

Review

Exploring the character of political parties, civil society organizations, security agencies, traditional institutions and the press in the Nigerian electoral processes

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Electoral system is a major attribute in any democracy. The failure of the electoral system is as a result of the problems associated with its processes. These problems, notwithstanding, are caused by some independent and intervening variables such as: the nature of Political Parties; the nature of Security Agencies; the role of Civil Society Groups, Traditional Institutions and the Press; as well as the dominant forces of the International Capitals. It is on this note that this paper explores the nature of Political Parties; its intrigues and strategies, cum the task and position of Civil Society Organizations, Security Agencies, Traditional Institutions and the Press as well as the effects of the International Capitals on Nigerian Electoral Processes from 1923 till date (2013). This paper reviews conceptual definitions of political party, civil society organization, security agency, traditional institution and the press. This paper tags the reviewed institutions as the institutions of governance. This paper adopts chronological approach to review available related literatures; it is historically descriptive; its research format is qualitative using documentary method of data collection as its instrument of research. At the end, this paper proficiently identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of all the institutions of governance in Nigerian political context.

Key Words: Political Party, Civil Society Organisation, Press, Security Agency, and Traditional Institution.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of election is as old as human civilization. According to Richard (2004:116), elections were used early in the history of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and throughout the medieval period to select rulers such as the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. Elections were also used to select rajas by the gana in ancient India. Ancient Arabs also used election to choose their

caliph, Uthman and Ali, in the early medieval Rashidun Caliphate; and to select the Pala king Gopala in early medieval Bengal. By implication, election is a mechanism commonly used to choose leaders. The modern election, which consists of public elections of government officials, didn't emerge until the beginning of the 17th century when the idea of

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representative government took hold in North America and Europe.

All over the world, electoral management bodies are government bureaus established to shape the fate of a nation state; provide the medium by which the different interest groups within the nation state can stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means; determine the manner, procedure and methods by which changes in political, social and economic orders may be brought about; operating within a legal framework (Iyayi, 2005:1). These electoral bodies carry out electoral activities with the involvement of political parties, civil society organizations, security operatives, traditional institutions and the press. Therefore, the role of these institutions of governance in electoral processes is essential in any democratic environment.

Democracy is understood to be the best system of governance which guarantees popular participation and representation of the citizens in government of the modern world. It is therefore posited that the administration and management of a country cannot be said to be democratic if there is no electoral practice because electoral system provides platform for citizen participation and representation in governance. Accordingly, electoral processes play a central role in building, development and sustenance of democracy.

Elections and electoral processes have been faced with a lot of challenges and problems. Lamidi (2011:3-4) highlighted the problems as follows: massive rigging, electoral violence, manipulation of electoral materials and records, lack of transparency on the part of electoral officials, bribery and corruption, delay of voting period, inadequacies in voters' registration, poor voters' education, and deliberate denial of funds for electoral commission, amongst others. All these problems have been discerned in series of elections in Nigeria. There is no distrust that these factors have led to the failure of electoral systems in Nigeria. A key question here is that: what are the causes of all these problematic factors? Providing answer to this question, Iyayi (2005:15) explains that these problems are feigned by the nature of the political parties, the nature and role of the press, the partisan use of state security agencies by the ruling section of the political elites, the character and action of electoral bodies and other agencies. It is against this backdrop that this paper will examine the nature of political parties, civil society groups, security agencies, traditional institutions and the press within the political context of Nigerian state and the strength of the pro-democracy forces in the society as well as the effects of international economics and politics.

STUDY DESIGN

This paper will review conceptual definitions of political party, civil society organization, security agency, traditional institution and the press. This paper is historically

descriptive; its research format is qualitative using documentary method of data collection as its instrument of research. The study is predominantly based on information derived from secondary sources. Hence, much of the data was assessed through the review of relevant texts, journals, magazines, newspapers, official publications, historical documents and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the origins and development of political parties, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, security agencies and the press in Nigeria and their operational patterns and impacts on democratic consolidation in the country. In effect, this paper will be proficient to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of all the institutions of governance in Nigerian political context.

POLITICAL PARTY AS A CONCEPT

According to McDonald (1963), a political party is a political organization that typically seeks to influence government policy, usually by nominating their own candidates and trying to seat them in political office. In an extensive view, Vieriu (2011 :95) defined political party as a group or a permanent association of people freely united between them through ideological empathise and political common believes created at territorial level upon the bases of strictly organisational and disciplinary principles whose aims are mentioned in a program, or status and consist in the making and the promotion in electoral and parliamentary competition with other parties of a certain doctrine or political ideas regarding the development and ruling of a certain society.

A roman sociologist Dimitrie (1926:33-48) appreciates political party to be one of the most suggestive and interesting collective personalities, but he wanted to give a scientific definition of the political party so he averred that the political party is a free association of citizens permanently united through common interests and ideas, association whose chase is to achieve the government power for accomplish an ethical and social ideals.

In the west, Jinadu (2011:1) explained that a political party has generally been defined more in functional than in structural terms, with two core elements, namely that a political party helps to (a) structure electoral choice and (b) conduct the business of government, under a party label or banner. A party needs not to perform both functions but generally all parties tend to perform both functions, more or less. In short, the core functions of a political party, not its organizational structures, are what typically distinguish a political party as a conceptual category from other organizations. It also follows from the functional definition that the significance of political parties for liberal democracy is that under conditions of competitive party and electoral politics, a political party (i) presents the electorate with a choice of candidates and programmes from which to choose; and in doing so (ii) helps to decide which party or coalition of parties should

govern for a fixed number of years. In other words, this functional definition of the party is predicated on the assumption of the competitiveness of the electoral process.

From the judicial point of view, Vieriu as quoted by Lamidi (2011), the political party is a legal institution which has: its own organisation, patrimony and a legitimate cause. In general, those three elements that give legal recognition must contain and present in the statute of the political party and its political programme. But the fact that a political party has a certain number of members and sympathisers and that is organised and functions accordingly to the principles and the values of democracy, is not enough in order to recognise the possibility to participate in the political life or to be given the political personality.

According to Akinbade (2008) Political parties can be defined as associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and / or maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition for electoral competition with other similar associations over the personnel and policy of government of an actual or prospective sovereign state. This definition is useful to the extent that it includes many issues that need to be discussed under the term political party. The central objective of a political party is to achieve political power. In a democratic setting, political power is mainly achieved through election. Hence, the role of political parties in electoral processes is very germane.

In democracies, a political party is "a more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments and representing such interests in government. It is thus a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governance." (Foley and Edwards, 1996)

Political parties are saddled with the responsibility of recruiting competent individuals for political leadership through periodic elections, educating the electorate through political rallies and dissemination of information about government policies as well as serving as a vehicle for the articulation and aggregation of the interests of people (Babawale and Ashiru, 2006). Thus, they serve as the pivot upon which the entire political process revolves.

The more vigorous and healthy they are the better assured is the health of the democratic process (Agbaje, 1998). It is therefore difficult to imagine any modern democracy without political parties as they are the connecting links between diverse groups of peoples and governments. The most common classification of political parties is that which emphasizes the degree of competitiveness in a political system.

Schumpeter (1954) identified key functions which are expected to be performed by political parties in any democracy:

a) Select Candidates- Political parties nominate candidates for political office. They narrow the field from a

multitude of wannabes to a manageable few credible candidates. This simplifies the voters' role and brings a certain order to what could be a chaotic electoral process;

b) Mobilize Voters - Political parties inform and energize their members. They send out brochures, run media campaigns, knock on doors, and call voters on the phone. Individual candidates can do the same thing, but parties maintain elaborate networks of state and local offices that can be immediately pressed into the service of a candidate once the party nomination is secured. In addition, parties have fundraising apparatuses in place that simplify their candidates' ability to finance their campaigns;

c) Facilitate Governance - Parties also bring order to the process of policymaking. As party members, individual politicians have a ready-made group of allies that will usually cooperate with their efforts to pass and implement legislation. At the national level, this means that a rookie Congressperson arrives with a network of allies that will support his efforts and that he must support in turn. In addition, party alliances close the gap between the legislative and executive branches. While separated by the Constitution, the existence of political parties narrows the distance between the branches and helps them work together; and

d) Monitor the Opposing Party in Power - Parties also serve as critical watchdogs for the public. The adversarial relationship between the major parties ensures that the party out of power (not in possession of the presidency) will keep a close eye on its opponent and notify the public of any wrongdoing or policy misstep (Schumpeter, 1954).

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION AS A CONCEPT

Civil society is an unusual concept in that it always seems to require being defined before it is applied or discussed. In part, this is because the concept was rarely used in American discourse before the late eighties and many people are therefore unfamiliar with it. In another part, it is a result of an inherent ambiguity or elasticity in the concept. (This is not so unusual. The apparently straight forward notion of freedom can in certain circumstances carry a meaning closer to license than to liberty.) Perhaps the simplest way to see civil society is as a "third sector," distinct from government and business. In this view, civil society refers essentially to the so-called "intermediary institutions" such as professional associations, religious groups, labour unions, citizen advocacy organizations, that give voice to various sectors of society and enrich public participation in democracies (Civil Society International, 2003).

Notably, there is no generally accepted definition of civil society. However, London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society gave an illustrative example, civil society refers to the arena of unforced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, and

market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degrees of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups (Centre for Civil Society, Philippine Normal University, 2004).

Put differently, civil society is the arena outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interests. It is sometimes considered to include the family and the private sphere and then referred to as the "third sector" of society, distinct from government and business. Dictionary.com's 21st Century Lexicon defines civil society as the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government. Sometimes the term is used in the more general sense of "the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc, those make up a democratic society" (Collins English Dictionary). Volunteering is often considered a defining characteristic of the organizations that constitute civil society, which in turn are often called Non-Governmental Organisations, or Non-Public Organisations.

The concept of civil society encompasses a wide range of organisations. In a broad sense, it includes all non-market and non-state organisations and structures in which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals. In the development field, there is a tendency to think primarily in terms of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose missions are explicitly and uniquely developmental in character.

However, civil society also includes farmers' associations, professional associations, community-based organisations, environmental groups, independent research institutes, universities, faith-based organisations, labour unions, and the not-for-profit media, as well as other groups that do not engage in development work. This broad definition is widely accepted in the world of development practitioners.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) operate at four different levels:

- First level: grassroots organisations/ community-based organisations. They consist of informal groupings or ad-hoc organisations working in the immediate local context.
- Second level: organisations legally registered with appropriated statues, working for the benefit of the populations or in service delivery, sometimes in collaboration with grass-roots organisations (e.g. NGOs, associations).
- Third level: geographic or thematic networks: national

associations, federations and thematic networks mandated to defend a common interest.

- Fourth level: this is the highest level of CSO networking. It is made up of platforms or common dialogue forums for umbrella organisations and networks of the third level. (Europe Aid Website, 2011).

SECURITY AGENCY AS A CONCEPT

A security agency is an organisation which conducts intelligence activities for the security of a nation, state or organisation. Security of peoples' life and properties is a major governmental task. However, security functions are not only performed by government, private organisations also venture into this responsibility subject to government approval, accreditation and periodic training of their personnel. Subjecting the approval and accreditation to government as posited by Leonard (2012:1) is in a bid to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of security providers in the delivery of professional, effective security services, utilizing existing personnel, equipment, and facilities to the extent possible.

In Nigeria, informal, socio-cultural and voluntary organisations which are security-oriented (Examples are the Hunters' Associations, Vigilante Groups and Oodua Peoples' Congress) are also regarded as security agencies. Nonetheless, the operation of these organizations is duly approved and coordinated by government. None of them can operate without government consent. They complement government efforts in providing security for life and properties.

To avoid misconception, security agency in financial context is exceptionally different to the ones discussed above. For instance, in United State of America, a security is usually known as a bond, issued by a U.S. government-sponsored agency. The offerings of these agencies are backed by the government, but not guaranteed by the government since the agencies are private entities. Such agencies have been set up in order to allow certain groups of people to access low cost financing e.g. students and home buyers. Some prominent issuers of securities are Student Loan Marketing Association (Sallie Mae), Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac). All these associations and corporations are otherwise known as security agencies.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION AS A CONCEPT

Traditional institution is defined by Richard (2005:1) as forms of social and political authority which have their historical origin in the pre-colonial states and societies, and which were incorporated by colonial rule into modern government. On this definition, traditional institutions are very varied. Although indigenous in origin, they have

changed in many ways during the colonial and post-colonial periods. They are living institutions, not museum pieces.

