

## ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN NIGERIA, 1999-2023

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examined electoral mismanagement and failure of democratizing the Nigerian state due to the corruptible tendencies and practices inherent amongst the politicians. Relying majorly on qualitative approach, applying data collected from secondary sources, interrogation was carried out via content and historical analysis. Electoral malpractices in Nigeria have actually incapacitated the growth and institutionalization of the precepts of democracy depriving Nigerians of free, credible and fair elections needed for socio-economic and political development. Indeed, elections in Nigeria have failed to live up to the expectations due to various forms of electoral manipulations which have denied the country credible electoral results. Unhealthy inter-party/intra-party politics have equally accounted for the marred democratic foundation through the violation of the fundamental human rights of the people. The electoral misadventures from 1999 to 2023 reviewed in this paper demonstrated the most systematic process of scientific investigation. The paper unequivocally found that election manipulation in Nigeria has resulted to the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who have no regard to the principles of democracy akin to good governance, rule of law, constitutionalism and fundamental human rights. The paper provides critical recommendations that would serve as antidote to the problems of electoral mismanagement in Nigeria to sustain the nascent democracy.*

**Keywords:** electoral mismanagement, corruptible tendencies, inter/intra party, constitutionalism, credible election.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Political parties are conventionally noteworthy organizations in democratic societies. Students of political science have usually associated them with democracy itself (Orji, 2015). Political parties, as 'makers' of democracy, have been so idealized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them (Ojukwu, *et al* 2019). In other words, the presence of active political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any society (Anifowose, 1982). Well-functioning political parties are vital for the success of electoral democracy and political development in Nigeria (Chikendu, 2002). Democracy along with its characteristics of freedom of expression, rule of law, accountability and elective representation has become the conventional system of government all over the world. Democracy as a system of government implies that the power of the political community hinges on popular sovereignty. Elected representatives, in contemporary times, refer to democracy as the means by which the political community expresses its general will.

Democracy in Nigeria has not really been what it is expected to be when compared to what is observable in other parts of the world. "The respect for human rights and the rule of law, which are the main characteristics of democracy, were not visible between 1999 and 2007; election rigging and gangsterism became the order of the day that one can hardly differentiate between democratic

government and autocracy (Osabiya, 2015). Accordingly, this author corroborates that in contemporary civilizations, political parties are vital to the political process. Not only are political parties' instruments for acquiring political power, they are also tools for interest aggregation and the fulfilment of those interests through government control.

Just before the close of the last century, Africa witnessed the “third wave of democratization” so did the rest of the world when authoritarian regimes and unilateral governments were replaced or displaced by civilian governments or administrations through elections. “Nwabueze (2003) described Nigeria as one of the strongholds of dictatorship in Africa caught in the cumulative effect of the wave after years of military dictatorship. After several failed attempts by the past military regimes of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and Sani Abacha, democracy formally gained footing in Nigeria on 29 May 1999.”

The fundamentals of true democracy include good governance, fair and legitimate elections, equity, justice, transparency, accountable leadership, accountability, political education of the common people, respect for the rule of law and cooperation among different branches of government. It is pertinent to observe that the Nigerian media and general speeches of the state often focus on the assertion that Nigeria is “consolidating its democracy”. “According to Momoh (2013), the evidence on the ground, however, contradicts this claim. It is perhaps most appropriate to liken the relationship between political parties and the consolidation of democratic rule in a particular society to that which exists between the umbilical cord and the fetus.

Nigerian democracy aims to ensure political stability and promote fundamental human rights. Elections in Nigeria which should have been a prelude for achieving a stabilize government accompanied with people's consent have contradicted these standards because of election rigging. This is a serious concern hence the stability and secured environment needed for the success of democracy have been severely jeopardized. Elections conducted since Nigeria's independence have been played in a do-or-die affair and this has made the peace-loving Nigerians to be dead scared in exercising their voting rights hence the suicidal nature of the politics. Evident has shown that the rate of citizen participation in elections these days have drastically reduced due to the limited choice or lack of qualified candidates. Lacks of candidates with vision have made the electorates politically weak. Sometimes, the electorates are disenfranchised and the alienated political barons employ the use of coercion to seize power. This quest to win election by all means has also claimed the lives of both the electorates and some popular candidates by some hoodlums who want to control the government by dubious means. As a result, those who have the interest of Nigerians at heart have resorted to shun politics for fear of facing a sudden death in the process and this has posed a serious threat to Nigerian democracy and its consolidation. Worse still, electoral body which would have been neutral, and ensure a free and fair elections have been biased because in some cases, they are employed by some power brokers to serve as a rescue mission to some illegitimate candidates to the detriment of popular candidates and Nigerian electorates. To ensure that their unpopular candidates emerged victorious in elections, they have seen election rigging as a way out against the general wish of the popular candidates, electorates and the good of Nigerian democracy. Kurfi(2005:101) has observed, rigging is almost synonymous with Nigerian elections. The main aim of election rigging or malpractice is to frustrate the democratic aspirations of citizens who have voted or would have voted into office someone instead of the victor. These days, votes don't count because come rain, come sun, electoral body must deliver and no one questions their decisions. In fact, the elections conducted in Nigeria have been cruelly contested that the success of the democratic order has been compromised. This ugly electoral malpractice and rigging have a negative effect on Nigeria's democratic future because the trend is increasing instead of reducing. These trends have actually undermined the chances of successful elections and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria provoking this study in attempt to unravel the factors majorly responsible for the political misadventure.

### **The Electoral Process in Nigeria**

The electoral process in Nigeria suffers diminutive conceptualization in political discourse, such that it is taken to be equivalent to election or electoral system. But the concept, to wit, reaches beyond the method of choosing public office holders; or the won an election. Perhaps, the most beneficial way to comprehend the electoral process is to explore a descriptive conceptualization which exposes the distinctive features of the process. This is necessary in order to make the idea of electoral process in Nigeria clear and inclusive.

