

The State, Democratization and 2015 Elections in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Generally, election is regarded as an indispensable tool for facilitating the process of democratization and democratic governance largely because it provides the people with the singular opportunity to choose credible representatives in government. Within this context, election creates the social contract between the elector and the elected. Election also empowers the former, with whom the ultimate political power resides, to recall the latter when he/she is not performing. But, democratization does not just flow easily from even free and fair elections because there are a lot more serious issues to contend with in the process democratization than just holding elections. Some of the basic concerns elections are expected to redress in order to permit democratization to get underway have not been really dealt with. Pertinent questions are: Are elections planned to facilitate the democratization of the pre-capitalist, communal and cultural people in Nigeria? To what extent will election help to re-orient Nigeria's domestic bourgeoisie whose ineptitude in public administration and private sector management away from its fraternity with liberal democracy as against social democracy? Other contentious issues that elections have to contend with include the need for a ground-up and popular participation in the political and development process; pro-people development policies and programmes such as actualizing the resource-rights of the people; transparent, accountable and open government, and effective public institutions expected to implement democratic governance of the polity and economy; democratization of the political parties; the supremacy of the rule of law-the hope of the common man; the independence of the judiciary to dispense justice without fear or favour; and the engagement of mass-based organizations such as the civil society in the development process.

Across Africa, therefore, the outcomes of elections since the 1960s when the majority of African countries gained political independence from their colonial masters have, in most cases, been mixed with anguish, bloody ethnic violence, internally displaced persons, suppression, massive fraud as evident in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Uganda; though some measure of relative orderliness and peace were recorded in countries like South Africa since 1994, Mauritius and recently, Ghana. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the winner of elections since

1987 when Robert Mugabe became President was already known and declared before voting, because he (Mugabe) was always returned to power unopposed. So, too, were the likes of then Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Idi Amin Dada of Uganda and Jean Bokassa of Central African Republic among other sit-tight and autocratic Presidents, who merely held elections to renew their tenure in government. Even then Libyan dictator and former Chairman of the African Union, Muammar Gaddafi, once said that multi-party elections usually resulted in bloodshed in Africa, but he was in power since 1969 when he led a military coup against the then monarch and never held any election until he was killed at the battle of Sirte on October 20, 2011. The Ugandan revolutionary, Yoweri Museveni, led a rebellion that toppled the government of Milton Obote in 1985 and had since 29 January 1986, been President of his country. First, he (Museveni) dissolved all political parties, resorted to zero party government, made a u-turn and embraced multi-party politics in 2006, contested and won all elections held since 2006 in the country till date. The trend of having the majority of the people vote without really choosing their representatives, having the winner already known and declared even before the elections were held, sit-tight Presidents and military Heads of States using elections to either rationalize or civilianize themselves as in the case of President Yaya Jammeh of Gambia; and Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, who resigned on November 1, 2014 as a result of popular uprising. These contradictions have continued to cast doubts on the rationale for holding elections in Africa.

In Nigeria, the general elections held on March 28 and April 11, 2015 were, on average, adjudged to be free and fair, and acceptable to the majority of Nigerians and the international observers; though they were limitations such as logistic challenges. The elections were considered as an improvement over the 2011 general elections. In particular, the March 28, 2015 Presidential and National Assembly Elections, in which an elected incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) conceded defeat to Muhamadu Buhari of the opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC), before the announcement of the final results of the election, was hailed across the world as unprecedented in African politics; though some critical minds within the PDP regarded his action as a sign of cowardice in a raging political warfare. That singular act by the former Nigerian President, Dr. Jonathan was assessed by most African and world leaders as having brought honour to Nigeria, and raised the political and economic profiles of the country globally. It kindled the hope about the feasibility of free and fair elections and the prospects of democratization in Nigeria, compared with the previous elections held in 1999, 2003 and 2007 that were characterized by bloody violence, massive vote rigging, snatching of ballot boxes, large-scale ethnic hostilities and declarations of highly contested results at the tribunals. In fact, then Umaru Yar'Adua, former Nigerian President, who was elected on the platform of the PDP in the 2007 general elections in which he defeated Muhamadu Buhari, had condemned it as a huge fraud, the political processes and the elections that led to his emergence as President; yet, he never rejected the result, nor refused to be sworn in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria until his demise in 2009.

