

Women Participation in Politics in Nigeria: A Democratic Imperative

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Abstract

Women participation in politics has been an issue of outstanding public interest for quite some time now. The need to revisit this contentious issue, from scholarly perspective, arose because of the need to correct a certain perception that women participation in politics, particularly in Nigeria, could only be made possible if they occupy appointive or elective offices. The paper makes an analysis of extant literature and examines the historical trajectory of women representation, and how they have been marginalized in the process; from the state-centrist, pluralist and Marxist orientations to comparative approach that examines institutions and strategies. We interrogate whether or not it is a democratic imperative and explores other alternatives of participating in politics, since political participation does not necessarily entail holding elective or appointive public offices, for which the Nigerian women have persistently asked for 35 per cent, as there are other avenues for participating in politics or ventilating political opinions. The paper recognizes that there are obvious inhibitions to women representation in the public space, some of which are self-inflicted. It was discovered that the general trend and international best practice, point to gender mainstreaming, which encourages gender parity in the public space. In the light of this the paper suggests far reaching palliatives on the way forward.

Keywords

Women, Participation, Politics, Representation, Democracy, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Politics entails the allocation of values authoritatively (Easton, 1961). Values are what we desire now or in the immediate future. The way and manner these values or resources are allocated have often been problematic. It is problematic because at the point of allocation there are always complaints by the contending groups that the values or resources to be allocated either did not get to them at all or that they were sidelined, short-changed, marginalised or outmanoeuvred in the process. This has always brought about bickerings and rancour in the political process.

However, one of the methods which most systems adopt to arrest this problem is democracy. Democracy is advocated in order to ensure citizens participation in decision making.

This is why Dahl (1971: 1) declares that the “Key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as *political equals*. (Italics mine). The emphasis is important because if the political society comprises men and women, it therefore presupposes that both should be equal partners in the political process. Representation is seen as very important, especially for development because, development policies are highly charged trade-offs between diverse interests and value choices. More so, “The political nature of these policies is frequently made behind the closed door of bureaucracy or among tiny groups of men in a non-transparent political structure”, (Staudt 1991:65; cited in Rai 2008:373-4). This is a major reason for the clamour for inclusion of women in decision-making in major policy matters, especially as it

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affects their interests. The non-inclusion is perceived as a problem because,

Citizens largely accept democratic institutions as important to the expansion of possibilities of political participation. Further, exclusion generates political resentment, adversely affecting not only the political system but also social relations within a polity; no individual or group likes being regarded as part of an excluded, and therefore disempowered, group, (Rai 2008:374)

We have to note that the practice of democracy in competitive elective politics appertains to only two branches of government, the executive and the legislature. It is therefore useful for our purpose to conceive democracy on the theoretical and conceptual levels as, “a form of government in which the identities of the leaders of the executive branch and members of the (national) legislature are determined in fair, competitive elections” (Ray, 1995: 97). The caveat in this definition is that in moving to a more operational level, in a “competitive” election, at least two different, independent political parties must offer candidates for elections. We adopt the minimalist and procedural definition of democracy because it largely accommodates the peculiarities of the Nigerian experience, as well as shields us from the encumbrances attached to the definition of democracy. Our purpose in this context nevertheless, is to examine how women take part in this process in Nigeria.

One important point we must also note is that in most countries in Africa, including Nigeria, the political arena remains largely dominated by men. In fact, in some countries like the Middle East-Arab countries, it is an exclusively male affair. This is antithetical to the fundamental principle of democracy, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union has incorporated this in the Universal Declaration on Democracy in the following words:

The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences (IPU, 1997, in IPU Series “Report and Documents” 1999, forward)

In the same vein, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria gives equal opportunity to governance and public life to both men and women. This entails that the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution by virtue of Section 40 states as follows:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular [s]he may

form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his[her] interests: provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that commission does not accord recognition.