According to Jega (2007), elections and electoral process in Nigeria have historically been conflict ridden. The campaigns preceding elections are invariably marred by pettiness, intolerance and violence. To him (Jega), there are several reported incidences of intra-party as well as inter-party violence, conflict including have often been neither free nor fair, characterized by violations of the process both inadvertent and willful), corrupt conduct by officials, rigging of results and so on . Reports indicate the incidences of these are pervasive during the party primaries, and some candidates are always buys scheming to ensure a favorable outcome for themselves by hook or by crook in the on - coming elections. Some politicians even consider it a do or die affair and a must win game. He further identified the primary challenges which elections and electoral process pose to Nigerian democrats in the context of our national democratic aspirations which are:

- i. How to ensure the electoral process is legal and constitutional.
- ii. How to ensure that the institutional framework for conducting the elections consisting of electoral management body is effective and credible to discharge of its responsibilities.
- iii. Ensure popular participation of citizens in the elections.
- iv. Guarantee peaceful conduct of the elections cum free and fair outcome acceptable by all.

According to Nwabueze (2003), the electoral process embraces within its ambit all the institutional procedures, arrangements and actions involved in elections. Specifying he said: it includes the suffrage, the registration of voters, delimitations of constituencies, the right to contest elections, electoral competition between rival political parties, body charged with the conduct and supervision of election the method of selection of candidates within the political parties, nomination of candidates, method of voting, ~he actual conduct of elections the determination of election disputes, electoral malpractices and their consequences.

Furthermore, the electoral process includes election observation and verification activities carried out by local and international bodies or both. It also included the establishment of institutions and structures that will mobilize the populace towards involvement in the electoral process and provides the rules and regulations that govern the process. Indeed, the electoral process is an all-encompassing process which involves many issues and operations. The electoral process is a defining and regulating process in the democratic contest.

Onyeka (2002) elucidates what characterize a proper electoral process. For him, the basic objective of election is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizen's interest. He posits that an electoral process reinforces the concept of self-rule, celebrates it and legitimizes governmental power. The basic constituents of the electoral process according to Onyeka include: political parties, public opinions pressure group and the mass media. They all converge in the electoral process to determine who the leaders would be and ensure that the elected official will represent their constituencies effectively.

In ideal situation, the power conferred on the electoral through election is absolute and not to be questioned. But in practice, the absolute power hypothesis has failed because of how elections are

actually conducted. In many elections, the ideals of the process are compromised and flagrantly abused in complex ways. These ways according to Iheanacho (2003) include intimidation of voters: causing confusion at voting stations, falsification of documents, falsification of voters' lists, making false radio and television announcements, using law counts for unfair injunctions, deliberate miscalculations, compromising polling agents, compromising electoral offices, stealing ballot boxes and ballot papers and attacking or even eliminating opponents. The masses therefore, appear to have lost hope in the elections and electoral process in Nigeria as rigging of elections and associate fraudulent practices have become endemic and unprecedented in the 2003 and 2007 elections, it was established beyond a shred of doubts that both the National Assembly and presidential elections were riddled with irredeemable fraud and irregularities. Iheanacho (2003) observed that, on this point, both the foreign and local election monitors are perfectly in agreement.

According to him, the summary of their findings indicted the whole electoral process and the incumbent leadership who use their political positions to undermine the due process and hence intimidated, disenfranchised and alienated the electorate.

Theories abound in explanation of issues of elections in political economy. The political economy approach is lucidly presented by Lenin (1984), Ake (1981), Aja (1998) and Chikendu (2002). Karl Marx's political economy approach is based on dialectical materialism. The theory of dialectical materialism places primacy on material or economic conditions of society. It is premised on the belief that man is dominantly motivated by economic needs. Labour is the essence of material existence hence, economic activity is man's primary concern. In line with Aja (1998), the thrust of this perspective is on how the understanding of a society's politics and culture depends primarily on the understanding of its economic structure as defined by the relations between employers of labour and the working class in the process of production.

To Marx, every political system corresponds and reflects its kind of economic structure. Marx places emphasis and premium on the production base i.e., the substructure, since this determines the politics, ideology and cultures of the society that is the superstructure. Thus, from substructure, one easily understands the nature of politics, how a society organizes, manages and reproduces itself.

In analyzing and explaining the phenomenon of electoral transparency and democratic consolidation in Nigeria therefore we shall use the Marxist theory of the state. This theory arose in reaction to the western liberal theory of the state which contends that the state is an independent force and a neutral observer that caters for the interest of every member of the society.

According to the Marxist theory, the state is the product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms (Lenin, 1984:10-11) succinctly puts it:

... the state is a product of society at a certain stage of development: it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have power, seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of order and this power arisen out of society but placing itself more and more from it, is the state. This state, which arose from the conflict between classes, is as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by this means also becomes the political dominant class and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed (Ake, 1996:67).

Analyzing the character of the post-colonial state Ake (1996:3) opines that although political independence brought some change to composition of the state managers, the character of the post-colonial state remained much as it was in the colonial era. It continues to be totalistic in scope, constitute a statist economy. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, had a narrow social base, and relied for

compliance on coercion rather than authority. The tendency, to reproduce the past was reinforced by the dispositions of the dominant social forces in the post-colonial era. None of them apparently had any serious interest in transformation and all of them were only too aware that they could not afford to broaden the social base of state power. What changed our title was the proliferation and conflict became more salient with the indigenization of the political elite and matured rapidly. For the purpose of understanding the post-colonial state and the politics associated with it, what is pertinent is that, the leaders of the post-colonial state placed more value on capturing political power for themselves and grew increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for the control of state power. Thus, the premium on political power rose higher and higher and with it the intensity of political competition and its domination by efficiency norms.

The political leaders are exposed to new conflicts. The increasing competition and conflict among nationalities, ethnic groups and communal and interest groups reflected in their ranks. Many of them had sought power by politicizing national, ethnic and communal formations, now in office, some of them manipulate ethnic and communal loyalties as a way to dissocialize their followers and contain the emerging class division of political society which could isolate and destroy them. In doing so, they weakened the solidarity of the people at a great cost. They create not only strong divisions within their own ranks but strong antipathies and exclusivity in society. As always, the exclusivity of the competing political formations increased the premium on political power and the intensity of political competition.

The dominant faction of the political elite found itself utterly isolated, increasingly relying on violence, at war with the rest of the society and with rival factions among its own ranks. Political competition itself assumed the character of warfare and paved the way for the ascendancy of the specialists of violence. State power remains especially the same, immense, arbitrary, often violent, and always threatening. Politics remained a zero-sum game; power is sought by all means and maintained by all means. Colonial rule left most of Africa a legacy of intense and lawless political competition amidst an ideological void and a rising tide of disenchantment with the expectation of a better life. The struggle for power is so absorbing that everything else, including development is marginalized. Those who are out of power constantly worried about their exposure to every kind of assault by the state. Since what mattered in this type of politics was the calculus of force, the out of power elites strive constantly to put together a credible force to challenge those in power.