Traditional institutions are also referred to as indigenous institutions. It is often used colloquially by people to refer to only the King's institution. However, a traditional institution is an indigenous institution which is expressly customary, conventional, fixed, long established, time-honored, and habitual in nature and its offerings are of concern and reference to the needs of its immediate environment. Analogously, Aliyu (2008:1) referred the concept of traditional institutions not to a single system but a collection of several hundreds of systems, mostly created arbitrarily by the powers that be. Each system has its own rules of succession, legitimacy and powers.

Nowadays, traditional institutions as discussed by Nwora (2009:1) are also an integral part of governance in a nation-state. Although, the character of traditional institution is either constitutional or not, but it is vastly influential.

THE PRESS

The press is an organisation established to provide official announcement or account of a news story that is specially prepared and issued to newspapers and other news media for them to make known to the public. It also champions the course of written or recorded communication directed by members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something ostensibly newsworthy. Typically, newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and/or television networks are regarded to as the press.

The press is common in the field of public relations. Typically, the aim is to attract favourable media attention to the professional's client and/or provide publicity for products or events marketed by those clients. A press provides an information subsidy containing the basics needed to develop a news story. Press can announce a range of news items, such as scheduled events, personal promotions, awards, new products and services, sales and other financial data, accomplishments, etc (Kelleher, 2007:5). They are often used in generating a feature story and they are also sent for the purpose of announcing news conferences, upcoming events or a change in a corporation. The press can be a public or private enterprise.

In essence, freedom is very crucial to effective discharge of duties of the press. Governments have widely varying policies and practices towards the press, which control what they can research and write, and what press organizations can publish. Some governments guarantee the freedom of the press; while other nations severely restrict what journalists can research and/or publish. Commonly, freedom of the press is mostly enjoyed under a democratic dispensation while it is sometimes

obstructed by military government.

THE ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Figure 1 offers a broad description of what electoral processes denote all over the world.

AN OVERVIEW OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

There are a lot of challenges with the conduct of elections in Nigeria from the 1922 election to the 2011 election. It has been documented that elections in Nigeria are constant tales of violence, fraud and manipulation. The challenges include among other things irregularities which put the credibility of the entire electoral process in doubt; problems with the legislative framework which puts constraints on the electoral process; several organisations are not playing their roles to ensure credible, free and fair election; the electoral system does not give room for inclusiveness; lack of independence of electoral commissions; long process of election dispute resolution; irresponsible behaviour by politicians and followers manifesting in thuggery and violence; lack of effective democratic institutions and monetisation of politics. It has been documented that money not only determines who participates in electoral politics but money drowns votes and voices in Nigeria as 'godfathers' openly confess about shady deals, funding or sponsoring elections for 'godsons' and purchasing electoral victory (Igbuzor, 2010). The upshot of the perpetual electoral tribulations is that the essence of electioneering has not been accomplished.

Elections under Colonial Rule

Nigeria, which existed as an amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates since 1914, had already witnessed five different elections:

1923: In September, the first election took place in Lagos and Calabar following the introduction of the Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution in 1922. The Nigerian National Democratic Party led by Herbert Macaulay won the three seats for the Lagos Legislative Council while the Calabar Improvement League, won the only seat for Calabar. Although voting was by direct election, it (the election) was based on limited franchise (Yunusa, 2003:1). Thus, the nature and pattern of party politics during colonialism was to a great extent determined by the constitutional concessions permitted by the British Colonial System. For instance, while the 1922 Clifford Constitution gave birth to the first political party in Nigeria known as the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1922, party politics in the State was restricted to just two cities;

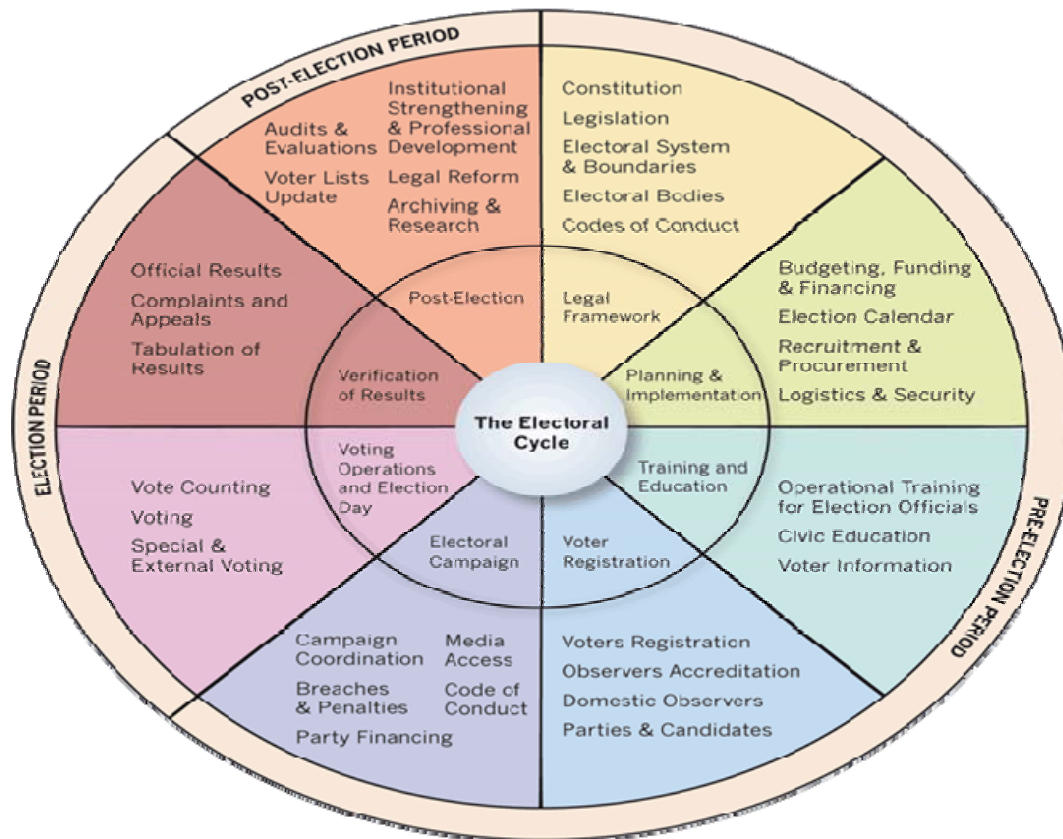


Figure 1. Diagram of electoral processes.
Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 2010.

Lagos and Calabar (Omodia, 2010:66). The implication is that it is undemocratic, party democracy during this era was restricted to two cities, and even in the cities, franchise was restricted because of property qualification coupled with the fact that the system was almost one party system. Those who could vote or be voted for were only British citizens residing in the cities and British Protected Persons with a minimum gross income of 100 Pounds a year. Many Nigerians were thus disenfranchised (Yunusa, 2003:1).

1964: An indirect system of election which filled seats in Regional and Central legislatures, following the introduction of Sir Arthur Richards (Lord Milverton) Constitution a year earlier. The Legislative Council had 45 members for the entire Country – 28 members were Nigerians of whom four were elected and the remaining 24 were nominated. Three political units emerged: the Northern, Western and Southern Regions. By the Indirect Electoral System, adult males in each village chose a representative for the district level, who in turn chose a Provincial representative. The Provincial Electoral College elected by secret ballot the specific number of representatives to the Regional Assembly (Yunusa, 2003:1).

1951: General Election by Electoral College, following the Sir John McPherson Constitution, guaranteed greater regional autonomy. So, a Council of Ministers had 18 members –12 Nigerian and six officials reflecting equal representation by each region as nominated by the Regional Legislature. The Houses of Assembly in each region was complemented with a House of Chiefs in the North and West. But the House of Representatives had 139 Nigerians out of the total of 142 members (Yunusa, 2003:2).

By the 1954 General Elections, the Sir Oliver Lyttleton Constitution had replaced the Electoral Collegiate System with Direct Elections as a means of electing 184 Members of the House of Representatives (Yunusa, 2003:2). In the 1959 elections held in preparation for independence (Meredith, 2005:195). Before the elections, bases of the Federal Department of Statistics' projection of Nigeria's population to be 31,559,026, the political parties all agreed that there should be approximately one seat in the new House of Representatives to every 100,000 persons in Nigeria. Elections were therefore held in 312 single member constituencies nationwide; but with the vacant seats allocated regionally thus: Northern Nigeria: 174, Western Nigeria: 62, Eastern Nigeria: 73, Lagos

Federal Territory: 3 (Yunusa, 2003:3). Explaining further Meredith (2005:195) the NPC captured 134 seats in the 312-seat parliament. Capturing 89 seats in the federal parliament was the second largest party in the newly independent country the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). The NCNC represented the interests of the Igbo- and Christian-dominated people of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, Meredith (2005:195) and the Action Group (AG) was a left-leaning party that represented the interests of the Yoruba people in the West. In the 1959 elections the AG obtained 73 seats (John de St. Jorre, 1972:30).

The elections were supervised (conducted) by an Electoral Commission headed by a Chief Commissioner, Mr. R.E Wraith, who was a senior lecturer in Public Administration at the University College, Ibadan. Another British, Mr. J. J. Warren was appointed Executive Secretary. Four Nigerians namely: Alhaji Muhammed Bello (North), Mr. Anthony Aniagolu (East), Prof. Oritsejomi Thomas (West) and Mr. M. A. Shosilva (Lagos). – were to join the expatriates later as commissioners. The Southern Cameroon's representative was Mr. K. A. de Bohn (Yunusa, 2003:3).

It is estimated that including the three major political parties, a total of fifteen others contested the critical election of 1959. However, the more prominent of the parties in this emergent multi-party system between 1922 and 1960 were the Nigerian National Democratic Party (1923), the Peoples' Union (1923), Union of Young Nigerians (1923), the Nigerian Youth Movement (1937), the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (1944), the Northern Elements Progressive Association (1945), the Northern Elements Progressive Union (1950), the Action Group (1951), the Northern Peoples' Congress (1951), the United National Independence Party (1953), the United Middle Belt Congress (1955), formed through the merger between the Middle Belt League (1950) and the Middle Belt Peoples' Party (1953), Bornu Youth Movement (1956), the Dynamic Party (1955), and the National Democratic Party of Nigeria and the Cameroons (1958) [Azikiwe, 1961:301-334, Thomas, 1961: 195-197].

As rightly observed by Jinadu (2011:3), the emergent political parties from the mid-1920s reflected the dominance of the nationalist movements by a combination of petit-bourgeois middle class and proletarian strata of the country's social structure. Yet the logic of competitive party and electoral politics and the unfolding ethno-federal political structure in the country meant that the emergent political parties had to cultivate the support of traditional rulers and traditional institutions, as part of their electoral strategy. This comes out clearly in the close, sometimes symbiotic relationship between ethno-cultural associations or organizations and a number of political parties, which, like the Action Group and the Northern Peoples' Congress grew out of or became the political wings of these cultural organizations.

From 1959 to 1960, Jaja Wachuku was the First Nigerian Speaker of the Nigerian Parliament - also called the "House of Representatives." Jaja Wachuku replaced Sir Frederick Metcalfe of Britain. Notably, as First Speaker of the House, Jaja Wachuku received Nigeria's Instrument of Independence - also known as Freedom Charter - on October 1, 1960, from Princess Alexandra of Kent, The Queen's representative at the Nigerian independence ceremonies (History of Nigeria, 1960-1979). The Nigerian political independence was ushered in by the 1959 General Elections.

At Independence and First Republic

The first post-independence national government was formed by a conservative alliance of the NCNC and the NPC. Upon independence, it was widely expected that Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto, the undisputed strong man in Nigeria who controlled the North, would become Prime Minister of the new Federation Government. However, Bello chose to remain as premier of the North and as party boss of the NPC, selected Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Hausa, to become Nigeria's first Prime Minister (Meredith, 2005:196).

Between 1960 and 1966, Nigeria was under civilian rule. Tafawa Balewa of NPC continued as the federal Prime Minister also becoming Minister for foreign affairs and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of NCNC succeeded the pre-independence Governor-General-representing the British monarch as head of state. This continued until October 1963 when the country adopted a revised constitution and Dr. Azikiwe took office as Nigeria's first President. The major problems that confronted the federal government within the period were threats to federal unity evidenced by ethnic rivalry, factionalism and the desire for autonomy within the federal system. This led to the formation of various political groupings and political alliances (ISS, 1993).

According to Iyayi (2005:7), from 1960 to 1965, three set of elections were held. These were the elections in the newly created Mid-west region in February 1964, the Federal elections of December and the Regional elections of 1965. Notably, it is important to stress here that the first election since independence took place in February 1964 in the mid-west followed by the December 1964 federal house of representative election.