This right is further reinforced by Section 42 of the Constitution which affirms the right to freedom from discrimination. By virtue of this section therefore, “a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that [s]he is such a person *be subjected to any form of discrimination*”. In essence, the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

However, in Nigeria, there are obvious constraints to the participation of women in politics. These constraints include, the volume of money involved. Most women are not proportionally empowered, to muster the kind of resources required to prosecute elections in Nigeria. Others are cultural barriers, the turbulent nature of the Nigerian political arena, lack of cohesion among women and women’s perception of themselves in relation to men, labelling women as anti-party people and cultural deviants, deliberate political party techniques to eliminate female aspirants, high registration fees, security, financial constraints, male dominated executive, undemocratic party policies, electoral violence, ideology, portrayal of women in the mass media, anti-religious doctrines, among other constraints (Aluko and Ajani, 2006:145; Akiyode-Afolabi, 2008:11-12).

It is against this backdrop that this paper in the next section looks at the conceptual issues and perspectives on women participation in politics, and further interrogates how we participate and whether or not it is a democratic imperative for women. Also we discuss the range of participation and to what extent it can go to assist in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This is followed by Nigerian women participation in politics in Nigeria, and finally the recommendations and conclusion.

2. Conceptual Issues and Perspectives on Women Participation in Politics

There is a contention that the problems encountered by women in their effort to participate in politics could be gleaned from the point of view of the state, as historical and institutional shells that protected and advanced male privilege, and as neutral umpire between competing groups, or as the instrument of the dominant economic class, (Staudt,

2008). These approaches believe that there is a historical linkage between the state and marginalization of women in politics. However, this rise and fall of women-and-the-state analysis, has since given way to a comparative approach that examines institutions and strategies. Even so, a common thread of male control lingers in the institutions, policies and laws in countries around the world, because it is evident that very few states have operated as neutral umpires in terms of gender. Even among trans-national organizations, there are proven cases of women under-representation. For instance, in 2002, 94.5 per cent of the World Bank Board of Governors was made up of men, and 91.7 per cent for its Board of Directors. For the International Monetary Fund, IMF, the figures were 97.8 per cent and 100 per cent respectively, for the same period, (Rai, 2008: 374).

There are important reasons why women seek adequate representation in all facets of life. They include the following;

- The large chunk of the population are women, and they therefore need to be proportionately represented;
- The need for the talent that abound in women to be harnessed. They are also care givers, and need to have adequate representation in issues that relate to this;
- Women are multi-taskers (involved in family life, jobs, church, politics, public office, etc);
- The need to have their interests represented, as there are identifiable women interests that only women can represent;
- Representation is a key component of liberal understandings of governance that focuses on institutions, organizations and practices;
- It is also important for purposes of accountability, both in public and private organizations, among others.

Scholars and practitioners alike have differed on several fronts on what the role of women in politics should be. The question that is often asked is: should women have a role in public life, private life only, or a mix of the two. Some feminist debates argue that women have recognized interests that need to be articulated through participation and representation in the arena of politics. Again gender and governance are important to political discourses of world aid agencies and financial institutions. There is also wide recognition by the United Nations Organization, UNO, in placing the issue of exclusion of women from political processes on the international agenda (Rai, 2008)

In the Gulf States, for instance in Saudi Arabia, there is an on-going debate and conflict between a modernizing and development oriented perspective and a religious-tribal perspective. While the latter fights to keep women at home

and preserve the traditional arrangement of male domination of the public sphere, and female limitation to the private sphere, the former promotes a partnership between men and women in public life, and citizenship rights and duties for both. This struggle is still largely unresolved. The third force (the government) remains undecided in the matter as it continues to vacillate, one day siding with the modernizers and the next day with religious and tribal elements. But there have been significant improvements in some areas. For instance, on June 20, 2005, Kuwait's first female cabinet minister, Massouma al-Mubarak, was sworn in, with the responsibility for the planning portfolio. Also six months earlier, a woman was appointed minister of economy and planning in the United Arab Emirate, UAE, and women have assumed ministerial posts in Bahrain and Oman. Again, in many Gulf states, including, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman, women now have the right to vote. In fact, in several conservative Gulf Arab states, the hitherto non-existent women's political rights have undergone extraordinary growth in recent years, though there are still great works to be done, (Henderson, 2005; Krause, 2009; Ahmed, 2009).

