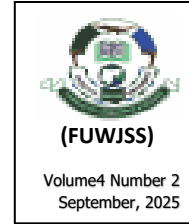


# A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE OF POLITICAL CULTURES AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN NIGERIA AND GHANA



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## Abstract

Since the return of democracy in Ghana and Nigeria in 1992 and 1999 respectively, the task of consolidating democracy has continued to pose difficulties. Despite sharing a similar colonial history and transitioning to multi-party democracy around the same period, these two West African nations present a stark contrast in their democratic trajectories. While Ghana has been lauded for its credible electoral process and peaceful transfers of power, Nigeria has struggled with electoral violence, widespread fraud, and persistent public distrust in its electoral process. This paper therefore, examines the critical link between political culture and credible electoral processes by x-raying the implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria and Ghana. It posits that Ghana seems to have experienced credible electoral processes more than Nigeria due to the inherent positive political culture and thus tend to have achieved democratic consolidation through periodic elections. Utilizing the Political Culture theory, comparative research design, qualitative method of data collection and qualitative descriptive analysis, the study argues that these divergent paths are largely due to fundamental differences in their respective political cultures. While both Nigeria and Ghana face challenges from institutional integrity, civil society engagement, ethno-religious divisions, and clientelism, these factors more profoundly undermine electoral credibility and democracy in Nigeria due to a deeper lack of public trust, more intense political polarization, and the pervasive nature of clientelistic practices. Thus, the paper concludes that the influence of political culture on electoral process seems to have accounted for the differences in democratic consolidation in Nigeria and Ghana. The paper therefore recommends a value re-orientation to inculcate a value-laden political culture capable of enhancing electoral process in Nigeria as in Ghana. This means there is need to replace incumbency supremacy in Nigeria with a political culture of high value system and supremacy of the will of the people.

**Keywords:** Consolidation, Credible electoral process, Democracy, Elections, Political culture

## Introduction

The global "Third Wave" of democratization in the late 20th century saw many African nations transition from authoritarian rule to multi-party democracy. Yet, the journey from transition to consolidation has proven to be fraught with challenges. The ability of a state to hold credible, free, and fair elections is widely considered a cornerstone of democratic consolidation, as it provides the mechanism for peaceful power alternation and institutional legitimacy. There is no doubt that the quality of elections is often a reflection of a nation's political culture which consist of the set of beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape political behavior. In West Africa, the contrasting democratic experiences of Nigeria and Ghana provide a compelling case study. Both countries emerged from British colonial rule, have endured periods of military intervention, and share a diverse, multi-ethnic social fabric. Despite these similarities, their post-1990s democratic trajectories have diverged sharply.

Indicatively there is existence of fundamental divergence in democratic outcomes between Nigeria and Ghana. Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," has struggled to entrench democratic norms, with its electoral process frequently marred by accusations of fraud, political violence, and judicial controversy. This has led to a persistent crisis of legitimacy and a cycle of instability. In contrast, Ghana, with its smaller population and economy, has successfully conducted multiple peaceful elections, including several turnovers of power between rival political parties. The puzzle is why two similarly situated countries have followed such different paths. This article posits that a critical variable explaining this divergence is the nature of their respective political cultures and the subsequent implications for the credibility of their electoral processes.

The gaping deficits of political culture tend to have marred credible electoral process to the effect that electoral democracy in Nigeria appear to be unable to bring about the needed democratic consolidation in terms of credible, free and fair elections that could bring about efficient governance. Thus, the influence of political culture on electoral process seems to be responsible for the inherent distortions in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. There is no doubt that the political culture in Nigeria influence its electoral processes and democratic consolidation. On the other hand, several aspects of Ghana's political culture have contributed to its more credible electoral processes and democratic stability.

These manifestations portend implications of these differences for consolidation of democracy in both countries. In this regard, this paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the political cultures and electoral processes in Nigeria and Ghana to understand their differing trajectories toward democratic consolidation. Despite a shared colonial history,

geopolitical proximity, and similar socio-economic challenges, the two West African nations have experienced significantly divergent democratic journeys since their return to civilian rule. Nigeria's path has been characterized by recurring electoral crises, violence, and institutional fragility, while Ghana has largely enjoyed peaceful power transfers and institutional stability, earning it a reputation as a beacon of democracy in the region.

Electoral process is therefore considered to be so crucial that some scholars have argued that it is the bedrock of all democratic variables. To this end, some scholars have argued that, democracy is best defined in terms of electoral process, politics and the institutional parameters that underpin them, (Dahl, 1989; Huntington, 1993). Also, Egwu, (2015); Elaigwu, (2014) argued that the founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, remain undoubtedly the electoral process with reference to elections. Thus, Election is therefore a viable mechanism for consummating representative government (Odigbo, 2015).