ISS (1993) expounded that the federal election of 1964 was preceded by a split in the coalition between the NPC and the NCNC (renamed the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens) and the formation of two new national coalitions. The first national coalition is Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), led by Ahmadu Bello was comprised of the NPC and the Akintola's breakaway Yoruba party, now renamed the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). Elaborating further, Yunusa (2003:6) The NNA which later renamed NNDP was an amalgam of hitherto

Table 1. Allocation of Parliament Seats in the First Republic

| | | |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| North | 167 seats | From 174 |
| East | 70 seats | From 73 |
| West | 47 seats | From 47 |
| Midwest | 14 seats | From 15 |
| Lagos | 3 seats | From 2 |

Source: Yunusa, 2003:7.

disparate political tendencies that included: NPC (Northern People Congress), NNDP (Nigerian National Democratic Party, led by Samuel Ladoke Akintola, who had indeed earlier formed the United Peoples Party (UPP) in protest against perceived injustices in the AG. The NNDP had its symbol as the hand), MDF (Midwest Democratic Front, which was an offshoot of the Midwest Peoples' Congress and elements of the AG and UPP in the new Midwest Region), Dynamic Party which was led by the renowned mathematician Dr. Chike Obi, Republican Party led by Dr J. O. J. Okezie, Niger Delta Congress and Lagos State United Front.

On the other hand, ISS (1993) discussed that the second national coalition is United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), led by Dr. Michael Okpara, Prime Minister of the Eastern Region, was composed of NCNC, the remainder of the AG (whose leader in person of Chief Obafemi Awolowo was imprisoned for plotting to overthrow the federal government) and the minority, populist Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Mallam Aminu Kano plus United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka as noted by (Iyayi, 2005:7) as well as Northern Progressive Front (NPF) as documented by (Yunusa, 2003:6).

Prior to the 1964 Federal Election, Chief Eyo E. Esua, chairman of Federal Electoral Commission came up with election guidelines to ensure free, and fair and non-violent elections by the 22 million registered voters of Nigeria's 55.6 million. Ballot boxes were designed to bear the symbols of each party in the elections scheduled for 30 December 1964 into the 312 seat House of Representatives (Yunusa, 2003:7).

The prologue to the December 1964 Federal election was provided by the census results released in March 1961 which showed that south had a higher population than the north and also the creeping crisis in the west region from 1962 onwards. Iyayi (2005:8) posited that as the time of the Federal elections of 1964 approached, the Balewa NPC government not only cancelled the 1961 census results but also slated a recount for 1963. The 1963 census results contrarily declared that the North had 55% of the population of the country. In addition, Ademoyega (1981) also revealed that the NPC government of the North frustrated the UPGA candidates in the north, so that many of them could not file in their

nomination forms. Moreso, the basis of representation, regionally, had however slightly altered as shown in table 1.

On the bases stated above, the UPGA called for postponement of the elections, but the Balewa government rejected the idea of postponement and went ahead to conduct the 1964 Federal elections. As a result, the UPGA called for a mass boycott by its supporters (Iyayi 2005:7). The elections were largely boycotted in the East, Midwest, Lagos and parts of the Western Region. In the North, (61) of the NNA candidates were returned unopposed. NNDP candidates in the West, where S. L. Akintola was the Premier, were equally returned unopposed for the NNA. UPGA denounced the outcome, calling the election a "farce" (Yunusa, 2003:7).

Bye-elections were conducted on the 18th March, 1965 in regions and areas where the 1964 federal elections were boycotted. At the end, out of 312 seats, NNA had 198 seats, UPGA had 108 seats, 5 independent seats and 1 vacant seat. Azikiwe (former Governor General Nnamdi Azikiwe who became the country's first President in October 1963) asked Tafawa Balewa to form a new government (Yunusa, 2003:7).

In October 1965, the elections into Regional Government of the west were no less farcial as documented by Ademoyega (1981). He elucidates further that although the people clearly rejected Akintola Government at the polls. The Akintola-led government 'interfered' with the results of the elections. In many cases, AG candidates who held certificates that they were duly elected in their constituencies later heard their names mentioned as defeated candidates through governmental news media.

Intimidation and brutalisation of political opponents oftentimes resulting in deaths including the vandalism of their property were rampant. Manipulation of the political process, partisan appropriation of the perquisites of office, suffocation of ethnic minorities fuelling, ethnic animosities and suspicion (Yunusa, 2003:8) plus Tiv revolt in the Middle Belt, political impasse at the centre as noted by Iyayi (2005:8) provided a conducive climate for the military coup d'etat of 15 January 1966 which claimed the lives of some leading actors in Nigerian politics and the suspension of the republican constitution of 1963. Therefore, political parties thus, failed in their responsibility of contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria's first republic.

In the Second Republic

From 1966 to 1978, this period was characterized with military interventions, takeovers and civil war. Political activities were banned. In 1967, the four regions were abrogated into 12 states and an additional 7 states were created in 1976. Military decree was the rule of law. Ibodje and Dode (2005) opined that it was in response to the problems, which led to the collapse of the party

Table 2. The Political Parties, their Slogan, Symbols, Chairmen and Presidential Candidates for the 1979 General Elections Party Slogan Symbols Chairman Presidential candidate

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| National Party of Nigeria (NPN) | One Nation One destiny | House and Maize | Adisa Akinloye | Shehu Shagari |
| Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) | Up Nigeria | Light Bulb | Obafemi Awolowo | Obafemi Awolowo |
| Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) | Nasara (victory) | Key | Aminu Kano | Aminu Kano |
| Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) | Adalchi (fairness) | Cockerel and Palm Tree | Waziri Ibrahim | Waziri Ibrahim |
| Nigerian Peoples party (NPP) | Power | A family | Adeniran Ogunsanya | Nnamdi Azikiwe |

system and the first republic that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime decided to put policies in place that will re-position political parties for national integration. Hence, the military attempted to solve the problem of ethnicity in the formation and management of political parties. In the electoral provisions contained in the transition programme of that period, political parties that were to be registered, were required to have “national spread”, to be national in outlook and programme, before being eligible for registration and subsequent participation in election.

On 15 November 1976, the Head of State General Olusegun Obasanjo (who assumed leadership on the assassination of general Murtala Muhammed) inaugurated a new 24 –member Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) headed by Mr. Richard Avic, a retired Civil servant (Yunusa, 2003:9).

In 1977, a constituent assembly was elected to draft a new constitution, which was published on September 21, 1978. On the same day, the ban on political activity was lifted (Meredith, 2005:220). When the ban on partisan politics was lifted, Dode (2010:4) recounted that associations cued up for registration as political parties. At the end, five political parties out of fifty political associations that applied for registration were given the nod to function as parties. These parties were the Great Nigeria People’s Party (GNPP), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN); the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP); Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN).

According to Yunusa (2003:9), the 1979 Constitution marked a major paradigm shift in Nigeria’s political experience. It evolved a presidential system of government modeled after the United States of America, and effectively abandoning the Parliamentary (Westminster) system inherited from the British at independence in 1960.

Party politics and formation defying all hindrances were seen to follow ethnic dimension, even in line with their operations in the first republic. Save the death of Ahmadu Bello of the NPC, the new political parties that were registered had their leaders replicated as it were. Hence, Obafemi Awolowo retained the leadership of the AG metamorphosed UPN, while Nnamdi Azikiwe maintained the control of the Igbo nations by leading the NPP – an affiliate of the old NCNC. The remaining two minority parties, GNPP, PRP and later NAP were not different as

they equally took on their ethnic colouration and affiliation (Ademola, 2009:4).

Similar opinion was expressed by Omodia (2010:3) that the scenario in the Second Republic was not however different from what was obtainable in the first republic except that the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) made attempt at having a broad based elitist support when compared to the other four that were active players during that era – that is, United Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigeria People’s Party (NPP), Great Nigeria People’s Party (GNPP) and People’s Redemption Party (PRP). These parties unlike the NPN were majorly ethnic based.

Sourcing from various literatures, these are the five contending political parties (Table 2), their slogan, symbols, chairmen and presidential candidates for the 1979 General Elections.

Yunusa (2003:10) asserted that the same actors, manifesting tendencies that threw up deep-rooted ethnic sentiments, were back on the political turf in a fierce struggle for the control of the reigns of power in a Federal Republic; even though a 19-state structure had emerged in Nigeria.

The elections were conducted for positions in the Local Councils, State Assemblies, Governorship, the Federal House of Representatives, the Senate and the Presidency. Another remarkable constitutional departure from the First Republic was the existence of a Senate into which elections would be conducted. Besides, the Governor was the Chief Executive of the State, assisted by a Deputy; and the President as the Chief Executive of the nation, also had an assistant in a Vice President (Yunusa, 2003:10-11).

The results of the 1979 elections in the state showed the ethnic sentiments and affiliations which eminent scholars have identified in the party politics and formation in Nigeria. Yunusa (2003:11) pointed out that the NPN was dominant largely in the North; the UPN controlled the Yoruba South West while the NPP was the leading party in the Igbo states of Anambra and Imo. The PRP held onto its traditional NEPU stronghold of Kano and Kaduna while the GNPP made a statement in Borno and Gongola States in the North East more or less indicating Kanuri independence of Hausa –Fulani domination.

Table 3 shows the states controlled/won by the competing political parties in the 1979 elections. The pattern

Table 3. Political Parties States Controlled

| | |
|------|---|
| NPN | Bauchi, Benue, Cross-River, Kwara, Niger, River and Sokoto. |
| UPN | Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and bendel |
| NPP | Anambra, Imo and Plateau |
| GNPP | Borno and Gongola |
| PRP | Kano and Kaduna |

Source: Yunusa, 2003:11.

Table 4. Political Parties and Votes Polled Political Parties Votes Polled

| | |
|------|-----------|
| NPN | 5,688,857 |
| UPN | 4,916,651 |
| NPP | 2,822,523 |
| GNPP | 1,686,489 |
| PRP | 1,732,113 |

Source: Yunusa, 2003:11.

of voting was finally reflected in the Presidential Elections. Of the 47,433,757 registered voters, 16,846,633 Nigerians voted in the 11 August, 1979 Presidential Elections.

The NPN candidate in person of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected as the President. The victory of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) candidate, Shehu Shagari, had barely died down when Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) challenged the results (Table 4). The Election Tribunal and the Supreme Court rejected his challenge, but suspicions linger that the latter's decision may have been motivated by political expediency (Akpo, 2006).

In Yunusa's view (2003:11-12), he stated that Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, of the NPN was the eventual winner of the Presidential Elections on 26 September 1979 after the Supreme Court had interpreted the provisions of the constitution on what constitutes two-thirds of 19 states, critical requirement to ascertain overall winner. The court's interpretation followed a legal challenge instituted by Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the UPN, challenging the FEDECO declaration on 16 August 1979 of Shagari as President-elect and claiming that Shagari could not have won the elections because he did not muster the 25 per cent of votes cast in 13 states of the Federation.

The second republic once more collapsed on 31st December 1983 because of the anti-democratic practices of the party leaders (elites). These leaders used their positions to illegally acquire stupendous wealth through government contracts and other deals as well as massively rigged the 1983 general election, while looking down on the people's interests. The second republic

Table 5. Political Parties and States Won During the 1983 Elections Political Parties States Controlled

| | |
|------|---|
| NPN | Anambra, Bauchi, bendel, Benue, Cross-River, Borno and Gongola, Kaduna, Niger, Oyo, River and Sokoto. |
| UPN | Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Kwara. |
| NPP | Imo and Plateau |
| GNPP | Nil |
| PRP | Kano |
| NAP | Nil |

Source: Yunusa, 2003:12

“witnessed the most rapid politics of aggrandizement and open robbery of the treasury” (Yaqub, 2002).

The 1983 Elections and the Abortive Third Republic

Elections in 1983, under the civilian government of President Shagari, saw a return to the intimidation, rigging and outright elimination of opponents that had emerged as the defining features of those in the mid-1960s. The election administration and law enforcement agencies were loyal to politicians, not to the nation. After Shagari's victory was announced, the UPN (then the most visible opposition party) disputed the results up to the Supreme Court, where the result was again upheld (Akpo, 2006).

The Nigeria Advance Party (NAP) of Dr Tunji Braithwaite joined the existing five political parties to contest the elections. The NPN consolidated its hold on the polity, breaking into the traditional strongholds of the UPN and NPP. The gubernatorial election results provided the first indication that the NPN had transformed itself into a “Super-Power,” as its new slogan indicated, albeit the other parties alleged the process was massively rigged (Yunusa, 2003:12).