In an important sense however, we must recall that most problems of today are rooted somewhere in history, and some of these traditions of the old generations still weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living. According to the early Christian church, St. Peter states that a woman should adorn herself not with braided hair and golden bracelets and fine clothing, but with "the imperishable jewel of a quiet and gentle spirit, which in God's sight is very precious". As well, St. Paul points out that the women had been created for the benefit of man and must defer to him in all things, she was not to teach in church, observe the law of silence and submit meekly to instructions as became the daughter of Eve who had deceived Adam into transgression (Tannahill.,1981). The implication here is that every seductive woman was a threat to male salvation. Perhaps this is why Tannahill (1981: 148) states that, what Christianity did offer women was spiritual equality, a gift of greater benefit to the giver than to the receiver. By treating her as an important convert, the church was able to make a public use of her in works of charity and evangelism, while keeping her (on the private level) firmly in her place. Even in the eastern Church where, because of female segregation, women's pastoral role was of considerable importance, and where widows, virgins and deaconesses all had specific places in the hierarchy, they were still forbidden to perform oblations, to baptize, to teach or pray aloud in church, to approach the altar, or pronounce a blessing.

In his summation, Clement of Alexandria avers that the attitude of the early Christian church was that, "woman was man's equal in everything, but that men were always better

than women at everything” (in Tannahill; 1981). Unfortunately, some of these perceptions and traditions still subsist today.

A few decades ago, in their quest to liberate women from the shackles of men’s oppression, there emerged on the horizon, the feminist propagandists. Their main objective was to persuade the world that women are powerless in society, and that men are natural oppressors of women, as they (the women) remain excluded from political, economic and cultural power.

Some scholars, like Chinweizu, have had reason(s) to question the conventional knowledge and wisdom of the feminist propagandists. They ask the question: who is dominating who? On what basis is the feminist standpoint on male oppression anchored on patriarchy? What about matriarchy? If a patriarch is a man who has special power and influence over not just his family, but also society, due to privileges gathered through intersections of age, wealth, achievement, lineage, patronage and the exploitation of others, as these attributes add to his place in the elite social hierarchy, then same goes to the Matriarch, who is the natural wielder of female power and authority. Even so, the theoretical competence of Patriarchy and Matriarchy has been challenged on the basis that black men do not have control over white women, and some women (slave/mistresses) have power over subaltern women and men. Again, we must note that not all men are Patriarchs and not all women are Matriarchs.

Intellectuals have also argued that the feminist propagandists have not properly investigated the potency of female power over men, and in fact that it seems *prima facie* odd to claim that women are powerless in society and in particular over men. In this regard, a foremost scholar argues:

If the essence of power is the ability to get what one wants, then women are far from powerless. Women do get, and always did get, what they want – be it riches, or thrones, or the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their men folk are obliged to endure. That women operate by methods which often differ from those available to men does not in any way mean that women are bereft of power (Chinweizu, 1990: 11)

If we focus our attention on the fact that, “women operate by methods which often differ from those available to men...” it then also means that it is only the women who may adequately explain their methodology if they properly understand the art. These secrets with which women are endowed, actually have vast potentials for their use over men, all things being equal. One presupposes that it is in the light of the above that Freud (cited in Chinweizu, 1999: 12)

explains that:

In the greater number of ambitious day dreams, too, we can discover a woman in some corner, for whom the dreamer performs all his heroic deeds and at whose feet all his triumphs are to be laid.

What we can discern from this is that even men of valour have conquered all, because of the love of a woman(en). Again, men of great wealth have confirmed, like Aristotle Onasis that, “if women didn’t exist, all the money in the world would have no meaning”, (Green, 1988, in Chinweizu, 1999: 12)

The point here is, why women should worry if the natural goal of male power is to pay tribute to women. In essence, men to women could be glorified “senior houseboys”. As Chinweizu (1990: 12) argues:

If, however powerful a man may be, his power is used to serve the woman in his life, that would make dubious the notion that men are masters over women. Because everyman has as boss his wife, or his mother, or some other woman in his life, men rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world. Thus, contrary to appearances, woman is boss, the over all boss of the world.