Thus, according to Lenin (1984) "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". The state autonomy in the class society is therefore more apparent than real for the state remains the instrument of the dominant classes for exploiting and suppressing the subordinate classes. As Miliband (1977:109) puts it, "the state is here the source of economic power as well as an instrument of it; the state is a major means of production".

It is within the context of the specific character or nature of the state of Nigeria that one can understand and explain the ugly indications of electoral malpractices. In Nigeria, the control of state power means access to wealth and influence. Therefore the consequences of losing power are the loss of wealth and influence. As a result, the struggles for control or access to the state becomes a zero sum game, a do or die affair. This explains the high premium place on politics in Nigeria and the incidents of electoral malpractices.

The political party and class in power strive to keep it by all means and those who are not in control do everything to dislodge the group in power. The common strategy employed to achieve their respective goals is to indulge in electoral malpractices with the resultant electoral violence.

### **The Concept of Election**

Gwinu and Norton (1992), election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office or accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting. They state further that an election is one of the means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions, adding that where voting is free it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relations in society, and as a method for seeking political obedience with a minimum of sacrifice of the individual's freedom.

Election therefore represents a modern and universally accepted process through which individuals are openly and methodically chosen to represent a body or community in a larger entity or government (Nnadozie, 2007).

As a mechanism for democracy or democratic government, elections serve the function of recruiting representatives by popular vote or ballot. Election constitutes a basic institution of democratic control, which enables the establishment of popular sovereignty. Ranny (1975:144) argues that although no model of free election is fully realized in the action of electoral system of modern democracy, such a model can however provide a useful set of benchmarks for analyzing, understanding, comparing and evaluating electoral systems. Like Mackenzie (1968) he lists six requirements for a genuinely free election. These include:

Meaningful choices, which implies that voters, must have a choice between at least two candidates for each office to be filled. Clearly, this requirement rules out single candidate elections.

Freedom to know and discuss the choices. This implies that there must be full freedom for all candidates and their supporters to publicize their names and policy positions so that the voters hear what they have to say.

A manageable number of clear choices. This implies that voters should be presented with a manageable number of meaningful choices.

All adults must have equal opportunity to register their choice by voting. If some people's votes are weighed more heavily than other people's, the basic democratic principle of political equality is violated and the favoured voters constitute an oligarchy.

Free registration of choice. This suggests that voters must be able to go to polls 'without any obstruction or fear of subsequent reprisal. It means also that they must be able to vote without coercion or fear.

Accurate registration, counting and reporting. This requires that voting procedures must permit voters to register their choices accurately and unambiguously. The counting procedures must provide accurate totals of the preferences registered for each alternative. And lastly, the reporting procedures must guarantee that the totals, which control who wins the polls or contested positions, are honestly published.

Jega, (2007), elucidates what characterizes a proper electoral process. For him, the basic objectives of election are to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens' interest. He posits that an electoral process reinforces or legitimizes governmental power. Thus, elections extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system. The basic constituents of the electoral process include political parties, political opinions, pressure groups and the mass media. They all converge in the electoral process to determine whom the leaders would be and ensure that the elected official will represent their constituencies effectively.

### **Conceptualizing of Democracy**

A principle of democracy is majority rule and the protection of individual and minority rights, which, although seemingly contradictory, are the very foundation of democratic government. According to May, majority is the only reasonable decision rule that is "fair", that is, and that does not privilege voters by

letting some votes count for more or privileges an alternative by requiring fewer votes for its passing.

Stated more formally, majority rule is the only binary decision rule that has properties like fairness, decisiveness.

Majority rule is a means of organizing government and deciding public issues without taking away the basic rights and freedom of majority groups or individuals. Minorities, by virtue of their religion, ethnic background, geography location, income level or as the losers in elections – are guaranteed basic human rights that no government or majority should remove. With their rights guaranteed, minorities can contribute to their countries democratic institutions. Because a majority can win a vote under majority rule, it has been commonly argued that majority rule can lead to a tyranny of majority.

The concept of democracy, in its pure and its practical forms, does indeed mean “majority rule”. Moreover, it does not mean that individuals enjoy certain rights against the state which will triumph the will of the majority. It is submitted that individuals enjoy no rights that triumph the will of the majority. The reason for this assertion lies in the genesis of the individuals rights themselves. It is true that there are certain individual right that are considered inalienable and which can bring the state to account. However, it is vital to recognize that those rights themselves, their status and application are born out of the fundamental processes of majority rule.

In sum therefore, therefore individuals rights capable of triumphing state power, but those rights are themselves born of the democratic process and therefore ultimately subordinate to that overarching mechanism, concept and power.

Democracy is by far the most challenging form of government, both for politicians and for the people. The term democracy comes from the Greek language and means “rule by the simple people”. Democracy is a political form of government in which governing power is derived from the people, either by direct referendum (direct democracy) or by means of elected representatives of the people (representative democracy). We vote for our representatives and the one with the most votes goes on to act for the majority; the majority being the collective people who voted for representative. That representative speaks on behalf of the majority who voted him in and votes in such a way as to embody the will that majority.

However, this system is not flawless? What about those who are not in the majority? This group is known as the majority. While the majority is not being indirectly represented by the politicians like the majority, the minority still retains their basic rights and expects the majority to show consideration for those rights as well. The minority also knows at this time they will not always be in the majority on every issue.

The minority accepts that the in order for our government to work completely the will of the people, in the case the majority, must be fulfilled. The framers of the constitution insisted that the indirect democracy approach to government will be the best methodology in creating our new nation. To ensure that the will of all people will be carried out and that the minority will still maintain their basic rights a system of “checks and balances” was established and assembly insured through the constitution.

Majority rule is a means for organizing government and deciding public issues; it is not another road to oppression. Just as no self-appointed group has the right to oppress others, so no majority even in a democracy, should take away the basic right and freedoms of a minority group or individual. The notion of majority rule with respect for minority rights guarantees that no political power will ever be more dominate than the other. It also makes certain that while the majority may have the obvious power that will of the minority will also be considered. That is why this attitude towards government is so important. There are several current examples in modern societies about the concept of majority rule with respect to minority rights.