ISS (1993) affirmed that the NPN used its entrenched position and financial influence to return to office in a six political party contested elections which took place in August to September 1983.

Table 5 shows that, in the Presidential Elections, Shehu Shagari of the NPN again emerged winner defeating Awolowo (UPN), Nnamdi Azikiwe (NPP), Aminu Kano (PRP), Waziri Ibrahim (GNPP) and Tunji Braithwaite (NAP). Three months into the new Government, on 31 December 1983, another military coup d'etat again aborted Nigeria's journey in democratic governance.

In December 1983, Shagari was disposed in a bloodless coup led by Maj.-Gen. Muhammed Buhari. Buhari's Regime arrested, detained and tried past political leaders suspected of any criminal offence. The usual military dictatorship was experienced and party political activities were banned till 1989.

In early 1989, Gen. Babangida's administration which

Table 6. Political Party Symbol Colour

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Social Democratic Party (SDP) | A Horse | Green |
| National Republican Convention (NRC) | The Eagle | White |

Source: Yunusa, 2003:13

took over power from Gen. Buhari formed a constituent assembly to prepare a constitution and in the spring of 1989, political activity was again permitted. In October 1989 the government established two parties (Table 6), the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) - other parties were not allowed to register.

Yunusa (2003:13) asserted that the influence of the Federal Military Government was obvious in the design, membership, structures and infrastructure of the two 'grassroots' parties: Government provided the funds, influenced the appointment of their leaderships, provided buildings and logistics for the parties.

In December 1991 state legislative elections were held and Babangida decreed that previously banned politicians could contest in primaries scheduled for August. These were canceled due to fraud and subsequent primaries scheduled for September also were canceled. All announced candidates were disqualified from standing for president once a new election format was selected. The presidential election was finally held on June 12, 1993 with the inauguration of the new president scheduled to take place August 27, 1993, the eighth anniversary of President Babangida's coming to power (BBC News, April 19, 2011).

As documented by Yunusa (2003:13), a civilian government had been installed at the local governments, State Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly. Civilian Governors had also taken charge as Chief Executives in the 30 States of the Federation. The states and their Governors were beholden to General Babangida who styled himself President.

In the historic June 12, 1993 presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman M.K.O. Abiola won a decisive victory. However, on June 23, Babangida, using several pending lawsuits as a pretense, annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. More than 100 were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to hand power to an interim government on August 27, 1993. He later attempted to renege this decision, but without popular and military support, he was forced to hand over to Ernest Shonekan, a prominent non-partisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until elections scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension (BBC News, April 19, 2011).

Gen. Sani Abacha, however, sacked the Interim National Government headed by Shonekan in November of the same year and abrogated the 1989 Constitution (which never really came into effect), banned the political parties and declared political activities illegal. In 1995, Abacha instituted a National Constitutional Conference Commission, which fashioned a new constitution for consideration by the Abacha junta. Dode (2010:191) explicated that many other political institutions established by that regime – their events were proved and tailored towards the achievement of the Abacha self-succession bid "hidden agenda", like Babangida attempted before him. Under the Abacha's transition programme, eighteen political associations applied for registration as political parties, out of which five were registered, viz: The Congress for National Consensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP).

Dode (2010:192) described the political events of Abacha junta as anti-democratic and self-succession activities of Abacha had negative impact upon the ability of those political institutions to perform their political functions in a democracy. One of the parties (UNCP) became the major vanguard through which Abacha's self-succession bid was to be realized. In the elections that were conducted from the local government to the national legislature, the UNCP swept more than 80% of the seats. Various analyses of that regime's activities point to the fact that Nigeria was gradually moving towards a one party State, especially when all the parties finally adopted Abacha as their 'sole' presidential candidate. In the words of Yaqub (2002): For once in the political history of this country, there loomed large the frightening and fiendish prospects of turning Nigeria into a one-party state, given the predominant 'performance' of the UNCP in the largely discredited elections, held from the local government to the national assembly levels. Abacha died in June 1998, before the completion of the electoral process he had set in motion, which was to see him emerge as the sole presidential candidate for the presidential election of that era which ended another era of national deception.

In the aborted Third Republic, Omodia (2010:3) expressed that, although parties were elitist created through the Ibrahim Babangida-led military administration, efforts were however geared towards making the parties to be people centered. This, no doubt, accounted for free and fair elections especially during the June 12 Presidential

Table 7. Political Party Symbol Colour

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) | An Umbrella | Green, White and Red |
| Alliance for Democracy (AD) | The Star | Green, White and Black |
| All Peoples' Party (APP) | The Maize | Green and White |

election in which the people voted for the candidate of their choice irrespective of ethnic or religious sentiment. In addition, Abacha-led military administration attempted to operate one-party system in Nigeria.

THE 1999 NIGERIAN GENERAL ELECTION

Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State on the death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998. Building on the recommendations of a work-in-progress constitution evolved by the Abacha regime, a transition programme was announced to terminate with a handover to an elected civilian president on 29 May 1999 (Yunusa, 2003:14).

In August 1998, Abubakar appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections for local government councils, state legislatures and governors, the national assembly, and president. The NEC successfully held elections on December 5, 1998, January 9, 1999, February 20, and February 27, 1999, respectively. For these elections, nine parties were granted provisional registration with three fulfilling the requirements to contest the following elections. These parties were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP), and the predominantly Yoruba Alliance for Democracy (AD). Former military head of state Olusegun Obasanjo, freed from prison by Abubakar, ran as a civilian candidate and won the presidential election. The PRC promulgated a new constitution based largely on the suspended 1979 constitution, before the May 29, 1999 inauguration of the new civilian president. The constitution includes provisions for a bicameral legislature, the National Assembly consisting of a 360-member House of Representatives and a 109-member Senate (Meredith, 2005:220).

Three political parties – Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) - were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to participate in the elections into legislative and executive positions (Table 7).

Most of the political actors were drawn from the pool of politicians that had participated in elections since the first Republic or who had been in government as military personnel.

The results of the 1999 Governorship elections indicated that the PDP had more national spread/support by winning in 21 states across the country. APP followed

with nine states; while AD, which held sway in the Yoruba Southwest had six states. Obviously, money politics and God-fatherism are noted to be new political instruments in Nigerian politics from 1999 elections till date.

The Presidential Elections were to pitch the PDP against an AD-APP alliance, whose joint candidate Chief Olu Falae lost to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former Military Head of State from 1976 to 1979. Now a civilian, Obasanjo would, draw on politicians from the AD and APP to join his PDP members, form a broad-based government of National Unity (Yunusa, 2003:14). With Obasanjo as President, politicians began to clamour for the registration of more parties. The government refused to register more political parties; hence, unregistered associations went to court and won. Court judgment in favor of political associations thus, opened the floodgate for up to 30 parties by the time 2003 elections took place (Dode, 2010:192).

Fourth Republic till Date

Elections are crucial to the sustenance and consolidation of democracy in a state. In Nigeria, this is more so given the fact that the nation is yet to experience a successful civilian-to-civilian transition as at 2002. In addition to this panic, elections conducted and supervised by civilian governments have often been fraught with frauds and irregularities as well as the curiosity of the serving civilian government to return to power. Thus, the 2003 elections became vital in facilitating democratic consolidation in Nigerian polity.

Going by the sheer magnitude of the elections, how prepared is the INEC? Yunusa asked. Responding the Chairman of INEC, Sir Abel Ibude Guobadia, says: "We are as ready as we can be, as of this time". Speaking in the wake of the release of the 2003 General Elections timetable, he hinged his confidence on the computerisation of the Voter Registration exercise. Other notable highlights of INEC's preparations include:

- The delineation of 120,000 polling stations nationwide
- 8,800 collation centres nationwide
- 60 million registered voters (so far)
- 500,000 polling officials to be engaged
- 3 sets of elections over a five-week period
- Ballot papers reflecting the logo, symbols and colours of 30 political parties
- 5-week long elections that will produce 780 State

Table 8. Political parties, Presidential candidates and Running mates

| Political Party | Presidential Candidate | Running Mate |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) | Chief Olusegun Obasanjo | Atiku Abubakar |
| All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) | Muhammadu Buhari | Chuba Okadigbo |
| National Conscience Party (NCP) | Chief Gani Fawehimi | Jerome Tala Topye |
| All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) | Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu | Alhaji Sani Bayero |
| National Democratic Party (NDP) | Gen.Ike Nwachukwu (rtd) | Alhaji Aliyu Habu-Fari |
| Green Party of Nigeria (GPN) | Chief Olisa Agbakoba | |
| United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP) | Sen.Jim Nwobodo | Alhaji Mohammed Goni |
| National Action Council (NAC) | Dr. Olapade Agoro | |
| Democratic Alternative (DA) | Dr Abayomi Ferreira | Ehoibge, Ihi Emmanuel |
| Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ) | Alhaji M.D.Yusuf | Emantor Patrick Wales |
| Progressive Action Congress (PAC) | Mrs.Sarah Jubril | Chief Mohammed Shittu |
| | | Adeyinka Ali-Balogun |
| Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) | Alhaji Balarabe Musa | Ngozi Okafor |
| Justice Party (JP) | Pastor Chris Okotie | Hajia Mairo, B. Habib |
| Peoples Mandate Party (PMP) | Chief Arthur Nwankwo | Otubo Raymond |
| National Advance Party (NAP) | Dr.Tunji Braithwaite | Suleiman Galadanchi |
| Liberal Democratic Party of Nigeria (LDPN) | Chief Pere Ajunwa | |
| African Alliance Party (AAP) | Alhaji Yahaya Ndu | Hajiya Asma'u A. Mohammed |

Source: Yunusa, 2003: 17.

Houses of Assembly members in 36 states of the Federation; 361 members of the Federal House of Representatives 109 Senators, 36 State Governors and one President (Yunusa, 2003:15).

Notably, there was a marked departure from previous voter registration exercises since the 1950's in Nigeria; the INEC initiative under the chairmanship of Chief Abel Ibude Guobadia holds the promise of giving the 2003 elections a patina of credibility. This is because the computerisation specifically seeks to eliminate incidents of multiple registration; a loophole often exploited by unscrupulous aspirants to political offices to stuff ballot boxes with votes bearing fictitious names of voters. INEC, which began the scanning and processing of voter details in October 2002, hopes to display a comprehensive and genuine voter register before the end of February 2003. Yunusa (2003:16) divulged that the commission sent out 70 million voters' cards during the registration exercise, but only 67 million were returned, thereby creating room for the supplementary exercise held by mid-January 2003 to address complaints that in the last September exercise, some politicians have disenfranchised some Nigerians because of alleged hoarding of registration materials.

Of the 30 political parties expected to field candidates in the General Elections, only the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has conducted shadow elections (primaries) for candidates into the State Assemblies, the National Assembly, and the Gubernatorial and Presidential Elections. Others, however, had contented themselves with selecting Presidential candidates and party officials only

based on provisions of their various constitutions (Yunusa, 2003:17). Only 17 out of the 30 parties registered for the elections, the registered political parties, their Presidential candidates and running mates as shown in table 8.

13 other parties did not field any candidates by the statutory period of Feb.11, 2003. These parties include:

- Alliance for Democracy (AD)
- Nigerian Peoples' Congress (NPC)
- Community Party of Nigeria (CPN)
- All Peoples Liberation Party (APLP)
- Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP)
- Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN)
- National Reformation party (NRP)
- Party for Social Democracy (PSD)
- Peoples Salvation Party (PSP)
- United Democratic Party (UDP)
- New Democrats (ND)
- National Mass Movement of Nigeria (NMMN)
- New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)

Apparently, the opposition parties (ANPP, AD, APGA, etc) that ought to serve as alternative parties (or to represent "shadow cabinets") have been strategically weakened through the overt and covert activities of the Obasanjo-led PDP. Disclosing the cunning and deceitful activities of Obasanjo by Dode (2010:192) in 2003 at the Southwest or example, he reported that Obasanjo promised the AD Governors of his support for them if they helped to see him through the presidential election

for the second term, since it was his own constituency (Western Nigeria) that voted massively against him during the 1999 presidential election. As soon as that support was given and Obasanjo got re-elected as the President, he reneged on his promise and ensured (through the use of federal might, monetization, and massive rigging of the elections), that the governorship elections in the West (except Lagos) were rigged in favor of PDP candidates.

Objectively, opposition parties are to function as gauges of change in the nation's political mood. When voters become frustrated with the ruling party, they should have alternatives to switch to. Unfortunately, this vital democratic content (i.e vibrant opposition party) is, to a large extent, lacking in the politics of contemporary Nigeria. Dode (2010:191) scholarly asserted that the facts surrounding the attempt to get a third term for President Olusegun Obasanjo tended to lend credence to the argument that there is no vibrant opposition party in Nigeria.