The failure of electoral processes in Africa has been attributed to both the colonial rulers and the political leaders (Nnadozie, 2005; Omotola, 2006; Kwasau, 2013; Muheeb, 2015; Nwanegbo, Nnorom, & Odigbo, 2014). Specifically, Nnadozie (2005) pointed out that "the different factions of the dominant class in the countries, prodded by their metropolitan masters, made election periods the occasions when ethnic and other primordial differences among the people are played up and brought to the fore". Such primordial tendencies which manifest in the political culture of most individuals and groups in West Africa tend to influence the electoral process in terms of voting patterns, party membership, contesting elections, interest aggregation and policy formulations amongst others.

This seems to have remained the main feature of democratic experience in most West African countries. It therefore appears that the above situation which is rooted in the political culture of most countries of West Africa including Nigeria and Ghana. Such inherited and sustained Political Culture tend to have continued to affect the outcome of electoral processes and thus seem to determine the pace of democratic consolidation in the States. Nwanegbo and Alumona (2011) specifically posit that the over-arching influence of the incumbents on the electoral administration results in manipulation of the electoral process. Other studies such as Asante, (2009); Ibeanu, (2007); Jega, (2007); Omotola, (2011); Okoli & Orinya, (2014) have equally examined elections and politics of democratic transition, and the prospects of democratic consolidation. More specifically, Omotola (2007) and Gyimah-Boadi (2009) have highlighted how Nigeria's deep ethnic and religious divisions, combined with a "winner-take-all" political mentality, have fueled electoral violence and instability. The politicization of

institutions, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the judiciary, is a recurring theme, with scholars arguing that these bodies are often used to consolidate power rather than ensure fairness (Akinola, 2013). In contrast, the literature on Ghana's democratic success often points to a different set of factors. Scholars like Arthur (2007) and Ninsin (2014) credit Ghana's relative political stability to a strong elite consensus on the rules of the democratic game occasioned by political culture. This consensus, forged after decades of military rule, has led to a political culture that values peaceful resolution of conflicts and adherence to constitutional norms.

Incidentally, regardless of the emphasis on the potency of Political Culture as a vital instrument of electoral process, democratic consolidation, seem not have fared so well in Nigeria, (Omotala, 2014). This tends to suggest that the political culture of any society tend to influence the degree of transparency of electoral processes. This in turn determines the pace of democratic growth or its retardation. While there is a rich body of work on both countries, there is a gap in recent scholarship that systematically compares the specific manifestations of political culture on electoral processes in a way that provides actionable lessons for democratic reform. This study seeks to bridge that gap by directly juxtaposing the two cases.

### **Conceptualization of Political culture and electoral process**

Political culture entails the totality of the way and manner in which people within their peculiar society whether consciously or unconsciously live their political lives within that context. In this sense, political culture is an overall distribution of citizen's orientations, ideas, traditions and assumptions towards political objects that have to do with government, the regime and the political community that shapes the choice to participate in the decision making and the framework within which the political system functions. For Almond and Powell, political culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientation towards politics among the members of a political system. It entails the means and methodologies of politics that are associated with a given people, their common attitudes to partisan politics and political institutions, (Okeke, 2015).

This means that different countries have different political cultures and thus, Nigeria has a radically unique political culture. For political culture to enhance electoral process, it must facilitate the satisfaction of the basic preconditions for democracy. Such includes; universal adult suffrage, periodic, free, competitive and fair elections, the existence of more than one political party, alternative and accessible sources of information and a means of adjudication.

Electoral process refers to all the process that encompasses the pre and post-election activities consisting of registration of political parties, review of voters' register, delineation of constituencies, resolution of electoral disputes, return of elected representatives and swearing-in of elected representatives. In other words, electoral process comprises of all the activities and procedures involved in the election of representatives by the electorates ranging from the provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly.