No doubt, Goodluck Jonathan's acceptance of defeat before the determination of the final results of the presidential (and parliamentary) election (s) held on March 28, 2015, was a rare demonstration of sportsmanship in Nigerian and African politics. However, novel as such singular act might seem, there are crucial unsettled issues elections may not necessarily deal with; issues that suffocate elections from getting the process of democratizing politics, governance and development in the country started in the first place, due largely to the huge gulf between the thought and actions of the politicians among others.

Some of the basic unsettled issues include, but not limited to: (1) the unique features of Nigeria, a predominantly rural country with the majority of its population poor, subsisting on land and operating pre-industrial production system; yet, election does not help them to actualize the resource rights and ownership, nor empower them in the democratization of resource governance and overall development process; (2) the politicians, the majority of who lack any productive base, and when they are out of power always stage a fierce comeback to the *ancien regime*, cashing in on elections as the only strategy to actualize their narrow social, economic and political interests; (3) the category of politicians who are not in government but in power because they dictate and control policy machineries, reproduce patronage politics and run roughshod of the tenets of democratization and democracy; (4) the party hegemons, entrepreneurs and ethnic leaders, who are vehemently opposed to internal democratic principles in the political parties because they have privatized the parties, and naturally prefer to select loyalists to fill political positions in government and in the process deepen divisive politics both within the leadership and rank and file cadres of the parties; (5) the ethnic and communal groups, who wage internecine struggles to access, capture and penetrate the state's political power and would retain it at all cost and by all means because a manipulative political leadership has seized power for too long; (6) the majority of Nigerian, who are referred to as the ordinary people, who are demanding for 'second independence and desiring a change' having been colonized, underdeveloped, traumatized and brutalized by their own people after an initial round of exploitation during the first and formal political independence from the imperial powers and failure to meet the promises of the nationalist struggles and; (7) the suspicious and unsolicited supports for Nigeria by the international financial and development institutions notably, the Bretton Woods institutions, the core countries of Europe and their political exhortations for the adoption of liberal democracy, a correlate of the market, so that they further penetrate the country for more ruthless economic exploitation and political manipulations by Euro-American foreign capitals.

It is in the context of the foregoing issues that, the paper problematizes elections in Nigeria, drawing on the period, since May 1999, when the political space in the country could be said to be partially liberalizing, till the March/April 2015 general elections and suggesting prescriptions for the future. In doing so, it pays attention to the Nigerian State, which, in practical terms, refers to the political leadership – both the politicians in power, government and

opposition - its nature, policies, politics and the implications of all this for elections, political democratization and development. It contends that, on account of the narrow interests of the tiny and hegemonic group within the state structure, the custodians of the state do not only retain its political power because it holds the key to wealth but conceives of elections as yet another political *alibi* being used by the political elite, who pretend to be identifying with, and empowering, the people with frivolous and unrealizable campaign promises whereas its major aim is to further exploit and deepen their misery and dis-empower them from the process of democratization. It further argues that, the state particularly suffocates the process of credible elections and democratization from getting underway because it seeks to empower the participation of the majority of the people in the political and development process, which, is often misconstrued by the political elite as capable of leading to a reduction in its political power and annihilates the master-servant relationship. It concludes with prescriptions on alternative and actionable strategies on how elections could help to foster democratization of the political and development process of Nigeria.

In Nigeria, like other African countries, elections would have to be situated in the context of the political leadership and its approach to politics and the path it took to surplus extraction from the economy in order to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of political contestations and its implication for development of the country and the continent generally. One of the frequently asked questions about elections in Nigeria and, indeed, Africa is: Why are elections being conducted periodically in Nigeria whereas the wellbeing of the majority of the people continues to worsen, the huge infrastructural gap still widens, the economy is being traumatized, worsening trend of huge debt-overhang, insecurity and environmental degradation among other contradictions of the state, while the politicians are awash with obscene wealth. It is ideal at this point to examine how the Nigeria state shapes elections in the country.

2. The Nigerian State and Elections

To begin with, there is the need to understand the Nigerian state in order to situate election and its underpinning politics in the country. In the context of this discourse, the Nigerian state is not synonymous with the federal government as often misconstrued by some bourgeois scholars. As used here and in scholarly and critical writings on politics, democratization, democracy and development, not the least, in (Africa's) political economy generally, the state has a different connotation. Theoretically, the state is not a public force whose objective is its monopoly and use of coercion to guide the society impartially, which, in this context, partly means not mere empowering the people to participate in the political and electoral process by providing the required voting materials to enable the people cast their votes, nor formally respecting their rights to choose who the political elite want to represent them in government and not really determined to help them to actualize their social and economic needs among others.

