Democratic Institutions and Good Governance in Nigeria: Lessons from Costa Rica

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Abstract
Friedrich Nietzsche stated that formidable democratic institutions form system of quarantine for tyrannical desires. Democratic institutions therefore, enhance the quality of democracy, citizen's empowerment, and economic development in a country. The paper evaluates the role of democratic institutions in influencing democratic stability, governance quality and economic development in Nigeria and Costa Rica. Interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2015 with executive and legislative class, judicial officials, INEC Staff and senior police personnel in Nigeria. The paper also adopted the historical research method to analyse secondary data on how democratic institutions contributed towards democratic sustainability, good governance and economic development in the two countries. The results showed that efficient and effective democratic institutions in Costa Rica are strongly associated with democratic stability in that country, while democratic institutions in Nigeria are very weak and fragile and are often unable to protect and promote sustainable democracy. The results also showed that establishment of strong and autonomous democratic institutions laid the institutional foundations for policy effectiveness and economic development in Costa Rica; while the fragile and non-autonomous democratic institutions continue to hinder economic development in Nigeria. The study concluded that strong and effective democratic institutions/systems have proven to be resilient and effective antidote to democratic stability, good governance, and economic development.
Keywords: Governance, Democratic Institutions, Economic Development, Democratic stability,

1. Introduction
Following the democratic transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ebbing of the Cold War, democracy promotion became a key element of foreign policy and development assistance. Governments, multilateral organisations and a large number of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) renewed and expanded their commitments to international engagement to support democracy. Thus, not only did democracy emerge as a universal aspiration, but norms also emerged in the international community indicating that it was legitimate to have an interest in promoting and supporting democracy abroad (Bjørnlund, 2004; Burnell, 2000).

Constitutional democracy, like other forms of government, is an art which has to be learnt and developed, and the learning involves a process of experimentation over time. Democratic institutions in Nigeria are very fragile and are often ineffective to protect and enhance sustainable democracy. The incursion of the military into public administration weakened democratic institutions like judiciary and legislature. It also resulted in flagrant disrespect to the constitution, which is usually suspended after a military coup. For example, seven military coups occurred in the country between 1966 and 1993; of these coups, two overthrew a legitimate democratically elected civilian government from office: the democratically elected government of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (1960–66), and the December 1983 coup that overthrew the democratically elected of government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

However, frequent military incursion in the governance of the country has resulted in weak democratic institutions, which are very fragile and often ineffective to protect and enhance sustainable democracy. The ineffectiveness of these institutions in discharging their statutory functions has resulted in democratic instability, poor governance quality, and economic under-development in Nigeria. This paper examines the role of democratic institutions in influencing democratic stability in Nigeria and Costa Rica. It also evaluates the impact of democratic institutions on governance quality in the two countries, and assesses the challenges of democratic institutions and implications for economic development in Nigeria and Costa Rica.

2. Review of Literature
2.1 Conceptual Clarifications
In view of the fact that concepts may have both cultural and ideological conceptualizations and similarity owing to the fact that like democracy, democratic institutions and good governance, such concepts are what (Gallie, 1962) calls an "essentially contested" (Weldon, 1981) also subscribes to this position that they can generate unsolvable debates about their meanings and application. It is therefore imperative to give meaning to concepts such as ethnic group and ethnicity to enhance a better understanding of the subject matter being examined.

Since democracy and good governance go together, then positive effects must connect democracy with governance quality, whether operating directly or indirectly through executive restraints. The word democracy is

one of the most used terms of the political vocabulary. This vital concept, through its transcultural dimension and because it touches the very fundamentals of the life of human beings in society, has given rise to much written comment and reflection; nevertheless, until now there has not been any text adopted at the world-wide level by politicians which defined its parameters or established its scope. This concept was probably in some way frozen by the opposition between plain or "formal" democracy and "popular" democracy which was current until recently in world-wide multilateral circles.

The concept of democracy, in its simplest form, can be defined using the two Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule) that combine to make the word democracy, meaning "rule by the people". The concept of governance has been used in the literature in two senses, one narrow and the other broad. The World Bank, for example, which uses it in the narrow sense, defines good governance as sound development management encompassing public sector management, accountability, the legal framework for development and, information and transparency (World Bank, 1992). The World Bank uses this restrictive definition to steer clear of contentious politics.

