

**ELECTORAL ENGINEERING, ETHNICITY AND PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA, 1979-2007**

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**BY**

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**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

SEPTEMBER, 2014

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**CERTIFICATION**

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### DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents Mr. and Mrs. Ajala Adesiyan; my wife, Victoria Omolara Adesiyan; my children: Isaac, Joseph and Deborah Adesiyan,

and

To God Almighty, the Source of my success in life.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of a number of people. I am grateful to my late parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ajala Adesiyani, who did all within their limited resources to nurture and bequeath to me a lasting legacy of education. I also acknowledge the support of my sisters and brothers during the programme.

I equally acknowledge the contributions of Prof. Rotimi Suberu, ~~an amiable intellectual, who took special interest in my academic career. He readily accepted to take me as his doctoral student, but for some reasons, he could not complete the supervision. I am ever grateful.~~

I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Dr Remi Aiyede, ~~a man of towering intellect. He joyfully volunteered to take up the supervision at the crucial stage of the study, when I almost gave up. He~~ who provided an enabling environment for me, such that speeded up the completion of the thesis.

The dynamic and creative environment provided by the Department of Political Science, proved invaluable to me. I am grateful to the Head of Department, Prof. O.B.C. Nwolise who is always desirous of seeing students of the department graduate on time. The Postgraduate Coordinator, Dr Irene Pogonson is equally appreciated. ~~She is such a dynamic academic, who is readily available to attend to the needs of students. I also~~ equally thank my teachers: Prof. Bayo Okunade, Prof. Eghosa Osaghae, Prof. Alex Gboyega, Prof. Kunle Amuwo, Prof. Adigun Agbaje, Prof. Rotimi Suberu and Dr Fred Onyeoziri. Other academic staff such as Dr. V.I. Isumonah; Mr Tunde Oyekanmi, Dr Lafenwa, Dr (Mrs) Bukola Adesina, Dr Idowu Johnson, Dr Umar Idachaba at one time or the other rendered needed assistance.

The success of the field work was due to the assistance of Prof. Lanre Olutayo of Department of Sociology. He linked me up with Dr Sarafa Ogundiya at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto who facilitated my interview with Alhaji Shehu Shagari. I am indeed grateful to them. Greg Ogunjobi of the Survey and Geo-informatics Department, Polytechnic, Ibadan. ~~He facilitated my interview with Chief Olu Falae made available the means of interviewing Chief Olu Falae.~~ Mr Akinwale of the General Studies Department, the Polytechnic, Ibadan ~~and~~ did the editing of the ~~work gratis~~ thesis. May God reward your labour of love.

During my field work, I received warm support from many individuals I interviewed. They were hospitable and eager to supply needed information. Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Chief Olu

Falae, Senator Lekan Balogun, Prof. J. A. Ayoade, Dr Emmanuel Ojo, Prof. ~~(Mrs)~~ Tonia Simbine. -I thank you all. Dr S.A. Adewuyi, Prof. Moji Oyebola (Special Education), Prof. C.O. Kolawole (Teacher Education), University of Ibadan, and Mr. S. O. Olajumoke contributed immensely to the success of this thesis. Dr Adewuyi gave his time to go through the work. ~~;- he was never tired of making useful suggestions.~~ Prof. Moji Oyebola, my special auntie, always encouraged me. I can never forget your labour of love. Deaconess Unuigbe and my bossom friend, Dr Tunde Abisoye were always encouraging me to complete the thesis on time.

I acknowledge the inestimable contribution of my darling wife, Omolara Adesiyan, a virtuous woman, always there for me. I could not have married a better woman. My children are also wonderful. Isaac and Joseph were involved in gathering data from internet; so also my little baby Debora. Sister Veronica Ekong word processed the manuscript. She is such a painstaking and industrious lady.

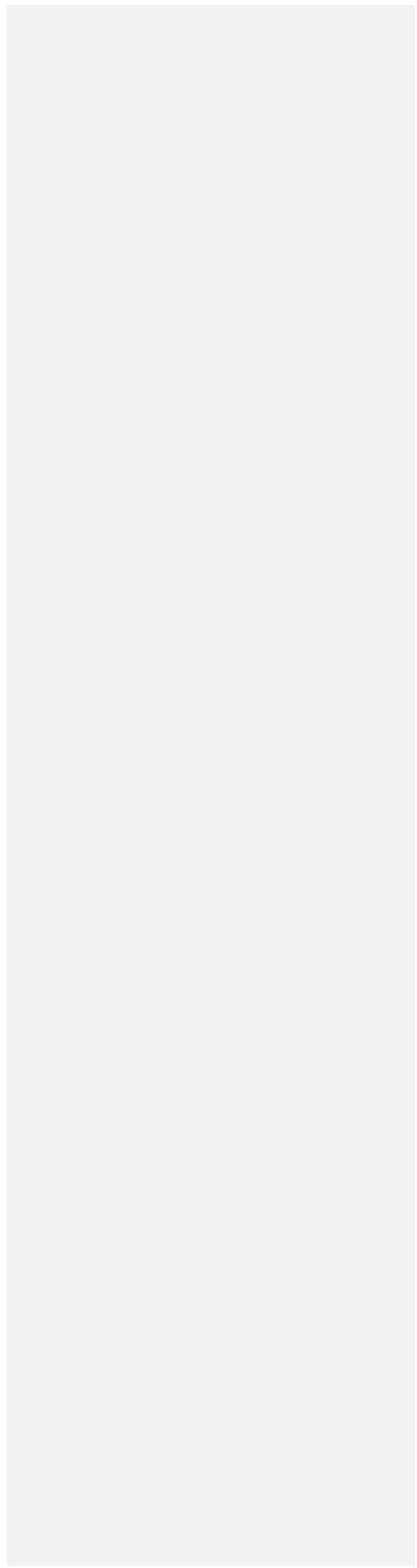
I equally appreciate my father-in-the-Lord, Rev. Solomon Adebara and his wife, Pastor (Mrs) Lola Adebara of the Fountain of Grace Ministries, for their prayers. Also my colleagues and friends in the Pastoral Council of the Ministry, Pastors Ayo and ~~(Mrs)~~ Alesinloye, Alakhume, Gabriel Oguntola, Gboyega Alagba, Femi Fadeyi, Wale Adediran, Joseph Ukoidip, Dele Akinrinola, Tope Oyedemi, Gabriel Adetula, Nathaniel Idah, and Akanji Lanre. My brethren at Mokola Branch of Fountain of Grace Chapel, where I pastor, are also appreciated.

Members of staff of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) gave me a hand of fellowship to use the Library. I am most especially grateful to Mr. Abubakar Oladeji who facilitated the use of the Library. ~~Moreover, we both went through the rigour of PhD programme under the same supervisor and God saw us through.~~ My colleagues and brothers in the Polytechnic Ibadan, Toyese Jayeoba, Akinola A.B., and many others too numerous to mention, deserve appreciation.

Finally, my greatest appreciation goes to my Creator, the God Almighty for His mercy and favour upon my life and more importantly, for the successful completion of the thesis. Ancient of Days, my Succourer, my Present Help in times of need, I bow and tremble. It is you I will serve all the days of my life.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Action Congress
AD	Alliance for Democracy
ADP	African Democratic Party
ALP	African Liberation Party
ANPP	All Nigeria Peoples Party
APGA	All Progressive Grand Alliance
APP	All Peoples Party
CA	Constituent Assembly
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CPC	Congress for Progressive Change
DAM	Democratic Advance Movement
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FDP	Fresh Democratic Party
FEDECO	Federal Electoral Commission
FMG	Federal Military Government
GNPP	Great Nigeria Peoples Party
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPP	Ideal Peoples Party
JMA	Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa
LC	Liberal Convention
NAC	National Action Council
NAP	Nigeria Advanced Party
NCNC	National Council of the Nigerian Citizen
NCP	National Conscience Party
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NECON	National Electoral Commission of Nigeria
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NNC	Nigeria National Congress
NPC	Northern Peoples Congress
NPN	National Party of Nigeria



NPP	Nigeria Peoples Party
NPWP	Nigeria Peoples Welfare Party
NRC	National Republican Convention
NSM	National Solidarity Movement
NUC	National Union Congress
NUP	National Union Party
PDM	Peoples Democratic Movement
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PFN	Peoples Front of Nigeria
PNP	Patriotic Nigerian Party
PPA	Progressive Peoples Alliance
PPP	Patriotic Peoples Party of Nigeria
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party;
PSP	Peoples Solidarity Party
RP	Republican Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SMC	Supreme Military Council
UDP	United Democratic Party
UMBC	United Middle Belt Congress
UNDP	United Democratic Party
UNIP	United Nigeria Independent Party
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
UPP	United Peoples Party

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## ABSTRACT

Electoral engineering, the purposeful **use of manipulation** of electoral rules, relating to party organisation and electoral formula, has been established in comparative political studies as a tool for managing ethnicity in order to stabilise politics in divided societies. In Nigeria, ethnicity has been a major obstacle to democratic stability. Most studies on policy measures to address ethnicity in Nigeria have focused on federalism, federal character and political restructuring, with little attention paid to the electoral system. This study, therefore, examined the use of electoral engineering tools and their consequences in managing ethnicity in Nigerian politics.

A longitudinal case study was employed and this was guided by rational choice institutional theory, with a focus on the structure of electoral incentives. Nigerian presidential elections from 1979 to 2007 were purposively selected. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted, with 12 leaders of six frontline political parties including: National Party of Nigeria (NPN); Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); National Republican Convention (NRC); Social Democratic Party (SDP); All Peoples Party (APP); and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and six experts in electoral system design on the effects of electoral rules on ethnicity and party organisation across the geo-political zones in Nigeria. Secondary data on electoral rules and disaggregated results of presidential elections were collected from archival documents. Data were subjected to content analysis.

Innovative changes in the electoral rules since 1979 included: requirements that membership in each party be open to every Nigerian irrespective of ethnic origin; power sharing through rotation of key political offices across zones and the use of two party system; five percent vote pooling electoral requirement for party registration; presidential electoral formula of plurality and 25% geographic distribution of votes in two-third states of the federation. Electoral rules on party formation promoted the development of inter-ethnic bargaining and compromises within the party system. Membership in each of the parties increasingly spread across various ethnic groups. There was a change in the voting behaviour of the electorates. Voting patterns in the presidential elections reflected a progressive decline in the influence of the ethnic factor in Nigeria's body polity. In 1979, the NPN won the mandatory 25% of votes in 12 of 19 states; in 1983 16 of 19; in 1993 SDP in 28 of 30 states; and NRC 23 of 30; in 1999 PDP 32 of 36; and APP 24 of 36; in 2003 PDP 32 of 36. The KIIs showed that since 1979, the Presidential electoral formulae aided the emergence of national rather than parochial parties as candidates were compelled to campaign across ethnic platforms. The incentives in the electoral system were perceived to have engendered balance in the distribution of key government and party offices among the six geo-political zones (North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South) and aided inter-ethnic cooperation and inter-group equilibrium.

Electoral engineering tools moved Nigerian politics from ethnic parochialism to inclusion and accommodation. These innovative electoral rules should be strengthened in order to enhance democratic stability.

**Key words:** Electoral engineering, Ethnic politics, Nigerian presidential elections

**Word Count:** 487



## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the Study

Political theorists have identified ethnicity as an obstacle to democratic stability in both developing and industrialised societies.<sup>1</sup> This is because ethnicity, that is, the mobilisation of ethnic symbols is often at the heart of political competition. It is such an ubiquitous social force that nations can hardly avoid its influence.<sup>2</sup> Ethnic conflict is such a dominant phenomenon that has featured in several countries of the world. Morson<sup>3</sup> alludes to the pervasiveness of ethnicity as a recurring decimal in world politics. He observes that:

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has witnessed the revival, intensification and stubborn persistence of ethnicity as an issue in politics and as a source of domestic and inter-state conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the political salience of ethnic conflict endured not only in former colonial territories but also in the advanced post – industrial democracies of Western Europe and America. The overwhelming majority of civil wars or independence-propelled ethnic conflicts in the post-World War era were fought in the name of ethno-national autonomy. Similarly in recent times, ethnic sentiments have brought devastation to the Balkans, the European Union and the express marginalisation of minority ethnic groups in the US has resulted in rioting over decades.<sup>5</sup>

As in the West, political interactions on the African continent are equally influenced by ethnic considerations. This is so as most states in Africa are relatively young and, more importantly, their beginnings were largely influenced by colonialism that brought together hitherto existing autonomous nations with social, political and cultural diversities.

<sup>1</sup>D. Horowitz; *Ethnic Groups in Conflicts*, Beckeley: University of California Press. 1985, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup>A. Thomson. *An Introeduction to African Politics*, New York: Routledge. 2000, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>T. D. Morson. "Ethnicity and Politics" in M. Hawkerswortat & M. Kegan, Eds. *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, London: Routledge. 2001, 1:226.

<sup>4</sup>A. Wimmer. Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict In Iraq, *survival.* , 2003, 45.1: 226.

<sup>5</sup>A. Thomson. *An Introduction to African Politics* London: Routledge. 2000, p. 8.