On the contrary, the state is a specific public force that dominates the larger society through the system of institutional mechanism to cater for the narrow political, social and economic interests of its constituents that make it a reality. It means the state is not class neutral; nor is it impartial as often misconstrued by most bourgeois scholars. Instead, the state is class-based and it exists to satisfy the parochial interests of its members. What does it (state) mean? In practical terms, therefore, the Nigerian state means the political leadership and elite, with the government serving as the theatre for the grim struggles by the state's constituents, which include the oligarchy, domestic bourgeoisie, local private capitals, representatives of foreign capitals, top bureaucrats, professionals, and ranking military brass that make it a reality. The state also provides the ground for the government of the day to play its own politics and promotes its style of surplus extraction.

However, there is a historical context to the origin of the Nigerian state. For, the Nigerian state was a creation of colonial capitalism, which was charged with the singular aim of exploiting the country's economy. To enable the state achieve its major objective, it became totalistic, brutish, pervasive and predatory. The colonial state's politics was also divisive and it alienated the people.

The post-colonial (Nigerian) state had, rather than been concerned with actualizing the major promises of the nationalist struggles - delivering development to the people- , assumed the character of its predecessor and continued with its policies and politics of dis-empowerment and exploitation. Not surprisingly, the Nigerian politicians play politics to "kill politics" as evident in its winner-takes-all approach to politics. Worse still, the political elite, once in power, even deny the losers their inalienable rights. Sometimes, the warfare is extended to the immediate and extended families and communities of the politicians in the opposition parties and groups. Rather than rely on the peoples' votes, the majority of the political elite build financial war chests and resort to occultic and fetish powers to prosecute their elections. The state is self-seeking, anti-democratic both in thoughts and actions; it breeds and reinforces confusions and manipulates the ignorance of the people to leverage its limited social, economic and political interests. It destroys the Constitution and political institutions like the political parties that brought them to power in order to foster recklessness, thuggery and general *anomie* because its politics does not conform with lawful and public order. It accumulates by terror as evident in the use of the state power of coercion to militarize the oil-producing communities to enable the state and the foreign oil capitals to produce oil and gas in the Niger Delta.

That is not all. There is really no difference between the political elite in power and those in opposition because they all have a common orientation and goal: to capture the state political power because it is coterminous with wealth. The state militarizes politics largely as a result of its ineptitude to govern. In such circumstance, the politicians do not really conceive of elections as a major hurdle to scale in the peoples' court in order to occupy elective positions, but resort to

the strategy of the highest bidder to access the state political power, essentially for self aggrandizement. Therefore, it is in the context of the state's own politics, mode of surplus extraction and the grim struggles between and among the constituents that make it a reality to capture its political power that the content, direction and outcomes of elections and the implications for democratization are located.

Expectedly and in practice, the issue is not so much with the enactment of electoral laws to enforce credible elections, but the culture of impunity of the political elite to continue to undermine the extant laws on election matters because the politicization of the judiciary by the state. Justice on virtually all issues inclusive of election suits, have been on sale for the highest bidder. As noted, the massively rigged 2007 general election conducted during the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the apostle of 'do or die' politics that brought then President Umaru Yar'Adua to succeed him, was keenly contested at the various tribunals before Muhamadu Buhari of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) appealed to the Supreme Court, the final Court in the land, which upheld the disputed results of the election in favour of Umaru Yar'Adua. Even though Yar'Adua was reported to have condemned the elections as fraudulent, he was sworn in as President until his natural death in office 2009. That explains, in part, why the establishment of the electoral bodies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) could not really do much to sanitize the electoral process in the country.

Further, the independence of the electoral umpire can hardly be guaranteed because of the pervasiveness of the state. The Nigerian state is totalistic and controls all sectors of the country's political economy. Not surprisingly, the national electoral body was created by the state, spelling out its structure, functions and moderating its activities. The President did only appoint the Chairman of the electoral body subject to the approval of the Senate, but wield enormous power to manipulate its removal should he falls out favour. The budget of the electoral body is approved by the President and to a large extent, the effectiveness of the electoral umpire rests largely on its good disposition to the Presidency and its politics.