Also, the concept of governance like other concepts in the social sciences has generated exciting debates as to its true meaning. Kim *et al* (2005) see governance as the process of policy making through active and cohesive discussion among policy makers who are interconnected through a broad range of networks. Alkali (2004) conceptualized governance as the exercise of political power to manage public affairs. He points out that governance borders on such issues as rule of law, accountability and transparency, development-oriented leadership, freedom of expression and association, responsiveness, responsibility, representativeness, efficiency and effectiveness. He argues that "accountability and transparency are the hallmark of governance."

Therefore, the word 'good' in governance connotes the proper exercise of authority, management of resources and respect for the rule of law in accordance to laid-down principles for the benefit of all in a society. UNDP's first attempts to define the parameters of good governance in a 1994 document Initiatives for Change which stated that "the goal of governance initiatives should be to develop capacities that are needed to realise development that gives priority to the poor, advances women, sustains the environment and creates needed opportunities for employment and other livelihoods." Governance is defined by UNDP as the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, comprising the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which that authority is directed. Good governance is viewed as a prerequisite to the achievement of sustainable human development. The ability of developing countries to fulfill their development goals is dependent upon the quality of governance. Governance encompasses the state, but it clearly transcends it by including roles for both the private sector and civil society organisations (UNDP, 2006).

2.2 Major Democratic Institutions in Nigeria

Numerous global and regional surveys clearly shows that institutions make a difference for the political system and individuals to express opinions about how institutions should be structured and function. Moreover, citizens often tend to see the low efficiency of the political regime as a function of the poor performance of its institutions, as well as the political leaders that operate within them, (Inglehard, Basanez, and Moreno, 1998; Rose and Haerpfer, 1993; Rose and Haerpfer, 1998). Scholars such as Badru (2005), Babawale (2006), Mimiko (2007), and Oddih (2007) have argued that democracy is required in a society because it enhances good governance and development. The success of democracy in a country is dependent on having strong institutions. These institutions include the Legislature (Assembly, Parliament), Executive, and Judiciary etc.

1. **The Legislature**

   The Nigerian legislature is vested with the powers to make laws for the smooth conduct of elections in Nigeria. Okoosi-Simbine (2007) stated that more attention should be paid to the legislature if Nigeria must sustain democratic rule. The legislature, according to Heywood, (1997), provide a link between government and the people, a channel of communication that can both support government and help to uphold the regime and force government to respond to public demands and anxieties. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2011) identified five major functions of the legislature as:

   i. Legislation: The legislators are vested with the authority to pass bills into laws on behalf of the citizens. This makes the laws binding because legislators execute this function on behalf of the people, meaning that the people themselves make their laws. It is in parliament that discussion and debate of proposed laws take place.

   ii. Representation: Legislature plays a representative role providing a link between government and the people. Since all citizens cannot sit in the national or state assembly, the elected members of parliament thus serve a delegated function.

   iii. Scrutiny and oversight: The legislature is acclaimed to be the watchdog of the activities of the executive by checking government power.

   iv. Recruiting and training: Legislature often act as the major channels of   recruitment, providing a

pool of talent from which leading decision makers emerge. Legislature is a training ground because it is where the representatives of the people acquire oratorical skills and learn how to debate and make laws, functions that build their capacity to fill other political offices.

v. Legitimacy: Legislature promote this function by encouraging the public to believe that the system of rule above them is rightful. It is for the same reason that even authoritarian regimes tolerate assemblies (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011).