Jinadu<sup>6</sup> observes that Africa as a continent since the mid-1960s has the largest share of ethnic discontent. It has had prolonged and protracted ethnic-related violent political conflicts including the extreme case of civil wars in Algeria, Burundi, Congo Brazaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Niger Republic, Sierra-Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.<sup>7</sup>

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The most serious challenge both to consolidation of new democracies and to the healthy or well-established democracies is posed by ethnic conflict. In spite of the existence of interesting local democratic traditions in many parts of Africa, national elections tend to degenerate into ethnic contests over legislative seats and public offices. Rather than ethnicity withering away, it has continued to serve as a reinforcing variable in the socio-political dynamics of the continent as Diamond<sup>8</sup> states:

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The social sciences may have discerned few true laws, but one that can be confidently stated concerns ethnicity: ethnic cleavages do not die, they cannot be extinguished.

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Ethnicity is arguably one of the most powerful forces shaping political processes and the architecture of political institutions in the contemporary world. Its influence, for good or ill, is undeniably present in developed as much as in developing countries.<sup>9</sup>

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Nigeria belongs to the category of problematic states that have been labelled “divided” or “deeply divided” societies. It has more than 250 ethnic groups identified on the basis of distinct languages, dialectic and insider - outsider perception.<sup>10</sup> It is like any other African nation, solely a construction of the European colonial enterprise.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, colonialism brought together ethnic groups that had ab initio existed as different independent nations. Various colonial policies that followed were to reinforce ethnic chauvinism that later characterised post-independence Nigerian politics.

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Nigeria is made up of multi-ethnic groups whose interactions have become

<sup>6</sup> A. Jinadu. *Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards A Cultural Theory of Democracy*. Claude Ake; Memorial Papers No. 1, Department of Peace and Conflicts Research, Uppsala University & Nordic African Institute, 2007. p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> L. Diamond; Three Paradoxes of Democracy, *Journal of Democracy*. 1990, 1.5: 58.

<sup>9</sup> A. Jinadu. *Confronting the God of Ethnicity*, Ibadan: CEPACS, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> E.E. Osaghae. *The Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence*, Ibadan: John Archers 2003, p 10.

<sup>11</sup> J. Coleman. *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Los Angeles: University of California, Press. 1958, p. 20.

conflict-prone especially in the struggle for ascendance to power, and this portends that ethnicity serves as a major factor in electoral politics.<sup>12</sup> While there may be other variables underlying the behaviour of an average Nigerian voter, ethnicity remains a potent force in the history of Nigerian politics. Stressing its relevance in Nigeria's political landscape, Joseph<sup>13</sup> argues:

Even though ethnicity might not be sufficient explanation of Nigerian political behaviour, yet, it is the most accessible yarn from which political cloth can be sown.

In essence, the voting behaviour of Nigerians has tended to be influenced by the sentiments of kinship and ethnicity as assets exploited by high-status seekers when canvassing for votes.<sup>14</sup> Obviously, post-independence Nigerian politics is characterised by ethnicity with its ruinous effect on sustainable democratic governance and the development of the polity. Thompson<sup>15</sup> informs that the immediate post-independence constitution entrenched the reality of ethno-regional politics by affirming regional differences and provided strong institutional base with the result that the First Republic was dominated by ethnic groups. In response to this ethno-regional constitution, Nigerians voted for their cultural brokers. Consequently, no powerful nationwide political party emerged. As local consideration dominated, the issue of ethnicity increasingly became politicised. A political party that squarely identified with an ethnic group governed each region.

These ethno-regional frictions and convulsions led to the collapse of the First Republic and the subsequent intrusion military rule with its attendant dictatorial disposition. Indeed, any systematic consideration of the problems and prospects of democratic governance would need to grapple with the challenges and dilemma of ethnic-based politics and tensions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>E. Anugwuom. *Ethnicity, Politics and Elections in Nigeria* Occasional paper, 2003. <http://www.ethnonet-Africa.org>. retrieved 5/19/2005 p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Joseph; *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Ibadan: Spectrum, 1991. p. 5.

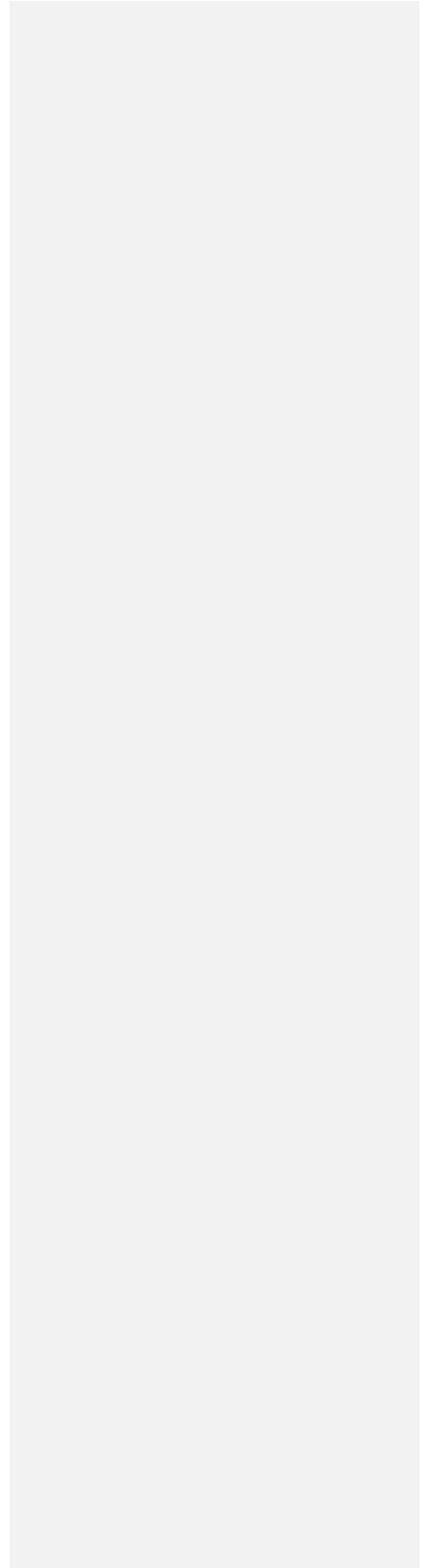
<sup>14</sup> Onigu Otite. *Ethnic Pluralism, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Shaneson C.J. Ltd, 2000. p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> O. Thomson. *An Introduction to African Politics*, London: Routledge, 2000. p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> R. T. Suberu. *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2003. p. 10.

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### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The desire for stable democratic rule in Nigeria has always been truncated by the rampaging phenomenon of ethnicity. Ethnicity has always been deployed by the political elite to capture state power. This is because would-be political leaders typically find the reward of outbidding on ethnic issues moving towards increasingly extremist rhetoric and policies. Some scholars argue that ethnic inflammation and polarisation in post-independence politics became heightened because political elite manipulated ethnicity as a calculated strategy in their competition for enormous resources of class formation mediated by the state.<sup>17</sup>

Scholars interested in ethnic conflict management argue that electoral engineering can serve as a useful mechanism in promoting stable democracy in divided societies. Lijphart and others explore consociational model that prescribes the design of democratic institutions such as grand coalition-cabinet, proportional representation election, and ethnic autonomy as a grand strategy.<sup>18</sup> On the other side, Horowitz and others have advocated centripetal political system which eschews the reification of ethnic identity inherent in consociationalism. They argue that deeply-divided society should seek to foster inter-communal moderation by promoting multi-ethnic parties which can encourage inter-group accommodation.<sup>19</sup>

In Nigeria, most studies on policy measures employed to address the problem of ethnic politics have focused on federalism, federal character and political restructuring such as state creation. But what is yet to be fully explored is the utility of electoral engineering in managing ethnic politics. The crux of the argument is that electoral engineering, involving the design and use of electoral rules relating to party organisation and electoral formula, can have important consequences on political calculus of the elite and the electorate.

The disintegrative tendencies inherent in ethnic politics have prompted successive governments in Nigeria to design institutional measures capable of managing ethnicity. In its bid to ensure the development or emergence of national integrative parties that can

<sup>17</sup>Larry. Diamond; Cleavages, Conflicts and Anxiety in the Second Republic; *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1982 . 20. 4:661.

<sup>18</sup> Arend Hijphart, Constitutional Design for Divided Societies, *Journal of Democracy*, 2003. 15.2:109.

<sup>19</sup> D. Horowitz; *Ethnic Groups in Conflicts*, Beckeley: University of California Press. 1985, p. 485.

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checkmate divisive ethnic politics, the 1979 Constitution put in place electoral requirements that will regulate the conduct and behaviour of the political elite. Section 203 (Ib) of 1979 Constitution requires parties to ensure that membership of their Executive Committee or other governing body reflects federal character. Section 203 (b) elaborates specifically that:

...the members of Executive Committee or other governing body of the political Party shall be deemed to reflect federal character of Nigeria, only if the members belong to different states not less than two thirds of all states comprising the federation<sup>20</sup>

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Other electoral requirements stipulate that the name, motto or emblem of the party must not have ethnic or regional connotations. In the transition programme of the Third Republic, the Babangida administration introduced certain institutional designs in the electoral system. Prominent among these was the “manufacturing” and funding of political parties, being optimistic that such would obviate the ethnic chauvinism that characterised past political parties in Nigeria.

Moreover, in 1999, other stringent electoral requirements for the registration of parties and emergence of candidates for the highest office of the President were introduced. For permanent registration of parties, the electoral requirements stipulate that each of the nine political parties that secured provisional registration was expected to poll at least 5% of the total number of votes cast in at least 24 states of the federation. Also section 134 (2) 1999 Constitution requires that a candidate for an election to the office of the President shall be deemed to have been elected, if he has not only the majority votes cast at election but has not less than quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two thirds of all the states of the federation<sup>21</sup>.

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Given the foregoing electoral engineering approach, the question to be asked is to what extent can electoral incentives moderate the inherent danger of ethnized politics? This study therefore examined the uses and consequences of electoral engineering tools in the management of ethnicity in Nigerian politics. It employed a longitudinal case study, making use of the 1979 to 2007 presidential elections to find out how electoral

<sup>20</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria; 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Lagos; Federal Government Press.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

engineering tools have impacted on the political and behavioural calculus of political entrepreneurs with respect to ethnic politics in Nigeria.

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## 1.2 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the utility of electoral engineering in the management of ethnicity in Nigerian politics.

### Main Objectives

- (i) To identify and appraise various electoral rules designed to promote national integration and democratic stability.
- (ii) To investigate the impact of electoral rules on party system in Nigeria.
- (iii) To examine the role of ethnicity in the voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate over time in presidential elections.
- (iv) To find out the effect of the structures of electoral incentives on Nigerian politics, presidential elections.
- ~~(v) To find out the impact of electoral engineering tools in the promotion of democratic stability in Nigeria.~~

## 1.3 Significance of the Study

While political theorists and policymakers have attempted to put up strategies or devices capable of stemming the tide of ethnic politics in Nigeria, ethnicity remains a potentially divisive social force in contemporary Nigeria.

Also, the abiding desire for a democratic political system is always frustrated by the deepening of ethnic, linguistic and regional identities, making the study relevant in Nigeria's political system.

Similarly, though there are tomes of extant studies such as federalism, federal character, and political restructuring on mechanism or policy measures for managing ethnicity, little scholarly attention has been paid to the electoral system.

Drawing data from primary and relevant secondary sources and using the presidential elections between 1979 and 2007 as case studies, this study examined the use and consequences of electoral engineering tools for managing ethnicity in Nigeria politics. It is evident that determining whether or not electoral engineering as a policy design has substantial impact on ethnicity in Nigeria's political landscape will be a useful



contribution to the literature on public administration in the continued search for enduring solution to ethno-political crisis in Nigeria particularly and ethnically divided-societies in general.

#### 1.4 **Scope of the Study**

The study focused on the Nigerian presidential elections as case studies from 1979 to 2007. The choice of these elections was made because of their inclusive and national character, cutting across ethnic divides. Also, it was a period when deliberate attempts were made to embark on party engineering in terms of constitutional prescription for party formation and organisation as well as presidential electoral system for winning the coveted position of the President, purposely to moderate the centrifugal tendencies of political entrepreneurs and their ethnic groups.

#### 1.5 **Methodology**

##### **Primary Sources of Data Collection**

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with leaders of six frontline political parties, holding various positions including Chairmen, Members of Board of Trustees, Founding Members, and Presidential Aspirants. The six political parties were National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Republican Convention (NRC), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Peoples Party (APP). These were purposively selected on the basis of electoral support in the presidential elections conducted between 1979 and 2007. Others interviewed were academics in electoral system design from across Nigerian universities.

##### **Secondary Sources**

Secondary data on electoral rules ~~on ethnicity~~ and disaggregated results of the presidential elections from 1979 to 2007 were collected through historical ~~record~~ means including archival records, textbooks and journal ~~articles~~.

The researcher depended largely on the National Archives and Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research both in Ibadan for archival materials. These included white paper reports, government gazettes, proceeding of the Constituent Assembly, reports on political transition committee, white papers and internet facilities.