The Nigerian politicians annihilate all forms of opposition while in power and they cannot pretend to be democratic in action. Even though they exhort the people on politics and democracy, it is not really on the agenda. There is a worsening trend of patronage politics, which largely explains why elections are fueling neo-patrimonialism rather countering it, and why the politicians in power and government are the same with their counterparts in the opposition, having been products of the same orientation in politics. In fact, the majority of the politicians in the opposition were previously in the party in power at a time, but they were edged out of power due to the alignment and re-alignment of political power and interests. The opposition politics is therefore, not radically different in ideas, policy, programmes and projects because they have not been able to reverse the disappointments of political independence. Some illustration is ideal here.

In the 2003 general elections, for instance, the PDP was the dominant party not only in Rivers State, where it accounted for over 90 percent of the registered voters, but nationally. In Rivers State, in particular, the party was reported to have had all registered voters cast their votes, and recorded 100 percent turnout. Of course, this could not have been realistic because it meant nobody died, nor traveled after registration. In the 2003 and 2007 elections, the Warri North Local Government of Delta State, the PDP also recorded the highest number of votes far above the population of the Council.

The politics of elections also stems from the processes that led to the registration of voters and their opportunity to cast their votes. Tendentially, the politicians subvert the process to have more eligible voters registered than the existing population of the wards; or institute administrative tardiness to deliberately commit errors in the registration process. It is not surprising that there were incidences of double or multiple registrations, which the INEC braced up in the preparation of the 2015 general elections. For instance, the biometric capturing of data of eligible voters during registration exercise was obviously an improvement over the 2011 elections, but the electoral body had other serious challenges.

The INEC had announced that a total number of 68,833,476 Nigerian voters registered for the 2015 elections as against the 70,383,427 voters previously released, without any explanation for the difference. This gap cast a measure of doubt on the reliability of the figure of registered Nigerian voters in the first place. Also, the body announced over four million Nigerians were involved in multiple registrations across the country and that their names were deleted by the INEC. Elementary arithmetic would show the difference between the initial figure of registered voters and those who were disqualified on account of multiple registrations was 1,549,951 and the difference between the second figure 68,833,476 and the over four million voters whose names were disqualified would be 64,833,476. This was another unexplained contradiction. Of this figure, about 30million registered Nigerian voters (48%) cast their votes in the 2015 general elections. This was an indication that over half of the registered voters were either not just interested in voting any more after registration because of the failure of the political elite to deliver development; or they were dis-enfranchised due to technical and logistics problems over the availability of permanent voters cards among others.¹

In Borno State, which has been held under siege by the Boko Haram insurgents for the past three years of intensive fighting, had total of Nigerian registered voters of 1,934,079 compared with a relatively peaceful Kwara State with 1,142, 267 voters during the April 11, 2015 general elections. All this partly demonstrates one of the major limitations of elections and the electoral body in Nigeria.²

Elections are expected to be issue-based, but not reproducing platitudes and fabricating new *alibi* to manipulate the ignorance of the people all in the name of having manifestoes. The politicians have not been able to redress the failures of political independence to the majority of Nigerians, which partly explains why development has been an *alibi* with which they continued to lure the people to vote for them and legitimize their governments in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s, politicians were already bereft of ideas with which to canvass for the votes of the people having failed to increase the material wellbeing of the majority of the people. In search for another catch phrase, therefore, democracy became the issue of electoral campaign. Expectedly, the question is not so much about democracy as its type. There is the preference for liberal democracy, which is not just a correlate of the market, but promises unrealizable rights of the people, which conforms with the thinking of the political elite. The other type is social democracy that deals with the concrete development issues and how they are actualized that the politicians are not interested in because the reversal of the underdevelopment of the people and the country is still not really on their agenda. The concern of the next section therefore, is to examine one of the very critical, but unsettled development issues in elections in the country, namely, resource rights, democratization and political parties.