2.   **The Executive**

The Executive branch of government is charged with the function of implementing or executing the laws and policies made by the legislature. This is the core of government, as noted by Heywood (1997), because political systems can operate without constitutions, legislatures, judiciaries and even parties, but they cannot survive without an executive branch to formulate policy and ensure that it is implemented. The executive is the source of political leadership. More commonly, the term is used in a narrow sense to describe the smaller body of decision-makers who take overall responsibility for the direction and coordination of government policy. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2011) identified five major functions of the executive as:

i. Ceremonial duties: Heads of state, chief executives and, to a lesser extent, senior ministers or secretaries represent for the state. These executive leaders performed formal and ceremonial roles as they may be tasked to represent their governments at state occasions, international conferences and ratification of treaties and in foreign visits.

ii. Control of policy-making: The key function of the political executive, as mentioned above, is to direct and control the policy process and policy implementation.

iii. Popular political leadership: Crucial to the character and stability of the regime is the popularity of the political executive, more than any other part of the political system. The political executive's role is to direct and control the policy process. The political executive is expected to develop coherent economic and social programmes that meet the needs of more complex and politically sophisticated societies, and to control the state's various external relationships in an increasingly interdependent world. At policy level, it is the ability of the executive to mobilise support that ensures the compliance and cooperation of the general public. Effective policy implementation requires support from the public, or from other key groups in society.

iv. Bureaucratic management: The task of overseeing the implementation of policy means that the political executive has a major bureaucratic and administrative responsibility. In this sense, the chief executive, ministers and secretaries make up the top management charged with running the machinery of government.

v. Crisis response: The ability to take swift and decisive action places the political executive at a big advantage over the other two arms of government. This explains why the legislature gives political executives emergency powers in times of war, and when confronted with domestic crises such as natural disasters, terrorist threats, industrial unrest and civil disorder (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011).

3.   **The Judiciary**

The judiciary is empowered to adjudicate on the meaning of law, in the sense that they interpret or construct law. This function arises because the makers of law, i.e. the legislators are very often lay people as concerns matters of law. In countries with written/codified constitutions, the function of the judges also involves the interpretation of the constitution itself and this allows judges to arbitrate in disputes between major institutions of government or in disputes between the state and the individual. One of the chief characteristics of the judiciary in liberal democratic systems is that judges are strictly independent and non-political actors. To ensure the impartiality of court rulings judges, whether appointed or elected, must have job security or tenure guaranteed by law, so that they can make decisions without concern over pressure or attack by those in positions of authority (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011).

4.   **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**

INEC is the institution set-up according to the provision in Section 153 (1) f (1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria with the sole power to conduct all elections to public offices in the country. The structure of INEC is made-up of the Chairman, 12 Commissioners at the federal level and 36 Resident Commissioners with each one presiding over a state of the Nigerian Federation of 36 states. One of the major weaknesses of INEC, which has generated negative feeling about its activities amongst politicians and citizens, is its composition.

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria gave the President of the federation the powers to appoint the chair person, 12 Commissioners at the federal level and the 36 Resident Commissioners at the state level, although such appointment must be rectified by the senate (FRN, 1999). The danger in this arrangement is that where a ruling political party secures majority of seats at the senate, the president's choice of nomination of candidates into INEC could easily be approved to support the course of the ruling party at subsequent elections. This was the case with the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) during the approval of the appointment of Professor Morris Iwu as the Chairman of INEC (2005–2010) by former President Olusegun Obasanjo. This eventually led to the poor conduct of the 2007 General Elections that was widely acclaimed to have been rigged in favour of the then ruling party and acknowledged by the then elected late President Musa Yar' Adua, and local and the international communities (Adegbamigbe 2007; Aiyetan 2007; and Ploch 2008).

5. The Media

A non-partisan media that is free and independent is important in a democracy as it is the mouthpiece for reaching out to the masses. As modern societies grow in size and complexity, the arena for communication and public debate become dominated by the media. The media includes radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books and, more recently, the internet and satellite television. Konrad- Adenauer-Stiftung (2011) identified four functions of the media as:

i.   Information and education: The media has a central role to play in informing and educating the citizens and in providing accurate information to public consumers. It facilitates intelligent decisions about public policy by hosting debates and dialogues. This role is especially important during election campaigns when few voters will have the opportunity to see, much less talk, with candidates in person.

ii. Advocacy: Media audiences may benefit from various conflicting opinions, in order to obtain a wide range of viewpoints. iii. Acting as watchdog over government and other powerful institutions in society: By holding to a standard of independence and objectivity, however imperfectly, news media can expose the truth behind the claims of governments and hold public officials accountable for their actions.

iv. Setting the agenda: Because the media cannot report on everything, they must choose issues to highlight and which to ignore. This way the media decides what is news and what is not. These decisions in turn influence the public's perception of what issues are most important (Konrad-Adenauer- Stiftung 2011).