Some analysts have contended that there is also men’s liberation from women, which is the opposite side of women’s liberation. In other words, women do not have any power at all over men. As Hanisch (1978: 72) argues,

The term men’s liberation was derived from the term women’s liberation and thus insinuates that women have power over men. Its very name infers liberation from female domination and is therefore an inversion of the fact as well as women’s liberation principles.

The argument goes on and on. This is observable from the standpoint of some schools of thought that postulate that women participation in politics is hamstrung because of misogyny (hatred of women) and phallocentrism or andocentrism which posits that maleness is the centre and the norm against which everything must be judged. It may not be necessary to go into details of the argument and every other perspective on women participation in public life and decision making. The bottom-line is that while some argue that women are dominated and oppressed, others argue that it is in fact women who dominate, since in the final analysis man pays tributes to the woman or women in his life. Others yet feel that women do not at all have any power over men. All these are intellectual standpoints and may be valid in the context of the circumstance(s) in which the experience(s) operates. Meanwhile, we deal with the issue of how we participate in politics.

3. How Do We Participate

The question of how we take part in politics and the range of participation is pointed and fundamental to the understanding of our discussion. This is so because of the general perception that women in Nigeria participate in politics only when they hold elective positions or government appointments, hence their present demand for 35 per cent of the positions. However, a scholarly position defines political participation as, “taking part in the process of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies” (Parry *et al*, 1992:16). The question of how we participate therefore emanates from here. For instance, will political activities mobilized by elites, such as political rallies and demonstrations be considered as political participation? Again, what will be the status of a political activity that is ineffective in making a discernible difference to a policy decision? This view also raises the issue of whether voting in an election can count as political participation, since a single vote may not be possible to make a discernible difference.

Following from the above, Finer (1972, cited in Moyser, 2003:175) explains that voters are not participants, but controllers, controlling who the real participants will be. In this sense, it is the rulers who do the real participating, “sharing in the framing and/or execution of public policies”, not the ordinary citizens. If this view stands, it raises serious doubt about the effectiveness of the modern forms of representative government in our democracy and even accentuates the issue of participation by both sexes. This is why it has been advocated that the ‘real’ democracy is one based on ‘genuine’ participation where the role of the citizens is indeed that of direct participant, as reflected in the practice of ‘direct democracy’, such as referendums and initiatives where legislation is directly decided by popular vote. A good example is the case of New England Town meetings, and several other places in Europe, including Switzerland and Belgium, where citizens gather to decide matters of local public policy. Moyser (2003:176) states that these views are useful because, “they point to the requirement that political participation must involve some minimal degree of effectiveness and intentionality in contributing to the making of public policy”.

Nevertheless, the issue of ‘taking part’ in politics has continued to generate controversy. For instance, it has been questioned whether or not political participation involves some form of action from the individual. Does a mere expression of political interest or discussion among family members also constitute political participation? What about support for or rejection of a government policy?, or the expression of enthusiasm to undertake a future political action?, or passive membership of a group of which the

leadership seeks to influence government policies? Also, what about participating in non-governmental areas? The list could go on and on, but the truth is that there are no easy answers to them.

Even so, Barnes, Kaase *et al* (cited in Moyser, 2003:176) have recognized that, “political protest had become a significant part of citizen political activity in advanced industrial democracies in the late 1960s and so brought direct action within the compass of the term”. In the same vein, they expanded the meaning of political participation by commingling various political activities with measures of approval and potentiality for protest.