Democratic consolidation entails strengthening, entrenching and institutionalizing democratic ideals, values and virtues in a political system. It has to do with the avoidance of authoritarian regression; particularly, through the institutionalization of a credible electoral administration process. This is in tune with the assertion Linz and Stepan (1996, p.10) who stated that "democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions, a democratic system expressed in periodic and regular elections becomes the only game in town; when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic norms and values". Democratic consolidation involves strengthening of certain institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights, which have been created or recreated during the course of the transition, (Carothers, 2007). Thus, Democratic consolidation revolves around making new democracies secure and extending their life expectancy beyond the short term by creating immune against the threat of authoritarian regression and building dams against eventual reverse to authoritarianism, (Carothers, 2007; Fawole, 2005; Przeworski, 1997; Zakaria, 1997). The implication of this is that election serves as a critical framework for democratic consolidation with ultimate regard and respect for the rule of law, (Frempong, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the Political culture theory. Political culture theory has to do with the ethos of the people which is integrally related to the type of government in any political system. It revolves around the behavior of people in politics. The theory is traceable to the writings of early political philosophers like Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece and later discussed by Machiavelli and Montesquieu (Weils, 1994). Essentially, political culture theory is predicated on the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments, which give order and meaning to a political process by providing the rules that govern the behavioural pattern in a political system (Weils, 1994). It encompasses both the political ideal and the operating norms of a polity which deals with commonly shared goals and accepted rules as well as pattern of orientations to political objects such as parties, government, the

constitution expressed in beliefs, symbols and values (Silver & Dowley, 2000).

This tends to suggest that political culture theory is a product of both the trajectory of a political system and the histories of the members of the society. The political culture theory was brought into political science by Almond and Verba (1965) who saw the political culture of a nation as a particular distribution toward political objects among members of the nation. The utility of this theory in the analysis of political culture and credible electoral process in Nigeria and Ghana lies with the fact that people's political consent constitutes the basic foundation of legitimate political power expressed through elections and thus, the tendency to abhor revolutionary approach to change of the government. It is a common knowledge that the credible electoral process anchored on sound political culture tend to affect the efforts to enthrone and sustain democratic rule. Ibeanu & Orji, (2014) posited that political culture produces the cognitive affective dimension which addresses the level of confidence of people on the possibility of a free, fair and credible elections and the virility of the electoral process. The level of openness of political competitions and recruitment depends on the value orientation of the political system which determines the operation of party politics and citizens' participation in the polity.

In this regard, an understanding of the history, nature and culture of the people becomes imperative in grasping the trajectories of political formations, their configuration and transformation. The theory x-rays why parochial political culture is bound to improve electoral process in Ghana while it undermines same and hinders democratic consolidation in Nigeria. In spite of its relevance, the political culture theory has been criticized for its failure to recognize that the political sphere constitutes a distinct subculture with its own rules of conduct and its distinct processes of socialization. However, the criticism of political culture theory, it is by and large significant in this work.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper adopts comparative research design, qualitative method of data collection and qualitative descriptive analysis. Comparative research design is ideal for utilization of the "most similar systems design" where the two countries are similar in many respects (British colonial heritage, multi-party systems, developing economies) but differ in the key variable of interest focusing on the credibility of their electoral processes. This approach helps to isolate the factors responsible for the observed differences.

### **Perspectives on the nuances of Political Culture and electoral process**

There tends to be more consensus than divergent on the relevance of culture in shaping and molding the history, identity and destiny of any given society whether authoritarian or democratic. Polazzo (2014) observed that culture is the fulcrum around which the dynamics of a social fabric of any society revolves. Undoubtedly, the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and traditions of the society tend to shape the political systems, institutions and processes of governance. According to Ibeanu & Orji, (2014) political culture is one of the most powerful influences that shape a political system, as it creates norms and beliefs about how people should behave and these norms influence social behavior. Political culture is therefore a critical bedrock of electoral process to the extent that it has the capacity to either facilitate or undermine electoral governance in any society and thus influence the electoral process particularly elections.

Political culture is one of the most powerful factors that shape a political system notable for creating norms and beliefs that shape social behavior, (Ibeanu & Orji, 2014). Political culture is a critical bedrock of any democratic political system and it has the capacity to either facilitate or undermine governance in any society and thus influence the electoral process. The foregoing suggests that political culture deals with the behaviors of people in relations to political development, governance and state policies. Durverger (2006) also observed that every country has a political culture consisting of widely shared beliefs, values, and norms that define the relationship between citizens and government, and citizens and another. For instance, Laski (1986) argued that comprehending a country's political culture is a prerequisite for understanding the design and operations of political decisions of any society.

Political culture has to do with the manifestation in aggregate form, the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics (Roskin, 2014). This implies that political culture encapsulates what people believe and feel about government, and how they think people should act towards it. Instructively, the manner in which people feel culminates to what they think which by extension determines what they do that accounts for their behaviors towards political processes and institutions. When and where the political values of a society are at odds with good governance and democracy, the political future becomes bleak and could reverse to authoritarianism. This portends that the nature of society determines its political culture and system of organization in relations to government and political system (Adibe, 2014). Political behaviors of citizens in homogeneous society are greatly similar than of citizens in heterogeneous society owing to the uniformity and similarity in culture and beliefs in the case of homogeneous setup and disparity in same as in the case of heterogeneous set up (Polazzo, 2014).