6. The Political Parties

A political party is a group of people that is organised for the purpose of winning government power, by electoral or other means. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2011) identified nine major functions of political parties to be:

i.   recruit and socialise new membership;
ii.   nominate and campaign to elect public officials;
iii.   draw up policy programmes for the government if they are in the majority;
iv.   offer criticisms and alternative policies if they are in opposition;
v.   mobilise support for common policies among different interest groups;
vi.   provide structure and rules for society's political debate;
vii.   enhance representation of the electorate;
viii. articulate interests as the citizens make demands to their governments;
ix.   mobilise the citizens to participate in political and development processes (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011).

7. Interest groups and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

These groups/organisations are another key element in a vibrant democracy. A citizen may be a member of a number of private or voluntary organisations, and interest groups that try to influence public policy and sway public officials' views. Democracy protects the rights of 'special interest' groups to organise and advocate their causes. NGOs attempt to serve the needs of a community, a nation or a cause, and supplement or even challenge the work of government by advocating, educating, and mobilising attention around major public issues and monitoring the conduct of government and private enterprises. NGOs may provide expertise and personnel on the ground for the implementation of government-funded projects. NGOs may be politically unaffiliated or they may be based on partisan ideals and seek to advance a particular cause or set of causes in the public interest. Whatever their nature, NGOs operate under minimal political control of states (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung 2011).

8. The Police

The Nigerian Police Force is the institution vested with the power to enforce law and order during the period of elections in Nigeria. The major functions of the Police at elections include: guaranteeing

safety and peace during the election process; providing security for personnel, materials and venues for voter registration; safeguarding the security of the life and property of citizens during voters' registration, political campaign and voting; and ensuring the safety of electoral officers before, during and after elections (FRN 1999). However, in spite of these functions of the police in the electoral process, there have been several complaints by members of the public and politicians that the police force in the country does not maintain impartiality in dealing with all political parties.

3. Methodology

The paper depended on primary data generated mainly from interviews for Nigeria, while it depended on secondary data for Costa Rica. The research adopted a survey approach to analyse primary data obtained from interviews using multi stage sampling technique. The first stage involved the stratification of the entire country into the six geopolitical zones. The second stage involved the selection of two states from each geopolitical zone using random sampling technique. The third stage entails the selection of two local government areas from each senatorial district of a state using stratified random sampling technique.

The fourth stage is the purposive selection of four main democratic institutions at the federal, state, and local government levels, and they are the executive and legislative class, judicial officials, INEC Staff and senior police personnel. This is to ensure that the whole country is covered up to the grassroots. The study population comprises all executive and legislative class, judicial officials, INEC Staff and senior police personnel in Nigeria. Research Instrument used in obtaining data was mainly in-depth interviews. A sample size of 184 respondents was selected through purposive sampling from the study population.

The historical research method was used to analyse the secondary data obtained from relevant books, journals, internet resources, magazines and newspapers on how democratic institutions such as the Legislature, Judiciary, Executive, INEC, and the Police have been able to contribute towards democratic sustainability for good governance and development in Nigeria. The historical research method involves investigating, recording, analyzing and interpreting events with a view to arriving at an acceptable research outcome (Osunde 1993).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Role of Democratic Institutions in Influencing Democratic Stability in Nigeria

Democratic institutions play great role in establishing democratic stability in any country. Interviews held with some of the citizens, they were of the view that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has contributed significantly to the democratic process, thereby promoting democratic stability. Also, some political analysts interviewed also applauded the contributions of pressure groups and the legislature in strengthening democratic institutions which also lead to democratic stability.

From the interviews conducted with some members of federal and state legislatures adduced that democratic institutions in Nigeria are very weak and fragile and are often unable to protect and promote sustainable democracy. They also revealed that the executive arm of government had actually at one time or the other manipulated election outcomes in Nigeria by utilising democratic institutions like the police and the electoral body to perpetuate its plans during elections. This was the case in the 2018 gubernatorial elections in Osun state where the security agencies prevented electorates they perceived will vote against the ruling party from voting. They even went further to prevent election observers from observing some of the elections, probably because they do not want the observers to witness the rigging and irregularities hey want to perpetrate.