While this remains contentious, we are also confronted by the range of women participation in a ‘democracy’ like Nigeria. Early studies by scholars restricted mass political behaviour to the electoral arena, which made political participation to be associated with involvement in election campaign, (Lazarsfeld, *et al* 1944). This is informed by the reason that elections are the principal formal ways for allowing citizens take part in democracies with representative forms of government, which is still relevant today. Verba and Nie (1972:51) have expanded on this view, with their formulation of the notion of ‘modes of participation’ as alternative systems by which the citizenry influences the government. This is because, the influence exerted through the ballot box was only one of the ways through which citizens in democracies participate in influencing public policy. Other ways include those activities associated with electoral campaigns, such as mobilizing others to vote and persuading them on how they should vote, contributing money to candidates, working for a political party or candidate, etc. They also believe that citizen participation in principle is continuous, even when election is not forthcoming. This is because citizen participation, though is likely to heighten during elections, a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon should focus beyond this period. On this issue, Verba and Nie (1972) advocate for two other modalities;

1. Citizen initiated contacting; these are contacts made by individual citizens with government officials on issues of public policy in which the individual was interested. For example, school, hospital, road repair, pipe-borne water, electricity, etc.
2. Participation through interest/pressure groups to raise issues affecting an entire community.

To a large extent, this debate provoked further discussions and research on the expansion of the range of political participation. This led to the viewing of political participation as a multidimensional phenomenon. In this respect, Barnes, kaase, *et al* (1979) incorporate ‘unconventional participation’, including various forms of direct action such as, signing a

petition, lawful demonstrations, boycotts, street blockades, etc.

Other scholars in their studies (Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992; cited in Moyser, 2003) expand the range of activities in the mode of participation which they termed, “output participation... activities which aim to influence the making of policy...in its implementation”. They include such activities as, service as special constable in a police force, being a citizen volunteer on a local governmental advisory body or doing jury duty. In Nigeria, the rural women for instance engage in some special activities through their associations, such as, local market cleaning, rural road maintenance, child care, assisting during festivities, settling disputes and other forms of community services. The urban women also have special ways of participating through their cooperative societies and associations, headed by the women leaders. Their opinions are also consulted on issues that affect them. A general view of these scholarly perceptions leaves a lot of unanswered questions when we talk about women participation in politics in Nigeria. This is because, what most of the women see as political participation is government appointment and some measure of ‘affirmative action’. This assertion is supported by the contention by some gender mainstream activists who contend, with the outcome of the 2007 general elections in Nigeria in mind, that:

the incontrovertible data spot-on analysis to that which is partly known, namely, that the number of women in elective and appointed posts, still forms an insignificant proportion of the total number of people in elective and appointive positions in the Legislative and Executive arms of government (Agomo, 2008:viii)

There is therefore the urgent need for Nigerian women to redefine and give intellectual depth to women participation in politics in Nigeria, of course, having at the back of their minds the environmental factors in which they operate.

4. Women Participation in Politics in Nigeria

From our discussions above, we attempt to categorize women participation in politics from recent developments in Nigerian politics. It seems to encompass a wide range of actions and strategies. It includes voting and voter education, candidacy in national and local elections, lending support to candidates who carry gender-sensitive agenda, campaigning against those who have policies that are anti-women’s rights; and advocating for the integration of women’s rights agenda in the platforms of candidates and parties. Strategies women adopt include mechanism and frameworks that enhance

women’s participation in politics; such as gender quotas that allot a certain percentage, 35% or more of decision-making positions for women, gender mainstreaming strategies that promote a culture of gender sensitivity in government; national machineries for women which champion and monitor gender mainstreaming strategies of government; gender or women’s budget that allot a percentage of affirmative action for women’s advancement (Bello, 2003).

If these can be considered critical issues on women participation in politics, the issue could be raised of the extent of involvement of Nigerian women. It is indubitable that women have played crucial roles in politics in Nigeria, either in the pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial era. We could recall the roles the Umu Ada played (and perhaps still play) in the Eastern part of Nigeria, in galvanizing the civil society; Queen Kambassa of Bonny, remains (perhaps) the only female Amanyanabo of Bonny. Igala was said to have been founded by a woman – Ebele Ejaunu. In Ijesha (Yoruba land), it is said that five of the thirty-eight Owa (kings) had been women. There was also the female sovereign in the North, in the person of Queen Amina of Zazzau who extended her suzerainty and influence up to Nupe land in the 15th and 16th centuries among others.