The primary data obtained from in-depth interviews with the chieftains and presidential aspirants of Nigeria political parties provided:

- (i) insight into the formation and registration of respective political parties;
- (ii) strategies designed for electoral mobilisation across ethnic divides to ensure victory at presidential elections

Academics from various ethnic divides offered:

- (i) objective assessment of various electoral system designs, pointing out the dichotomy between provisions and implementation, and
- (ii) suggested policy measures that can improve or strengthen ethnic relations in Nigeria.

In essence, the interview helped to interrogate, interpret and deepen the understanding of the information already gathered from secondary source. More importantly the study relied more profoundly on secondary data. The secondary source provided data for building a useful empirical data on presidential election results and information on the dynamics of party politics among relevant actors in Nigeria.

#### 1.6 **Research Questions**

The notion of the design of an electoral system as a policy measure in multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria raises some fundamental questions as follows:

- (i) What has been the effect of this approach in mitigating potential conflict? Put differently, of what relevance is institutional design in confronting the “gods” of ethnicity?
- (ii) How have these electoral rules contributed to the overcoming or stabilising the plural nature of the Nigerian society?
- (iii) Has Nigerian politics been de-ethnicised? In other words, has the electoral engineering tools altered the behaviour of entrepreneurs and the voters alike?

The foregoing research questions motivated this study.

### 1.7 Data Analysis

Data collected from both secondary and primary sources were qualitatively analysed, using content analysis.

A multidisciplinary approach was applied in analysing data generated from both primary and secondary sources. The simple descriptive analysis involved a content analysis of the election results from 1979 to 2007 to determine the voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate. The qualitative method involved the analysis of various electoral rules as they relate to presidential elections.

The in-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed qualitatively with a view to ascertaining the impact of electoral design on the strategic behaviour of the political elite. Such data also helped in strengthening and validating data collected through secondary sources.

### 1.8 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 covers the introduction, general and /specific objectives; significance of the study, methodology adopted for the investigation, and clarifies certain concepts used in the research work and chapter summaries.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical chapter with focus on ethnicity in the context of its foundation and dimension in Nigeria's body politic. It also contains review of literature on electoral engineering as a mechanism for ethnic conflict management in a deeply-divided society like Nigeria. Through the existing literature, we were able to adopt rational-choice institutionalist model as a framework for the study.

Chapter 3 examines various institutional engineering initiatives designed by the military government during its transition programme in 1979. These included constitutional requirements for party formation, shift from parliamentary system to presidentialism with its unique electoral system of geographic distribution and federal character rule. The impact of these electoral rules on the political elite and the voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate, using 1979 and 1983 presidential elections as case studies, was evaluated.

Chapter 4 is focused on the aborted Third Republic that witnessed more institutional innovations of party engineering and electoral politics. It treats the impact of

two-partism and other electoral laws as the guiding philosophy of Babangida's transition programme. The impact on Nigeria's body politic was more appreciated in the 1993 Presidential election which was a watershed in Nigeria's political history.

Chapter 5 examines electoral system design, involving the presidential electoral system of intertwined geographic distribution and plurality of votes, which motivated zoning and rotation of political offices by the political elite as rational actors interested in capturing political power at the centre. More importantly, the chapter probes further to find out if electoral innovation has made any significant contribution to the stability of the country in the Fourth Republic.

Chapter 6 is a summary and conclusion of the study. It helps us to draw conclusion on the uses and consequences of electoral engineering tools as management strategy in Nigeria's ethnically-divided society.

## 1.9 Conceptual Clarification

### (a) Ethnic Group

A clear understanding of ethnicity has to start with the concept of "ethnic groups". This is because the interaction of these social groups is the underlying factor that engenders ethnicity.

What then is an ethnic group? Following Otite,

Ethnic groups are categories of people characterized by cultural criteria of symbols including language, value system, and normative behaviour and whose members are anchored in a particular part of the new territory.<sup>22</sup>

In generic term, ethnic group is defined as a collectivity which identifies itself and is defined by others according to ethnic criteria. That is in terms of certain common elements such as language, religion, tribe, nationality or race or a combination which shows a common feeling of identity with other members of the group.

In the same vein, Cohen<sup>23</sup> defines ethnic group as an informal interest group whose members are distinct from members of other groups within the same society because they share kinship, religion and language. He further informs that ethnicity is

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<sup>22</sup>Onigu Otite. *Ethnic Pluralism – Ethnicity and Conflicts in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Shaneson. 2000, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>A. Cohen. *Customs and Politics in Urban Africa*, London: Rotledge Kegan. 1969, p. 16.

essentially a form of interaction between cultural groups operating social contents.

Osaghae shares the view by defining it as:

A group whose members differentiate themselves from others on the basis of certain common objective criteria like culture and subjective criteria like myth of common destiny for the people who lay claim to actual kingship.<sup>24</sup>

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The definitions above point to certain facts about ethnic group:

- (i) The groups exist within a defined territory
- (ii) They are distinguished or distinguish themselves by one symbol or the other.
- (iii) This symbolic distinction brings about discrimination of one group against another. However, the existence of these groups does not necessarily give impression of ethnicity, though it possesses the potentiality

(b) **Ethnicity and Politics**

Ethnicity however becomes manifest when interactions among these various ethnic groups become conflictual especially when competing for resources either economically or politically. This is why ethnicity is often explained in terms of competition for scarce resources. It is when actors begin to draw attention to, and manipulate, their differences in the context of competition for access to economic and political resources at local and national levels that ethnicity manifests.

Ethnicity is thus defined as the contextual discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of differentiated symbols.<sup>25</sup> Osaghae emphasises that ethnicity is more of political than cultural phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> In essence, ethnic affiliation becomes strengthened through the need to acquire political relevance or power. It can therefore be perceived as individual or group behaviour based on ethnic phenomenon which serves as a political resource that can be manipulated to gain political power. Indeed, it is when it becomes a generalised strategy for furthering individual and group interests that it becomes actually salient and problematic.

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For the purpose of this study, ethnicity is viewed from the context of group

<sup>24</sup>Ethnicity in Africa or African Ethnicity: the search for a conceptual understanding in U. Himmeistrand, K. Kinganju and E. Embuguru Eds. *African perspectives on Development*, London : James Currey p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. p. 41.

relation. This is because Nigerian politics has tended to be regulated or mediated majorly at group interest level. Indeed, ethnic relations have assumed a dangerous dimension which has threatened the corporate existence of the state. The fact that the control of power is the object of political competition where the state is the supplier of all resources produces an instrumentalist view of ethnicity. This means that ethnicity becomes a veritable instrument applied by the political elite for the purpose of acquiring state power.

Given the fact that it lacks the necessary economic base and desperate to gain control of access to state resources, the political elite is at the fore-front of mobilised group ethnicity and of prebendal politics which thrive in patron-client network.<sup>27</sup>

(c) **Ethnic Politics**

Ethnic politics arises when ethnic groups manipulate various ethnic symbols for the purpose of gaining access to political power. Politics is inherently conflictual as people and organisations mobilise themselves to have access to power. Political parties in Nigeria have been found to be organised around group interests. In this sense, ethnicity plays an important role in the organisation of political parties. Nigerian politics has always been centred on the particular interest of various ethnic groups especially the major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Joseph<sup>28</sup> notes that one common item of information about Nigeria that is widely shared today is that it is made up of large ethnic groups, often in conflict with each other. Post-independence Nigerian politics has towed ethnic line where political entrepreneurs form parties along ethnic basis and manipulate such to gain access to the corridors of power. The resistance from other ethnic groups which felt out-bided or marginalised unjustly had resulted in political violence and instability of the polity. The control of state power is the object of political competition where the State is the supplier of all resources produces an instrumental view of ethnicity. This means that ethnicity becomes a veritable manipulable instrument in the hands of political elite for acquiring power.

<sup>27</sup>Donald Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, Berkeley CA: University of California 1991, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup>Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991.

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(d) **Electoral Engineering**

Electoral engineering, essentially, has to do with the design of an electoral system. It involves all strategies aimed at bringing about a desirable change within a political system. This includes rules and regulations (both formal and informal) that could regulate the behaviour of the elite and the masses for a desirable change. It is a purposive attempt to induce particular outcomes by the design of political institution.

Horowitz<sup>29</sup> explains electoral engineering as involving the design of electoral rules that promote reciprocal vote pooling, bargaining and accommodation across group lines. This means the objective of electoral engineering as a mechanism is the enhancement of group relations especially in a multi-ethnic society to ensure democratic stability.<sup>30</sup>

Reilly has explained electoral engineering as that which involves changes in the institutional rules, and the design of electorate system which facilitates cross-cultural communication, bargain and interdependence between rival politicians and the group they represent. Such electoral formula can have impact on the promotion of moderate politics and thus prospect for democracy in divided society.<sup>31</sup>

In Nigeria since 1979, there have been attempts by successive governments to put in place certain strategies in form of institutional design such as the introduction of presidential government with various interrelated electoral formulas, rules and regulations for party registration. These constitute the bulk of electoral architecture which this study intends to interrogate in managing ethnic tension in Nigerian politics.

(e) **Concept of Election**

Liberal democratic theorists have emphasised the primacy of election in the democratic project. Schumpeter<sup>32</sup> stresses that democracy denotes only that people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing men who are to rule them. This means election has to do with the choice of political leadership. Democratic method thus means an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's votes.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Horowitz, A Democratic South Africa, *IbidOp cit* p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> B. Reilly; *Democracy in divided Societies: electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> J. Schumpeter. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York. Harper & Brothers. 1947.

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Huntington<sup>33</sup> perceives 20<sup>th</sup> century political society as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through honest and periodic elections in which the population is able to vote.

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Norris<sup>34</sup> argues that, of all the strategies adopted by international agencies in forming democracies, free and fair elections through the ballot box seems to be the most viable option.

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In Nigeria and elsewhere around the world, election is the most, if not the only, organised method of “peaceful” democratic transition and the principal means for large number of people to participate “peacefully” in forming and changing democratically-elected governments. The implication is that election is one of the most popular means of assessing, in empirical manner, the political behaviour of both the political elite and the electorate.

Significantly, however, a plural society divided along ethnic lines may experience democratic convulsion when political entrepreneurs whip up ethnic symbols as a means of winning electoral contest. This has been the experience in Nigeria’s post-independence politics where politicians face powerful incentives to play ethnic card and campaign along narrow sectional lines, as this is often a more effective means of mobilising support than campaigning on the basis of issues or ideologies. It is against this background that the study examined the presidential elections that engendered competition for the position of the presidency in Nigeria’s political set up.

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<sup>33</sup> S.P.Huntington.*The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

<sup>34</sup>P. Norris. “*How Do Rules Matter? Electoral Systems and Voting Behaviour*”; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. 2003, p. 15.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Literature Review

##### 2.1.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the concepts of ethnicity and electoral engineering, which form the main thrust of the study. This is with a view to striking a cord between ethnicity, viewed as a major obstacle to sustainable democratic rule<sup>1</sup> and electoral engineering as a core instrument of public policy in managing ethnic politics in deeply-divided societies.<sup>2</sup> The nexus between the two necessitates appropriate theoretical framework for proper political analysis, situated within the rational choice institutional theory with its associated structures of incentives.

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##### 2.1.2 Ethnicity

Literature on the understanding of how and why ethnicity and its conflict potential occurs in multi-ethnic societies is wide and diverse, indeed there are several schools of thought advancing various formulations and permutations.<sup>3</sup> However, such theoretical debates fall within two major parameters of primordialist and the constructivist/instrumentalist spectrum.<sup>4</sup> This study reviews the schools of thought under four headings as they have direct bearing on the dynamics of politics in a plural or deeply-divided polity like Nigeria. These are the primordialist, the political entrepreneur, the competition for resources and the institutional perspective.

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**The Primordialist School:** The primordialist school shares the view that ethnic groups are based on primordial sentiments of solidarity and will continue in modern and post-modern times.

<sup>1</sup> Donald. Horowitz. *Ethnic Group in Conflicts*, Berkely; University of Carlifornia Press; 1985, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> P. Norris. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*, New York: Cabridge Univesity Press; 2004, p.

<sup>3</sup> D. Horowitz. *Structures and Strategies in Ethnic Conflict*, Paper Prepared for the Annual World Bank Conference in Development Economic, Washinton DC, 1998, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

Shills,<sup>5</sup> a major proponent of this school, presents ethnicity as a primary bond, which expresses original primitive solidarity with the one who is related by kinship,, language, religion and customs. This means territorial bonds, kinship ties and value system form the central basis of ethnic integration. Ethnicity thus becomes a matter of social ties rather than a matter of social interaction that creates primary nearness and bonds.

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In a similar manner, Geertz<sup>6</sup> sees ethnicity as primordial affiliation in the sense that it is connected to the things that people cannot live without, among which are traditionality, assumed blood ties, the persistence of the past into the present and a sense of collective self-consciousness which generates awareness of other communities and eventually spills over to conflict and violence. Ethnicity in this sense is a static identity rooted in the historical past.