Also, one of the national executives of Nigerian Union of Journalist revealed that the selfishness and self-centredness of the Nigerian Legislature has led to their placing more attention to their remuneration and allowances rather than providing the needed effort to strengthen democratic institutions so as to enhance democratic stability in the country. For instance, Mokwugwo (2011) had reported that the cost of maintaining each Senator for four years is put at approximately NGN3 billion or USD19.35 million and each member of the Nigerian Federal House of Representatives receives NGN 128.4 million or USD828,387 million as annual salary. Their fringe benefits include: wardrobe allowance – 25 per cent of annual basic salary, recess allowance – 10 per cent; accommodation allowance – 200 per cent of basic salary; utilities allowance – 30 per cent; and domestic staff allowance – 75 per cent.

In an interview conducted with a Registrar of a federal high court in Abuja, she was of the opinion that incessant review of the constitution by the legislature and lack of respect for the rule of law by the executive is affecting democratic stability in Nigeria. She cited the case of the legislature carrying out amendments to the electoral acts close to the 2012 election. Her views were earlier asserted by Adekeye and Ogunjobi (2008); Ero (2008); Majirioghene (2008); Yusuf (2008); and Kolawole (2010), when they opined that the legislature as a democratic institution in Nigeria failed in its role as facilitator of democratic governance. They argued that the Nigerian legislature amended Section 285(6) and (17) of the 1999 Constitution in 2010 that have to do with timeframe for election petitions in the country to be disposed-off from indefinite to a maximum period of 180 days by the courts without foreseeing the future consequence of that particular section.

Many of the stakeholders were of the view that election petition outcomes should be determined before acclaimed election winners are sworn into public offices after elections, but the legislature turned it down, and supports the view that the 'winner' should take the oath of office while the case is decided by the judiciary for a period not more than 180 days. The implication of this action is that those declared 'winners' by INEC, fraudulently use state funds to prosecute their cases to the detriment of their petitioners and the citizens as was the case in Edo, Ekiti, Ondo and Osun States of Nigeria.

4.2 Impact of Democratic Institutions on Governance Quality in Nigeria
Different scholars have posited that strong and effective democratic institutions will lead to good governance quality in a country. On the impact of democratic institutions on governance quality, a former commissioner in Osun state was of the opinion that until the executive and other democratic institutions have respect for the rule of law and protects human rights, and operates an open and transparent government, governance quality will remain very low. This view was earlier asserted by Arowolo and Aluko (2012), who averred that good governance is achievable in the atmosphere of sustenance of the rule of law. They opined that good governance should be measured on government's delivery inputs and capacity to use resources effectively to create wealth, induce economic growth and engender sustainable development. It is not about budget provisions; it is about actual accomplishment and its good intentions.

In an interview conducted with some civil society organisations that specializes in good governance, they were of the opinion that there is a relationship between efficient democratic institutions and good governance. They concluded that for democracy to successfully provide a platform for quality governance, democratic institutions are put in place as mechanisms to legitimately enthrone political leaders through the conduct of elections in a democratic society. Their views corroborated that of Gberevbie (2014) who stated that the executive arm of the government failed in its role as facilitator of democratic governance and quality governance in Nigeria. This according to him, implies that for democracy and democratic governance to thrive in a society, the executive as a democratic institution must play a role of an unbiased umpire because the executive arm of government is not a creation of a particular political party but of the constitution and hence should be supported by all, including those who may not be government - 'opposition' for the time being, if sustainable development is to take place in a country.

Nigeria's inability to decisively tackle most development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, security and deplorable state of infrastructure according to Federal Government of Nigeria Transformation Agenda (FGNTA), has been largely attributed to bad governance in all its ramifications. These include political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and effectiveness of institutions (FGNTA, 2011–2015).

4.3 Challenges of Democratic Institutions in Nigeria
Democratic institutions in Nigeria have failed to consolidate democracy in Nigeria due to some challenges confronting it. From the interviews conducted with three judges of the high courts in North-central, Southwest and Southeast, they all reiterated interference in the functions of the judiciary by the executive and legislature. The forms and nature of interference include blackmail, offering bribe to distort justice, intimidating the judiciary and depriving the judiciary of the needed infrastructure, facilities and security.