3. Resource Rights Struggles, Undemocratic Resource Governance and Political Parties

Notwithstanding all the pretensions by the political elite as evident in the manifestoes of the political parties, the Nigerian state is, to all intents and purposes, capitalist largely on account of its origin and mode of surplus extraction bequeathed to it by its predecessor. The path it (state) took to capitalist development is commercial by creating public institutions to mediate its surplus extraction in the agricultural, mining and infrastructural sectors among others. In all forms of pretensions and nuances, in which a faction of the managers of the state claims to be welfarist or socialist or progressive in ideology, it is all nothing but state capitalism where public corporations were established to either wrest control of the real sector of the economy from the subsidiaries of transnational capitals, or merge interest with them while retaining its identity or merely acts as a rent collector. The public institutions like the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is politically created to play one major role: serve as the grounds for the accumulation of wealth accruing from the production and export of oil and gas and as well; as an avenue where plum but unproductive appointments in government are made by the political elite. Without an exception, the political elite have all struggled to access, penetrate and control the Corporation because it is the major source of wealth and a cesspool of corruption in the country for the past four decades when the petroleum sector accounts as the major source of foreign exchange in Nigeria.

Further, there are instances when the tiny and hegemonic faction within the state personalizes the ownership of public corporations in certain critical sectors of the economy.

Under one form of deceptive commercialization and privatization programmes of the state, the political elite have acquired either in part or totally, public assets in the up-and downstream oil and gas sectors by arranging for the sale of public petrochemical and refinery companies, electricity distribution companies, state-owned iron and steel companies, and public agro-allied businesses among others, to themselves or their proxies. Ironically, the majority of the political elite have neither the financial resources nor the technical capacity to operate independent of foreign capital, resulting in their parasitic form of capitalism. That explains why the essence of Nigerian politics has increasingly and unfortunately be reduced to the politicians' access and control of the country's land and its contents like oil and gas, and forest resources; physical infrastructures among others.

United by the overall common capitalist interest to exploit the people and their resources and the larger country's economy, the politicians will continue to sustain legislations that invest sole ownership of all natural resources in the Nigerian state as evident in natural resource-based legislations like the Land Use Act of 2007, the Petroleum Act of 2007 as amended, respectively. These legislations are basically not only an extension of the Mineral Act of 1912, but have transformed the majority of Nigerians who are rural-bound into *tenants in their ancestral homelands*. Further, the majority of the political elite do not endorse the resource rights of the people, because it would amount to committing a *class suicide*; that is undermining the political power to accumulate in the country.

Yet, the future of Nigeria's democratization resides with the ability of the rural population to actualize their access to, and ownership of, the natural resources rights found in their region. The resource rights struggle that has taken roots in the oil-rich Niger Delta, therefore, is only helping to re-awaken the political elite and their political parties to the need to incorporate resource rights issue into elections. The resource rights agitation is a critical component of the right of the people to development, though it has been misconstrued by many a Nigerian, as an agitation for resource control, campaign for more funds to the oil-producing areas and a threat of secession from the Nigerian federation. Nothing can be more misleading! Rather, it is not only about having a property regime that vests ownership of the resources on the people and the state, but that the people and not only the state as it obtains, should have a decisive say in how the natural resources and the proceeds that flow from their production are governed. Resource rights struggle is about accountability, openness, broad-based participation of the individual, family, community and the state in the governance of the natural resources. It is about the empowerment of the people in the democratic governance of natural resources. Herein lies its relevance for social democracy because it gives substance to democracy and democratization rather than exhorting the people on abstract terms of development as the current crop of politicians do during electoral campaigns and when they are in government.

Is democratization of development inclusive of resource governance, really on the agenda of the Nigerian state, its policies and politics? The answer is a resounding NO. This is largely because democratization as a strategy for development does not occur in a vacuum, but emanates from a political context. In Nigeria, development flows from the politics of the state, particularly its perception of development. The Nigerian state conceives of development as its exclusive rights, instead of a collective process that involves the people. That explains, in part, why the state has ruled the people with policies and politics ridden with ambiguities and contradictions as evident in worsening trend of miseries and underdevelopment of the people. The state, in its current structure, is anti-democratic and not really interested in democratizing the political space and resource governance.

What does not it mean to democratize development? It means the use of the instrumentality of democracy to enhance the material condition of the people in such a way that they become the means, agent and end of such development. That is, to say the people have their development based on their experience and socio-cultural milieu, which empowers them to sustain the kind of development. But the reality is that, the state has always imposed development on them, which has, rather than improve the material condition of the people, promoted dependence and underdevelopment because it caters for the parochial interests of the the state and its metropolitan capitalist proxies. In all, it means the re-distribution of the sole power to develop from the state to involving the people to have a say in the kind of development they want and the strategies for the implementation. That way, the people will identify with such development and defend it because they were involved in the political processes that brought about the sought development. It does not really mean diminishing the state as often misconstrued by the political leadership; rather, it entails a partnership between the community-based organizations, the civil society groups and the state actors in the development process.