Hence, it becomes difficult for parties and the nation's democracy to be consolidated and stabilised without institutionalised political parties. Voters cannot enjoy effective representation; neither can they be properly organized or mobilized. Also, political participation cannot be structured; the weak and mercurial parties (like the JP, APGA, AD, CP e.t.c) in 2003 cannot be expected to fulfill the functions of monitoring and checking those in government, how much more of providing alternative governments. Evidentially speaking, Ouyang (2009) is of the view that Nigerian opposition parties are basically fractured and fragile entities and have thus, failed in their democratic responsibilities of aggregating social interests, representing specific constituencies, surveying votes during elections, and serving as intermediaries between State and society.

Consequently, The 2003 elections was characterized by large-scale electoral fraud on the part of the PDP - led Federal Government, thus, buttressing the accusation that PDP wants to be the only political party in Nigeria. It was so bad in some states like Rivers state, which in its Presidential Election results (2003), recorded more votes cast for the Presidential aspirants than the number of registered voters for that State (Yunusa, 2003:17). The results of the 2003 Governorship elections indicated that the PDP won in 75% of the states across the country with majority of its members at the two houses in National Assembly.

An excerpt from Oyebode (2005), he discussed that PDP massively rigged the elections in 2003, there were no sanctions even when the tribunals found impish practices on the side of PDP. On the contrary, the guilty PDP candidates were rewarded with at least stint in power through unnecessary postponement of court verdicts. A good example is the case of Anambra state, the governor (Peter Obi) by default spent almost 3 years before the final verdict of the court nullifying the rigged election.

In 2003, the ANPP Candidate (Muhammod Buhari) challenged the election results, but it was apparent that the allegations were not properly investigated because the petition was not adequately substantive.

The 2007 and 2011 Elections

A critical review of numerous articles on Nigerian electoral processes shows that the character of political parties towards 2007 and 2011 elections gyrated around the following features:

1. Cross-Carpeting;
2. Judiciary and Electoral Dispute;
3. Creation, Breaking away and Merging of Political Parties;
4. Electoral Acts, 2006 and 2010;
5. Amendment of the Constitution;
6. Electoral Chairmanship; and
7. Voting Method and Procedure.
8. Party Politics and Flag-bearers at all levels.

Political parties are of two categories in Nigeria political systems. Few are major operating on a large scale while numerous are minor functioning on a small scale. These are the lists of the registered political parties for 2007 elections: A – Accord, AA - Action Alliance, AC - Action Congress, ACD - Advanced Congress of Democrats, ACPN - Allied Congress Party, AD - Alliance for Democracy, ADC - African Democratic Congress, ANPP - All Nigeria People's Party, APGA - All Progressives' Grand Alliance, APLP - All People's Liberation Party, APN - Action Party of Nigeria, APS - African Political System, ARP - African Renaissance Party, BNPP - Better Nigeria Progressive Party, CDC - Congress for Democratic Change, CPN - Community Party of Nigeria, CPP - Citizens Popular Party, DA - Democratic Alternative, DPA - Democratic People's Alliance, DPP - Democratic People's Party, FDP - Fresh Democratic Party, HDP - Hope Democratic Party, JP - Justice Party, LDPN - Liberal Democratic Party of Nigeria, LP - Labour Party, MDJ - Movement for Democracy and Justice, MMN - Masses Movement of Nigeria, MRDD - Movement for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy, NAC - National Action Council, NAP - Nigeria Advance Party, NCP - National Conscience Party, ND - New Democrats, NDP - National Democratic Party, NEPP - Nigeria Elements Progressive Party, NMDP - National Majority Democratic Party, NNPP - New Nigeria People's Party, NPC - Nigeria People's Congress, NRP - National Reformation Party, NSDP - National Solidarity Democratic Party, NUP - National Unity Party, PAC - Progressive Action Congress, PDP - People's Democratic Party, PMP - People's Mandate Party, PPA –Progressive People's Alliance, PPP - People's Progressive Party, PRP - People's Redemption Party, PSP - People's Salvation

Party, RPN - Republican Party of Nigeria, UDP - United Democratic Party and UNDP - United Nigeria People's Party.

It is also important to accentuate that poor articulative and aggregative capability of political parties has snowballed into cross-carpeting by politicians or the formation of new political parties. The case that vividly comes to mind is the formation of the Action Congress (AC) in 2006 by the some strong factions of Alliance for Democracy, Former Vice-President Abubakar Atiku and other former PDP chieftains such as Chief Tom Ikimi, Chief Audu Ogbeh among others who felt disadvantaged by the politicking within the ruling PDP government. Also, the formation of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in 2010 by some break-away factions from PDP, ANPP among others under the leadership of Muhammad Buhari is also noteworthy. The formation of these two alliances is in a bid to break the jinx of PDP during 2007 and 2011 elections respectively. This issue of cross-carpeting revealed that Nigerian politicians are power-drunk; they want to, at all costs, be at the helm of affairs; they are ideologically baseless. During this period (2006-2010), the cross-carpeted politicians were tagged with this phrase "Political Prostitutes".

Contemporaneously, apart from the ruling PDP, no other party seems to have the prospect of winning especially the presidential election in Nigeria. Atiku Abubarka and his AC as well as Buhari and his ANPP have remained undaunted by Presidential vilification and suppression. This is so, because of the enormous powers currently welded by Obasanjo who doubles as the national leader of the party (PDP) and the Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from 1999-2007 and became the PDP Chairman, Board of Trustees after his presidential tenure. He thus, uses the powers and resources of the State at his disposal to protect and project the interest of the PDP above those of other parties and elites – another characteristic of a fragment party system. As a matter of fact, whoever emerges as the PDP presidential flag bearer would be rightly addressed as "His Excellency" or "President-in-the-waiting", even before the presidential election in 2007 and 2011 (Dode, 2010:193).

It is perhaps true to say that tactical rigging of elections in Nigeria began with the general elections in 1964. In the second republic, the re-election of Sheu Shagari saw the resurgence of several rigging techniques of 1964 and 1965. Before the election, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) had boasted that it would not record landslide but moon-slide victories. Another related case is June 12, 1993 presidential election, this election was rated as the most free and fair election in the political history of Nigeria but it was subjectively annulled by Babangida on June 26, 1993.

Specifically in 2007 general election, Edwin (2011) reported that the culture of malpractice, rigging and electoral fraud was re-introduced. The tactic deployed by

INEC in connivance with PDP was that of unlawful exclusion of validly nominated candidates from other parties. This tactic was effectively used to exclude nominated candidates of ANPP, ACN and APGA in the April 14, 2007 gubernatorial elections in Anambra state and ACN candidate in the Delta state. This tactic was also used within PDP, noteworthy here is the case of Rotimi Amaechi of the PDP in River State. It was well known that Rotimi won the PDP gubernatorial primary election and his name was thereafter sent to INEC. But a typical manipulative tactics of his party was set out due to factional interest in PDP River State, his name was replaced with another person (Celestine Omehia) who did not participate in the party primary (Ogunde, 2008). Pressing forward Edwin (2011) also accounted that Atiku Abubakar had also been excluded before the Supreme Court ruled to allow him on April 16, 2007, 5 days to the presidential election. Incredibly, INEC refused to put him on the ballot papers despite two Federal High Court's ruling in his favour on March 3, and April 7, 2007 respectively. From above, it is pragmatic that INEC Chairman (Dr Maurice Iwu) is like a pen in the hands of PDP – using it to write whatever PDP likes at any willing time.

The resultant effect of the above is that: firstly, parties such as ACN, PPA, ANPP and LP did defy the 2007 elections results and challenged them at the election petition tribunals. Although, it was late but judgements were delivered in favour of the right candidates; secondly, the PDP though the party in power at the center and still controls majority of power in the states of the federation, but in 2007, lost some of her strongholds through revalidation of votes by court of laws/tribunals. These are states where 2007 governorship election votes were revalidated: Edo, Anambra, Ondo, Bauchi, Osun, Ekiti, among others due to poor aggregative and manipulative mechanism of PDP. There were also bye-elections in some states such as Adamawa, Balyesa, Imo, Kogi among others. The implication therefore is that, in Nigeria, the political strategy of winning the elections by most prominent political parties is acquiring political power through electoral rigging (Omodia, 2010:68).

Edwin (2011) citing European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) which consisted of 150 international observers deployed to all 36 states of the federation. In EUEOM's report, it was stated that the 2007 states and presidential election fell below international standards for democratic elections. They were marred by poor organization, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, significant evidence of fraud, particularly during the result collation, lack of equal conditions for the contestants and numerous incidents of violence.

The above mentioned threats to electoral processes were achieved with the full support of the political elites, state security agencies and to some extent, the people who had benefited from the largesse of State extended to

them by the Presidency. Apart from the PDP, all the other parties are either in disarray, coma or narrow based, thus making it difficult for them to resist sectional interests. Recent events show that even the so-called majority party (PDP) has been hijacked to the point of projecting only the narrow interest of a clique of individuals, led by President Obasanjo (Dode, 2010:193).

It is important to explain at this juncture that, from fourth republic till date, the political party which shall win local government elections is the party in power at the state level. This is because; no political party will allow any opposition party to win local government elections in its controlled state. Instead, manipulative mechanisms will be employed.

Describing the 2007 elections, Ogunde (2008) is of the view that looking carefully at the governorship, state assembly, presidential, national assembly and local government elections, it was filled with the same old story; the same old method of open snatching of ballot boxes, multiple thumb printing, writing of election results on official record sheets, even before the election took place. Put differently, elections in Nigeria have always been rigged before, during and after the elections without exception. The difference in the April 2007 elections was that it was apparently conducted with worst impunity. The emerged president (Umaru Musa Yar'Adua) lent credence to the statement above when he openly acknowledged that the 2007 presidential election which brought him in as the president was marred with malpractices.

This paper recognized the Electoral Act of 2006 which, on the contrary, was not accordingly complied with or strictly adhered to by the political communities in 2007 elections. Also, the revalidation of election results by Court of Appeal under the chairmanship of Justice Ayo Salami brought some pandemonia in Nigerian judiciary system. Subjectively, the ruling party (PDP) was of the perspective that Courts of Appeal were used by opposition parties (majorly Action Congress of Nigeria) to get favourable verdicts in Edo, Ekiti and Osun states.

Before groping the nature of political parties in 2011 elections, it is analytically important to give brief details on Umaru Yar'Adua's disappearance and Jonathan's succession. Yar'Adua's presidency was fraught with uncertainty as media reports said he suffered from kidney and heart disease. In November 2009, he fell ill and was flown out of the country to Saudi Arabia for medical attention. He remained incommunicado for 50 days, by which time rumours were rife that he had died. This continued until the BBC aired an interview that was allegedly done via telephone from the president's sick bed in Saudi Arabia. As of January 2010, he was still abroad (BBC News, May 6, 2010).

In February 2010, Goodluck Jonathan began serving as acting President in the absence of Yaradua. In May 2010, the Nigerian government learned of Yar'Adua's death after a long battle with existing health problems and an undisclosed illness. This lack of communication

left the new acting President Jonathan with no knowledge of his predecessor's plans. Yar'Adua's Hausa-Fulani background gave him a political base in the northern regions of Nigeria, while Goodluck does not have the same ethnic and religious affiliations. This lack of primary ethnic support makes Jonathan a target for militaristic overthrow or regional uprisings in the area. Goodluck Jonathan called for new elections and stood for re-election in April 2011. He won and is currently the president of Nigeria (BBC News, April 19, 2011).

Towards the 2011 elections, there were political uproars, the new president could not really concentrate on governance rather he was nurturing his ambition to become an executive president in 2011. The political scenario was not different from what was obtainable in the first republic till date. However, the backbone of the ruling party was broken by the cancellation of governorship election results of some states controlled by PDP in 2007 and the threat from the CPC presidential candidate Muhammad Buhari. Prior to this, there was great party politics within the ruling party on who will be the presidential flag-bearer. The state funds were excessively used by the incumbent president who intended to also return to the office of the presidency. There was, as usual, breaking-away from political parties; merging of political parties to form an alliance and creation of new political parties.

In order to address the challenges of election in Nigeria especially the 2007 election, the former President, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua set up a 22 member Electoral Reform committee under the chairmanship of Justice Uwais in August, 2007 to examine the entire electoral process with a view to ensuring that we raise the quality and standard of our general elections and thereby deepen our democracy.