Ikelegbe (2005) observed that the failure of the democratic institutions in Nigeria were characterized by incumbency manipulations of state agencies, announcement of fake results, repression of the opposition and imposition of the ruling party on the nation. Furthermore, Nnadozie (2007) points out the challenges militating against the success of democratic institutions in Nigeria to include what he termed 'ethnic stigma', which, according to him, occurs when ethnic consideration plays prominent role in the appointments of people into the headship of these democratic institutions making the future and survival of democracy and democratic institutions to be in danger.

Dudley (1973) also has advanced reasons for the failure of democratic institutions in Nigeria to include the phenomenon called 'tribalism' as basis for the appointment of leaders into these democratic institutions. The implication is that people that lack the capacity to adequately manage these institutions for enhanced performance are appointed to the detriment of merit. These people so appointed on the basis of tribalism are seen to be loyal to their tribes rather than the nation as a whole in the implementation of policies and programmes for democratic sustainability. Abubakar (2011) argued that democratic institutions also lacked the capacity to perform well due to the prevailing circumstances of the environment in which they are situated— weakened moral threshold and poor ethical values. Ingraham (2005) identified one of the major problems responsible for the failure of democratic institutions as the lack of capacity on the part of the structure, system and operators of these institutions to achieve set goals.

Also, the failure of some democratic institutions in Nigeria could be explained within the context of the argument of Richard Joseph. According to Joseph (1991), Nigerians often seek to device structures that will prevent the materialization of the state affairs they fear most, namely, that presumed opponents will take a

decisive and perhaps ruinous advantage over them. With this kind of mindset, democratic institutions are bound to fail both in structure, content and implementation of the policies and programmes for which they were established in the first instance. Little wonder therefore that democratic institutions in Nigeria find it difficult to accomplish their goals even from the very beginning.

Studies by Ikelegbe (2005); Oloruntimehin (2005); Soleye (2005); Okoosi-Simbine (2007) have shown that the various democratic institutions in Nigeria such as INEC, the Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and the Police, by their actions at one time or the other since the nation's independence, have denied Nigerians the unique opportunity to enjoy the benefits derivable from a democratic system based on popular participation of the citizens in the election of the political leaders of their choice. These have resulted in political decay of military takeover of political power, undemocratic behavior amongst politicians and citizens, underdevelopment and lack of proper democratic ethos in Nigeria.

Other crises facing democratic institutions in Nigeria include: dependent and weak judicial system; poverty and ignorance; corruption; citizenship, settlers/strangers crisis; absence of internal democracy in political parties; political intolerance and winner - takes - all syndrome;

non-existent deep-rooted ideology in political parties; and self-serving legislature. Nigeria's democracy is being manipulated by those in power. They employ and monopolise state machinery to maintain their hold on power. The Obasanjo's administration, for instance, was noted for its selective judgement and flagrant disrespect for and disobedience to the rule of law; this is also a function of ineffective rules and weak institution. The administration hunted its opponents with the awe of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The same applies to the current Buhari administration, who uses the EFCC to arrest prosecute members of the opposition, in the name of fighting corruption. And when members of the opposition who are tagged as being corrupt cross carpet to the ruling party, they are no more corrupt. The administration have also used the police and other security agencies to rig election, intimidate and harass electorate as seen in Osun state Gubernatorial election that took place in 2018. In other cases, security agencies were used to harass serving opposition governors such as former Ekiti state governor, Mr. Ayodele Fayose, Akwa-Ibom state governor, Rivers state governor, just because they are in opposition.

The judicial and legislative officers were not spared either. Security agencies were used to prevent the Senate President and his Deputy from leaving their official residence to the national assembly from performing their official functions. In some other cases, the security agencies were used to prevent legislators from entering the national assembly to perform their civic and official duties. Also judges were arrested in their official residences and bundled out like criminals to the detention facilities of these security agencies. It took the intervention of the courts for some of them to be freed. All these actions of the executives act as obstacles to strengthening the democratic institutions vis – a – vis the democratic process.

