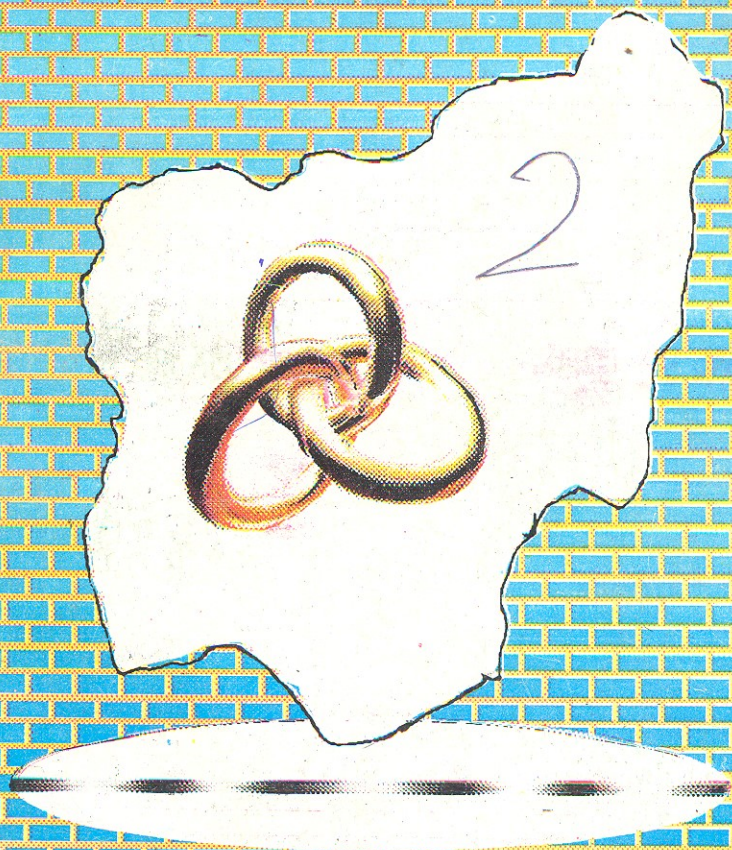


ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NIGERIA



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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Women and Democratic Governance: Lessons from Second and Third Republics

Iyabo Olojede

Introduction

Since the early 1990's, increased attention has been paid to democratic project in Africa (Chabal, 1992, Beecham, 1994). The incidents of oppression, plunder and the spate of violent conflicts have led to renewed calls for democracy and good governance. In several African countries, authoritarian regimes face increasing pressures for democratic changes. For example, in 1990 alone, there were civil protests in fourteen African countries particularly in their state capitals (Bratton & Walle, 1991:27). The civil protests were aimed at producing democratic changes in the polity. Scholars have proffered numerous prescriptions for resolving the crisis of democratic governance in Africa (Joseph, 1991; 201-205). These include an independent associational life, a free press, independent judiciary, improved human rights records, autonomous mechanisms for equity, capacity building, qualitative and quantitative resource management. In spite of the rich elaboration of prescriptions for sustainable democracy, very little attention has been paid to the potential roles of women in the promotion of good governance and democracy in Africa. The low profile of women in the subject of democracy and good governance reflects the sexist bias in the study of politics. This chapter will attempt to fill this gap through empirical analysis of women participation in governance in Nigeria's second and Third Republics. Studies on women's participation in democracy and governance could make a valuable contribution to a more general theory of democratic process. The analysis of women's participation in governance, if developed, also has implications for the determination of public policies. It can also assist in deepening our understanding of the relationship between gender and politics.

Nigeria is a signatory to several international instruments affirming women's rights and equality with men. (World Bank, 1994). Prominent among these international instruments are the Convention on the Political Rights of Women which was adopted in 1952 but ratified by Nigeria in

1980 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which was adopted in 1979 and ratified by Nigeria in 1985. At the national level, the Nigerian constitution also enshrined the principle of gender equality (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979).

Despite the numerous international instruments and constitutional provisions affirming the equality of men and women in all spheres of life, public governance inclusive, very few women have participated in the management of Nigeria. Public institutions such as political parties, legislative assemblies and executive councils are depicted as "Male Clubs". Under the Second and Third Republics, very few women participated in the public affairs of the country. What were the impediments to women's participation in governance under the Second and Third Republics? What lessons can be learnt? Answers to these questions will form the central thrust of this chapter.