A hot topic right now, the issue of same sex marriage, is a perfect illustration of this model of

governments. The majority of nation feels that same sex marriages should not be permitted in the United States. However, in respect to the minority opinions (that same sex marriage be legal), many of the citizens in the majority group feel that same sex marriage couples should be allowed civil unions. As a form of government democracy requires adherence to the basic principles of majority rule (given that this is the only way to determine the will of the people as entity). That is to say that the will of the majority prevails in the governance of society and the formation and application of its laws.

It is submitted that the necessary corollary of the principle of majority rule is the subjugation of the minority. In simple terms, democracy will not function if individual or minority views will be sovereign in all circumstances. Individual rights may be honored but only those licensed by the majority will, which sees its manifestation in the actions of the state in a functioning democracy.

Likewise, Aristotle endorsed the rule of law writing that “law should govern”, and those in power should be “servant of the laws”. The “majority rule” is often described as a characteristic feature of democracy, but without governmental or constitutional protections of the individual. It is more proper that laws should govern than any one of the citizens: upon the same principle, if it is advantageous to place the supreme power in some particular persons, they should be appointed to be only guardians to be oppressed by the “tyranny of the majority”.

An essential process in representative democracy is competitive elections that are fair both substantially and procedurally. Furthermore, freedom of the expression/freedom of speech and freedom of the press are essential so that citizens are informed and able to vote in their personal interest. The concept of the democracy does indeed boil down to majority rule. Individuals will continue to enjoy certain rights against the state will triumph the will of the majority at the tolerance of law by the design of the majority view itself. The majority can at any time and by the means of its choosing vary or abolish even the highest and most sacrosanct individual rights. The ultimate triumph card is thus held by the majority will in any true and functioning democracy. The enshrinement and protection of certain inalienable human rights is certainly a characteristic of many sophisticated, modern democracies, however, those rights are not a component of those democracies and they exist or will exist only while the majority will exist to safeguard them.

The concept of democracy when reduced to its essentials is rooted in majority rule. Moreover, while it is true that individuals enjoy certain rights against the state which will triumph of the majority, these rights only exist with the forbearance of the majority and the ultimate triumph is held by the majority view, which ultimately drives the legislative process within a true functioning democracy and which can vary, augment or even nullify any individual right as it sees fit. According to KAZ, rule of law generally “is not to be confused with democracy, justice, quality (before the law or otherwise), human rights of any kind or respect for persons or for the dignity of man.

Individuals enjoy certain rights against the state which will triumph the will of the majority only where the majority has taken the specific decision to allow it to be taken the specific decision to allow it to be triumphed. In certain specified situations. Therefore ultimate and unchallengeable authority remains vested in the majority will, which may choose to acquiesce in narrowly defined situations, but which can reverse that decision or amend the qualifying criteria for a certain right at any given moment if and when the will of the people evolves.

### **The Concept of Democratic Consolidation**

According to Ake (1996), for democracy to consolidate, it involves a process of alteration from totalitarian systems to a democratic system, which is vital for a lasting democracy and stable institutions to be established. This author implies that; democratic consolidation is a change from authoritarian system of government to a democratic system of government. However, this view appears shallow,



because majority of nations in the world have adopted democracy as a system of government, but can we say that their democracies are consolidated? If citizens cannot enjoy the dividends of democracy, how can we then say that there is consolidation of democracy? The transition from authoritarian regimes should rather be the first step towards consolidation of democracy. Huntington, (1991) argues that democratic consolidation transcends just the shift from totalitarian regime to democratic system, to encompassing that elections be credible, free and fair and to make sure that incumbent political leaders accept the verdict of elections and hand over power to the opposition without violence, when they lose elections.

Huntington (1991) contends that democracy consolidates when it defends people's rights and the sanctity of ballot. "Democracy is therefore, a system of government and a system of defense. It is a system for defending the powers of the people against seizure by political thugs. Democracy defends the hopes of a people against onslaught by sundry intruders. Hence, in the context of developing democracies, the stronger the defense mechanisms of democracy, the nearer the tendencies of the system toward democratic consolidation." In other words, democratic consolidation occurs when people's desires, choices, aspirations and decisions are well guided, defended, promoted and executed. "

The above explanations on democratic consolidation seem quite elaborate, detailing that democratic consolidation is beyond just political stabilization, and entails economic, social and political life also. Nonetheless, the challenge here is on how to enforce these preconditions in Nigeria where the struggle for power (acquisition) seems to be the major drive and not the consolidation of democracy. Leaders in Nigeria device any means to remain in power, including the manipulation of the populace to believe their lies and fables.

Democratic consolidation ought to constitute a tangible hallmark where the masses are well acquainted with political procedures and norms. This implies that citizens routinize, internalize and habituate these procedures and norms, and these norms must be legitimized by the people. Therefore, democratic consolidation is possible only when the populace is acquainted with political procedures and they must go beyond that into internalizing these processes of democratic values.

### **An Insight into Democratic Practice in Nigeria**

Democracy has become the most dominant political movement in the world today. The popularity of this political practice has been a worldwide trend over the years. In effect, by the second half of the 20th century, most independent states in the world had a government that embodied some of the tenets of democracy (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2013).

The Nigerian state assumed a new governance status in 1999 following the demise of authoritarian regime in the country. Military dictatorship was replaced by representative democracy with the hopes and aspirations of good governance much higher than what the seemingly collapsible democratic institutions could fulfill. The source and nature of transition in 1999 was later found to constitute threat to the foundation of democracy and obliterates the current efforts at consolidating democracy. Since restoration of democratic rule in the country, change of government has been orderly while elections have been periodic. Between 1999 and 2015 four different civilian administrations have emerged and there have been four successive transitions from civilian government to another (Obasanjo Administration, 1999-2007, Yar'Adua/Jonathan Administration, 2007-2011, Jonathan Administration, 2011-2015) and the present administration of Muhammadu Buhari which began in 2015. This is also applicable to the legislature. Since 1999, the country has successfully passed through five legislative houses both at the centre and the component units. Elections in the Fourth Republic have been characterized by monumental irregularities and malpractices which magnitude increases with every election. Even though Nigeria has experienced about sixteen years of uninterrupted democracy practice there are various challenges confronting democratic practice, consolidation and good governance in Nigeria. Therefore, as far as

ordinary Nigerians are concerned, democracy is not for them, but for the politicians and their cronies. The masses are yet to reap any dividend if ever there is any, of their democracy. What the masses are expecting to see is genuine, real and concrete improvement in their standard of living, and not fleet of foreign flash luxury cars, mansions and paraphernalia. It is high time Nigeria stop living in a world of illusion, deception and hypocrisy. Democracy around the world is changing very fast, smaller countries, less endowed than Nigeria have gone far in terms of human and economic development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are many theories of democratic consolidation. These include institutionalization and Informal rules.