With the force of Western education, the pioneer role(s) played by personalities like Mrs. Olufumilayo Ransome Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and others in advancing the course of women in the Nigerian political space, remain indelible. However, in the present day Nigeria, the enhanced status being enjoyed by women in politics could be attributed to the Babangida era, which as it were, marked a watershed in the history of women struggle in politics in Nigeria. This is so, because, Maryam Babangida institutionalized the office of the First Lady in 1987, and transformed it into an intensive, supportive mechanism for the presidency. Furthermore, she became the first working First Lady and launched the ‘Better Life for Rural Women Programme’. A lot has happened since then, yet, the struggle continues.

Efforts have been made, especially since 2003 to increase women participation in governance in Nigeria, but the available figures still show a low and disproportionate representation of women in politics. This falls far below the recommended 30% of the Beijing Platform for Action. It is worthy to note that with the emergence of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the opportunity was provided for more women participation in politics, but unfortunately, there has not been a dramatic change. Available statistics show that in 2003, 13.4% of the cabinet members were women; there were no female governors. Mrs. Etiaba became Governor of Anambra state within that period by an accident of history.

Within the same period, 1.6% of women were councillors;

1.2% were local government chairpersons, 2.8% were female senators, and 3.3% were female representatives at the House of Representatives. What this translates into is that only 9 out of 774 local government chairpersons were women; there were also 143 female councillors out of 8,810. At the National Assembly, 3 out of 109 senators were women, and there were only 12 female members of the House of Representatives out of the 360 members. In other spheres, there have not been much changes. In essence, one could conclude without any ambiguity that the search and struggle for women participation in political life is still a far cry from realization, hence former President Jonathan's administration promised more space for women in his tenure, and presently has about 33% of women in his Cabinet.

However, the unstoppable surge for gender mainstreaming has produced some positive results. The evidence could be seen from the remarkable improvements in the score card. In Nigeria for instance, some key ministries which were hitherto seen as the exclusive preserve of men, like finance and defence now have female ministers, excluding those who have served in other key ministries more recently. Elsewhere, the roles being played by the female gender has also been huge. We have a female, Dr. Zuma as the Chair person of the African Union, AU, Commission, Two Female Presidents in Africa, SirLeaf of Liberia, and former Banda of Malawi. There is also Christine Lagarde of the International Monetary Fund, IMF, South Korea now has female President, also with Bangladesh, Germany, Brazil and Australia, and Indonesia. Benazia Bhuto was a two-time Prime Minister of Pakistan. In essence the political space is opening up for women, but whether or not parity could be achieved is doubtful, taking into consideration the apparent hypocrisy of the men-folk to assist in making this to happen. We note that the cited cases are the shining jewels of womanhood, who have been able to distinguish themselves.

What we could see is that many women still play essentially the role of "cheer leaders" in politics. The women mostly constitute enthusiastic supporters whose votes are mobilized for party candidates who mostly are men, rather than women seeking elective offices themselves, obviously because of the various inhibiting factors we have listed. They constitute perhaps the majority who throng the campaign grounds to canvass for votes for the men. This is made possible with the creation of women's wings of the different political parties that are charged with the political education and mobilization of women. It therefore means that the utmost objective of the women's wing of any party is to mobilize women for party activities including voting en-mass on election day for men, instead of encouraging women to vie for elective positions. This has unfortunately reduced the role of women participation in politics to that of 'go-out-to-vote (GOTV).

This frustration is perhaps why Ola-Aluko and Edewor (2002: 25) aver that:

Denying women their rights in the political, religious, economic and social spheres through discouragement and prejudice invariably means denying the society valuable contributions which can enrich the lives of its members and move the society forward

They however challenge the Nigerian women to work relentlessly "until justice runs down like a river and every bias and prejudice against women is erased". The truth here is that there is tension and conflict because women want power, wealth, and status as their male counterpart. Since the women would largely depend on the men to achieve their goals, men generally believe that any attempt to seek the same goals will result in women becoming uncontrollable. This is perhaps why the men have cried out that;