Women and Democratic Institutions

In the study of politics in Nigeria, as elsewhere, the traditional approach to the study of political participation relies heavily on surveys of public opinion, voting behaviour and on analysis of leadership (Jinadu, 1982; 85). Little of women participation in politics have remained understudied. The concern in this section is therefore to examine women participation in politics in Nigeria's second and Third Republics.

Women participation in governance at every level can be taken as an index of the level of democracy in a country since women often constitute half the population of most countries. In many African countries (Nigeria inclusive), available evidence shows that the participation women in democratic governance has been generally low. In liberal democracies, political parties, legislative assemblies and executive councils, are vital sources of decision making, among other power centres. Political parties in particular provide the citizens with the opportunity of participating in the management of a country's affairs, and constitute a major platform for selecting and promoting candidates for elections. They also provide avenue for mass mobilisation and provision of political leadership for the nation. Political parties also organise and share power in parliament as well as influence the decisions of government and other executive bodies. Since the emergence of indigenous political leadership in 1960, Nigerian

women have remained invisible in the party system. Women were grossly under-represented in party membership as well as in decision-making organs. The marginal showing of women in political parties has made it difficult for a visible women party constituency to emerge or develop (Olojede, 1990; 85). Between 1957 and 1959, there were four major political parties – Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Action Group (AG). In the executive bodies of these political parties, women were almost invisible. It was only NEPU that had a woman in its national executive. Even in this particular case, she was designated as women's organiser. Men exclusively dominated the national executive councils of other political parties – AG, NCNC and NPC.

The marginal participation of women in the decision making of the political parties has been well documented by (Ogunsola, 1996) As shown in Tables (1) and (2) in the decision making bodies of the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), women were grossly underrepresented. In NRC, at the Ward/local government level, women constituted 4.21%. The same trend can be observed in SDP where women who occupied executive positions at the grassroots level constituted about 4.0%

TABLE 1

Membership of Party Executive By Gender in National Republican Convention

Ward +	Local Freq	Government %	National Freq	+ State %
Male	19464	95.79	171	93.44
Female	856	4.21	12	6.54
Valid N	20320		183	

Source: Culled from W. Ogunsola

Source: Culled from W. Ogunsola "Women in Intra Party Politics", In C. Osinulu and N. Mba (eds) Nigerian Women in Politics 1986 – 1996 Lagos, Malthouse Publishers, P. 83.

TABLE 2**Membership of Party Executive by Gender in Social Democratic Party**

Ward	+	Local Freq	Government %	National Freq	+	State %
Male		23020	96.0	209*		96.76
Female		958	4.0	07		3.24
Valid N		23978		216		

Source: W. Ogunsola op. cit:84

The low participation of women in the executive bodies of political parties explain why fewer women were/are often nominated as candidates for elections. Under the Second Republic (1979 – 1983), in the Senate elections, out of the 479 contestants only four were women. In the Federal House of Representatives elections, out of the 2,000 candidates presented for elections by political parties, only ten were women. In the Third Republic, out of 330 governorship aspirants, only nine were women and none of them won their party nomination. Given the small number of women in decision-making organs of political parties, their views could be easily ignored. There is therefore the need for women to exert adequate pressure in the existing three political parties in the Fourth Republic to strengthen their electoral ambition. Conscious efforts must be made by female aspirants formally and informally to influence the party membership and structure for their political ends. Female aspirants must not operate independently as obtained in the Third Republic, where female presidential and governorship aspirants operated as individuals without visible support from party leadership. Interpersonal skills must be learnt and employed to reduce isolation often experienced by female politicians in view of their insignificant number (Olojede, 1996).

Similarly, in legislative assemblies where laws governing the nation are made among other policy sources, women are also under-represented. Between 1960 and 1966, there were only two women in senate, the highest decision making body. The observed scenario also obtained in 1980s when out of ninety-five senators, only one was a

woman, while in the lower parliament, out of 445 parliamentarians, only three were women. During the Second Republic, the participation of women was still negligible. In the senate, ninety of them were men while only one was a woman. In the same vein, out of 601 parliamentarians only 13 were women. Under the same period, men largely dominated the National Executive Councils of the parties. Of the 35 members that constituted the National Executive Councils, only 4 were women.