Institutionalization:

Scholars think that the process by which a democracy becomes consolidated involves the creation and improvement of secondary institutions of the democracy. Linz and **Stephan's** thesis (nay), for example, is that democracy is consolidated by the presence of the institutions supporting and surrounding elections. (For example the rule of law) Informal rules:

O'Donnell (1988), believes that the institutionalization of electoral rules is not the most interesting feature of democratic consolidation. His approach is to compare the formal institutional rules (for example the constitution) with the in formal practices of actors. Consolidation on this view is when the actors in a system follow (have informally institutionalized) the formal rules of the democratic institution.

This study adopts the informal rules approach. This is because, the inability of Nigeria to meet the challenges of rising expectations within the polity as well as lack of accountability and active citizenship have undermined democracy in the country. The operational norm of democracy in Nigeria is less about political competition, but is more about public accountability and active citizenship, and the ability to adhere to the norms has chipped away at governance.

Other factors include the inability of the political leaders to create an environment of shared ownership in the practice of governance and in the generation of ideas needed to govern as well as inability of the state to meet the challenge of rising expectations within the polity.

The increase in the gap between the rich and poor must be addressed and the Millennium Development Goals attained for government to be functional. (Kalu, 2011). Consequently, the research posits that what negate democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the failure of the actors to abide by the norms of democratic governance. As a corollary to this reality, therefore, the study asserts that the antidote to the prevailing stalemate is strict adherence by all politically relevant strata of the Nigerian state to the universally acclaimed of democratic governance.

### **How Elections in 1999-2019 ensured Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

#### **The General Election of 1999**

The 1999 general election came up with three political parties; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). APP and AD came into alliance and fronted Chief Olu Falae who competed with PDP flag bearer, former military Head of State, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who later won the election.

Before this election, the military has promised lots of transition but ended up transferring power from one military regime to the other. In fact, the polity had been damaged that people no longer show interest in politics due to three decades of military dictatorship and the people of South-west (Yoruba) extraction were not happy that their son (Abiola) was denied the chance to rule the country in an election conducted in June 12, 1993 which he won with great margin. They saw it as a device from the federal government to stop a Yoruba man from ruling the country. The outgoing military who wanted to settle the

above scores, released Obasanjo who was then in detention for an alleged attempted coup and presented him as the sole flag bearer of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Obasanjo, who also come from Yoruba, did not attract support from his people because he was picked by the military to run for the election. This made his people accused him of representing the interest of the military oligarchy. The South-west rather rallied support for Olu Falae but Obasanjo later emerged the winner in an election that was seen as a mirage and as a result was not taken serious. The lackadaisical attitude shown towards the elections by Nigerians gave the military junta the freehand to manipulate the election and handed power to the person the hierarchy wanted.

### **The General Election of 2003**

The 2003 election brought some fresh hope to Nigerians because the previous election handed over power from military regime to a civilian regime. Because Nigerians were in desperate need for a democratic consolidation and haven assured by the military that power would be relinquished to a civil administration, the game this time, took a different look in that many were desperate for a political power having seen the kind of money that accrue from politics. This quest for money prompted the incumbents to clinch onto power for more tenure. Though Aina (2006) states that elections were adjudged as greatly flawed by the International observers, it presented in the history of Nigeria politics the first peaceful civilian transition in Nigeria.

However, the election was not without rigging judging from the reports gathered. European Commission which observers rampant election-related malpractice in a number of states in the Middle Belt, the South East and the South-South (European Commission, 2003:42). A Commonwealth Election Observer, Stuart Mole who was an eyewitness in the Niger-Delta reveals that the election outcomes were fixed. He notes that while voter turnout for the April 2003 elections was very low in many polling stations, with some polling booths not opening till 2.00p.m. and closing before 5.00p.m., the election results declared for most constituencies indicated a 90-100 percent voter turn-out (Mole, 2003:427). Added to this, most extraordinary of all, this apparently phantom election recorded extraordinary high turnout figures generally in excess of 90 percent. In Tai District, where we had seen few voters and where the polls had only opened for a few hours, turnout was recorded at an incredible 99.6 percent (and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) share of the vote at 99.2 percent). Clearly, widespread voter intimidation had accompanied massive electoral fraud. Ogunsanwo (2003:15) remarked on the conduct of the 2003 elections, one thing was unique in the 2003 election. The Independent National Electoral Commission was genuinely not in control. Human Rights Watch which monitored the election and asserted that: Rigging, violence and intimidation were so pervasive and on such naked display that they made a mockery of the electoral process. {...} Where voting did not take place, many voters stayed away from the polls. They were frightened off by a pre-election period that saw more than 100 people killed in election related clashes. By the time election ended, the body count has surpassed 300 (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In his speech, Iyayi (2007) noted that Transition Monitoring Group described 2003 election thus: "...Twenty-nine of the registered political parties that either contested or did not contest the elections have variously rejected the results as announced by the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) declaring the results a fraudulent. Some political parties and their candidates decided to challenge some of the results before the various Election petition tribunals and have gone ahead to do while others declared "mass action" to pressure a government without popular candidate to quit power. Abubakar Momoh describing the latest Nigeria democracy crippled with rigged elections and other forms of manipulations, dubbed it "presidential Authoritarianism". In his words: It is questionable whether what we had in 1999 and 2003 could be rightly qualified as election and not selections or better still allocation of positions. The (ruling) Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) using the (so called)

Independent National Electoral Commission(INEC) and the Nigerian Police to (sic) share out votes to contestants. Party primaries were mere impositions of godfather's candidates. And they were then allocated votes by INEC (Momoh, 2005.51).