The white paper of the Electoral Reform Committee was released in March, 2009. The Federal Government accepted many of the recommendations of the committee including unbundling of INEC, the open secret ballot system, display of voters list, announcement of result at the polling booth, independent candidacy, funding of INEC to be on first line charge on the consolidated revenue fund, politicians convicted of violence and thuggery to be banned for ten years.

But the Federal Government rejected the recommendation that appointment of INEC Board and the three bodies to be created should be done by the National Judicial Council. The Government also rejected the recommendation that election petition should be disposed off before swearing in. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has included electoral reform as one of his top most priority. He sent the Justice Mohammed Uwais report unedited to the National Assembly and nominated a new Chairman for INEC (Prof. Attahiru Jega) along with national commissioners and Resident electoral commissioners that have been commended by a cross section of Nigerians to be people of integrity. The National Assembly

has amended the constitution through the First Amendment to the 1999 Constitution and enacted the 2010 electoral bill which has been signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan. While signing the Electoral Act 2010 into law, the President Goodluck Jonathan reiterated his commitment to guaranteeing the sanctity of the ballot and committed to doing all that is needed to guarantee free, fair and credible elections (Dode, 2010).

As a result of the above, there was an Electoral Act in 2010; there was slight difference with its 2006 version in areas, such as: period of state elections; voting methods; method of selecting party candidates; period of hearing election petition among others. Extracting from the work of Igbuzor (2010), the 2010 Electoral Act introduced some elements meant to refine the electoral process in Nigeria. We will examine only a few of them. The first Amendment to the 1999 Constitution provides that election should be held as provided in the electoral Act but that the elections should hold not earlier than 150 days and not later than 120 days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder of than office (Igbuzor, 2010).

The implication of this amendment is that the next election will hold not earlier than the 29th December, 2010 and not later than the 29th January, 2011. The Electoral Act specifically provided that the elections should be held in the following order:

- (a) Senate and House of Representatives;
- (b) Presidential Election; and
- (c) State Houses of Assembly and Governorship Elections. (Igbuzor, 2010)

The Electoral Act also provides for issuance of notice of elections (90 days before election); registration of voters (60 days before election); submission of list of candidates (60 days before election); withdrawal of candidates (45 days before election); notice of poll showing the day and hours for the poll, the persons entitled to vote and location of polling units (14 days before election); registration of new political parties (6 months before election); and merger of political parties (90 days before election) (Igbuzor, 2010).

The 2010 electoral act also provides for procedures for political parties conventions and congresses for the nomination of candidates. They are expected to give INEC 21 days notice. Section 87 specifically provides that political parties should hold primaries for aspirants to all elective positions to nominate candidates for elections through either direct or indirect primaries. In direct primaries, all aspirants will be given equal opportunity of being voted for by members of the party. In indirect primaries, special convention and congresses will be held in designated centres on specified dates with delegates. The delegates to the congresses and convention are to be chosen through democratic election (Igbuzor, 2010).

Moreover, the Electoral Act places a limitation on election expenses with the maximum of one billion naira

for presidential election; 200 million naira for Governorship election; 40 million for Senatorial election; 20 million for House of Representatives election; 10 million for State House of Assembly election; 10 million for chairmanship election; and one million for councillorship election. The law also places a limit on individual donation to a maximum of one million (Igbuzor, 2010). Finally, the electoral act provides that INEC should keep an eye on the political parties to make confidently certain that they comply with the law.

The voting method and procedure of the 2011 elections was not new in the electoral system in Nigeria; it was firstly used by Prof, Humphrey Nwosu for local government elections in 1989 and the presidential election in 1993. However, the major difference is that the 1993 elections made use of Option A4 and was not technologically based. The voting method and procedure has seven (7) steps. The main components of the procedure include, the Electronic Voters Register- a database of eligible Voters complete with photographs, biometric data(fingerprint) and other bio-data such as age, sex, address, polling unit, registration area, etc; Voter Accreditation and Authentication prior to balloting. This will be based on the use of a secure Voter identification and the biometric information and photograph on the cards; the use of some form of Direct Recording Balloting Machines (Electronic Voting Machines) will completely eliminate the cost associated with the printing of several million ballot papers. The last, but most important component of the Electronic Voting System is the immediate collation and transmission of election results directly from each of the polling stations at the close of polls to designated collation centre nationwide (Umobong, 2006).

The Commission, however, is not unmindful, of challenges the introduction of the new system will pose, but is nevertheless, ready to learn from the experience of other countries with similar challenges where the system has been tested and found to be acceptable like Brazil, India, Venezuela, etc.

Step One- Accreditation Procedure

1. Accreditation starts at all the polling units at 8:00 am and ends at 12 noon.
2. All eligible voters would start to arrive at:
 - a. Voting centre as from 8 a.m until 12 noon when the accreditation ends;
 - b. All voters' cards would be checked, stamped and signed at the back by the presiding officer who will record details such as the date, type of election and code number;
 - c. At 12 noon, the poll orderlies would stand behind the last voter on the queue. Any person who gets to the polling centre after 12 noon shall not be accredited.
 - d. At each polling unit, the following would be entered in

words and in figure into statement of result from titled “form EC.8A and EC.8A (1)”.

3. The actual number of persons available at the point of voting. This is to determine the number of voters, if any, that left the centre after accreditation but before voting time:

- i. The total number of persons registered as voters at the centre;
- ii. The number accredited; and
- iii. The serial numbers of the ballot papers issued to the station.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:21).

Step Two- Post Accreditation Activities

1. Declare accreditation closed.
2. Direct the poll assistant or security agent to stand behind the last person on the queue to prevent anyone from joining it.
3. Count loudly the number of the accredited voters.
4. Announce loudly the number of accredited voters and the number of voters in the register of voters.
5. Enter in form EC.8A and EC.8A (1) “statements of the result of poll” the number of voters in the register of voters and the number of accredited voters.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:22).

Step Three- Commencement of Voting

1. Immediately after the accreditation at 12 noon, voting method and procedure would be explained by the presiding officer to all present.
2. All activities that constitute electoral offences within the polling zone including penalties for committing such offences will be explained.
3. The presiding officer will open the ballot box and show those present that there are no ballot papers or other materials enclosed therein.

Voting shall commence at 12:30 p.m and ends at 4 p.m nationwide or as soon as the last accredited voter casts his/her vote.

CONDUCT OF POLL

After undertaking all post accreditation activities, the presiding officer will announce loudly the commencement of voting at 12:30 p.m and shall request:

- a. The accredited voters to line up;
- b. Security agents and/or the poll orderlies to stand behind the last person on the queue.
- c. Every accredited voter in the queue to show his/her duly stamped registration card.
- d. The voters to move to the presiding officers’ table where he/she will issue each voter with ballot paper for the election.

e. Each voter to move to the voting cubicle to put his/her thumb mark in the space opposite the symbol of the candidate of his/her choice and to drop the ballot paper in the ballot box in the full view of all present.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:23-27).

However, it must be noted that every voter is expected to line up in a single queue; separate queues are allowed for men and women in certain parts of the country (e.g northern part) where culture does not allow men and women together in a single queue.

Also, preference is also given to disabled people at every polling unit in the federation.

Step Four- Sorting and Counting of Votes

Immediately after the last accredited voter has voted the presiding officer shall:

- i. Separate the ballot forms for the types/kinds of election;
- ii. Sort out the ballot papers according to the political party’s symbol;
- iii. Use the alphabetical order of acronyms of the political parties sponsoring the candidates and count loudly the number of votes scored by the candidates;
- iv. Enter in form EC.8A and EC.8A (1) printed in 12 copies the number of votes scored by all the candidates;
- v. Verify the poll result by cross-checking:
 - a. The number of persons registered to vote at the centre;
 - b. The number of accredited voters in the queue before voting commences and the total number of votes scored by the candidates.
- vi. Carry out thorough check on ballot papers to identify irregular/improper votes casted which shall be rejected if identified.
- vii. Sign form EC.8A and EC.8A (1) and invite the party agents for each of the political parties to sign the statement of result form.
- viii. Give a copy of the duly completed and signed form EC.8A and EC.8A (1) to:
 - a. Party agents; and
 - b. The police.
- ix. Proceed immediately with the original copy of the EC.8A and EC.8A (1) accompanied by the security agents and party agents and deliver to the returning officer at the ward collation centre;
- x. Return all ballot papers used during the election to the electoral officer through the ward returning officer for preservation.
- xi. Also return all the remaining electoral materials such as stamps, unused ballot papers and ballot boxes, pad, gum, voters’ register to the electoral officer through the ward returning officer.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:28-32).

Step Five- Collation and Declaration of Results

Collation and Declaration of results shall be done at:

- a. Registration Area;
- b. Local Government level;
- c. State Assembly constituency level;
- d. Federal House of Representative constituency level;
- f. Senatorial District;
- g. State; and
- h. National.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:35).

The councillorship election shall be declared at ward level, the chairmanship shall be declared at INEC office at the local level, the state house of assembly election and the national assembly election shall be firstly declared at local level and forwarded to INEC office at the state level and INEC office at the federal level respectively.

It should be noted that candidates with the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected (i.e. simple majority votes).

The governorship/gubernatorial election shall be declared at INEC office at the state level and finally, the presidential election shall be declared at INEC office at the federal level strictly in accordance with the provisions of the guidelines for this election.

Step Six-Distribution of Result Forms EC.8B & EC.8B (1)

The returning officer after declaring the results at any level, shall then distribute duly completed and signed copies of form EC.8E and EC.8E (1) as follows:

- a. The original copy to the electoral officer;
- b. One copy to each of all the candidates or their party agents; and
- c. One copy to the police.

SOURCE: (Manual for Election Officials, 2011:36).

Step Seven- Issuance of Certificate of Return of Election

The chief electoral officer of the federation who is also the chairman of INEC shall, as soon as possible after the declaration of results, issue certificate of return of election to the returning/winning candidates at all levels (Nigerian Electoral Act 2010, Clause 75:19).

The INEC Chairman (in person of Prof. Attahiru Jega) demonstrated electoral management acumens in choosing the resident electoral commissioners for states in the federation and in other electoral activities. People of high integrity and prestiges were selected; eminent professors who cannot afford to mislay or obliterate their profiles in exchange of Naira and Kobo. There were fora, seminars, symposia, conferences organized by INEC in collaboration with civil society organisations for political parties and political communities at large on how to facilitate free, fair and credible elections.

Due to high level of preparedness and readiness of the INEC coupled with a modified voting method and procedure, no party, not even the ruling party, was confident of their winning at the polls. Worsening the winning confidence of the ruling party (PDP) at polls was the political fatigue discerned in electorates on the dominance and unproductivity of (PDP) in Nigerian contemporary politics.

Sixty-three (63) political parties participated in the 2011 elections. These political parties are: Accord (A), Action Congress (AC), Action Alliance (AA), Action Party of Nigeria (APN), Advanced Congress Of Democrats (ACD), African Democratic Congress (ADC), African Liberation Party (ALP), African Political System (APS), African Renaissance Party (ARP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Alliance For Democracy (AD), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Change Advocacy Party (CAP), Citizens Popular Party (CPP), Community Party of Nigeria (CPN), Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Democratic Alternative (DA), Democratic Front for Peoples Federation (DFPF), Democratic People's Alliance (DPA), Democratic People's Party (DPP), Freedom Party of Nigeria (FPN), Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH), Hope Democratic Party (HDP), Justice Party (JP), Kowa Party (KP), Labour Party (LP), Liberal Democratic Party of Nigeria (LDPN), Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN), Mega Progressive Peoples Party (MPPP), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), Movement for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy (MRDD), National Action Council (NAC), National Conscience Party (NCP), National Democratic Liberty Party (NDLP), National Democratic Party (NDP), National Majority Democratic Party (NMDP), National Movement of Progressive Party (NMPP), National Reformation Party (NRP), National Solidarity Democratic Party (NSDP), National Transformation Party (NTP), National Unity Party (NUP), New Democrats (ND), New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Nigeria Advance Party (NAP), Nigeria Elements Progressive Party (NEPP), Nigeria People's Congress (NPC), People For Democratic Change (PDC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Mandate Party (PMP), Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN), Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Peoples Salvation Party (PSP), Progressive Action Congress (PAC), Progressive People's Alliance (PPA), Republican Party of Nigeria (RPN), Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP), United Democratic Party (UDP), United National Party for Development (UNPD), United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP)

Expatriating on the details of the candidates sponsored by political parties, it was reported that only 54 out of the 63 political parties sponsored candidates for some elective positions, while the ACN, ANPP, CPC, and PDP have candidates in all elective positions. As rightly noted

from the fourth republic till date, opposition parties are weak; some scholars have categorised them as third parties because the spirit of competitiveness can not be identified, they are rather servant to the ruling party. For example, 21 political parties led by APGA supported the PDP Presidential candidate in 2011 elections; this still buttresses the fact that opposition parties are still feeble and they have not been able to serve as watch-dog on party in government. It is important to state that much analysis could not be presented on opposition parties in Nigeria because their origins, structures, organisations and functions are not nationally and ideologically grounded and their impacts have not really been felt and they have always been pocketed by party in government. On the other hands, any attempt by opposition party to challenge the party in government will be frustrated by the ruling party through the use of state apparatus.