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Kaufman,<sup>7</sup> a proponent of the primordialist school of ethnic conflict, argues that the causes of ethnic violence are groups' myths that justify hostility, fear of group extinction and a symbolic politics of chauvinist mobilisation. He observes that myths produce emotion-laden symbols and makes extremist policies popular. He identifies three symbolic factors that lead to conflict or war. These are: (i) Mass hostility (ii) chauvinist political mobilisation (iii) security dilemma. These interact to create a spiral of escalation. He cites the case of Rwanda conflict as a result of primordial sentiments of ancient hatred between the two major ethnic groups. He argues that Rwanda crisis was driven by mythologies between the Hutus and the Tutsi. The hard-line goal of Hutu domination was unambiguous and popular. Hatred of the Tutsi was described as a lifestyle. Symbolic appeals by the elite are also present, the pervasive racist appeal in the media by the Hutu extremists is widely known. The advantage of this politics of primordialism is that it explains why politicians put so much effort into symbolic appeals and why manipulators gain support from those whose tangible interests are harmed by their policies drawn by emotional responses. In all, the primordial approach offers the benefit of historical past and emotive power as a trigger of ethnic political mobilisation.

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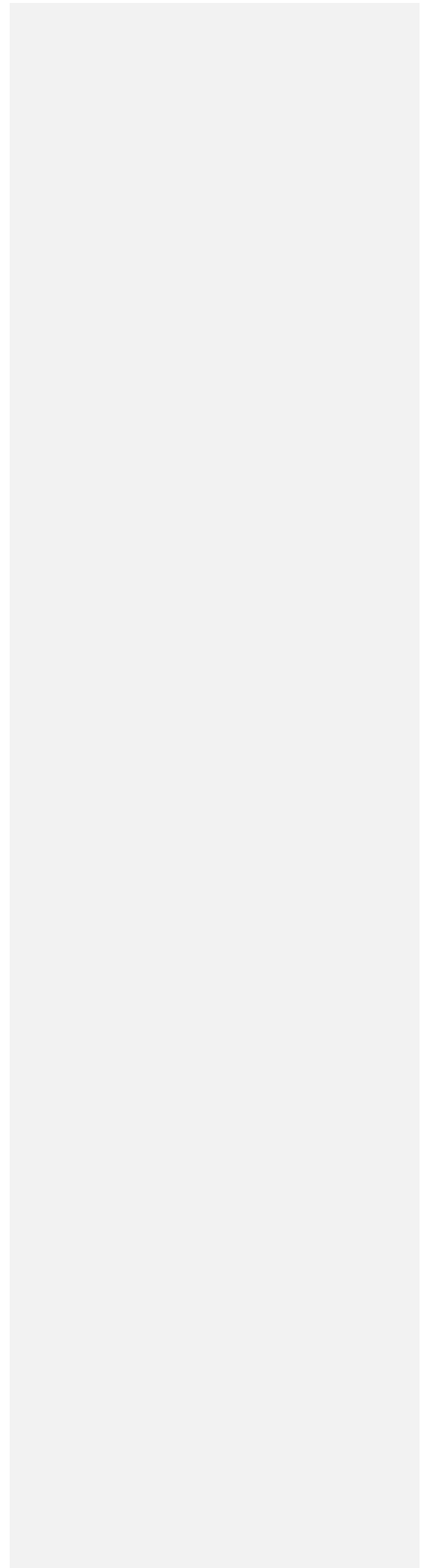
<sup>5</sup> G. Shills. Primordialism, Personal Sacred and Cultural Ties; *British Journal of Sociology*; 1957. 8.1:135-137

<sup>6</sup> Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Culture*, New York: Basic Books. 1973, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> S. J. Kaufman. "Spiralling to Ethnic War: Elite, Masses and Moscow in Moldavia's Civil War" *International Security*. 1996, 21:109

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However, Kaufman, like other primordialists, failed to account for the fact that the conflicts are not created by rhetoric alone but also by specific interaction. In other words, this school fails to unearth the social factors that manipulate ethnic communities. The primordialists therefore fail to consider the historically-constructed nature of the very concepts that are central to their arguments.

Blagojeric Bojana<sup>8</sup> has equally vilified the primordialists for reducing the cause of ethnicity to ancient hatred as something that is ingrained in ethnic groups that cannot be changed in a symbolic view.

She argues that:

Understanding ethnic hatred as something that is” ingrained in ethnic groups that cannot be changed is a simplified view of a complex problem.

The view prevents those who build peace from seeing that ethnic conflict exists in combination with other factors and addressing each dimension of the problem. In actual fact, a proper understanding of the cause of ethnic political mobilisation must move beyond simplistic discussion of ancient hatred to search for more systematic and robust explanation. Moreover, while primordialism explains the role of emotion in ethnic conflict and conflict potential of ethnicity, such are socially and politically constructed.

Constructivist’s insights have been used to undermine the very premise of primordialism. Their argument is that group identities have existed in one form or the other throughout time, noting that the political elite and institutions have self-consciously constructed nations and ethnic groups. They argue that the elite and institutions play a central role in nationalising identity politics project and the outbreak of ethnic conflict. It is with the view that three approaches – the institutional, political entrepreneur and competition for resources- are examined, as we highlight the role of the elite from rationalist perspective in these approaches.

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<sup>8</sup> Bojana Blagojeric. Causes of Ethnic Conflict: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Global Governance*. 2011, 3.1: p 5.

### 2.1.3 Political Entrepreneurship Approach

This approach considers ethnicity or ethnic differences, ingrained with the materials of potential violence, as not inherent in human nature, or intrinsically valuable; rather, it masks a deeper lore of interests which are either economic or political. Political leaders therefore manipulate ethnicity or ethnic symbols or emotion to access political power or state resources. At the heart of this approach is the fact that ethnic factor is often manipulated by the political elite to appeal to their immediate ethnic community to gain access to state resources. Political entrepreneurs manipulate fear and uncertainties of the ethnic group they represent and are able to awaken a consciousness of common grievances and desire to rectify such perceived wrongs.

Lake and Rotchild<sup>9</sup> also argue that the misinterpretation of information contributes to the security dilemmas of ethnic group. It means groups cannot acquire necessary information to bridge bargaining gap among themselves, thus engendering conflict. Therefore, security dilemma rests upon information failure: "As such inability to know the intention of your neighbour and the ability not to arm yourself against him drives the logic of the other to the spiral of dynamic and ultimately ethnic conflict".<sup>10</sup>

Political entrepreneurship approach is closely related to institutional explanation of ethnic conflict. Bojana explains that the nature and character of institutions created by the state will determine the extent to which political entrepreneurs can be given latitude for ethnic mobilisation. Thus, politicians who use ethnicity to their advantage can successfully operate only within those institutional structures that provide opportunity for such. Therefore, the success of political entrepreneurs in mobilising ethnic groups into violent conflict depends on the strength of the existing state institutions.<sup>11</sup> As Crawford also stresses, the state provides a legitimate arena to compete and, if resources available for allocation are abundant, identity politics like other kinds of political competition will be legitimate and stable.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the failure of institutions to provide such

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<sup>9</sup> Bolagojeric Bojana. *Op cit*, p-10

<sup>10</sup> Beverly Crawford. The causes of cultural conflict: An Institutional Approach in *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict* Beverly Crawford and Ronie D. Lipschutz International and Area Studies Research Series No 98 Berkeley: University of Carlifornia. 1998. 8:556.

<sup>11</sup> B. Bojana, *Op cit*, p-10.

<sup>12</sup> B. Crawford. "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: Assessing the Evidence" in Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz eds; *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict*, Berkeley: University of Carlifonia, 1998, 98:556.

leads to social and political divisions along cultural lines to be exploited by the political entrepreneur which ultimately leads to ethnic conflict.

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#### 2.1.4 Institutional Approach

This approach emphasises the role of institutions in the exacerbation or moderation of ethnicity. Crawford<sup>13</sup> observes that institutions are capable of defining inter-ethnic relationships by either facilitating or obstructing inter-group relationship. Institutions both constrain and provide incentives for cooperation and compliance with norms, rules, procedures for participation, representation and accountability. Accordingly, whether identity politics will turn into violence depends on how the institutions of the state are structured. Crawford declares that:

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Where identity politics is practiced, states can channel it into peaceful political competition as long as they can make credible commitments to shape and uphold agreements made among culturally defined political actors.<sup>14</sup>

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In essence, ethnic tension in a particular political system is a function of the structure of the institutions by the state. Countries whose administrative structures and institutions distribute resources on the basis of ethnicity are more likely to experience political mobilisation and countries whose political institutions promote integration of diverse political groups are likely to promote inter-ethnic relations.

The colonial state and its attendant divide-and-rule policy are seen to serve as a trigger of ethnic conflict in most parts of Africa. Berman<sup>15</sup> has provided insightful analysis on how colonial institution constructed and promoted ethnicity through its various policies. He argues that Africa's contact with colonial power caused the destruction of ancient African societies. What followed the colonial construction was the formation of various policies that facilitated the administration of the territory and simultaneously sowed the seed of hatred, fear and subsequently differentiation among hitherto disparate ethnic nationalities.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ronnie D. Lipschitz eds*, *Ibid*, *Op cit*, 556.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* p. 557.

<sup>15</sup> B. Berman; *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*. Working Paper No 22; *JICA Research Institute*, Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute. 2010, p. 8

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One of such divide-and-rule policies was the mapping classification and numbering of ethnic groups meant to create administrative units to ensure political and institutional control.<sup>16</sup> He further observes that the political economy of the colonial state was deliberately structured to ensure inequality among ethnic communities. The colonial state as a central institution created ethnicity through its capitalist mode of production.

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Nnoli<sup>17</sup> argues that the colonial administration promoted ethnicity through policies of indirect rule, classification of Africans by tribe and promotion of separate settlements between the natives and settlers in urban centres. The byproduct of divide-and-rule policies included socio-economic competition, regional inequalities, lack of economic unity, rivalry in provision of amenities, low class consciousness, intemperate utterances and factional politics.<sup>18</sup> He further argues that the colonialists manipulated ethnic consciousness that emerged from the violence of the colonial state. It was this force of colonialism that British employed to dampen the emergence of nationalism in Nigeria. As he reiterates:

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It was the force of colonialism that dampened the emergence of western nationalism through its agent Sir Hugh Clifford who preyed on the ethnic sentiment of Nigerian members of the National Congress of West Africa when they called for the reform of the colonial order who eventually channelled their political attention and sentiments towards their own ethnic groups or organizational.<sup>19</sup>

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#### 2.1.5 Competition over Resources Approach

The instrumentalist school of ethnicity identifies competition over scarce resources as the major source of conflict among various ethnic groups that make up a society. In a situation where resources are scarce, it is easier for political entrepreneurs to capitalise on the conflict potential of ethnicity. The instrumentalists focus on the relative deprivation of ethnic groups. Conflict in a society is thus explained by various economic and political factors such as economic development, welfare of the people, benefit distribution and relative deprivation, meaning a decline in the standard of living of the people.

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<sup>16</sup> B. Berman. *Op cit*: p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Okwudiba Nnoli. *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*; Fourth Dimension Publishers. 1978, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.

This school of thought states that economic development is one of the fundamental causes of group grievances. It sees the forces of the political and socio-economic development as being responsible for change and competition, among ethnic groups, for resources. This economic development brings contextual change into the societies, decreases socio-economic linkages and increases competition over resources, thus contributing to ethnic rivalry.

In such a society, members of an ethnic group may suffer inequalities as a result of the actions and behaviour of other groups. For their survival, members of the ethnic group as a unit compete for scarce resources, which may include political positions or economic opportunities. Ethnic entrepreneurs take advantage of such opportunity to whip up sentiments and provoke awareness to mobilise ethnic followers.

From the review of literature above, a conceptual framework for the understanding of ethnicity and its conflict potential could be better appreciated when a combination of factors are considered.

There is no consensus among scholars on the conceptual framework for understanding ethnicity and its conflict potentials. While primordialists emphasise the emotive and ancient hatred as the trigger, other schools of thought are much more on the rationality perspective, where individuals and groups as rational actors employ the scarce resources, defective institutional devices to fan the embers of conflict.

This study therefore argues that a better understanding of a conceptual framework of ethnicity lies at the heart of a combination of factors as the literature review in this Chapter revealed.

The study, while not discountenancing the primordialist view, agrees with the salient functionality of ethnicity as a manipulable instrument in the hands of the elite and their group to gain access to political power and state resources.



## 2.2 Ethnicity in Nigeria: Foundation and Dimensions

Ethnicity and the inordinate passion woven around it are no strange elements to Nigeria. The socio-political history of Nigeria has been a study in the dynamics, divisive and deepening role of the ethnic factor in the state-building project. Graf has rightly observed that harmony, cooperation and unity have not manifestly characterised social and political life in post-independence Nigeria.<sup>20</sup> Politics in the country, especially contestation for state power and resources tend to be organised around regional, ethnic and religious interests.<sup>21</sup> By this, ethnic politics and mutual distrust among various cultural, linguistic and ethnic groups in Nigeria are the main causes of Nigeria's social and political upheavals. Politicians in Nigeria have, over time, imbibed the culture of equating political aspiration with their various ethnic or primordial groups. As such, the success or failure of political aspirants is seen as the failure or success of his own group. This is rampant when aspirants come from different geographical zones of the country. It is not uncommon to find the political elite, using group consciousness in a way that suggests that their personal mandate is the same as their group mandate. It is this group consciousness and the solidarity deriving from it that politicians in Nigeria have exploited over the years in their quest for gaining political power.