### **The General Election of 2007**

The 2007 election marked the first time when a third consecutive presidential election took place and the first time when one elected leader succeeded another in the history of Nigeria's election. Amidst the tension that engulfed the country via delay in reviewing the constitution to give real autonomy to the electoral commission by the National Assembly, Obasanjo and his vice Atiku accusing each other of corruption, agitation for more tenures from the southern politicians while northern politicians insist that power must move back to their region, or the persistent disturbance from the Niger Delta militants to control some oil wells located in their states. Many political parties registered, the struggle for who should control the government gained momentum and this gave room for various presidential aspirants with the motives of perpetrating all forms of maneuvers to dethrone the leadership of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). President Obasanjo who failed in his bid for third term tenure, handpicked his successor (late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua) in a PDP convention and left other aspirants vying for the same seat disappointed. Earlier on, some PDP members who had intention to vie decamped to some other political parties and this made the election even fierce as killing of political opponents mount. This of course did not stop without election rigging since it was a carryover of the 2003 election which employed all kinds of riggings.

2007 election was not far from previous elections conducted in Nigeria. This time around, the election rigging went scientific as the Electoral bodies made electronic voting their benchmark. In spite of the promise from INEC chairman that the election will be free and fair, local and international monitoring team categorized the election a rigged one, in fact, as the most damning kind of election ever conducted anywhere in the world. In his speech, Iyayi (2007) notes: The April 2007 general elections surpassed the 2003 and 2004 elections in the level of fraud, violence, rigging, criminality and complicity by the various organs of the state in the electoral farce that occurred. Human Right Watch reported that 'in several key states, the Nigerian government failed completely in its obligation to conduct free and fair elections'. The 59 member International Republican Institute concluded that the first three parts of Nigeria's April 14 and April 21 election process fall below the standard set by previous Nigeria elections and international elections'. The remaining part of the election process was the determination of election disputes in the election tribunals and the courts. The challenges from some of the election outcomes have seen some been upturned while fresh elections were declared in some states like; Ekiti, Edo, Oyo, Benue and among others. Recently, one of the leading newspapers in Nigeria, The Nation, reported through Adekunle Jimoh on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2010 that a governorship aspirant (Dr. Kayode Fayemi) who contested in 2007 was returned as the governor of Ekiti State having been rigged out in re-election he won with 105,631 votes against Olusegun Oni's 95,176, who maneuvered the contest via election rigging and this also affect many other states with cases of election riggings.

### **The General Election of 2011**

The 2011 General Elections of the Federal Republic of Nigeria were the fourth elections since the country's return to democracy in 1999. The original calendar for the elections foresaw three consecutive Saturdays from 2 to 16 April. However, these dates were subsequently modified for different reasons. Elections took place in the following order: on 9 April for the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) on 16 April the presidential office and on 26 and 28 April, and 6 May for governorships and State Houses of Assembly.

The leading presidential candidates were President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the former Head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the former Head of State, retired General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and the then Governor of Kano State Ibrahim Shekarau of the All Nigeria Peoples party (ANPP).

On 2 April, on the Election Day for the National Assembly during a live broadcast at around noon, the INEC chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega informed the public that due to the late arrival of the result sheets in many parts of the country, the National Assembly Elections was postponed to 4 April. On 3 April in another televised speech, Prof. Jega announced that after consultations with the political parties, all the elections were shifted by a week from the original schedule. The new dates were: 9 April National Assembly poll, 16 April Presidential elections and on 26 April Governorship and State House of Assembly elections. The need to re-print a number of ballot papers was announced on 7 April and caused a third postponement for several Senatorial Districts and Federal Constituencies.

Despite the explosion of a bomb on 8 April at the INEC office in Suleja, Niger state that killed eleven people, the repeated National Assembly elections on 9 April proved that the decision to postpone the voting was favorable to a positive and peaceful conduct of the Election Day.

On 16 April, the presidential elections were conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly, manner with enthusiastic voters, committed to patiently attend accreditation and voting from early in the morning.

President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the election, defeating his closest rivals, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Mallam Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). From the results released, Jonathan polled a total of 22,350,242 votes to beat Buhari, who had 11,914,953 to a distant second, while Ribadu of ACN polled 2,049,357. Shekarau of ANPP polled 1,624,543 votes (Nigeria Tribune, 18 April 2011 p4).

In their various responses to the election, both domestic and foreign observers and commentators described the election as credible. According to the NLC “the presidential and National Assembly elections was the first controversy-free, all inclusive and demonstrably fair and just elections in the country since colonial times (*Nigerian Tribune* 18 April 2011p3). In a statement entitled: “salute to Nigerians in the aftermath of the presidential elections, “the NLC applauded the sacrifices of the Nigerian populace, who spent hours queuing for accreditation, for the vote, and finally staying behind for the vote count to ensure that their precious votes count”.

Observers from the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United States, National Democratic Instituted (NDI), made the outcome of their observation expressing their views on the election process. As M.S, Robin Carnahan, secretary of state of Missouri, United States said, “the presidential election was the second in a series that appears to mark a turning point for African's most populous country”. While presenting his team's preliminary report, Mr. Alojz Peterce, a former prime minister of Slovenia who was chief observer of the 141-member EU EOM stated that “the presidential elections (last Saturday), means an important step in strengthening democratic elections in the federal republic of Nigeria”.

Ms Mariya Nedelcheva, the head of the four-member strong delegation of the European parliament noted that “the elections are a convincing proof that the Nigerian authorities, institutions and electorate, are determined to remain owners of their destiny and to run even better elections the future”.

Another preliminary report titled: “Nigeria shakes off stigma of flawed elections,” presented by the chairman of the Commonwealth observer group, Mr. Festus Mogae, a former president of Botswana, said Nigeria has now “discarded the notion that the country can only hold flawed elections”... notwithstanding the organizational deficiencies that resulted in the April 2 National Assembly elections

being aborted after they had started, and in spite of persistent procedural inconsistencies and technical shortcomings, the elections, the elections for the National Assembly and the presidency were both credible and creditable and reflected the will of the Nigeria people” Mogae said.

Another preliminary report presented by International Republican Institute (IRI), an American-based body that has monitored more than 135 elections in 40 countries asserted that “the overall conclusion is that in at least four areas, the election was different from the previous three elections”. As Ms Constance Newman, a member of IRI's Board of Directors observed the areas to include: “the overall integrity of the electoral process, INEC's professionalism, the role of security agencies an reduction in cases of election-related violence”.