What roles are the political parties expected to play in all this? Quite a significant role! Historically, political parties arose as politicians sought to gain office and pursue their goals. With the increase in the number of electorates, new ways were devised to overcome the problem of gathering electoral support and this resulted in the formation of mass parties. Political parties are, therefore, the instruments of interest articulation and aggregation, political recruitment and education, agent of democracy, democratization and training political leadership. Political parties are also a microcosm of the state and its politics.

There is a critical linkage between the internal democratization of the political parties and the prospect of democratization of the polity and development generally. First, the leadership of the political parties has to imbibe the tenets of democracy and democratization before it can take off at the national politics and development. The democratization of development matters must be understood, received and practiced in the internal organization of the political parties before it can be leveraged into their manifestoes, political campaigns and elections. All this will give

some useful insights into the possibility of conducting credible elections, democratic consolidation and renewal and establishing democratic linkage with the people in who ultimate political power resides.

However, the politics and intrigues of the political parties like other political institutions such as the National Assembly, flow from the kind of politics of the Nigerian state. In the colonial histories of Nigeria, for instance, the political parties, which were basically transformed socio-cultural organizations (*Egbe Omo Oduduwa*), the forerunner of the Action Group led by then Obafemi Awolowo in the Yoruba-speaking Western region; and the student unionism by then Nnamdi Azikiwe in the United States of America, which later formed the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC and held sway in the Igbo-speaking Eastern region) were formed to annihilate colonial rule in order to assume control of the reins of government. Once the colonial rule was sacked, the political parties degenerated into ethnic and regional groups, which, in turn, shaped the political leadership along ethnic lines. This accounts partly for the absence of political leadership with a national profile. Subsequently, the formation of political parties was privatized with the major financier(s) of the parties transformed into their owners and whose interests, world-view automatically become the objectives, manifestoes, rules and regulations of the parties. Membership was also at the discretion of the owners of the parties- the major financiers. Even though the *owners* of some of the political parties may have transcended the ethnic divide, the major financiers gravitated along ethnic line thereby producing local ethnic hegemons.

Under the First Republic, 1960-1966, there were three major parties: the Action Group led by Obafemi Awolowo, largely a Yoruba party. Awolowo doubled as the leader of the party and Premier of Western Region; the Northern People's Congress dominated by the Hausa-Fulani was led by Ahmadu Bello, who was also the Premier of Northern Nigeria; and the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, formed by Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was the leader of the Igbo-speaking Eastern region. But, Azikiwe shifted the Premiership of the Region to Michael Okpara, when the NPC and NCNC merged to form the national government with Azikiwe (first as Governor-General) and later, as the President, with ceremonial powers, while Tafawa Balewa of the NPC became the Prime Minister, and he was effectively in charge of government. The ethnic basis of the political parties created powerful and undemocratic ethnic hegemons, who relied on violence as the currency of politics as elections were bloody. The resultant military coup and 30 months (1967-1970) civil war in Nigeria stemmed largely from crude and bloody politics and elections characterized by bloodshed, arson and insecurity caused by the political elite, their political parties and winner-takes-all politics.

The resumption of party politics in 1979 did not change the orientation of the politicians. Six major political parties were formed, namely, the Unity Party of Nigeria, again, for the states in the defunct Western region; National Party of Nigeria, with its roots in the North; the Nigeria

Peoples Party in the Eastern region; the Great Nigeria Peoples Party for the North Eastern region; and the Peoples Redemption Party for the people of Kano. There was the Nigerian Advanced Party with loyalty from some groups in Lagos. However, the trend of undemocratic and ethnic-based party leadership, violent elections and corruption that characterized the First Republic was prevalent during the Second Republic headed by an NPN-led Shehu Shagari government. As result, the military coup toppled the Shagari-led government on December 31, 1983.