African women cannot prove that they are oppressed or violated. After all, there is no discrimination against them on the basis of their sex in our culture and religious practices. Some of them are only trying to imbibe western practices which are un-African. In so doing, they will succeed in misleading others (Akintunde and Labeodan, 2002: preface)

They also claim that most of the women who cause this 'confusion' are very good house wives at home and are loyal to their husbands. This fear inheres not only in African or Nigerian men, it has a universal spread, because some scholars contend that the tradition of marriage and family does not seem to have any valid place in the feminist picture. This is why a Cornell political sociologist Andrew Hacker remarked in 1970, that "The trouble [is] ... that the institution of marriage can't hold two full human beings – it was only designed for one and a half" (cited in Tannahill, 1981: 423). It is either the man or the woman chooses to play the role of the half or there will be crisis. In the final analysis, there are honestly hard choices to be made.

5. Conclusion

From our analyses so far, one cannot deny the fact that the issues raised are quite contentious. The struggle for political power is tough, and political power is not freely given. It is fought for. In this sense we attempt some palliatives for a genuine democratic consolidation in Nigeria as follows;

- a. Women should try as much as possible to change perception about themselves politically, and support one of their own, especially on the basis of merit. This entails building a common front and closing ranks for the struggle ahead;

- b. The professional status of women should be promoted with a view to reduce the gap between public and private life. This would inexorably lead to an increase in the range of electable women, and invariably encourage them to enter a career in politics;
- c. Women should strive not just to be “cheer leaders alone, but be encouraged to stand for elections;
- d. There is no guarantee that more women in public offices would mean a better deal for women in general, because these women who seek public offices are elitist. Therefore the focus should be on the greater good of women generally;
- e. The women who have laboured to get to the top in their political career, should mentor credible up-and-coming ones. They should at all times strive to live above board in order to avoid the proverbial banana peels;
- f. Women should encourage and support the development of political and civic participation structures at local, state, geo-political zones and central government levels, which should also accommodate young women;
- g. Civil society organisations and other related pressure groups should be formalized and encouraged to intensify their pressure on government and male politicians on the need to accommodate more women in the political space;
- h. Women should try also to produce knowledge that enriches political discourse. The emphasis should not be on the acquisition of power alone, but power with a purpose.
- i. The women leadership should focus attention on strengthening the realization of the agenda of people oriented and sustainable development, and working towards the elimination (both in law and in reality) of all discriminations based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, caste, descent, work, lifestyle, appearance, age, etc. This is important because women political leaders can only make a difference by translating their political power into political, social, economic and cultural advancement of women and other marginalized groups.

Finally, from our analyses, there is no doubt that more women are needed in the political and public sphere to create harmony and balance with their male counterparts. It has been posited by IDEA that the pursuit of democracy is incomplete without policies, measures and practices that seek to minimize inequalities between men and women in all spheres of life and which anchor democracy and its intersections with gender. Democracy presupposes the transformation of power relations between men and women by promoting the equal distribution of power and influence

between women and men.

In all honesty, this is quite desirous. The problem is how to get to the target whichever option(s) we take, society will pay a prize for it. This is solely because philosophy admits that it is women who taught men to settle down and stay in one place from early times when women started bearing children and staying in one place with their children. In essence, it is women who have covenant with God. It is also women who gave birth to men and sent them message to play politics. If the same women also turn round to say that men should ‘surrender’ that responsibility, knowing full well the seeming hypocritical stance of most men on this issue, then they should have a rethink on the kind of future society they want. This is because, in keeping the family and home front safe, the men have great responsibility in the upbringing of the children who constitute a vital part of the future, but the owners of the children are the women even though the children bear their fathers’ names. Hence, if we do not want any disintegration in the fundamental basis of society, a new formula agreeable to both parties needs to be invented. Therefore, as the world becomes more and more globalised, with the attendant deepening and broadening of interactions and relationships among peoples and countries, the women are bound to be more mobile. While they think globally, there is also the need for them to act locally. Finally, the onus lies on the women to design and redesign the kind of world they want to live in. It is therefore a democratic imperative that more space should be allowed in both elective positions and appointment to public offices, but the women will have to put their ace properly together and engage the political space more positively with determination.

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