From the exposition done so far, there was a consensus of opinion among domestic and foreign observers about the sanctity of the 2011 general elections as observable pit falls were not overwhelming as to affect the judgment pendulum to swing in the negative direction (the Nation, April, 19, 2011 p7).

However, some opposition parties refused to accept the verdict of the election results as announced by INEC. The first party to decline endorsement of the results even before it was formally declared was the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The party raised posers about the results from the states in the south-south and south-east. The CPC also criticized results from 22 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In the petition adopted by the agent of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Dr. Garba Abari at the collation centre at INEC Headquarters, Abuja, CPC demanded a fresh manual re-calculation of the results nationwide and eventually challenged the results in court contrary to its earlier resolve (the Nation, April 19, 2011, p5).

The announcement of the results and the concomitant grievances especially on the part of the supporters of CPC, dovetailed into a state of ambivalence as violence broke out in Kaduna, Gombe, Adamawa, Yobe and Bauchi states. It later spread to other areas in the North as supporters of CPC went on rampage destroying lives and property. Many people were reported killed and properties worth billions of naira destroyed in the violence that assumed a religious dimension. Churches and mosques were not spared in the melee as they were set ablaze by hoodlums (*ThisDay*, April 20, 2011 p 20).

Despite the paradox of primordial reactions that followed the outcome of the 2011 elections, the elections could be said to have marked a democratic leap-forward in the annals of elections in Nigeria

### **The General Election of 2015**

Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the Presidency has been held by the People's Democratic Party (PDP). As such, it is the most influential party in the country (Tijani, 1986). The most recent election of 2015 came down to two candidates: the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner and flag bearer of the PDP, and retired General Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner and flag bearer of the All Progressive Congress (APC) party. The APC Party was formed from the merger of four opposition parties and some members of the PDP who had defected to the APC party (Lewis & Kew, 2015).

The 2015 election was special for many reasons. First, it was a repeat battle between the incumbent President and the retired General. The 2011 Presidential election, which pitted these candidates against each other saw Goodluck Jonathan win, 59% to 32% (Animashaun, 2015). Second, this election was a test of the incumbent President's ability to retain the support of the people who had lost patience with government graft scandals, high unemployment, and the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern part of the country ("How Nigeria's presidential election works," 2015). These issues had arisen during the administration of the incumbent President and formed the basis of General Buhari's campaign and slogan—“Change” ("How Nigeria's presidential election works," 2015). Finally, the candidates were from two different parts of the country: Jonathan is from the south and Buhari is from the north. As such,

there is an expected level of support from their native regions. For example, the states in the south, east, and parts of the west tend to support a southern candidate, while the northern states tend to support a northerner.

For these reasons, various news stations predicted the Presidency would be won by Buhari. However, there has been long-standing concerns about the vote rigging, violence, and electoral fraud that has characterized Nigeria's elections (Lewis & Kew, 2015). For example, in the 2011 election, the NDI heavily criticized the elections (*Final Report on the 2011 Nigerian General Elections*, 2012). Apart from marked violence, the NDI report cited irregularities, including underage voting, vote buying, stealing of ballot boxes, and lack of secrecy in voting. Due in part to this report, INEC worked hard to enact various measures to curb the concerns on elections in the future. INEC spent more than \$40,000,000 on ensuring that the elections would be free and fair (Whitehead & Saater, 2015). As a result of these changes, the INEC Chairman, Attahiru Jega, stated, “the [2015] elections were reasonably free and fair”, and he “attributed the success of the elections to sacrifices made by INEC officials” (Adibe, 2015).

Even with this praise of the 2015 elections, election-day violence was present. Boko Haram, a known terrorist organization, attacked several voting centres in the North, killing at least 39 (Whitehead & Saater, 2015). Given the long-standing reputation of Nigeria's electoral politics, additional doubts remain on the credibility of the election. The goal of this study is to analyze this presidential election for evidence that the INEC fell short of its goal.

### **The General Election of 2019**

Nigeria's democratic journey reached another milestone following the successful completion of the general elections in 2019. Given the intense competition that surrounds elections in Nigeria, every electoral period generates fear of a possible large-scale conflict that may cause democratic breakdown or national disintegration. The fact that Nigeria successfully carried out the elections is a major achievement in its political history.

Clearly, the 2019 elections were followed with great expectations because of the improvements recorded in the previous general elections in 2015. The 2015 elections generated positive perception of the electoral process for a number of reasons. For the first time in Nigeria's electoral history, a winner emerged from the opposition party, and there was a successful alternation of power. The 2015 elections saw remarkable improvements in the incorporation of technology into the electoral process, which contributed to strengthening the integrity of the elections. Since 1999, after democratic transition, there was also a decline in election petitions that had become a common phenomenon after the announcement of election results. It was, therefore, not a surprise that international and local observers gave some positive assessments of the 2015 elections (Iheanacho, 2019).

However, going by public comments and election observers' reports, the 2019 general elections did not meet the record of the 2015 elections. Nigerians were dissatisfied with the management of the elections by the Electoral Management Body (EMB), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). INEC battled with logistical problems and administrative deficiencies that impacted negatively on the quality of the elections. The logistical challenges caused a sudden postponement of the presidential election six hours before its commencement on 16 February 2019. The postponement significantly dampened public expectations about the prospects of the electoral process. The elections were followed with reports of disenfranchisement as a result of arbitrary cancellation of poll results, over spurious reasons, by the EMB. This is more problematic as most of the cancellations occurred in areas considered as strongholds of the opposition parties.

The state security personnel, responsible for securing the environment for a credible election, were again at the centre of controversies. Allegations of partisanship trailed the conduct of the security agencies to such extent that the public perceived the large presence of the security agencies as a calculated strategy to intimidate voters. Despite the huge presence of security officials, the election was still marred by violence that led to a number of deaths and arson attacks on the EMB facilities. Unsurprisingly, voter turnout was abysmally low in comparison with the previous elections. With a 35% voter turnout, the country recorded the lowest turnout on the continent, which speaks to the growing public disenchantment and mistrust in the electoral process (Iheanocho, 2019).