Between 1999 and 2003 when the Fourth Republic was inaugurated, 56 political parties were formed with the dominant ones being the PDP, All Nigeria People Party (ANPP). Others were the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Labour party (LP), Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) and NAP. Under the 85-day interim government headed by Ernest Shenakan in 1993, there were no political parties.

The PDP had won the general elections held in 1999 at the national level with dominance in the majority of the states, leaving no room for the opposition parties. In subsequent general elections held in 2003, 2007 and 2011, the PDP also swept the polls. Although factions existed with the ruling party, they lacked the capacity to break its rank and file. The PDP became a colossus that no political group could dare. In fact, the PDP became the largest party in Africa, which accommodated politicians of different opinions and interests because there was enough public wealth to share under its symbolic *umbrella* as often canvassed by its leadership. But, the party also became largely undemocratic with the President doubling as its leader. The culture of impunity pervaded the party from the national to the ward level. The emergence of the inglorious concept of *consensus candidate* imploded the party because there was no basis for the practice of internal democratic principles. The majority of the members could no longer aspire to elective positions except with the approval of the party leader.

The undemocratic politics in PDP were rooted in the kind of politics played by the Nigerian political leadership. The politics of winning at all cost and by all means was not and still not peculiar to the party, but ingrained into party politics since the First Republic. The average Nigerian politician is brutish, all-powerful and arrogant, and behaves as the sovereign. The people who voted him/her into power are regarded as slaves and should be trampled upon, traumatized and abused.

However, the only political party that had resource rights as an election issue was the National Democratic Party established by General (retired) Ike Nwachukwu in 1999, but his party fizzled out of the political scene. For the period that the PDP was in power, neither was the issue of resource rights of the people leveraged on its electoral campaign, nor was there any policy on democratic resource governance. Rather, the party, as an extension of the Nigerian state, ensured that all extant legislations on natural resources were retained as they were

amended because they vested sole ownership of the resources on the state, which provided a window for the politicians to misappropriate and accumulate wealth. Even during the First Republic, when Nigeria practiced the confederation system, the rights of the people to natural resources were equally denied as it was under colonial rule. The state capitalist development in the primary sector of the economy was characterized by exploitation and personalization of public institutions as evident in the crises over the real ownership of the Cocoa House, Ibadan and then Africa Continental Bank, Enugu.

Midway into the 2011-2015 tenure of the PDP-led government, political parties and groups re-grouped and desired to break the dominance of the PDP in the country's political space. The group requested the INEC to register new parties as part of their preparation for the 2015 general elections. There was a merger of the Action Congress Party of Nigeria (led by Bola Tinubu, former Governor of Lagos State), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) - formed and led by Muhammadu Buhari, having previously contested twice for the Presidency under the ANPP and lost; the faction of the APGA led by Rochas Okorocha, who decamped from the APGA; the ANPP; the New PDP make up of five Governors who decamped from the party to actualize their presidential ambitions, the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) - a major group within the PDP. All these political parties groups formed the newly registered All Progressives Congress, APC. The political strength of the opposition party APC, was underestimated by the PDP, thinking as usual that the power of the incumbent was an assurance of victory at the polls. The PDP, APC and 12 other parties contested the March/April 2015 general elections. The PDP was defeated by the opposition, APC, at the election as Muhamadu Buhari of the APC was declared winner and President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

According the INEC, the total number of votes cast was 29, 432083. Of this, 28, 280, 083 votes were captured by the APC and PDP. Muhammadu Buhari of the APC secured 15, 426, 921 votes, while Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, of the PDP, scored 12, 853,162 votes. A total number of 1,152,000 votes were shared by the other 12 political parties.³ The APC won in more than two-third of the states and Muhammadu Buhari was sworn-in on May 29, 2015 as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Expectedly, the people had wanted the change having the PDP-led national government ruled for 16 years with worsening trend of poverty, misery, infrastructural decay, debt over-hang. The internal undemocratic politics of the PDP blocked the process of democratization from getting underway, which resulted in the majority of the politicians decamping to the APC on whose platform, they won elections.