4.4 Democratic Institutions and Good Governance: Lessons from Costa Rica

Costa Rica has had a competitive political system for more than 100 years. After the United States, it is Costa Rica that has had the longest, continuous period of democratic stability with a presidential form of government (Lehoucq, 1996). The 2003 Bertelsmann Management Index (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2004), a composite measure of the ability of a political system to build agreements to solve social problems, ranks Costa Rica as the 8th most successful case among 110 developing countries it examines (Lehoucq, 2006).

4.4.1 The Role of Democratic Institutions in influencing Democratic Stability in Costa Rica

Empirical studies have shown that efficient and effective democratic institutions in Costa Rica are strongly associated with democratic stability in that country. Policies are remarkably stable in Costa Rica, despite wholesale change in incumbents every 4 years given the ban on consecutive re-election. None of the 73 constitutional amendments enacted between 1949 and August 2000, for example, has radically changed the letter or the spirit of the 1949 charter (Ramírez, 2000). No amendment has undermined the core principles of constitutional design: neither the division between the central state and the autonomous institutions nor the absence of overlapping jurisdictions between the parts of government (e.g., Ackermann's [2000] "new separation of powers") has been violated. Despite efforts to have the legislature debate and approve the budgets and plans of the autonomous institutions, the agencies of the decentralized sector remain insulated from the elected branches of government.

The Costa Rican political system devolves important policymaking responsibilities to autonomous institutions, ones whose budgets the executive does not propose and the legislature does not approve. Health care, old age pensions, monetary policy, and electoral governance are among the policy areas not under the direct purview of the two elected branches of government and entrusted to independent agencies. An independent judiciary, especially since the establishment of the Constitutional Chamber in 1989, has become an aggressive defender of individual rights and an assertive interpreter of the powers of, and boundaries between, the branches of government (Ramírez, 2000), unlike the case in Nigeria where the judiciary is at the mercy of the executive..

According to the Costa Rican Electoral Code, every party fielding candidate for legislative offices must

organize a series of assemblies that start in each of the country's 510 districts and culminate in national conventions that are held after each party has selected a presidential candidate (Lehoucq, 2006). Yet, a comprehensive study of internal party dynamics (Zamora and Fallas, 1991) demonstrates that party leaders can manipulate district-level legislature by, for example, convening them secretly or at odd hours.

Executive-legislative conflict has never led to a democratic breakdown. Nor has it prevented the elected branches of government from enacting their core policymaking responsibilities, even if divided government does lead to a slowdown of lawmaking. Fast track budget procedures that limit the powers of both branches of government lead to the regular production of annual budgets. In agreement with its central design principles, that of functional specialization and the delegation of important policy responsibilities away from the elected branches of government, the constitution takes a lot of the politics out of the central state PMP. Both of these factors made the executive-legislative arena conducive for development of effective public policies, even though the recent increase in the number of parties and congressional rules of order that empower minorities to obstruct the legislative agenda are reducing cooperation between the elected branches of government (Lehoucq, 2006).

Widespread consensus exists that both the president and legislature are institutionally limited (Carey, 1997; Lehoucq, 1998; Shugart and Carey, 1992; Urcuyo, 2003). The ban on consecutive reelection weakens the institutional memory of the Assembly and deprives most legislators of long-term policy expertise. The President has one of the weakest sets of legislative powers of any presidential system due to limited decree powers and cannot convene referenda single-handedly, though he can convene the Assembly in extraordinary session (or 6 months a year) to deliberate exclusively on matters of his choosing. While he can veto legislative bills in whole or in part, the Legislature can override his vetoes with the vote of two-thirds of its members. He also cannot veto the budget after the Assembly amends the budget bill he sends them (Lehoucq, 2006).

Three sets of factors contribute to what is, in general terms, a history of cooperation between the elected branches of government. First, concurrent elections (but with separate ballots) for the executive and legislature seem to increase the size of the president's support in the Assembly, especially before the 1990s when most voters identified with a party. Approximately half of the governments—or 7 out of 13—between 1949 and 2002 were unified. Between 1953 and 2002, the average size of the pro-government legislative contingent was 48 percent. Only in the 1958-62 and 2002-6 periods did the size of pro-government majorities fall significantly below this number, to 22 and 33 percent, respectively (Lehoucq, 2006).