Although election observers and analysts conclude that the above incidents did not significantly affect the results, it is instructive that the courts have nullified many of the election results on the grounds of irregularities. The nullification of some of the results not only confirms concerns by the public, but also indicates the weak quality of the elections and the need for continuous reforms in the electoral process. While the judiciary has played a major role in confirming the quality (or otherwise) of the election, it should be noted that the judiciary has been another source of controversy in the electoral process. Thus, there is a need for caution in celebrating recent judgments from the courts. Increasingly, studies have demonstrated that the Nigerian judiciary can be compromised and has become a tool for electoral manipulation (Uzodike, 2014). It is, therefore, not surprising that some of the judgments on petitions from the 2019 elections have attracted huge criticisms from the public and reduced confidence in the judiciary.

### **The Impact of Political Parties on Democratic Consolidation**

There is a general agreement among political analysts that without the effective participation of political parties, democratic consolidation would be impossible. Political parties are major components in legitimizing control of political office and are the sole means of translating electoral outcomes into effective action. Momoh (2005:10) argues thus: “In a democracy, multiple political forces compete inside an institutional framework”, and furthers thus: “Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions, a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions and democracy is consolidated with compliance – acting within the institutional framework – constitutes the equilibrium of the decentralized strategies of all the relevant political forces.” For a fully unified democracy to occur, democratic process need to be developed into the very first level of political organization and that includes the grassroots.

A pattern has emerged since the commencement of the Fourth Republic that suggests that elites in the political scene have not learnt much from the mistakes of the past. The cross-carpeting of some governors and defections in the National Assembly which is part of the various crisis affecting the major parties are graphic instances of political elites having learnt nothing from their mistakes of the past. Another prominent feature in all the major parties is the lack of party discipline and fictionalization within the parties are the fallouts of indiscipline among party members. The phenomenon of carpet crossing and decamping has been aided by the registration of new parties. These actions portend dangers for democratic consolidation. These trends show how political parties through their internal and external conduct have impacted democratic consolidation. It is sad, however, that most of the impacts tend to be negative rather than positive and this hampers the chances of democratic consolidation.

### **Militating Factors against Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

#### **Lack of Accountability**

In Nigeria, the public sector is not accountable to the people, it seems like there is a divide between what goes on in government and what is being reported to the citizens. According to Okoye (2005), there is no transparent system where the public is allowed to participate in policy formation and have a say in



how these policies should be implemented. Nigeria has a large amount of natural resources but lacks proper accountability measures. In part this could be due to a lack of connective infrastructure like roads, internet access and electricity which service delivery and social accountability systems depend on. This lack of infrastructure is caused by the mismanagement of resources by government officials, and if these officials are made to be accountable to the citizens, there will be a good response to the delivery of services.

### **Inequality in the distribution of resources**

Nigeria has substantial natural resources to accommodate its expanding population but only a few people in the country have access to the money generated from the resources. A large proportion of the citizens are living below poverty line amidst the massive wealth in the country. Thus, when citizens get government jobs they try to amass as much wealth as they can while in their positions. Nigeria's constitution makes provisions for its citizens but the politicians are not following through. The citizens are not being supported through their salaries; the current minimum wage is 18,000 naira a month, which is about \$130, this is hardly enough to sustain an individual for a month talk less a family. Thus, public officials tend to find alternate means of raising income to be able to take care of their families. Although this is not an excuse for public officials to be corrupt, it hardly gives them an opportunity to remain honest if they can barely survive on the salary they are receiving.

### **Weak Social and Government Enforcement Agencies**

One of the major limiting factors of democratic consolidation in Nigeria is the lack of strong government agencies to enforce laws and rules as sternly as they need to. This creates an opportunity for public officials to embezzle funds without fear of repercussion or punishment. Nigeria is degenerating into a society without a discernible legalistic framework for law enforcement agencies or judicial system. In Nigeria, anyone that is favoured in political patronage can basically get away with most crimes, and some of these crimes involve money laundering, uncontrollable theft of government money and other illegal crimes (Omotoye 2011). Enforcement agencies need to be equipped to enforce laws and be given the authority to persecute anybody regardless of his or her position. There should also be an audit of the enforcement agencies to expose all the bad eggs that are corrupt, thus forcing a change to occur in these agencies and leaving the good guys in charge. Another major challenge and threat to democrat consolidation in Nigeria is corruption. Transparency International in 2004 projected Nigeria as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most corrupt country in the world (132<sup>nd</sup> out of 133 countries surveyed) (Nnaedozie, 2007). Nigeria has also been ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most corrupt country in the Sub-Saharan Africa and 143<sup>rd</sup> out of 183 countries surveyed around the world in 2011 (Transparency International, 2011). It has been argued that the war on graft has been difficult to win because the act is perpetrated by policy makers themselves. Oko (2008) observes that nothing enervates democracy more than corruption. It not only distorts governance but also provides perverse incentives for dysfunctional behavioural as well as diminishes the quality of life of the citizens by diverting funds for social service into private pockets.

### **Conclusion**

Various data generated and analyzed pointed that the state's machineries and institutions as primary cause of electoral dysfunctions due to hidden agenda sought to realize by certain elements hitherto inclined to the Nigerian political system for ulterior motives. Thereby, ensuring that institutions of the state are pre-disposed to individual control and/or manipulation. A system that ought to be free from prebendal consideration and akin to elitists' manipulation would not survive for the gross interest of the state.

## Recommendations

In Nigeria's quest to consolidate democracy, there should exist strong opposition party or bodies. In Liberal democracies, opposition parties put constructive pressure on the ruling political party and serve a watch-dog role. It is unfortunate that the All Progressive Congress (APC), the ruling party in Nigeria has been hostile to opposition parties, mass media and civil society organizations. To command loyalty from opposition parties or critics, they have resorted to using appointment to break the ranks of other political parties. When these men from opposition parties held such appointments, they find it hard to resist the lure of carpet-crossing the ruling party. The ruling (APC) has been hostile against the opposition made them deny the people free access to information of government activities as debated in the Information Bill.

Worse of it all, some wicked politicians or parties have indulged in the elimination of strong opponents. This in return made the opposition weak and dead scared to push on and some credible members who would have run will hide their dear lives least should they be the next target. To stop this ugly situation, a death sentence should be handed to any contestant found guilty of initiating or carrying out elimination of his opponents because he wants to gain upper-hand in the election. It will be wise to hit anyone who eliminates his opponent because of political position to face the penalty as applies to someone who commits murder.

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