The implication is that political culture does not imply that all societies share the same set of political attitudes as the values and beliefs found in developed societies differ strikingly from those found in developing and underdeveloped societies. Adebayo & Omotola, (2007) pointed out that political culture as a predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system represents a consistent pattern that influences the electoral process of any democratic society. The above assertions tend to unveil the primacy of the influence of political culture on the electoral process in any society. In fact, elections and the process of democratic consolidation through party politics are often influenced by political culture due to its influence on the electoral process expressed in their attitudes, behaviors and actions in respect of the control of state power and allocation of resources.

Political culture is heavily embedded in the process of political socialization and thus crucial for democratic governance and stability due to its capacity to build societal perceptions and expectation necessary for political leadership. To this end, Almond and Verba (1965) emphasized that political culture is potentially a powerful, unifying concept capable of specifying how people affect their political system, and vice-versa. Thus, it implies that political culture deals with the behaviors of people in relations to political development, governance and state policies. Durverger (2006) also observed that every country has a political culture consisting of widely shared beliefs, values, and norms that define the relationship between citizens and government, and citizens and another. For instance, Laski (1986) investigated the contradictions responsible for differences in democratic success of different countries and concluded that comprehending a country's political culture is a prerequisite for understanding the design and operations of political decisions of any society.

Apart political culture consisting of attitude, beliefs, values and affections that are consciously held or implicit in a society in relation to its political process also has to do with people's dominant orientation towards political processes. Such orientation refers to the attitude beliefs and values held in relation to structures, the political authority and processes, and the way the citizens relate to the state in terms of level of participation, and efficiency of the system, (Simbine, 2005). Thus, the level of trust or mistrust of leadership, level of compliance, allegiance, patriotism etc are all elements of political culture. In other words, political culture determines what is acceptable, prohibited and sanctioned in a nation's political process. Almond & Verba, (1965) identified the various types of political culture as: parochial political culture, subject political culture, participant political culture and civil political culture.



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Political culture is a shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates (Mbah, 2007). It revolves around the pattern of individual attitudes and orientation towards politics among the members of a political system (Okeke, 2017). These individual orientations have several components which determine the political culture of the society. The components of Political Culture comprises of the knowledge, understanding and awareness of a state development institutions, role and characteristics of individuals, (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). The element of political culture is classified into affective and evaluative element, (Almond & Verba, 1965). Whereas the affective element of political culture relates to feeling or orientation of people towards political system expressed in the level of trust on the leadership of the state; the evaluative element refers to the people's opinion and judgment of the

political system based on standard, knowledge and orientation of the citizenry. It should be noted here, that political objects include parts of the political system such as the executive, legislature, judiciary, political parties, and pressure groups and so on. Hence, the overall distribution of citizen's orientations and reactions to these political objects may be termed as political culture (Mbah, 2007).

Also, Ezeani, (2005) and Odofin, (2005) have separately contended that electoral process is a complex process that encompasses the good intentions and undesirable outcomes of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. This indicates that electoral process is immensely characterized by a culture of electoral malpractices such as illegalities committed by government officials responsible for the conduct of elections, political parties, groups or individuals with sinister intention to influence an election in favour of a candidate or candidates. Electoral process commences with the announcement of intention to conduct elections, till the elections have been won and invariably lost (Osaghae, 2002).

Fundamentally, electoral processes can be divided into three key phases, consisting of pre-voting, voting, and post-voting. The Pre-voting stage has to do with electoral frameworks which determine the voter eligibility. The various elements and activities of the pre-voting phase include voter and civic education, voter registration, party nominations, and electoral campaigns also take place. The voting phase involves the casting of votes, vote counting and the verification of results, announcement of result, and probable litigations. On the other hand, the post-voting phase has to do with the various activities that take place between different elections. These include revision of voter register, review of electoral laws amongst others. The essence is to strengthen the electoral process. Supporting the above views, Oladipupo, (2011. P.2), "the degree of transparency of electoral processes as an integral part of genuine democracy, therefore, present a good yardstick for the determination of a country's smooth growth or retardation democratically." He further stated in a comparative manner that:

For Nigeria, conducting a free, fair and transparent election is a problem she is yet to overcome for a combination of factors; chief among which is the inherent Hobbesian nature of the state more pronounced during leadership succession process. In contrast, Ghana, another sub-regional giant appears to be taking giant strides in this direction to the admiration of the whole world, (Oladipupo, 2011. p.2).