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### 2.2.1 Colonialism and Ethnic Politics

In discussing the problem and factors that precipitate ethnic politics in Nigeria, it is important to examine its political history. This is important since the country's present predicament has been shaped by developments of its recent and distant past.<sup>22</sup>

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Notably, Nigeria, like most of others countries in Africa, is an arbitrary creation of the British imperial power. Colonialism remains a watershed in the history of the country. Lancia<sup>23</sup> observes that, in Africa, colonial administrations carved out boundaries that divided territories inhabited by indigenous societies and brought together a diversity of ethnic communities within unitary administrative structures.

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<sup>20</sup> W.Graf. Nigeria "Grassroots" Politics: Local Government, Traditional Ruler and Class Domination. *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*; 1986; 24. 2: 100.

<sup>21</sup> E. E. Osaghae. *Op cit*, p.15.

<sup>22</sup> Okwudiba.Nnoli. *Op cit*: p 22.

<sup>23</sup> C.Lancia. Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: The Realities of Regionalism. 2009 from <http://www12.georgeoun.edu> accessed 3/6/2010.

Suberu and Diamond and Diamond classify this British colonial legacy into three categories and they have had enduring effects on Nigeria's post-independence politics. They are:

- (i) The arbitrary consolidation of three major ethnic nationalities (accounting for some two thirds of the country's 100 million people) and about 200 smaller units into a single state in 1914.
- (ii) Differential administration and modernisation of the northern and southern sectors of the country.
- (iii) The establishment in 1954 of a three-unit federal structure that secured political autonomy and hegemony for the principal ethnicities of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo in the northern, western and eastern regions respectively.

These three major legacies need further exploration as they help to properly situate the foundation and dynamics of ethnic politics that characterise Nigeria's political landscape.<sup>24</sup>

As noted earlier, Nigeria is an arbitrary creation of the British imperial power. Prior to that, Nigeria was a conglomeration of nations with varying degrees of political, social and economic sophistication. It was the forces of colonialism, through conquest, that brought about the nation called Nigeria. Osaghae<sup>25</sup> recalls that before it, indeed before the advent of colonial rule, Nigeria did not exist and the likelihood that a state like it could have evolved, was remote.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, before the establishment of colonial administration, there existed a motley concentration of diverse groups whose histories and interactions interlaced, as they were, by external influences - principally trade with Europeans and which crystallised into three discernible regional formations at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. These three major regional formations were the protectorate of northern Nigeria, the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria which were previously administered as separate but related territories.<sup>27</sup> However, a proclamation by the British colonial overlord on January 1914 through Lord Lugard decreed into existence the entity

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<sup>24</sup> R. T. Suberu and Larry Diamond; *Institutional Design, Ethnic Conflict Management and Democracy in Nigeria*; 2000. <http://www.scholar.google>. 2/11/2007. p. 15-

<sup>25</sup> E. E. Osaghae, *Op cit* p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16

<sup>27</sup> Cited in Osa Sanya. *Dimension of Ogoni Crisis: Socio-political perspective: An unpublished report submitted to IFRA*, 1996. p. 15.

called Nigeria.

According to Lugard:

After long and mature consideration, (His Majesty's Government) arrived sometime ago at the conclusion that it would be the great advantage of the countries known as Southern and Northern Nigeria that they should be amalgamated into one Government, conforming to one policy, and mutually cooperating for moral and material advancement of Nigeria as whole.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to know that contrary to the above declaration by the colonial authority, amalgamation policy especially the way the protectorates were administered, portended serious danger for the future integration of the Nigerian state. It is therefore relevant to further elaborate on the nature of this commingling, given the far-reaching implications it had for the state and its post-independence politics.

The two protectorates brought together were not only diverse in terms of culture, language, political organisation and aspirations, but also in terms of land mass which, as a result, triggered apprehensions about administration in different parts of the country. Moreover, the bringing together of these separate nations did not obtain the approval of the parties involved. This was to create ethnic tension among these regional formations, the effect of which became visible in the ethnic nature of political parties that emerged. The amalgamation also caused disruption in the socio-economic development of the north and the south. The consequence of this socio-political development could be noted in the area of education and the unfolding political activities of the country involved in the tripartite arrangement.

While most part of the north was shielded from Western influences, especially education and Christian missionary activities, such was allowed to thrive in the south.<sup>29</sup> In education sector, there was a fatal gap. Records show that in 1912, two years before amalgamation, there were 150 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in the south whereas the first secondary school in the north was established in 1922, eight years after amalgamation.<sup>30</sup> The gap extended to tertiary education and, whereas by 1950 graduates from the southern part ran into scores of hundreds, the whole of the north produced only

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<sup>28</sup> E. E. Osaghae. *Opcit*, p. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Ngowu; *The 1959 Elections and the Formation of the Independence Government; In Peter Ekeh Peter Cole and Gabrie; Nigeria Since Independence*, Ibadan: Heinemann. 1989, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> E. E. Osaghae. *Op cit* p. 17.

one.<sup>31</sup> This gap had dire consequences for party politics as well as socio-economic good.

Coleman describes two manifestations of this tension arising from uneven development: (i) the struggle between Yoruba and the Igbo and (ii) the rivalry between the northern and southern provinces. Given the early advantage of the Yoruba in educational and professional attainment, the group's monopoly over political activity centred on Lagos. Until the 1940s when the Igbo-led NCNC emerged, the Yoruba held on to overwhelming majority of higher positions in the civil service. As a consequence of comparative lack of opportunity in the east, the Igbo embraced Western education and Christian missionaries. However, by 1945, the educational gap between the Yoruba and the Igbo was wide. Therefore, the Igbo effort to assert themselves politically culminated in Yoruba-Igbo competition and tension.

The rigid structure in the north produced a delayed movement towards nationalism or sense of national belonging due to the prevalence of Islam and the lack of an uprooted Western-educated class. Such rigid posture in terms of divide-and-rule was attributed mainly to the attitude of certain die-hard British administrators who were determined to keep the region from the "corrupt" South.

The unfolding constitutional developments during the colonial era, which later spread to post-independence period, further helped in the entrenchment and exacerbation of ethnic politics. It is relevant to recall that the Clifford Constitution (1922) created a legislative council from which the north was excluded, with the first ever African elected members in British Africa. Osaghae<sup>32</sup> states that the British did not involve northerners in Nigeria's affairs which enabled southern Nigeria to become, for a temporary period, more politically advanced. Indeed, the southern politicians and nationalists had gained considerable experience as members of the Central Legislative Council, while their northern counterparts did not sit in this council until 1947 after the 1946 Richard's Constitution introduced regional representation which provided a forum for politicians from the north and south of the country to meet for the first time after 1914, the date of amalgamation. Given the palpable fear and tension of domination perceived by northerners in both educational and political realms by the southerners, it was hardly

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<sup>31</sup> E. E. Osaghae. *Op cit* Ibid p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

surprising that when the motion for self-government was moved by the southern political elite, it was vehemently opposed by their northern counterparts.

The regionalisation of the legislature by the 1951 Constitution introduced three regions in Nigeria with autonomous legislature, thus creating the breeding ground for ethnic politics. Coleman<sup>33</sup> in his critical assessment of the constitution regards it as accelerating the drift towards ethno-nationalism and tribalism. The colonial policy of maintaining the distinct identity of each major ethnic region did not augur well for the unity of Nigeria. This British, shielding of the south from the south in terms of political structure, created a situation in which the political elite had to first emerge as ethnic champions before negotiating at the national or central level.

The implication of this ethnic consciousness occasioned by colonialism became visible in the emergence of various political parties during the colonial period. The Action Group belonged to the Western Region and its founder, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was the first Premier of the region. It should be stated that the party was an offshoot of Egbe Omo Oduduwa which was an association of the descendants of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba. Justifying its formation, Awolowo declared that he was concerned about stability in a multi-ethnic polity like Nigeria and that such stability could come if ethnic conglomerates were formed.<sup>34</sup>

In the east, NCNC was the dominant party. It was established as a national party by Herbert Macaulay and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, but later degenerated into a party limited to the former Eastern Region in its membership and political influence. The third major party took its firm root in the Northern Region. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was formed in 1951 and, like its Action Group counterpart, was an offshoot of a cultural organisation Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa (JMA) which literally means the association of people of the north.<sup>35</sup> The NPC was even more pronounced in its ethnic sloganeering. The party never pretended to be a national party because membership was restricted to northerners, while other areas of the country were regarded as being inhabited by pagans and unbelievers.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> J. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1958, p 45.

<sup>34</sup> B. J. Dudley. *An introduction to Nigeria Government and Politics*, Ibadan: Macmillan. 1982, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Bola Ige; *People, Politics and Politicians in Nigeria 1940 – 1979*. Ibadan: Heinemann Books Plc, 1994,

Apart from these major ethnically- based parties, there existed side-by-side other minority parties. Such included United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by J. S. Tarka which only advocated for the area it represented, the Middle Belt Region. So also was the United National Independent Party (UNIP) led by Eyo Ita and Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) which, though regarded as pan-ideological in orientation, restricted itself to Kano metropolis.<sup>37</sup>

Not only did colonial structures and policies encourage regionalism, it also ignored and marginalised minority ethnic groups within Nigeria. Osaghae stresses that ethnic minorities are usually defined in contradistinction to major groups with which they coexist in the policy. In analysing the role of ethnicity in Nigerian politics during the colonial era and during preparation for Independence, Nnoli<sup>38</sup> shows that the Igbo provided ethnic support for the NCNC. This manifested in their bloc vote which enabled the party to win all the 50 constituencies in Igboland during the 1959 federal elections. In the same manner, Post newspaper discovers that the Action Group had an overwhelming electoral support in the West, where its political rival (NCNC) had declining votes from 41.9% in 1954 to 17.4% in 1959.<sup>39</sup> It is also revealed that the Hausa-Fulani north gave its total support for the Northern People's Congress by winning 134 seats equating about 77% of the total votes in the entire region.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>A.A. Adebayo. "Political Parties: Formation, Development, Performance and Prospects" in Emmanuel Ojo, (Ed.) *Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*: Ibadan: John Archers, 2006. p. 16  
<sup>38</sup>O. Nnoli. *Op cit*: p. 165.  
<sup>39</sup> K. Post. *The Nigerian Federal Elections of 1959*, London: Oxford University Press. 1963, p 367  
<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 368.

### 2.3 Scarce Resources and Ethnicity

The fact that different ethnic groups in Nigeria do not have equal access to the resources in the country accounts for the exacerbation of ethnicity. Luckman identifies three objects of political competition between the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. These are:

- (i) The quest to secure control of scarce economic resources created struggle mainly between major ethnic groups over the siting of federal development projects and for revenue allocation.
- (ii) There was the competition for the gains of office and patronage in political and administrative posts. Each ethnic group therefore seeks opportunity to secure access to such patronage.
- (iii) There is also struggle for political power in both the then regions and now states (within major ethnic group) and the Federal in Nigeria.<sup>41</sup>

In Nigeria, the victor not only appropriates the spoils of office but potentially permanent, that is indefinite control over the most significant means of acquiring wealth and social prestige. Political power then means success for and prosperity for the man who holds it and his family, as well as his birth place, that is, his ethnic origin.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.4 Political Elite and the Growth of Ethnicity

The political elite, especially those who were perceived as nationalist(s) and were at the forefront of the struggle for independence from the British colonial rule, contributed to the growth of ethnicity. While attempting to wrestle power from the colonialists, the political class was at the same time carving a niche for itself in the political arena. They therefore used the ethnic difference to mobilise support for their political ambition as well. Osaghae notes that the elite, being in the frontline of access to resources and privileges, usually mobilise ethnic support to further their constitutive interest. Idahosa and Otoghile contend that the elite of an ethnic group who have to strengthen their bargaining position via-a-vis other groups are bound to whip up sentiments that will facilitate the mobilisation of the desired support.<sup>43</sup> It is also noted

<sup>41</sup> Graf William. *The Nigerian Citizen's Guide to Parties, Politics, Leaders and Issues*, Idanre: Afrografika Publishers. 1979, p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> A. A. Idahosa and H. Otoghile Ethnic Politics and Election in Nigeria, the 1979 & 1993 Presidential

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that the elite who are supposed to be at upper level of the society have been more ethnocentric than the middle or lower classes. The reason is that the Nigerian society functions as a series of ethnic groups, and in order to succeed, the political elite deem it necessary to join or pledge allegiance to one of such ethnic group.<sup>44</sup> Also, Nigerian politicians find it difficult to win votes by universalistic appeal to ideology. Therefore, appeal to primordial factors such as sectionalism and ethnicity provide a short-cut to electoral victory.<sup>45</sup>

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Ethnicity, in the words of Ekeh<sup>46</sup>, has become an elite-begotten ideology deployed by the political elite to win electoral support. Sklar also sees ethnicity of the same ilk as a mask for class privilege,<sup>46</sup> which is being manipulated to benefit it.