Given the under representation of women in public management, women could not significantly influence the course of public policies. In spite of this, they are bound by the outcomes of the policy process of which they were/are an insignificant part. Similarly, their peculiar needs and interests could not be adequately projected as they had few advocates in policy institutions (Olojede, 1969). Consequently, several policies/programmes adopted by federal and state governments to enhance sustainable human development were/are gender insensitive.

Impediments to Women's Participation in the Process of Governance

It is not uncommon for gender blind critics to indict women for political inactivity and challenge them to come up to male standards of political participation and savvy to achieve political equality, without considering the barriers on the way of women's participation.

Several factors tend to constrain women's participation in democratic governance in Nigeria. The first one is discriminatory socio-cultural practices which men consciously or unconsciously practices against women. These negative socio-cultural practices were manifest in the political behaviour of male politicians in the Second and Third Republics. In general, Nigeria operates a patriarchal system. In a patriarchal system, gender inequality in politics is determined by the patriarchal division between private and public life (Pateman, 1988). Under this system, motherhood is a crucial factor excluding women from politics. As practiced in Nigeria, patriarchy gives ascendancy to men in authority and decision making in and outside the home. It is perceived more or less as an aberration for women to participate in public affairs. Women who venture into politics are labelled as "prostitutes" or "wayward women". As a result of these negative attitudes towards women participation in public affairs, many potentially qualified women were shielded a way from politics in Second and Third Republics, despite the

steady though slow **growth in the number of educated women in Nigeria**. This phenomenon is an outcome of negative socio-cultural practices against women. In a study among 120 top Nigerian women managers in 1993, it was revealed that even top professional women are apathetic towards the political process (Olojede, 1969). About 96.7% of the respondents who occupy first three positions in the public and private sectors indicated lack of interest in party politics. These respondents are not party members neither did they hold executive positions in the two political parties, i.e SDP and NRC of the Third Republic. This finding shows that gender inequality in political participation of well-educated groups challenges the initial belief that education by itself abolishes gender differences. Few women who ventured into politics in the First and Second Republics were intimidated by unwritten traditions which men foster while women acquiesce. The few women who were bold to enter into the political terrain were used for mass mobilisation/campaigns and thus dumped after party victories (Yusuf 1985;213). In recent times (from 1990's), a new dimension has been added to the trivialisation of women's participation in politics (Mama, 1995;213). Polygamous men now organise their wives from different ethnic origins to mobilise fellow women. Examples can be found in presidential and vice-presidential candidates (Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola and Alhaji Baba Kingibe) of the SDP during the 1993 presidential elections who dispatched their different wives to campaign in their states of origin.

Negative attitudes of Nigerian women towards the political process are also an impediment to few courageous women who aspire to elective political positions. The statement made by Helen Gomwalk concerning Sarah Jubril's aspiration for presidency in 1993 illustrates the lack of support of women for their sisters. Helen Gomwalk is a political activist and chairperson of the defunct NRC in Plateau State. Her statement in the extract below illustrates the negative attitudes of many women to female aspirants.

If any woman has the ambition of the presidency, I would advise that she should not be in a hurry... If Sarah Jubril feels she is ready for the presidency, good luck to her
(Newswatch, 1992; 10-13).

While some people have argued that Gomwalk's view reflects the reality of Sarah's ambition in view of the deep-rooted biases against women occupying top public positions, her view is considered as not indicative of gender insensitivity. For a woman to aspire to the presidential position against this background is stretching her boundary of ambition too far. It is noteworthy to point out that while her statement may contain some useful caution, it has the potential of being interpreted as lack of support for fellow women, which may serve as discouragement to others. Sarah's bold move can be regarded as a political campaign for women in all ramifications, which ought to be supported, by all women regardless of the timing. While the institutional environment (social, cultural, political, etc.) is hostile to women politicians, the lack of support from fellow women was a demotivator for aspiring female politicians. This finding corroborates the thesis that female politicians are not necessarily feminists neither do they necessarily support feminist ideology or women's cause/interests. Women politicians must support themselves regardless of differences in political affiliations. Efforts must also be made by women associations to campaign intensively across the federation (rural and urban) to break the gender stereotypes of women's public roles vis-a-vis men. Mass mobilisation campaigns must be stepped up towards breaking traditional attitudes and stereotypes of women's public roles and inequality with men in decision making. Women associations through systematic campaigns can create grassroot constituencies for change which will ultimately empower women for participation in politics. The Nigerian political system must be remedied to remove traditional prejudices, which stand in the way of women. It is through politics that women can influence the adoption and implementation of policies that would guarantee access of women to governance.