The above implies that the level of openness and credibility of the electoral process and acceptability of outcomes by greatest number of the members of the society determines its capacity to guarantee political stability, good

governance, and political accountability which ultimately deepens democracy. Elections serve as a mechanism through which politicians can be called to account and influenced to introduce policies that somehow reflect public opinion (Mbah, 2011).

Electoral process helps to institute a representative government, bestow legitimacy and credibility, activates accountability and institutionalize democratic transition and succession of governments. In this manner electoral process tends to strengthen, entrench and institutionalize democratic ideals and virtues in a political system. The prevailing electoral process in any society has the capacity to determine how democracies could be secured and life expectancy extended beyond the short term, (Ibeanu & Orji, 2014). This suggests that it is through the electoral process that a new democracy matures, in a way that makes it unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock. To this end, O'Donnell, (1996), postulated that Democracy is consolidated when power alternates between rivals through periodic and regular elections in a manner of electoral turnover through credible electoral process. It is when support for the system is continued even during times of economic hardship, rebels are defeated and punished, the regime remains stable in the face of restructuring of the party system, and there exists no significant political anti-system.

Undoubtedly, electoral process is quite instrumental in achieving democratic consolidation. Studies such as (Jega, 2007; Gambo, 2006; Ayee, 2003, Gasiorowski, & Power, 1998; Jeffries, 1998; Gunther, Diamanduros & Puhle, 1995) have strongly argued that electoral process expressed in periodic and regular elections are crucial to the return, sustenance, and democratic consolidation in most states of Africa. This however prompted Jega, (2007) to emphasize that periodic and regular elections serve as the major drivers of electoral turnover and thus capable of enhancing democratic consolidation. These critical functions of election underscore its significance as bedrock and critical framework of the democratic process. Through elections, the legitimate power which rests with the people could be invested into political office holders. Elections are therefore, crucial in selecting public office holders, guaranteeing citizens support for government, ensuring political stability and providing alternation of political power. In other words, there is an inextricable link between elections and democratic consolidation.

### **Typologies and Critical Determinants of Political Culture**

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in their Pioneering study (the civic culture) of cross national differences in political beliefs, symbols and values, in five different countries in 1959 and 1960 in which they interviewed 1,000 people each to measure national political attitudes; they discerned three

major types of political culture: Parochial, Subjective, Participant and Civil Political Culture. However, they emphasized that every country (Nigeria inclusive) is a varied mixture of all three of these ideal types (Mbah, 2007). Almond and Verba, (1965) identified the various types of political culture explained as follows:

- i. **Parochial political culture:** This refers to political culture in which citizens are disorientated from the central government and as such contribute little or nothing in the political process of the society. There tends to be low awareness of the existence and impact of government among the people and thus the people make little or no demands, contributes nothing and they are non participative to the overall political activities.
- ii. **Subject Political Culture:** This is a political culture where the citizens are to the government rather than being participants. In other words people are aware of government but do not contribute or participate because such has no consequences in terms of influence on the political process.
- iii. **The Participant Political Culture:** This type of political culture entails a situation in which the citizenry participate actively and effectively in the political process of the society. The people are fully aware of the existence of government, contribute and make demands from the system.
- iv. **Civil Political Culture:** It is the combination of subject, parochial and participant political culture. It is a common knowledge that the political culture of a state emanates from several development such as the history and experiences relating to it. The nature of a nation's political culture can be determined by the degree to which the citizens are heterogeneous and homogenous. New political culture could be fostered on existing culture as a result of some radical and ideological changes, (Almond & Verba, 1965).

From the above mentioned types of political culture therefore, a careful look at the Nigerian political system, suggests as noted by Almond and Verba that the system is made up of people with Participant, Subject as well as Parochial Political Orientations. Political Culture differs from society to society as it is not naturally inclined but defined by each society's peculiarities and transferred from generation to generation through imitation and the society's agents of socialization. Hence, within the context of Nigeria's democracy in the fourth republic, the following are peculiar factors that determine the country's political culture.

### **Comparative Analysis of Political Culture, Electoral Process, and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria and Ghana**

In most West African countries, electoral processes seem to be characterized by uncertainties on account of the political culture that portrays a possibility of election-related violent activities. This is particularly true when electoral contests are enveloped in a political culture of ethnic and religious polarization. This often results in killing and maiming of voters, election officials and members of political parties. As should be noted, political culture consists of the orientation of the citizens of a nation toward politics, their perceptions of political legitimacy, and the traditions of political practice which creates a framework for political change. It tends to influence both the decision to vote and the structure of government through the laws that govern the gamut of electoral process including registration, turnout and voting in elections. Desai & Thakur (2007) argued that the political culture of nations is determined by various factors such as history, geographical location, socio- economic structure, symbols and political continuity. These factors tend to result to enduring sets of beliefs and attitudes that in turn influence the electoral process. In view of these factors Nigeria and Ghana which ought to share similar political culture tend to manifest different types of political culture.