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According to Nnoli,

Intemperate utterance of some Nigerian aspirants to leadership positions arising from personal ambition have contributed significantly to the growth of inter-ethnic hostility in Nigeria.<sup>47</sup>

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In this regard, some statements of political pundits from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria will suffice.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe in his early political activities once made such chauvinistic and ethnically-loaded remark in depicting the Igbos:

It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages. And that the martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of the preserver..... The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility.<sup>48</sup>

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Such intemperate statements, no doubt, undermined his pan-Nigerian and indeed anti-imperialist pronouncement that regarded individuals as Africans no matter being

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<sup>44</sup> Margaret Peil. *Nigerian Politics: The Peoples View*, London: Cassel and Company Limited. 1976, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 31

<sup>46</sup> P. P. Ekeh. Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: Comparative Studies, *Society and History*. 1975, 17.1:74.

<sup>47</sup> P. P. Ekeh. Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: Comparative Studies, *Society and History*. 1975, 17.1:74.

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<sup>48</sup> O. Nnoli. *Op cit*, p. -22

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born whether at Zungeru, Bathurst... Accra.<sup>49</sup> Azikwe also used such statements to portray other leaders from Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups as “misleaders and their leadership as Uncle Tom misleadership accusing them of being lackeys of imperialism who cringed to curry favour from their colonial master”.<sup>50</sup> This ultimately raised ethnic tension among other ethnic groups.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent leader of the Yoruba reacted to the activities and utterances of Dr. Azikwe as follows:

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<sup>49</sup> O.Nnoli. *Op cit*, p. 90.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, p. 91.

It seems to me that Azikwe's policy was to corrode the self-respect of the Yoruba people as a group to build up the Ibos as a master race.<sup>51</sup>

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Sir Adeyemo Alakija, one of the leaders of Egbe Omo Oduduwa, was even more explicit in his defence of the Yoruba race:

The big tomorrow for the Yorubas is the future of our children.... How they will hold their own among other tribes in Nigeria in the future.<sup>52</sup>

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Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a spokesman and founding member of the Northern People Congress, who eventually became Nigeria's first Prime Minister, once declared his opposition to Nigerian unity which he regarded it as artificial: "The Southern tribes now pouring into the North do not mix with Northern people... we in the North look upon them as invaders."<sup>53</sup>

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The effect of such inflammatory statements is predictable. It generated mounting ethnic tension and heightened affirmation of ethnic identities among various ethnic groups. Such statements led, for instance, to the formation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and its eventual evolvement to the Action Group party which was to champion the cause of Yoruba nationalism against the rising tide of Igbo nationalism championed by Azikwe, the National President of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens.

Apart from such provocative utterances, there was press war among some newspapers owned by these ethnic warlords. The West African Pilot represented Azikwe and the Igbo union, while the Daily Service championed the interests of the Yoruba. This hostility became heightened as Adeyemo Alakija remarked that 'we have tolerated enough from the class of Ibos and addlebrained Yorubas who have mortgaged their thinking caps to Azikwe and their hirelings.'" The West Africa Pilot reacted by declaring war on the Egbe and its leaders at home and abroad, accusing them of being the enemy of Nigeria.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>54</sup> Anifowose Remi. *Violence and Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu: NOK Publishers. 1982, p. 40.

Similar comments were made after the amalgamation of northern and western protectorates in 1914. Times a Lagos-based newspaper once declared: “The amalgamation of 1914 is, broadly speaking, the conquest and subjugation of Southern Nigeria.”<sup>55</sup>

Nnoli notes that such intemperate statements aided the growth of ethnicity in various ways. First, on behalf of whom they were made, the utterances created a feeling of pride and solidarity in the membership of their ethnic group. Second, with regard to the victims of such remarks, the utterance inculcated a collective sense of fear, danger and insecurity which during the formative stage of ethnicity are ameliorated by greater solidarity and identification with ethnic group. These fears eventually intensified ethnicity.<sup>56</sup> The ethnic convulsion was carried over to the period of Nigeria’s post-independence politics. Indeed, the same class of ethnic entrepreneurs that dominated pre-independence period emerged as leaders in Nigeria’s post-independence politics.

Osaghae observes that the history of the First Republic prominently featured the bitter rivalry among major regional parties in their struggle for supremacy at the centre. It was this rivalry among various ethnic messiahs that cumulatively led to the collapse of the republic:

Given the background of intense regionalism and mutual fears and suspicion among ethno-regional leaders which extended the final phase of colonial rule, each major ethnic group was anxious not to lose out in the power game and the structural framework within which the Republic was to be operated.<sup>57</sup>

From the foregoing, it is easy to discern that ethnic factor has dominated Nigerian politics with ruinous effects on society in terms of dysfunctionality and impeded democratic institutionalisation. This further reinforces the need to improve on policies that can tame the monstrous influence of ethnicity in Nigeria’s politics.

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<sup>55</sup>C. Ngogu. *The 1959 Elections and Formation of the Independence Government* (ed) Ekeh P. P. et al *Nigeria Since Independence*, Ibadan Heinemann. 1980, p. 37.

<sup>56</sup>Anifowose Remi. *Op cit*, p 40.

<sup>57</sup>E.E.Osaghae. *Op cit*, p.3

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## 2.5 Electoral Engineering and Ethnicity

The question of whether democracy can survive in a divided society has always been a source of controversy in political discourse. It has been argued that democracy is incompatible with the structure of multi-ethnic society. This view represents prevailing thought of political scientists, citing ethnicity or tribal ethnic sentiment as responsible for failure of democratic rule in newly-independent African states.

Rabuskha and Shepsele (1972) argue against the likelihood of democracy in deeply-divided society based on the rational actor perspective. According to this, would-be political leaders typically find the reward of outbidding on ethnic issues moving towards increasingly extremist rhetoric and policies. To them, therefore, in societies divided along ethnic lines, it is easier for political entrepreneurs to appeal to ethnic allegiances rather than issues of class and ideology. This shows that aspiring politicians have a strong incentive to mobilise followers along ethnic lines and unscrupulous leaders who play the ethnic card can be rewarded with electoral success. As rival parties respond in kind, a process of outbidding can take hold, pushing the locus of political competition towards the extreme. Given this scenario, Party politics and democratisation can result in heightened ethnic tension and, at times, the outbreak of ethnic conflict.<sup>58</sup>

Sisk (1996) states further that ethnic identities tend to be invested with a great deal of symbolic and emotional meaning and that, in such circumstances, aspiring politicians hungry for electoral success have strong incentives to harness these identities as a political force and use communal demands as the base instigator of constituency mobilisation. In that setting, failure of democratic politics is often the result.<sup>59</sup>

In the democratic project, political parties play crucial role as agents of mobilisation and contestation for political power. In a society divided along ethnic lines, the more expedient thing any ethnic group seeking political power can do is to form political parties that exhibit ethnic tendencies. By this, competitive politics becomes dangerous because supposedly normal competition becomes a battle for ethnic supremacy. Really, the problem multi-ethnic democracies face is how to balance the need for free association with the need to prevent divisive party politics. The question then

<sup>58</sup>E.E.Osaghae.*Op cit*, p. 40

<sup>59</sup>T. Sisk.*Powersharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press. 1996, p. 60.

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arises: how can such centrifugal tendencies exhibited by ethnic entrepreneurs in the divided societies be moderated to ensure enduring democracies?

## 2.6 Electoral Engineering and the Management of Ethnicity

Electoral engineering as a public policy has become a popular mechanism of promoting democracy and development all over the world.

Norris<sup>60</sup> informs that the global spread of democracy after the cold war coupled with effort at consolidating the third wave of democracy has popularised the design of electoral rules both by the government and international agencies to promote good governance. This attempt to deepen and strengthen democratic governance is universal. It is not limited to the third world as even established democracies have implemented radical electoral reforms with occasional modifications to electoral formulas.

Although authors agree on the importance of electoral engineering tools as a management strategy of ethnic conflict management, there is strong disagreement over the most relevant or appropriate for divided societies. Essentially, two major schools of thought predominate. These are the consociational and centripetal. This study examines and reviews literature on the duo.

Electoral engineering, which focuses on the design of electoral systems that encourage cooperation, bargaining, interdependence between rural politicians and the groups they represent, has become attractive policy strategy for promoting democracy in divided societies and been recognised as one of the institutional mechanisms for shaping the nature of political competition. In other words, electoral engineering approach has been devised to regulate or moderate the conduct of political entrepreneurs and their group followers to guarantee democratic stability.

Sartori<sup>61</sup> has given prominence to the possibility of engineering the development of an electoral system by urging political scientists to take up the challenge of becoming participants in the building of political institutions through constitutional engineering. This indicates purposive attempts to induce political outcomes by the design of political

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<sup>60</sup> Pippa Norris. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*, New York: Cambridge University Press. 2004, p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> G. Sartori. *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into the Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*. New York: Columbia University. 1994, p. 100.

institutions. He argues that electoral system represents a particular important element in this process because it is the most specific manipulable instrument of politics. Electoral laws, he continues, could be used to contrive the format of political parties and influence voting behaviour.

Lijphart (1985:81) supports this by restating that if one wants to change the nature of a particular democracy, the electoral system is likely to be the most suitable and effective instrument to accomplish the task. Norris<sup>62</sup> (2003) also affirms that electoral design, depending on its objective, can shape the behaviour of politicians, parties and citizens. Specifically, scholars of comparative politics, who specialise in divided societies, maintain that political conflict can be ameliorated with the adoption of specific democratic institutions through political engineering.

Reilly (2001) has stressed that divided societies need a heavy dose of political engineering laden with incentives of accommodation to sustain the third contemporary wave of democratic change in the Third World democracies.

Reynolds and Reilly (1996) have also observed that, in most developing democracies, too much attention has been given to social forces and not enough to the careful crafting of appropriate democratic institutions by which those forces can be expressed.

The foregoing postulations emphasise the need for the crafting of institutional roles or incentives within a broad electoral system that encourages power sharing among various ethnic groups for consensus politics in the democratic project.

## 2.7 Consociational School

Consociational democracy means government by the elite is designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy.<sup>63</sup> The approach, projected by Lijphart, has received international applause as the most peaceful means of ensuring national integration and democratic stability in multi-ethnic societies. In his view, the consociational thesis is the most viable approach to peacemaking in multi-ethnic societies.<sup>64</sup> His electoral recommendation of a constitutional democracy for

<sup>62</sup>Pippa Norris. *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*. Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>A. Lijphart. *Consociational Democracy*: World Politics. 1969, 21.2:207-225.

<sup>64</sup>A. Lijphart. Consociational Democracy, in Joel Krieger ed *Companion to Politics of the World*, Oxford:

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divided societies is based on a detailed examination of the features of power-sharing democracy in continental European countries including The Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland.<sup>65</sup>

In Lijphart's view, a majoritarian electoral system is dangerous for a divided society, since it presupposes shifting majorities in parliament and fairly similar policies of major parties in order not to exclude other parties' interests. Because political parties in divided societies diverge to a great extent and often people vote along ethnic lines, political parties representing ethnic minorities have no chance of ever forming a majority and shifting majorities in parliament are unlikely. Under such conditions, "majoritarian rule is not only undemocratic but also dangerous and risky resulting in civil strife. There is therefore the need for divided societies to develop institutional mechanisms for elite power sharing for democracy to survive the ethnic cleavages." This power-sharing approach to resolving ethnic division is hinged on the fact that it is better to accommodate different ethnic groups in the same state with proper guarantees of political influence and autonomy than to assign separate territorial states. Consociational democracy is thus described as a system of accommodation and compromise among the elite where deeply-fragmented societies have been able to preserve political stability. However, to consociational theorists, post-election institutional design is preferable.

Accordingly, political accommodation implies the capacity of political actors to amicably settle their differences. This approach has, in the main, four essential characteristics:

- (i) Grand coalition of governments, giving opportunity to all ethnic groups represented.
- (ii) A high degree of autonomy for each of the ethnic groups.
- (iii) Proportional representation of different groups in the legislative seats in the Parliament.
- (iv) A power of veto over key decisions by minority groups.<sup>66</sup>

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Oxford University Press. 1993, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup>A. Lijphart, "Electoral Systems, Party System and Conflict Management in Segmented Societies" in R. A. Schierie Ed. *Critical Choices for South Africa: Agenda for the 1990*. Captown: Oxford University Press, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup>Adriano Pappalardo "The conditions for consociational democracy: Logical and Empirical critique, *European Journal of Political Research*. 1981, 9:100.

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In terms of electoral system design, consociationalism advocates proportional voting system, thereby allowing ethnic-based parties to form the basis of government. The consociationalists approve the legal recognition of ethnic parties as political institutions in which it is assumed that the major actors can be brought for negotiation. In other words, this school of thought believes that ethnic demands can be kept in check by elite-level groups.