In other words, the implication of these anti-democratic practices above as described by Dode (2010:192-193) is that the likelihood of attaining democratic consolidation in Nigeria looks dim with this unique characteristic of the present fragmented party system that the country showcases. Fragmented party system in this work refers to one, which is made up of a large number of opposition parties that are largely divided in terms of ethnics, ideology and composition. Because of these serious divisions, the power of the incumbent party is reinforced, while other parties offer no real opposition in the legislature. Analysts have argued variously from the political economy point of view that this nature of party politics persists in Nigeria because of the economic weaknesses of the opposition parties (weak economic base). They buttress this argument with the fact that while the ruling PDP can pay generously for her expenses, the opposition are economically weak, hence, people decamp and cross-carpet easily. In effect, democratic consolidation and governance become unworkable due to lack of effervescent opposition parties.

In 2011 elections, it was observed that various campaign stratagems were employed by the political parties; springing up surprises. For instance, the CPC candidate (Muhammod Buhari) who, wanted to win the election at all costs, restricted his campaign areas to few northern states. No political party, except (PDP), embarked on a nation-wide campaign. It was widely reported that the North was tactically assessed by the PDP candidate (Goodluck Jonathan) through the Northern States' Governors, the south-western states' votes were sold by an ACN National Leader (Bola Ahmed Tinubu) in a meeting which lasted for some hours in Lagos, and the south-east region, where the PDP candidate hailed from, supported the son of the soil beyond expectations – this was spotted in the high level of voters' turn-out in the region. Advantageously, he emerged as the president.

Generally, the 2011 elections were relatively peaceful and it can be labelled to be relatively free and fair. However, there were post-election upheavals in the

northern part of the country which resulted to killings and destruction of properties. Concluding, the paper asserts that there can be no meaningful democracy without functioning political parties with high degree of competitiveness. It is obvious therefore those political parties constitute the major actors of democracy.

Recently in 2013, some of the major opposition parties (ACN, CPC, DPP, and some factions in APGA e.t.c) are on merger talk with the aim of dislodging the PDP dominance at the federal level in the 2015 General Elections. This is not first of its kind; such alliance was experienced in the second republic. This political issue has raised many questions from different quarters. Some people are of the views that merging of opposition parties will bring no benefit to the country because it is not called for by the masses, rather by sectional elites for their selfish interests. However, some people assume that it is a good political mechanism of aborting one-party system and making our democratic system to be more competitive.

POSITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

In Nigeria and like other parts of the world, civil society groups play active role in electoral processes, mainly serve as watch-dog to both the political parties and electoral management bodies, play advisory role to all the governmental institutions. Most importantly, civil society groups organize seminars through which voters are enlightened on the reasons why they must participate in electoral processes. They also advocate for credibility at polls, they criticize unfair rules; they join the electoral commission in debating and deploying best strategies and methods that will bring about free and fair elections. Technically, they serve as observers on election days in order to note the proceedings, loopholes and the general conduct of the election. The role of civil society organization in electoral processes is very pivotal; it is like that of an auxiliary nurse to a surgeon in surgery theatre (Lamidi, 2011:45).

Civil society organisations have important roles to play in advancing democracy and in particular overseeing the elections. They can contribute not only to formulating the framework, such as timetables and codes of conduct, but also to voter education and election monitoring. Their watchdog efforts can add credibility to the exercise and thereby minimise the potential for violence.

Igbuzor (2010) elucidated the functional capabilities of civil society organizations as follows: monitoring the entire electoral process especially the voter registration exercise; processing of nomination of candidates by political parties; campaigning process and the media; carrying out civic and voter education; observing the election in a more comprehensive manner; synergising and coordinating the deployment of observers and aim to cover

more than 50 percent of the polling units; training citizens and communities on strategies for mandate protection; and monitoring the key stakeholders including INEC, security agencies, political parties and the media.

Nigeria's civil society organisations have contributed well to the preparations for the elections. However, the unhealthy relationship between INEC and the major civil society organisations could reduce the impact. Various scholars are of the opinion that INEC leadership publicly acknowledges civil society's importance and has taken some initiatives toward creating working relationships. Nevertheless, Moru (2005) clarified that there has been deterioration in recent time. INEC sees itself as the sole custodian of the election process, while civil society organisations insist on shared ownership. The standpoints need to be reconciled urgently to permit constructive cooperation. The INEC chairman needs to make a clear pronouncement, not only embracing the role of civil society but specifically outlining the modalities for cooperation.

On the part of the civil society, it is imperative to intensify efforts in the last weeks before the elections to educate voters on the electoral process, including their rights and duties and how to mobilise to defend the sanctity of their votes; encourage religious leaders and traditional rulers to use their moral authority to curb violence at the polls; and participate in INEC forums on the administration of the electoral processes as well as disseminating information so as to minimise the risks of violence related to unjustified suspicions of fraud. Security issues are very crucial in electoral processes, they should be guided by and conform to appropriate principles, rules, code of ethics and laws governing police duties, especially in relation to crowd control and the use of force and firearms.

Civil society organisations have rightly devoted considerable attention to electoral violence, either on their own, or in collaboration with international partners such as International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and Amnesty International. However, there is a need to strengthen their activities and improve coordination. Consideration should be given to establishing constituency level peace committees to, among other things, engage in mediation and encourage development of community-based, dispute-resolution training. This should complement INEC's work, through the proposed party liaison structures, to resolve inter- and intra-party conflicts as they arise during the final phase of campaigns and on Election Day in particular (Africa Report No. 123, 2007:19).

In 2007, Academic Associates for Peace Work (AAPW) recommended that civil society organisations also need to intensify efforts to organise interethnic/religious dialogues in various states, to inform people on the dangers of bigotry and using ethnic and religious profiling as the basis for electing candidates. Discussions on political/

electoral violence should be conducted at the grassroots level, using the media and indigenous languages to raise awareness of the dangers of polarising differences and how to resist such manipulation by politicians. NGOs, community leaders and the mass media should educate politicians and the general public on the democratic culture of political competition and opposition and the need to respect the rules of the game and act within the law.

The mass media must do better at ensuring equal access for candidates. If the elections are seriously flawed, any attempt at denying exposure of opposing views could result in attempts to obtain redress by extra-legal means. Civil society groups must, therefore, monitor the print and broadcast media and insist that they remain professional in their dealings with all parties before, during and after the polls (Africa Report No. 123, 2007:20).

Lastly, democratic governance, economic development, social and political stabilities can be achieved and sustained when all processes of development are driven by good number of civil society participation. Thus, civil society organisations must also actively seek ways of working in partnership with the government at all levels, bringing their levels of expertise to bear in the governance process for the good of all. Wherever government is not meeting up with its governance responsibilities, the civil society can complement the leaderships to deliver on promises. This is achievable, if government can bestow even-handed participation on civil society organisations in all processes of development.

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Traditional institutions can be examined from three different phases namely: pre-colonial period, colonial period and post-colonial period. But, in this context, the pre-colonial period is irrelevant owing to absence of electoral practice. Aliyu (2008) thematically reviewed the colonial era as the period of increase in the number of traditional rulers. This increase was catalysed by the policy of Indirect Rule. Justification for the policy of indirect rule has been debated. Many writers, most notably Margery Perham in her book *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, have emphasised that there was no practical alternative to the adoption of a policy of Indirect Rule. That a system of ruling through native chiefs, was a matter of expediency rather than of high moral, political or philosophical principles. Lugard was, as Perham puts it "shackled by the poverty of his revenue" and was obliged to open up and to attempt to control (if not administer) a vast territory "much of which had never been viewed by himself or any other European" with the aid of a small and reluctant Imperial grant-in-aid, sufficient only for the employment of a tiny cadre of "political" (i.e.

administrative) officers. A policy of “direct rule” whatever that could conceivably have meant at the time was impossible to contemplate. Accordingly, as Lugard put it in one of his Political Memoranda of 1906, “we must utilize the existing machinery and endeavour to improve it”. From the foregoing, it is clear that the policy of Indirect Rule actually employed traditional rulers as public servants, as administrative officers for the colonial government. Any traditional ruler, in the words of Lugard “will hold his place only on condition that he obeys the laws of the protectorate and the conditions of his appointment.” Thus, traditional chieftaincy institutions flourished even in areas such as Tivland, Iboland and Urhoboland where they were absent in the pre-colonial era. Gradually the British transferred the responsibilities of government to the colonial officers, while still retaining traditional rulers as fronts.

Upon the independence in 1960, Nigeria witnessed an explosion in the number of traditional rulers in the country as more traditional institutions were created for reasons mostly political. However, due to the historic roles played in the north, by the duo of Malam Aminu Kano of Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Malam Ibrahim Imam of Bornu Youth Movement (BYM), the Native Authority systems, as the traditional systems were then called, underwent series of reforms which culminated in the Local Government reforms of 1976. Consequently, traditional rulers were stripped of most, if not all, of their powers both spiritual and temporal and are reduced to no more than ceremonial monarchs. Little wonder then, the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and its successors of 1989 and 1999, left the future of the Royal Fathers hanging in the balance (Aliyu, 2008). However, the jinx of traditional institutions can not be outrightly broken in Nigerian politics because most political parties are ethnic, cultural, religious and regional based. Politicians seek for support from their traditional institutions during electioneering campaigns and voting exercise.

Even though, the traditional institutions are not classified as any level of government. Citizens mostly have trust and belief in them, its customs and traditions; they accord them with respect; and accept their laws and orders. As a result, traditional institutions are good organs for sensitising citizens to come out en-masse to participate in all electoral processes; they also enjoin their people to maintain peace, law and orders of the electoral activities; they are also fathers to all political candidates; and they enjoin them to do what will be of great benefit to the society at large. The viability of traditional institutions is more virile at local level. Thus, political power seekers make use of the traditional institutions to get mandates from citizens – this is discerned in various campaigns by political parties. A typical example is the Olagunsoye Oyinlola of the PDP’s campaign in 2007 at Osun State, where traditional rulers converged at Oba Okuade sijuwade’s palace at Ile-Ife to pay for him; endorse him

as right candidate; and citizens were urged to vote for him at the polls.

Furthermore, the role of traditional institutions on political representation of the community and community identity is highly influential. This role, as explained by Richard (2005:2), has led to the frequent involvement of chiefs, town leaders, associations’ leaders in party politics, either as ‘brokers’ for the mobilisation of support, or as powerful actors in their own right.

TASK OF SECURITY AGENCIES IN NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Security agency mainly focuses on the wellbeing of the people in a country, but duties of security agency are more complex during the election period. A major component of electoral practice is electoral security which has to do with the process of protecting electoral stakeholders and officials, electoral materials, information, facilities or events. The study of Corrado (2004) revealed that, for an election to be peaceful, security agency must play an active role in protecting any form of election violence.

The work of security agency does not start on the Election Day, its works begin during the registration of voters and electioneering campaign of all the political parties. Special trainings must be organized to mentally and physically equipped security officials for electoral security. Essentially in an electoral exercise, security agencies must curb any form of physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstration, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics aimed at exploiting, disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, or otherwise influencing an electoral process and its outcome (Lamidi, 2011:46).

The security agencies can make a difference in the outcome of elections. It is therefore important that security officers display the highest level of integrity, neutrality, professionalism and sense of duty. The protection of human life, voters, electoral materials and officials and the preservation of lawful and orderly electoral processes are necessary for credible, free and fair elections. Without adequate security, there cannot be credible, free and fair elections. In the past, the security agencies have been accused of being used by politicians to intimidate opponents and to rig elections.

In line with Igbuzor (2010), the primary role of security operatives including the Police and other voluntary organisations in elections is to protect the integrity of the electoral processes and of the participants, institutions and outcome through:

1. Safeguarding the security of lives and property of citizens during the electoral process;
2. Ensuring the safety of electoral officers before, during and after elections;

3. Providing security for candidates during rallies, congresses, conventions, electioneering campaigns and elections;
4. Ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful atmosphere for campaigning by all parties and candidates without discrimination;
5. Maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and counting centres;
6. Providing security for electoral officials at the voting and counting centres;
7. Ensuring the security of election materials at the voting centres and during transportation; and
8. Ensuring the security of all electoral material, personnel and citizens during registration of voters, update, revision and any other electoral event.