Monetisation of the political process by the state and the political class is another major impediment to women's participation in governance (Momoh, 1995). Available evidence shows that the monetisation of the political process during the Second and Third Republics served as a disincentive to the participation of women in contesting for elective offices in the then existing political parties as well as executive and legislative positions (Newswatch, 1992). This was particularly rife in the Third Republic. Under Babangida's transition programme, the cost of

nomination for elective positions was prohibitive. Presidential aspirants under the SDP were to pay a non-refundable nomination fee of ₦500, 000 each while the NRC aspirants were to pay ₦400,000 each. Out of the 31 aspirants for the parties' primaries, only 19 eventually contested and none was a woman. The three female presidential aspirants (on the platform of SDP) Sarah Jubril, Maria Braimah and Catherine Wayas, could not fulfill the financial requirements of their party.

Apart from official financial requirements for contesting party tickets, unofficial expenses such as financial mobilisation of voters and planned campaigns to enhance electoral success serve as a major setback for potential contestants. In the Third Republic, it was estimated that to fund a presidential primary, an aspirant must have between ₦300 and ₦400 million which was beyond the reach of all the female presidential aspirants (Newswatch, 1992). The poor financial situation of female politicians is exemplified by the "moneyless Sarah Jubril". In preparing for her party nomination, Sarah Jubril went about campaigning in hired taxicabs in areas outside Lagos State while in Lagos State, she transported herself in rickety yellow buses known as "molue". Conversely, many male counterparts were more financially capable to contest for party primaries and at other level. Most of the male contestants were either former public office holders or rich businessmen/contractors who have made their fortunes through appropriation of public funds or in "private business". Since many of these men have a strong financial base, they were able to pay the required nomination fees. Similarly, they were able to campaign effectively. Campaign offices of these male contestants were visibly located in all the Nigerian states. Other campaign components such as vehicles, transportation (air, road and water) for campaign teams, posters, handbills, radio and television advertisements were conveniently financed. In general, the political landscape of the Third Republic was characterized by financial profligacy. Many political aspirants involved themselves in a strange kind of spending spree (Adedeji, 1995; 91). Monies were spent as if minting machines were installed behind family compounds. Consequently, many female aspirants, who, of course, were in the majority of financial "have – nots" in the political scene, have tended to lose out more in electoral contests as witnessed in intra-party and inter-party elections regardless of their competence and leadership qualities.

It has been argued that availability of financial resources is no guarantee to women's participation in politics, neither is it crucial for electoral success. It has also been said that there are numerous wealthy women with little or no interest in politics. While these arguments may be tenable to some extent, financial capability is still a crucial factor in the successful execution of political campaigns and ultimate electoral success in Nigeria. For a woman to be visible politically, she requires financial resources (directly or indirectly from sponsors). For example, Suliat Adedeji, the notable female politician in Ibadan (South West of Nigeria) became visible politically not only through possession of political skills but also through skillful use of her financial resources to gain political recognition (Adedeji, 1995; 91). It was through her financial resources that she was able to mobilise groups within her political party NPN (in the Second Republic) and occupational groups within Ibadan community. For example, she donated a sizeable amount of money to the NPN.

Similarly, she donated two Kombi buses to the NPN drivers' unions in Ibadan (Communique, 1996). It was through this gesture that she gained recognition of not only occupational groups within Ibadan community but also her political party. All these were tremendous political tools which in the long run would have facilitated her ambitions politically within the NPN had the military not intervened in 1983.