However, the viability of this approach in solving ethnic problem in developing democracies divided along ethnic lines is doubtful. In the first instance, Lijphart's consociational line of thought is seen as Eurocentric. This is because his experience is based on the detailed examination of the feature of power-sharing in advanced democracies like The Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland and its application may not fit into developing societies that are deeply divided.<sup>67</sup>

Quade asserts that most of Lijphart's successful examples of Proportional Representation (PR) are drawn from very small Scandinavian societies that are nearly homogenous, with low level of racial, ethnic or religious turbulence. Moreover, these countries never experienced any severe economic stress during the period of Lijphart's study.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, coalitions are subject to stress and dissolution more than a single party majority would. Moreover, when parties with ideological differences form a coalition, it becomes hard for them to pursue their democratically-mandated programme. He concludes that:

 Lijphart consociational Proportional Representation (PR) rather than producing consensus politics tends to recreate society's division and locate them in the legislature.

Such coalition can become political absurdities as witnessed in Greece in the 1990s when the Rights forged alliance with the Communists in order to keep the Socialists out of the government. Coalition government may also give undue chance to extremist parties to participate in government. Such a party may eliminate its coalition partners by an internal

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<sup>67</sup>Arend Lijphart. The Power Sharing Approach in J. V. Montvill ed *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multi-Ethnic Societies* in Massachusetts: Lexington Books. 1990, p. 104.  
<sup>68</sup>S. Quade; Proportional Representation and Democratic State Craft, *Journal of Democracy*, 1991. 2.3: 6



coup as Mussolini's fascists did in Italy in the 1920s.<sup>69</sup>

The argument that proportional Representation (PR), a major feature of consociational mechanism, favours the representation of the minorities has also been faulted. Though the mechanism gives any well-recognised pressure group, be it a union, a religion, or an ethnic group a chance to win seats, dividing the electorate in this way tends to exacerbate conflicts in a society.

Lardeyret has also shown that PR is dangerous for countries faced with ethnic or cultural divisions. In Belgium for instance, linguistic parties sprang up after PR was introduced in the early 1980s. Belgian politics became barely more than a feud between the Flemish and French – speaking Walloons. Without the minority to cement its national unity, Belgium could have fallen apart.<sup>70</sup>

In another important sense, PR tends to give small parties disproportionate powers because such parties control the swing seats needed to make up a majority coalition.

Reilly and Reynolds have shown that consociationalism has not succeeded in effectively addressing ethnic politics in post-war Bosnia, in spite of the fact that groups are represented in proportion to members in the community. In their survey of the results of elections in Bosnia in 1996 – 2002, they have shown that they were effectively an ethnic census. This is a consequence of the fact that major parties in that country are ethnic-based and still depend on their own community for electoral success. As such, they have little incentive to act moderately on ethnic issues and every reason to whip up ethnic sentiments.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly in Nigeria, a society divided along ethno-religious cleavages, democracy has been undermined by the presence and recognition of ethnic parties. It is to be noted that the rise and fall of Nigeria's First and Second republics was largely instigated by the ethnic nature of the political parties which inspired support from their ethnic enclaves. Thompson (2000) notes that politics in Nigeria, since independence, has been dominated by political parties that have their roots in particular ethnic groups. In such a situation, ethnic entrepreneurs throw decorum to the dogs through inciting statements and actions

<sup>69</sup>S. Quade. *Opcit.* 1991, p. 7

<sup>70</sup>A. Lardeyret. The Problem with Proportional Representation, *Journal of Democracy*. 1991, 2 . 3: 38.

<sup>71</sup>B. Reilly and A. Reynolds. *Electoral Systems and conflict in Divided Societies*, Washington D. C, Academy Press. 1999, p. 75.

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that spark ethnic violence among ethnicised political parties. This was clearly demonstrated in the voting pattern in the general elections of the First Republic. Consociationalism encourages the recognition of small parties and tends to fragment the party system or encourage parties to craft their appeals around narrow sectarian interests. Consociationalism, therefore, is a cause rather than a solution to the problems of ethnic politics.

## 2.8 Centripetalism/Integrative Electoral Design

In contrast to the consociational orthodoxy, the interactive centripetalists have argued that the best way to contain the destructive tendency in divided societies is not the encouragement of party formation on ethnic basis but rather to utilise and craft electoral engineering tools (rules) that encourage cooperation and accommodation between rival groups, and therefore work to mitigate the salience of ethnic factor.

The integrative electoral system theory emphasises that, rather than designing rigid institutions in which elected representatives have to work together after election, political stability is more likely to be achieved if electoral formulas are devised that reward candidates for moderation and cross-communal appeal before elections, thus effectively excluding extremists who appeal to a new sectional constituency. Horowitz, the leading proponent of this school of thought, has consistently maintained the need to put in place certain electoral rules and institutional incentives that promote the development of broad-based parties which also transcend ethnic considerations as the defining point of political competition.

This approach involves designing institutional mechanisms that de-emphasise the overbearing influence of ethnicity in the electoral process by undermining the potential for ethnic demands. Such network of institutions may include a presidential system and a semi-majoritarian electoral system which removes ethnic groups as organising principles of democracy and replaces them with a non-communal federal structure. He adds that building specific institutions should include the use of vote-pooling electoral systems which will cut across ethnic barriers.<sup>72</sup> He states that specific institutional devices to achieve this outcome include the use of preferential or cross-regional electoral systems,

<sup>72</sup>D. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering*. Berkeley: California Press. 1991, p. 45

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political party laws which require multi-regional party organisation and the legislative selection procedures which encourage median, centrist outcomes. Such institutions which give parties and candidates electoral incentives to pool votes across ethnic lines can thus motivate vote-seeking politicians to reach out across ethnic divide. Doing so will help to take tension out of ethnic politics.<sup>73</sup>

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In line with Horowitz's thought, Reilly writes that certain electoral systems under certain circumstances will provide rational actors with incentives towards cooperation, moderation between themselves and their rivals:

...by giving politicians in ethnically divided societies reasons to seek electoral support from group beyond their own community, well crafted political institutions particularly electoral systems can influence the trajectory of political competition, exerting a centrist will upon electoral politics and a moderating, cooperation - including influence upon the conduct of politics more generally.<sup>74</sup>

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In this wise, there is the need for the design of institution through electoral rules in such circumstances that create an environment in which cooperative interaction and "win-win" exchanges are possible so that norms of cooperation and negotiation can become habituated amongst political actors. Such device has the prospect of democratic longevity.

Reilly<sup>75</sup> also believes that the most powerful electoral system for encouraging accommodation are those which make politicians reciprocally depend on the votes of members of groups other than their own. Given his conviction on this, Reilly proceeds to present an approach that finds its expression in institutional design in divided societies. This he dubs centripetalism. Centripetal institutions essentially are designed to encourage moderate, centrist forms of political competition rather than polarising extremes and centrifugal patterns that characterise divided societies.

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He proposes three facilitating components of centripetalism as conflict management strategies:

- (1) The presentation of electoral incentives for campaigning politicians to reach out to, and attract votes from, a range of ethnic groups other than their own,

<sup>73</sup> D. Horowitz; *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. 1985; pp. 599-600

<sup>74</sup> B. Reilly. *Democracy in Divided societies: Electoral Engineering for Ethnic Conflict Management*, Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press. 2001, p. 30

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

thus encouraging candidates to moderate their political rhetoric on potentially-divisive issues and forcing them to broaden their policy positions.

- (2) The development of centrists, aggregative and multi-ethnic political parties which are capable of making cross-ethnic appeals and presenting a complex and diverse range of policy options to the electorate.
- (3) The presence of multi-ethnic bargaining under which political actors from different groups have incentive to come together to bargain and negotiate in the search for reciprocal electoral support via negotiation on vote-transfer deals and other more substantial societies.<sup>76</sup>

Reilly has studied some divided societies that have employed centripetal electoral rules to encourage inter-ethnic accommodation. A common theme in those countries is the desire to engineer political behaviour by changing the incentives for election that campaigning politicians must respond to. The evidence of the centripetal institutions is shown in Northern Ireland, Estonia, Australia and Papua New Guinea. These countries have provided empirical proof to show that centripetal electoral system promote cooperation between competing groups in divided society. Northern Ireland is cited as the most notable example of centripetal institutions, which encourage inter-ethnic accommodation in a divided society. The use of preferential electoral rules for the 1998 elections resulted in a pro-peace majority in the assembly through vote transfer.

Fiji,<sup>77</sup> an Island in South Pacific, is another divided society where electoral engineering through the use of centripetal approach has taken place. Fiji's indigenous populations are a mixture of the Malenasian and Polynesian groups. The Fijian society and politics have long been characterised by an uneasy coexistence between the two communities, with one group dominating the other. However, the promulgation of a new constitution in 1997 that featured innovative package of electoral rules promoted the development of open and multi-ethnic political competition and encouraged a degree of vote pooling between rival ethnic parties which helped to encourage accommodation

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<sup>76</sup> B. Reilly. *Op cit*, p. 31.

<sup>77</sup> B. Reilly. "Constitutional Engineering and the Alternative Vote in Fiji: An Assessment" in Broj V. Lal and Peterharmour (eds.) *Electoral Systems in Divided Societies: The Fiji Constitution Review*, National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University Canberra. 1997. p. 80.

between and within Fiji's deeply-divided society.<sup>78</sup>

The foregoing prescriptions of institutional incentives have remained the cardinal objectives of the architects of Nigeria's constitution since 1979. This was envisaged to aid consensus politics and the emergence of national leadership in Nigeria's theatre of politics. Suberu and Diamond<sup>79</sup> observe that the period of transition programme initiated by various military regimes was a remarkable era of institutional engineering. This electoral architecture included the constitutional prescriptions of federation-wide political parties. The 1979 Constitution, for instance, stipulates conditions under which political parties may be formed and recognised.

Nigeria has also experimented with other restrictive laws guiding party system, ranging from the mandatory two-party system during Babangida's transition programme, to more stringent electoral regulations of winning at least 5% of the votes in local elections, for parties to qualify to compete in national elections.

Another centripetal option for cross-ethnic parties is to introduce distribution requirements which make it incumbent parties or individuals to mobilise specified support levels across ethnic regions, rather than being limited to the home base, to be elected. As an integrative antidote to relentless sectionalism of the First Republic, 1979 and 1999 constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria introduced distribution requirements for the presidential election in which the candidate must enjoy a spread-vote cutting across various ethnic enclaves. Specifically, section 125 (a-c) of the 1979 Constitution stipulates that the president will be chosen by a vote pooling-formula involving plurality plus geographic distribution. This presidential election voting system is expected to ensure the emergence of a national leadership whose victory enjoys the support of various ethnic groups in the country.<sup>80</sup> The 1989 Constitution also provides a similar threshold. The presidential electoral law requires the presidential candidate to garner a plurality of votes nationwide and, at least, a quarter of the votes in the 19 states of Nigeria.

<sup>78</sup> B Reilly, "Centripetalism" in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.) *Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, London: Routledge. 2011, p. 5-7.

<sup>79</sup> Suberu and L. Diamond. *Institutional Design, Ethnic Conflict Management and Democracy in Nigeria*, <http://scholar.goggle> retrieved 2/11/2007. 2002, p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> D. Horowitz; *Constitutional Design, Proposal versus Process*, Paper Presented at Duke University, Univeristy of Rational Choice U.S., 1999, p. 6.

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Under the 1999 Constitution, to emerge as Nigerian president, a candidate must win an overall majority and, at least, one third of the votes in at least two thirds of all the states of the federation. This electoral design is consistent with Reilly's centripetal logic of mitigating secessionist or centrifugal motive of ethnic politics.<sup>81</sup> In a situation where no candidate emerges based on such requirements, provision is made for run-off election. This is to prevent the emergence of a sectional leader as Nigerian president. The question then arises that to what extent has this management technique militated against ethno-regional politics in Nigeria? This is one of the major questions this study attempts to answer.

In spite of the disagreement between the two views, that is the integrative and the consociational power-sharing institutions on the methods or types of electoral system for managing ethnic conflict, there is still an area of convergence. The two schools of thought agree basically that some form of joint rules is the only option for the sustenance of democratic governance in divided societies.

## 2.9 Theoretical Framework: Rational Choice Institutionalism/Incentive Model

The framework for this study is located in the Rational Choice Institutional Theory, with embedded structure of incentives. The theory argues that political life occurs within institutions, and to be able to have a comprehensive explanation of politics, the nature and role of political institutions must receive priority attention.

Weingast<sup>82</sup> opines that Rational Choice Theory provides a distinct set of approaches to the study of institutions, institutional choice and long-term durability of institutions. It further provides systematic treatment of institutions through the importation of the micro-foundation of analyses from rational theory.

Institutions, according to this theory, are conceptualised as collection of rules and incentives that establish the conditions for bounded rationality and therefore establish a political space in which many interdependent political actors can function. Thus in rational choice model, the individual politician is expected to manoeuvre to maximise personal utilities but his or her options are inherently constrained because they are

<sup>81</sup>B. Reilly. Political Engineering and Party Politics in Conflict Prone Societies, *Democratization*. 2006, 13.5: 11.