4.4.2 Impact of Democratic Institutions on Governance Quality

Previous studies showed that establishment of strong and autonomous democratic institutions laid the institutional foundations for policy effectiveness and economic development in Costa Rica. According to Lehoucq (1997), there were more than 118 autonomous institutions by the mid-1990s. They include state corporations (though not all state corporations were autonomous institutes) and a host of agencies entrusted with fulfilling the ambitious economic and social welfare objectives.

Wilkie (1978) posited that autonomous institutions controlled the equivalent of 7.3 of GDP in 1950. Two decades later, this figure increased to 17.4 percent of GDP. And, by 1994, they controlled the equivalent of approximately 30 percent of GDP. In comparison, the central state—the three branches of government plus the Supreme Tribunal of Elections—spent 10.2 percent of GDP in 1950. By 1970, the autonomous sector used 15 percent of GDP, 6 percent less than the central government. In 1994, the autonomous sector controlled 30 percent of GDP or a sum equivalent to the central government (Madrigal, 1995).

Along with the fact that consolidated public sector spent or otherwise controlled the equivalent of 60 percent of GDP in 1994, what makes this data fascinating reading is that the budgets of autonomous institutions are not part of the central state's Ordinary Budget (even though the central state's supplemental funding would be part of its annual budget request). Only the Comptroller General, an auxiliary institution (e.g., a semi-autonomous agency) of the Assembly, inspects their budget to make sure they have not violated any laws. Indeed, Supreme Court interpretations have excluded the budgets of the decentralized sector from normal budgetary processes that require the approval of both the president and the Legislature (Lehoucq, 2006).

The judicial system is the oldest democratic institution alongside with the Supreme Tribunal of Elections and the Comptrollership General, making it one of the most respected public institutions in Costa Rica. Unlike the other two branches of government, it was not affected by the 1948 civil war, though the junta did remove the magistrates of the Supreme Court. Neither did 1949 convention delegates target the judiciary for substantial changes. Though the Supreme Court historically shied away from politically charged issues before the establishment of its Constitutional Chamber in 1989, it still maintained its stand on issues that affects sustainability of democratic process, and its stand as enforcer of the inter-temporal agreement is responsible for relatively effective public policies in the post-civil war period. Since 1989, the magistrates on the Constitutional Chamber have used their broad powers to become a veto player in the PMP, one that aggressively enforces the individual rights and guarantees contained in the constitution (Lehoucq, 2006).

5. Conclusion

Democratic institutions play an important role in democratic stability, good governance, and economic development. Although strong and effective democratic institutions/systems provides resilient and effective antidote to democratic stability, good governance, and economic development, it limits the ability of politicians to use the institutions for partisan or electoral gain. The configuration of democratic institutions conditions politicians' need to maintain policy flexibility.

The results cast doubt on the fragile and weak democratic institutions in Nigeria to promote democratic stability, good governance, and economic development. Arguments based on policy capabilities and credible commitments imply that efficient and effective democratic institutions in Costa Rica are strongly associated with democratic stability in that country - predictions that directly contradict the results in Nigeria. The strong democratic institutions in Costa Rica accounts for democratic stability, infrastructural development, human capacity development index, and economic development in that country. Whereas the weak and fragile democratic institutions in Nigeria has contributed to political violence, hate speeches, corruption, increasing poverty incidence, bad governance, poor human and physical infrastructure, distorted economy, and poor human capacity development index.

This paper has brought renewed emphasis to the role of democratic institutions in shaping democratic stability, good governance, and economic development. The configuration of domestic democratic institutions not only affects political interests but also conditions how politicians respond to the pressures of good governance, and economic development. Although some electoral and legislative institutions will encourage politicians to respond to the socioeconomic consequences of good governance and economic development, other institutions will insulate politicians from these economic and societal changes. Focusing on democratic institutions and their incentives, therefore, is a necessary complement to explanations centering solely on democratic stability, good governance, and economic development. The study concluded that strong and effective democratic institutions/systems have proven to be resilient and effective antidote to democratic stability, good governance, and economic development.

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