However, the relief that characterized the polity with the victory of APC and swearing in of President Muhamadu Buhari on May 29, 2015 was becoming short-lived largely because of the crisis of the leadership position rocking the National Assembly. The show of shame

displayed by the Honorable Members of the House as they openly fought to seize the mace was interpreted by the critical public in Nigeria as disgusting. The Senate is still embroiled in leadership crisis largely because preferred candidates by factions with the APC leadership were not appointed. The hegemons of the various political parties and groups merged under the APC are scheming to install their loyalists in the leadership structure of the Parliament. Over a month after Buhari was sworn, the National Assembly was not really get ready for legislative business because of the internal wrangling, lobbying, back-stabbing, alignment and re-alignment of political forces thereby retarding the progress work of the Executive Branch. At the Benue State House of Assembly it was open fisticuffs between and among members of the APC as they struggle to seize the mace.

The National Assembly leadership crisis is just one of the numerous problems the APC will face in the months and years ahead, because the various political parties and groups are already going into the trenches for political appointment either as Ministers, or Members of Boards of Public Parastatals among other political jobs. How the party settle its huge campaign expenses will likely ignite more problems for the stability of the APC. The Buhari-led Federal Government disbursement of the bail-out funds to the highly indebted States without first probing the origin and nature of the obscene and odious debts portend more serious crisis for the economy. For, the question now is: After the bail-out, what next?

From all indications, the 2015 general elections were generally regarded as peaceful and relative free and fair compared with previous elections, but the nature and politics of the Nigerian state have not changed. The elections have only facilitated the entry of yet another group of politicians into elective positions that will further unbridled quest to amass wealth. There is nothing really strange in politicians exchanging blows at the floor of the Parliament, if only that would foster the democratization process. After all, they can disagree and later agree if there is consensus on critical national development issues such as resource rights, but not pretending to interested in mitigating poverty by paying odious debts owed by the States. The Parliament is already questioning the constitutionality of the financial largess extended by the Executive Branch because the procedure was breached. In some of the heavily indebted States, the Executive Governors have acquired property worth half of the debt the State government owe.

4. Concluding Remarks: What should be done?

What to do to use elections to facilitate democratization in Nigerian politics has been dealt with in the forgoing analysis. All the same, I shall identify and explain some of them.

First, there is the need to reconstruct and democratize the Nigerian state by orienting it away from its narrow conception of politics of terror and winners-take-all. That is, to say that the

empowerment of the people in the political process is key to democratization of the political leadership. Here, a strong emphasis is placed on the people in whom ultimate political power resides, but not the political entrepreneurs who are financing politics for huge returns.

Second, the actualization of the peoples' resource rights is imperative for the political leadership. The majority of Nigerians really have no fate on elections and politicians because they gain virtually nothing after the elections are concluded. There is the tendency for the people to identify with political parties and support their programmes when the state assures them of their rights to, and ownership of, natural resources found in their regions. The resource struggles started in the Niger Delta is increasingly being bought by individuals, community based organizations and groups in the mineral-producing areas in the Middle Belt region. That way, social democracy will gradually take roots in Nigeria.

Third, there is the need to establish a Special Court for Electoral Crimes. The Court will deal promptly with all forms of crimes committed by politicians, political parties and political groups in the course of the electoral process. The Court should cause politicians to refund all the monies stolen and property misappropriated if they eventually lose the case, instead of allowing fraudulent politicians to go with their loots after they were sacked from office by Court verdicts.

Fourth, there is the need for an autonomous electoral body with the tenure of its Chairman fixed like that of the Judges of the High Court which no President can sack at will or starve of funds. The INEC, in its current structure under the existing power configuration of the state, can hardly perform without the manipulation of the political leadership. All this will help to insulate the electoral umpire and make elections more credible.

Finally, the civil society groups should be brought into the centre of the democratization of the development and politics. In their existing status, the majority of the civil society groups are weak, but they constitute a formidable countervailing force in the country's political economy if they are empowered. It was groups like the Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and NADECO that helped to chase the military out of the political scene into the barracks in the 1990s. If they are re-organized, they could backstop the political parties and instill democratic values into their leadership. But, where are the fierce and courageous activists?

In all appearances, there are fundamental unsettled issues beyond elections. Free and fair election in Nigeria can be organized, but the Nigerian state, on account of its materialist interest, can hardly allow democratization to get underway. There is only path to the struggles for democratization to materialize in Nigeria and that is to compel the political parties to democratize or face mass action and revolution.

Notes

1. See INEC's Report on the Breakdown of Voters Registration by State, Abuja: INEC, January 2015
2. *ibid.*
3. See INEC Final Results of the Presidential and National Assembly Elections held on March 28, 2015. 30 March 2015.

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