Nigeria tends dangle between subjective and parochial political culture where winning an election becomes a question of using corrupt method to deliver votes to the dominant or incumbent party. Also, most of the citizens of Nigeria appear to maintain passive relationship with the political system due to the perception that their votes do not count owing to the fact that political thugs during elections, unleash terror at voting centres, cart away ballot boxes and stuff them with fake voting papers. Such scenario is inimical to electoral process as it keeps people from developing the right political attitudes and thus hinders their active roles that would enhance democratic growth and consolidation.

On the other hand, Ghana seems to have participatory political culture characterized by higher levels of awareness, expectation and participation on part of the citizens that possess cognitive orientations towards both the input and output aspects of the political system. As should be noted, this type of political culture tend to have citizens with high expectations from government and high levels of participation in politics and such attributes are central to the principles and successful functioning of any democratic system seen more in Ghana than Nigeria.

The Nigerian Political Culture seems to be characterized by politics of hooliganism and electoral brigandage manifest in the winner-takes-all culture, (Egharevba & Chiazor, 2013). This is a difficult scenario for electoral process and tends to hinder the chances of elections to be turned

into opportunities for political choice due to electoral fraud evident in all manners of elections rigging. Odigbo, (2015) lamented that the repetitive patterns of electoral malpractices evident in rigging, falsification of popular vote and disenfranchisement breathe hatred and alienation into the political arena in Nigeria.

There seems to be a consensus that the Ghanaian democracy has been noted for a cordial and coordinated positive and participant political culture in the conduct of electoral process. In fact, the seemingly entrenched political culture anchored on the factor of "Ghana first" and respect for the will of the people in almost all the electoral contests in Ghana account for the success, (Omotola, 2010,p.12),. In Ghana, elections have been relatively calm in comparison to elections in neighbouring West African countries including Nigeria with more case of electoral malpractices. To this end, Adebayo & Omotola, (2007) stated that the Nigeria's political system is characterized by political culture inundated with electoral malpractices and sinister intention to influence an election in favour of a candidate. This occurs by means of illegal voting, bribery, and undue influence, intimidation and other acts of coercion exerted on voters, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as winner as witnessed in the general elections in Nigeria, (Adebayo & Omotola, 2007).

However, in Ghana, pockets of electoral malpractices and election-related violence often occur in certain parts of the country during general elections. There have been recorded cases and complaints about electoral fraud particularly concerning the country's two largest parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). According to Omotola, (2010,p.12), what appear to have made a difference in the two countries is that "while the political culture of Ghana tends to have resulted to enhanced credibility of electoral process though with minimal electoral infractions, the Nigeria's scenario depicts a primordial political culture that elevates all manner of malpractices and electoral impunity". This ugly phenomenon seems to be growing rather than declining as seen in successive elections as seen in 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria. The implication is that elections have become turning points in which the outcome has been the subversion of the democratic principles rather than its consolidation.

Nigeria seems to manifest a political culture of pervasive monetization of politics where people tend to care for money rather than the integrity of their votes occasioned by the collapse in the values of the people which has been accentuated by the desperate political class, (Aderonke, 2012). This worrisome situation is laced by ethnic, religious and regional based politics resulting to corporate national damage evident in the level of political corruption, electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganisms, and ethnic

bigotry as well as leadership rascality, national cabalism, irresponsibility and the culture of winner-takes-all. This implies that Democracy cannot be consolidated where people are denied the right to vote or candidates are imposed against the choice of the people

The above incidents of election-related violence and irregularities seem to be minimal when compared with that of Nigeria. This suggests that while Ghana is reckoned with relatively robust and developed political culture of accommodation, tolerance and progress of Ghana nation, the type of political culture practiced in Nigeria accounts for politics of personal interest enveloped in ethno-religious and regional sentiments. This results to the pursuit of parochial interest as against collective public good thereby breeding poor electoral process. It portends a primordial political culture which snowballs into legitimacy crisis and acts as one of the major impediments of an enduring democracy in Nigeria.