The security operatives should devise and use proactive methods to prevent fraud, coercion, intimidation or other manipulation or violence. The security operatives should collect effective intelligence information throughout the campaign period and day preceding to voting in order to be able to appreciate threats to free and fair elections in different places. Appropriate measures must also be taking to curb electoral violence, including ensuring timely deployment of adequately equipped and briefed personnel, and cooperate with other security agencies, as well as work cooperatively with other stakeholders to provide proactive, impartial policies in order to ensure that existing laws are applied to alleged offenders in order to end impunity (Africa Report No. 123, 2007).

In addition, the use of state security agencies by the party in power to oppress the opposition candidates should be jeopardised by appropriate authorities in order to provide a conducive political atmosphere for electoral processes. Hence, equal access to state security operatives should be guaranteed for all party candidates before, during and after elections. This is hoping to curb constant pre-election killings in Nigeria.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE NIGERIAN PRESS

Historically, the Nigerian press has the attributes of free and outspoken press in Africa; however, it has consistently been the target of harassment by the past military dictatorships and under the civilian administrations. Many agents of Nigeria's press have been imprisoned, exiled, tortured, or murdered as a result, among them, to mention few, was Dele Giwa, who was killed with a letter-bomb in October, 1986; also, Ogoni activist and television producer Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed for treason by order of the Sani Abacha in 1995 (resulting in the expulsion of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations and sanctions from abroad).

In spite of all harrassments, which can be best addressed legally and constitutionally. Press/Media house is seen as the mouthpiece of the peoples and government. Its importance in any federation cannot be underrated. In Nigeria context, media houses are purposefully set up by

prominent politicians in order to publicise their political interests, respond to opponents' comments, canvass for votes, and expose the weaknesses as well as loopholes of opponents via propaganda.

Put differently, Lamidi (2011:46) disclosed that some governments have used media which they control to attack opposition candidates, restrict the supply of newsprint and exclude opposition candidates from appearing on TV and radio. One frequent abuse by incumbent government is to disallow balanced coverage in designated election broadcasts, and then show politically biased programmes.

It is nevertheless expected that all responsible media houses should report impartially about the election, particularly state-run media, since they are funded by the tax-payers. Apart from National Broadcasting Commission's monitoring, conscientious newspapers and broadcasters should set up a monitoring system with daily assessments on the distribution of air-time and other issues related to elections and electoral processes. Daily newspapers should ensure that reporters travel as wide as possible through the country to get the broadest selection of views. Ogbuzor (2010) added that media houses should refrain from selective reporting or reporting out of context, exaggeration or outright falsehood; and must be balanced in its coverage of the electoral process and not give undue advantage to any political party or aspirant/candidate.

On a final note, the contributions of all the above-mentioned organizations are very vital in the electoral processes; their usefulness cannot be undermined in electoral practices. It is expected that they function in their full capacities so as to contribute to the fairness and credibility of electoral processes.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESSES

STRENGTHS

(i) Strengths of the Political Parties:

- a. Recruitment or Reproduction of the Political Class;
- b. Membership Recruitment;
- c. Patronage Disbursement;
- d. Organisation-Party Bureaucracy;
- e. Involvement in Policy Formulation; and
- f. Voter Mobilisation.

(ii) Strengths of the Civil Society Organisations:

- a. Civic and Voters' Education;
- b. Election Monitoring; and
- c. Mobilisation of Voters.

(iii) Strengths of the Security Agencies:

- a. Protection of Electoral Stakeholders and Officials, Electoral materials, Information, Facilities or Events;

- b. Prevention of Fraud, Coercion, Intimidation or other Manipulation or Violence; and
- c. Provision of Proactive and Impartial Policies, thus, ensuring that Existing Laws are applied to alleged offenders in order to end Impunity.

(iv) Strengths of the Traditional Institutions:

- a. Enjoining their people to maintain peace, law and orders of the electoral activities;
- b. Sensitising Citizens to come out en-masse to participate in all Electoral Processes.

(v) Strengths of the Press:

- a. Mouthpiece of the Peoples and Government.

WEAKNESSES

(i) Weaknesses of the Political Parties:

- a. Poor Ideological Basis;
- b. Poor Internal Democracy;
- c. Uninstitutionalisation of the Political Parties;
- d. Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics;
- e. Money Politics;
- f. Poor Political Education of the Citizens;
- g. Poor Competitors or Weak Opposition Parties; and
- h. Prevalence of Voters' apathy.

(ii) Weaknesses of Civil Society Organisations:

- a. Lack of Legitimate Power;
- b. Lack of Financial Resources;
- c. Few Grounded Civil Society Organisations;
- d. Poor Collaborations; and
- e. Diverse Perspectives of the Civil Society Organizations.

(iii) Weaknesses of Traditional Institutions:

- a. Poor Organisation;
- b. Conflicting Interests; and
- c. Lack of Coordinated Relationships.

(iv) Weaknesses of Security Agencies:

- a. Poor Funding;
- b. Lack of Sufficient Machineries;
- c. Lack of Well-Equipped Staff; and
- d. Lack of Clear-cut Definitions of Various Security Agencies' roles in Electoral Processes.

(v) Weakness of the Press:

- a. Poor Coverage;
- b. Poor Monitoring System;
- c. Reporting out of Context; and
- d. Exaggeration or Outright Falsehood.

OPPORTUNITIES

(i) Opportunity for the Political Parties:

- a. Viable party system serves as basis of democracy.

The existence of vibrant political parties as posited by Omodia (2010:1) is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity. A point to note here is that without viable, democratically managed political parties, it will be impossible to have a 'lasting' democracy. Parties are supposed to be the strong pillars and instruments through which democracy can be cultivated and entrenched.

(ii) Opportunity for the Civil Society Organisations:

- a. In an ideal political system, civil society organizations can be opportuned to play active complementary roles in consolidating democracy and democratic practices.

(iii) Opportunity for the Traditional Institutions:

- a. Through these institutions, it is possible to harness understanding of local politics, high level of political education and participation, thereby, facilitating democratic governance.

(iv) Opportunity for the Security Agencies:

- a. Under normal circumstances, security agencies can guarantee elections and electoral processes that are devoid of violence, manipulations and intimidations among other quandaries of the electoral system.

(v) Opportunity for the Press:

- a. The press can provide quick and instant information without prejudice, bias or sentiment.

THREATS

(i) Threats to the Political Parties:

- a. Military Take-over and Military Rule;
- b. Self Succession Bid by Military Rulers;
- c. Dominant Forces of the International Capitals;
- d. Dominance of One Political Party in Civilian Regime; and
- e. Interest of the Incumbent Government.

(ii) Threats to the Civil Society Organisations:

- a. Military Rule;
- b. Ruling Class or Dominant Coalitions.

(iii) Threats to the Security Agencies:

- a. Political Party in Government of the Day.

(iv) Threat to the Traditional Institutions:

- a. Restricted Constitutional Roles.

(v) Threats to the Press:

- a. Military Government;
- b. State – Controlling of the Press.

EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS ON NIGERIAN POLITICS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Wallerstein (1976) acknowledged the fact that the

processes of state formation and the actions of interest groups within the nation state occur within the context of a global economy; it does not occur in isolation. The existing state of affairs within this global political economy is consequential for actions in individual nation states. By implication, the politics of a nation state is an element of international politics. Global economy extorts the values of freedom and democracy; this makes the sovereignty of a state to be a vague concept. Owing to the fact above, Nigerian state, like other third-world countries, is neo-colonial and dependent.

Neo-colonialism and dependency, according to Olorode (1998), mean that the independence project has not been completed; that foreign interests and models dominate and dictate the political and economic choices of a Nigerian state; and that in situations involving conflicts of interests between Nigerian people and international capitals, the international interests will override that of Nigerian people.

Obviously, during colonisation, there was total dominance and control of the state affairs by the colonialists. Ideally, it is expected that self-rule and government will be the order of the day at independence without any form of foreign interests or representation dominating the political and economic choices of a state. Contrarily, Iyayi (2005:19) recounted that the neo-colonial and dependent status of the Nigerian state deepened after flag independence in 1960. For example, the British government sought to preserve its political and economic arrangements in an independent Nigeria when in 1962, sought a defence pact with the NPC Balewa – led government. It is also widely believed that the reversal of Gowon's decision to take the North out of Nigeria following his counter-coup of 1966 was based upon intelligence of the British government. Similarly, it was widely believed that both British and United State of America intelligences were involved in the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed and in the subsequent reversal of the patriotic course of his government. The babangida reversal of the Political Bureau's recommendation for a patriotic course for the country was also based upon pressure from international capitals.

Furthermore, the death of Abacha in 1998 and the murder of Abiola shortly after have also been credited to the handwork of British and United State of America intelligence. Finally, although it was widely suspected at the time, but it has now been confirmed by accounts of Nigerian politicians who were in exile during the dark years of Abacha's rule, that General Obasanjo was selected and installed as President of Nigeria by both British and United State of America intelligence working in collaboration with members of the dominant coalition of Nigeria's ruling class. Even recently, it is an accepted fact that the global capitalist institutions of the World Bank and International Monetary Funds (IMF) have now assumed direct control and management of Nigerian economy.

Inferences can be logically drawn that the direct involvement of international capitals in the arrangement of economic and political choices in Nigeria and elsewhere has made the question of political security and stability of the state a matter of overriding concern. This is because political security and political stability are the defining requirements for the protection of the activities of international capitals in the Third World.

Analysing the effect of global economy on the politics and electoral processes of nation states, Cabral (1969:24-25) is of the view that due to the back-up from international capitals, those in control of the state apparatus see themselves as standing above the people; that they do not see the state deriving its legitimacy from the people, thus, the wielders of state power do not therefore understand the meaning of the sovereignty of the people. However, attempts by other interest groups in society to create this understanding and persuade the wielders of the state power to redefine their basis of legitimacy are termed as oppositional and adversarial.

Examining the political scenario of a nation state in the context of global economy, international capitals decide who will be positioned in the house of power, thus electoral management body will just allocate rather than count votes or even if votes are appropriately counted, the figures can be falsified. An emblematic example is the emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 election, of which scholars have credited his emergence to the handwork of the two (2) major international capitals namely: British and United State of America.

Conclusively therefore, this attitude has had the consequence of further encouraging the ruling class elements in power to take other actions and measure that weaken and subvert the prospects for good governance and democracy in Nigeria. Above all, the effects of international capitals in politics and electoral systems of the Third World countries, Nigeria inclusive, have not been progressive; rather it is a destruction of freedom and democracy.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has come a long way in developing her electoral system from 1923 when elective principle was introduced. Though the incursion of military into governance has caused serious setback to evolution of an enduring electoral system in Nigeria, yet there is hope for the future (Afe, 2003).

Scholars have, over the years, recommended possible solutions to the failure of the electoral system in Nigeria. These recommendations are based on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the use of Security Agencies, Conduct of the Political Parties, the conduct of Civil Society Organisations, Traditional Institutions and the Press as well as the Electoral Laws.

For instance, it is recommended that more feasible

independence and better funding for (INEC) as the Electoral Management Body will enhance impartiality and objectivity in mediating between the competing political parties. On the other hand, its better funding will lead to improvement in logistics and the conduct of election.

Political parties should incorporate the five philosophies of this nation in their structures, political lines and actions. No institutional powers should be above the political will and sovereignty of the people. All activities should be value-driven and truly competitive so as to enable different ethnic groups which constitute the federation to interplay their ideologies and programmes. Moreover, for more confidence in the electoral processes, better education and more informed choices of the voters, there is need for strict adherence of the political parties to the fair rules of the game as well as devoting more time to interest articulation rather than electoral manipulations.

Security agencies should also endeavour to upgrade their security techniques and strategies in order to enjoy freedom, peace and tranquility in the electoral exercises. Therefore, this will assure the interest groups that are out of power to re-invest greater trust and legitimacy in the social order and political processes.

In reality, independent judiciary is very indispensable in Nigeria polity. Electoral laws must be strictly abode by the political communities and such laws must be derived through credible and transparent process thereby strengthening the foundation of democratic culture in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the complementary roles of the Civil Society Groups, Traditional Institutions and the Press must not be despised.

Finally, the will and sovereignty of the Nigerian people must prevail over the dominant ruling class, political class and the international capitals. The values of these dominant classes should be re-defined to support both democracy and development in Nigeria.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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