While female politicians climb on lonely political ladders in the absence of political and financial mentors, male politicians with little or no financial resources had/have political and financial mentors who funded their electoral campaigns. What lessons are there for aspiring female politicians in the Fourth Republic? How can women overcome the financial constraint, which they encounter in the electoral process? It is our belief that financially handicapped female aspirants can overcome this problem through early search for funds. Funds can be sought not only from female philanthropists but also supportive men with financial resources. Female aspirants must ensure that their projected plans of action must be well articulated to elicit support from potential funders. This chapter does not in any way suggest fund sourcing for purchase of votes by women. Engaging in such anti-democratic practices would foster a negative political culture, which is already an endemic problem in Nigeria polity.

The violent nature of Nigerian politics, which was amply demonstrated in Second and Third Republic, pose an obstacle to women's participation in governance (Diamond, 1988: 74). During these periods, the political climate was characterised by wave of assassinations, murders, arson, looting and kidnappings (Diamond, 1988; 74). Given the general abhorrence of women for violence, many women were discouraged from participating. Election results, which were allegedly rigged, were often met with violent protests. In 1983 elections, the announcement that National Party of Nigeria (NPN) won governorship elections in Oyo and Ondo (strongholds of Unity Party of Nigeria) provoked violent explosions in which angry mobs sought out the property of persons of leading NPN figures, dragged them from their homes and buried them alive. Similar violent protests were recorded in Bendel, Borno, Gongola, Kaduna and Anambra states where the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), and the People's Redemption Party (PRP) were alleged to have lost to National Party of Nigeria due to official manipulations (Human Rights Watch, 1996; Osaghae, 1996) The physical battles which often accompany electoral contests in Nigeria must be addressed to ensure women participation in democratic governance. Government must provide exemplary leadership by first adhering to constitutive and regulative rules governing the country. By extension, government must ensure that all political actors adhere to rules of political contest to ensure peaceful political atmosphere. This would assist in the motivation of women for political participation. It is also suggested that politically inclined women associations should identify and collaborate with civil associations, which are involved in re-engineering Nigerian political values to promote sustainable democracy. It is only when positive political culture is internalised by men and women those women's participation can be guaranteed. Through participation in governance, Nigerian women will be helping to build a sustainable democracy where public policies would adequately reflect diverse interests (women inclusive). This, of course, would also assist in guaranteeing peace and security as consensus can be built around issues, which promote general interests of the populace. The lessons from Liberia and Rwanda's conflicts should not be lost to other countries (Nigeria inclusive). Lessons should be learnt from Liberian and Rwandan experience where governance was male

dominated and the female voices were rendered peripheral. Women did not play any significant role in decisions leading to conflicts (Human Right Watch, 1996). Prior to the 1994 civil war in Rwanda, women were significantly under-represented in politics. Few women participated in Rwanda's politics prior to the 1994 genocide. In 1990, only about 5.2% of women participated in the executive arm of government. In 1993, the first female Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana was appointed. She was popularly known to be a moderate who would have opposed the genocide but was one of the first national leaders to be murdered when the genocide was launched. A more proportional representation of women in Rwandan parliament may have lent a voice of moderation thereby leading to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Conclusion

The chapter has examined the participation of women in governance in second and Third Republics. It was discovered that women participation in democratic institutions during the periods under discussion was negligible. Several factors were identified as major impediments to their participation. These include; discriminatory social practices which intimidate women in their quest for power sharing, lack of support from fellow women, monetisation of the political process and the violent nature of Nigerian politics.

In order to enhance women participation in the Fourth Republic, some suggestions were proffered. For example, it is suggested that politically inclined women associations must assist in providing a conducive cultural environment for women's participation in democratic governance. This can be done through systematic and integrated campaigns in rural and urban centres to soften gender stereotypes of public roles. The potential roles of women in promoting good governance must be highlighted to elicit support. Alliance must also be forged with civil associations that strive to re-engineer political values devoid of thuggery, violence and manipulation. Finally, female politicians must support themselves to create a democratic space for women folk. It is also not enough for women to acquire political office since female politicians are not necessarily feminists. Public policy in favour of women cannot on its own improve women's status in Nigeria. Constant feminist pressure and vigilance is needed to ensure their effective implementation. Politics

is a tool that must be employed to modify inequitable gender relations and negative socio-cultural values within the society. Feminists cannot afford to ignore the political process. Experience of Rwanda and Liberia must be borne in mind. This should energise feminists for positive political action.

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