Electoral system in Nigeria tends to be hindered by the political culture characterized by culture of "supremacy of the incumbent" which has remained a worrisome trend in the democratic experience more in Nigeria than in Ghana. On the other hand, Ghana is noted for a political culture of the supremacy of the will of the people. Some of the indicators of discernible differences in the political culture and their influence on electoral process in Nigeria and Ghana as put forward by Oladipupo (2011, p.11-12) are summarized in tabular form below as follows:

**Table 1: Some indicators of discernible differences in the Political Culture and their influence on Electoral Process in Nigeria and Ghana**

<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Ghana</b>
Low political culture. Lack of patriotism.	High Political Culture. High sense of patriotism and national pride.
Inadequate and problematic preparation.	Adequate and almost problem-free election.
Caliber of political office aspirants- most of them lack integrity. Election umpires yet to proof their integrity.	Contestants are mostly men of relative integrity. Election umpires are relatively tested/proven men of integrity.
Pending court cases years after elections. Institutions are built around individuals.	Elections concluded in record time. Institutions are built for societal benefit.
Low level of social trust Electoral malpractices, very high Election-related violence and killings, very high	High level of social trust Very low Electoral malpractices Low incidence of election-related violence and killings

**Source:** Adapted from Oladipupo, (2011, p.11-12).

From the above table, it showed that the respect for electoral rules is low in Nigeria while it is very high in Ghana. Also, the level of societal trust is very high in Ghana while it is very low in Nigeria. Oladipupo, (2011, p.1) stated that “the above list is not exhaustive regarding the electoral scorecards of the two countries under review and does not portray the relatively better system as hitch-free”. The above indicates that, democracy in both Nigeria and Ghana has been growing but not on the same pace due to the significant differences between the political culture of the two countries. The poor political culture characterized by incumbency factor, money politics, disrespect for laws, lack of values, poor awareness and enlightenment campaigns, violence, ethnicity and parochialism as well as injustices tend to have hindered electoral process more in Nigeria than Ghana. To a large extent, the electoral process seems to have been faulty, skewed and manipulated in favour of one party or candidate at the expense of the others. This has been the practice from one election to another leading to rejection of election results by electorates and has manifested electoral violence more than Ghana. In this regard (Odigbo, 2015, p.8) observed that electoral contests in Ghana were hallmarked by low-intensity violence, manifesting in such acts as manipulation of formal procedures, violent assault and harassment, disorderly behaviour and breach of peace, protests, abusive political language, violent intimidation, among others.

It is however Important to state that there was a paradigm shift in Nigeria during the 2015 elections that resulted to the then incumbent President, DR. Goodluck Jonathan to call and congratulate his main challenger, Muhammad Buhari even before the final result was collated and announced. This depicts a step forward in the democratic experience of Nigeria.

In spite of the fact that Ghana has managed to successfully conduct a number of elections, there are pockets of low intensity election-related violence. Such violations, irregularities, and malpractices, resulted to widespread instances of over-voting, where votes cast at various polling stations exceeded the total number of registered voters in violation of Article of the Constitution, the universally-acknowledged principle of “one man, one vote” and electoral regulations. Despite the observed irregularities, the overall conduct of the elections was relatively orderly and managed in transparent manner. Arguably, democracy in Ghana remains a model of African democracy and serves as a yardstick for other democracies on the continent due to the seemingly credible electoral process resulting from low intensity of election related violence, high level of transparency and credibility.

This suggest that unlike what obtains in Nigeria and other West African countries, manipulation of electoral process and attendant high level



violence is not part of Ghanaian political culture as the unity of Ghana is often placed above individual interests. The foregoing analyses suggest that the political culture of a country affects its political practices. By all indications, the type of political culture practiced in Nigeria has been responsible for the skewed electoral process resulting to poor quality of elections and slow pace of democratic consolidation. The citizen's attitude towards the political system and the leadership behavior towards elections seem to have hampered credible electoral processes more in Nigeria than in Ghana as seen in the table above. Electoral process in Nigeria has been confronted with many problems emanating from the inherent poor political culture prominent during leadership succession process.

In contrast, Ghana appears to be taking giant strides in this direction to the admiration of all supporters of democracy owing to the developed political culture in line with the 'Ghanaian factor' which typifies a deep sense of patriotism of Ghanaians to national symbols, including democracy and its institutions. We therefore submit that political culture has negatively influenced electoral process more in Nigeria than in Ghana. This is because the political culture of Ghana creates a competitive behavior that is relatively free of the kinds of high intensity violence that has characterized electoral processes in some parts of West Africa including Nigeria. Nigeria's political culture is often described as one of intense, high-stakes competition. The legacy of military rule and the central role of oil revenues have fostered a "winner-take-all" mentality, where capturing political power is seen as the primary means to control vast state resources.

The inherent political culture in this republic is highly characterized by godfatherism, ethnicism (Ayoade, 2006), political opportunism, weak opposition, and commoditization of party delegacy, rigging of election, cross-carpeting and party defection in the Nigeria political system. This is a manifestation of low political culture. It is probably this precedence that prompted Genyi & Ortom, (2017) to argue that elections in Nigeria are considered a high staked event. As a result, a situation arises where the primacy of access and control of political power constitute a precondition for political relevance in the societies. In other words, losing election means a total and seemingly irreparable loss that must be avoided by all means and at all cost. This is a manifestation of a political culture characterized by all manner of tension and electoral malpractices which are common place in Nigeria. In these circumstances, the prevalence of such political culture hinders the quality of participation and invariably the democratic quality of elections. The outcome of this scenario is usually doctored election results and caged public will as well as distortion of the democratic consolidation process.

The Nigeria's political culture seem to have created and nurtured a system where political offices come with the spoils and public offices are utilized for private gain (Gambo, 2006; Egharevba & Chiazor, 2013; Bolaji, 2014). There seems to be manifestations of electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganisms, ethnic bigotry and leadership irresponsibility in Nigeria. (Elklit, & Svensson, 1997). Consequently, election rigging and manipulation of post-election disputes using the institutional frameworks becomes a norm that is entrenched and sustained in the electoral process in Nigeria. The direct implication of this political culture is a crisis of electoral integrity where elections are not seen as a fair contest but as a struggle for survival, leading to widespread rigging, ballot box snatching, and violence. The lack of credible elections, in turn, prevents the peaceful rotation of power and hinders the institutionalization of democratic norms, creating a perpetual state of transition rather than consolidation.

Ghana has cultivated a political culture that is more conducive to stability. The prevailing positive elite consensus in Ghana has accounted for the progressive electoral process in the country. After a turbulent history of coups and political instability, Ghana's political and military elite reached a broad, bipartisan consensus on the supremacy of democratic governance. This consensus has been a key factor in ensuring peaceful power transfers, including the historic turnovers. Moreso, Ghana's Electoral Commission is widely regarded as one of the most credible electoral bodies in Africa. Its autonomy and integrity are a result of sustained civil society pressure and an elite commitment to fairness. This institutional strength has been crucial for managing complex electoral processes and earning public trust. A vibrant civil society and a free press in Ghana have played a crucial role in monitoring elections, holding political actors accountable, and fostering a culture of transparency. They have acted as a crucial counterweight to potential political excesses. The implications for democratic consolidation are profound. Credible elections have built public confidence in the system, encouraging political participation and discouraging extra-constitutional means of seeking power. The repeated peaceful turnovers have demonstrated that losing an election does not mean losing everything, thereby reducing the high-stakes nature of political competition.

The comparative analysis reveals that while both countries have formal democratic institutions, the informal political cultures surrounding these institutions are fundamentally different. Nigeria's culture is rooted in a "zero-sum game," where winning an election is everything and losing is a catastrophic failure. This culture permeates every aspect of the political process, leading to the manipulation and subversion of formal rules. In Ghana, the dominant political culture, particularly among the elite, is more of a "positive-sum game," where all major actors believe they have a stake

in a stable democratic system, regardless of who is in power. The crucial variable is the presence or absence of a broad elite consensus on the necessity of electoral integrity and the rule of law.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This comparative discourse has shown that political culture is a critical determinant of a nation's ability to hold credible elections and consolidate its democracy. The credibility of a nation's electoral process, and by extension its democratic health, is inextricably linked to the underlying political culture. Ghana's experience demonstrates that a concerted effort by political elites, civil society, and the media to foster a culture of respect for democratic norms can lead to tangible improvements in electoral integrity. In contrast, Nigeria's struggle highlights how a culture of clientelism, ethnic division, and political impunity can undermine even constitutionally mandated institutions, trapping the country in a cycle of democratic fragility. Nigeria's challenges are a direct consequence of a winner-take-all political culture that has undermined its electoral institutions. Ghana's success, on the other hand, is attributable to a participant political culture and an elite consensus that have fostered respect for the rule of law and institutional independence. The lessons from Ghana are not simply about adopting new electoral laws but about cultivating a new set of values and behaviors.

This paper therefore recommends that there is need for a value re-orientation to develop a value-laden political culture capable of enhancing electoral process in Nigeria as in Ghana and thus replace incumbency supremacy in Nigeria with a political culture of high value system and supremacy of the will of the people. The interest and democratic progress of Nigeria should supersede the individual, ethnic or religious interest as evident in Ghana where the "Ghana factor" is paramount. Above all every political forum should be utilized to re-orient the electorate on the need to embrace political culture that will help to reduce to barest minimum all manners of electoral malpractices in Nigeria. It also advocates for large-scale, sustained civic education to shift public attitudes from a parochial view of politics to a participant one, encouraging citizens to demand accountability and participate constructively.

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