<sup>82</sup> B. R. Weingast. Political Institutions: Rational Choice Perspective, in Goodin R. E. Klingemann H. D. eds *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford University Press, London. 1996, p. 67.

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operating within the rules of one institution or more.<sup>83</sup>

The fundamental position of the rational choice institutional theory is that utility maximisation can and will remain the primary motivation of individuals or group. But those individuals may realise that their goals can be achieved most through institutional action and that their behaviour is shaped by the institutions.<sup>84</sup>

The theoretical framework as a method of political analysis has the following benefits:

- (i) The model provides an explicit and systematic methodology for studying the effects of institution which are modelled as constraints on action.
- (ii) It is explicitly comparative through models that compare distinct institutional constraint with their corresponding implications in behaviour and outcome and through the analysis of how behaviour and outcomes change.
- (iii) Affords comparison of behaviour and outcomes in related institutions within a given country and of similar effects of similar institutions across countries of importance.<sup>85</sup>

This particular model offers alternative interpretation of how far political actors will respond to changes in the formal rules of the game. The theory claims that formal electoral rules generate important incentives that are capable of shaping and constraining political behaviour.

### Incentive Model

Horowitz observes that for democracy to thrive in divided societies, and not to be overtaken by authoritarianism, they need special precautions. These are discussed under incentive model.<sup>86</sup> The central argument of the model is that maximum incentives should be provided by constitutional and electoral architects to motivate politicians, who are the major peddlers of ethnic sentiments, to act moderately. As Horowitz asserts, when the electorate is alert to ethnic issues, as they typically are, exhortation to leaders to compromise are likely to be futile in the absence of reward for compromise. Attention

<sup>83</sup> G. Peter. *Institutional theory in Political Science*. The New Institutionalism. London: Continuum. 2005, p. 30.

<sup>84</sup> J. M. Colomer. *Strategic transitions: Game Theory and Democratisation* Baltimore, M.D: John Hopkins University Press. 2001, 59.

<sup>85</sup> B. R. Weingast. Political Institutions: Rational Choice Perspective, in Goodin R. E. Klingemann H. D. (eds) *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford University Press, London. 1996, p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> B. Reilly. *Political Engineering and Party politics in Conflict-Prone Societies' Democratisation*; 2006; 13.5:11.

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needs to be devoted therefore to maximising incentives for accommodative behaviour. He therefore avers that "the challenge is to take an environment conducive to ethnic and racial allegiances in the Party system and create incentives for Parties to bid for floating votes across ethnic divides".

Such incentives will lead to vote pooling across ethnic divides in which parties will depend on the vote of other groups. This vote pooling, which is also referred to as distribution requirement of votes in Nigerian electoral system, is the major goal of incentives approach. This is expected to force ethnic entrepreneurs to behave in accommodative manner to gain the votes of other ethnic groups which leads simultaneously to the emergence of multi-ethnic government and lasting democratic rule.<sup>87</sup>

Since the emergence of the Second Republic in 1979, there have been deliberate attempts by successive governments in Nigeria in terms of electoral engineering to manage ethnic division and simultaneously consolidating democracy by providing incentives for cross-ethnic accommodation in the context of electoral competition. Thus, there has been the political engineering of parties and party system both in the Nigerian constitution and other electoral laws in forms of regulations that govern the formation, registration, and behaviour of political parties. The 1979 and 1999 constitutions require parties to display federal character in terms of membership and by providing that the name, motto or emblem of the party must not contain ethnic colouration.

Furthermore, to emerge as Nigerian president, aspiring candidates must have a overall majority and at least one third of the votes in at least two-thirds of all states of the federation, thus cutting across ethnic divides. It is under these conditions that the candidates have been elected Nigeria's executive president. This arrangement which forces presidential candidates to run on a cross-ethnic platform is believed to hold the prospects of democratic stability in the country.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>D. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in Divided Societies*; 1991, *Op cit.* p. 7.

<sup>88</sup>B. Reilly; *Op cit* 13.5: 824.

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2.10 Rational Choice Institutional/Incentive Model

This particular model offers a useful insight into the understanding of electoral engineering as a tool in managing ethnic politics in Nigeria.

It is thus graphically represented as follows:

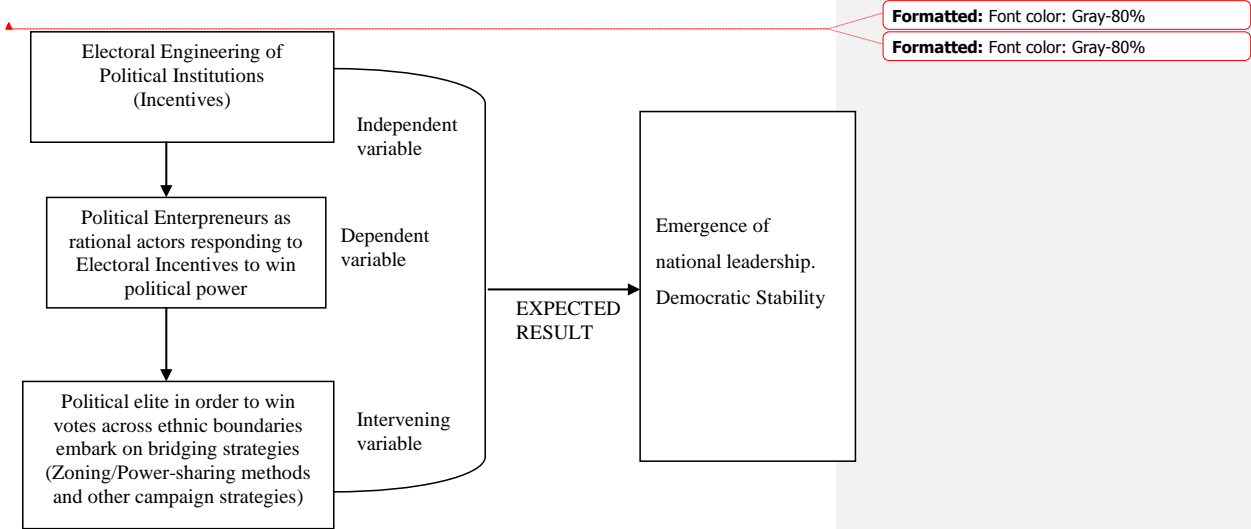


Fig 1: Rational Choice Institutional Model

Source: Drawn by the author.

From the above diagram, electoral rules on party formation, semi-majoritarian electoral system (vote pooling) serve as the independent variable – forcing politicians who are rational actors and desperate to win political power at the national level (the Presidency) to respond in kind to such rules. The actions and behaviours of politicians (Dependent Variable) are thus dictated by the nature and structure of incentives facing them. Where the incentives encourage bridging strategies, the political elite respond in kind by devising bridging strategies such as zoning/power-sharing. This in turn promotes accommodative behaviour among politicians across ethnic boundaries. The ultimate result is the promotion of national integration, emergence of national leadership and democratic stability.

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### 2.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the review of the concepts of ethnicity and electoral engineering that form the building blocks of the study. The review of the concept of ethnicity revealed that to understand its causes and exacerbation requires a combination of factors ranging from institutional deficiencies that facilitate ethnic intolerance, ethnic emotions as a result of historical memories, manipulation of ethnic symbols by political entrepreneurs and competition over resources. However, an examination of the foundation and dynamics of Nigerian politics unearthed the effect of colonialism and the activities of the political entrepreneurs who, through their intemperate utterances, succeeded in mobilising their groups for political gains, which has resulted in political instability. This has prompted the need for more ingenious means of managing ethnic diversity. The review of electoral engineering demonstrated that it is a widely-used mechanism in conflict resolution. A rational Choice Institutional Theory with the structure of incentives was also reviewed as appropriate framework of analysis for the study.

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**CHAPTER THREE**  
**ELECTORAL ENGINEERING AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN**  
**NIGERIA'S SECOND REPUBLIC**

**3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to analysis of the political transition programme supervised by the military government that led to the emergence of the Second Republic. Specifically, various electoral engineering tools on party formation, presidential electoral system and other innovative institutional measures were examined. This became imperative since the objective was to create a new political climate that could checkmate the excesses of political entrepreneurs who specialised in deploying ethnic chauvinism for winning political power, whose activity contributed to the demise of the short-lived democratic rule of the First Republic.

**3.2 Inception of the Transition Programme**

The major step towards realising this goal commenced with the inauguration of a Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC) in September 1985. The Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed<sup>1</sup>, in his inauguration speech, highlighted the general objective for the setting up the CDC

The Constitution Drafting Committee was set up to produce an initial draft of a constitutional arrangement which will provide a sound basis for the continuing existence of a United Nation.

Having reviewed Nigeria's political history and the constitutive elements of the previous constitutions that promoted divisive politics, and periodic political crisis, the military Head of State charged the body specifically to ensure that the constitution about to be drafted would seek to:

- (i) Eliminate cut-throat political competition based on a system of winner takes all.
- (ii) It should also discourage institutionalised opposition to the government in power and, instead, develop consensus politics and government based on a community of all interests rather than the interests of sections of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> The Head of State Murtala Muhammed was assassinated on February 13, 1976. The programme was completed by his second in command Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo.

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(iii) Eliminate overcentralisation of power in a few hands and, as a matter of principle, decentralise power wherever possible as a means of diffusing tension.<sup>2</sup>

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For the practical implementation of the stated objectives, the Supreme Military Council (SMC) explored further to see how these principles could be implemented and came to the conclusion that “Nigeria required genuine and truly national political parties.” However, in order to avoid harmful effects of proliferation of national parties, the CDC was charged to work out specific criteria to limit number of parties.<sup>3</sup> This implies that the body was expected to spell out rules and procedures capable of checkmating another emergence of ethnic associations that posed as political parties in the times past.

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On the type of institution of government desirable for the unity of the country, the military government emphasised the need to break away from Westminster system of government which promoted divisive politics. As such it informed the CDC to feel free to:

- (a) Recommend an Executive Presidential System of government in which the president and vice president are elected with clearly-defined powers and are accountable to the people.
- (b) Furthermore, there should be legal provisions to ensure that they are brought into office in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of the country.
- (c) The choice of members of cabinet should also be such as would reflect the federal character of the country.

### 3.3 Membership of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC)

Members of the committee were selected on the basis of two per state, so as to obtain as wide geographical coverage as possible and gather learned men in disciplines considered to have direct relevance to constitution making, namely, history, law, economics and other social sciences especially political science.<sup>4</sup> The CDC comprising 49 members, described as committee of wise men, was headed by Chief F.R.A. Williams a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and President of Nigerian Bar Association (1956-58).

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Immediately after the inauguration, the committee swung into action, by forming

<sup>2</sup> Head of State’s Speech, cited in the Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee, containing the draft constitution.;1976, Vol. 1 p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid p. 7.

various committees to facilitate its deliberations. 4,000 memoranda were received from the public for deliberations. Eventually, the Committee submitted a two-volume report to the Federal Military Government in September 1976.<sup>5</sup>

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#### 3.4 Recommendation of the Transition Committee

Some of the recommendations of the CDC relating to the country's political system later formed the basis of the 1979 Constitution as highlighted below:

- (i) **The Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principle of State Policy:** The fundamental objectives are ideals towards which the nation is expected to strive while the directive principles laid down the policies which are expected to be pursued in the efforts of the nation to realise national ideals. The CDC proposed that the statement of relevant portion of fundamental objectives should read that the composition of the Federal Government or any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to command national loyalty.
- (ii) **Decisions on Executive Presidency for the Federation:** Thus, there shall be a president and a vice-president who shall be elected on the same basis. It rejected the system of separation between the Head of State on the one hand and the Head of Government on the other. This decision was based on the fact that no African head of state had been known to be content with the position of mere figure head.
- (iii) **Decisions on Citizenship: Fundamental Right, Social Security, Political Parties and Electoral System Party System:** The C.D.C. recognised the need to have a national party. It recommended that for a party to be allowed to form and to be regarded as national such a party must satisfy the following conditions:
  - (i) Its ideology must reflect national outlook,
  - (ii) Leadership should as much as possible reflect federal character,
  - (iii) Names and addresses of national officers must be deposited with the Electoral Commission,
  - (iv) The sources of fund must be federal,

<sup>5</sup>O. Ollawa. "The 1979 Elections in Nigeria", P Ekeh, .D. Cole and G.O. Olusanya Eds. *Nigeria since Independence, Politics Constitution the First 25 Years*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publications. 1989, p. 127.

- (v) Party constitution must be available to the public, and be made public,
- (vi) The title or name of party must be national and not sectional.

The CDC considered various options, concluded and recommended multi-party system with national outlook:

By a process of rational elimination and grounds of sufficient reason we are thus left with a multi-party system which fits the declared objective of the regime and satisfies the expressed acceptance of multi-party system for the country.<sup>6</sup>

**Electoral System:** A single member constituency, a form of proportional representative system based on checklist system.

- (iv) **Election for Presidential Office:** The nation is recommended as one constituency and the elected candidate must secure a majority of all votes cast in two-thirds of the states of the federation. That is First-Past-the-Post electoral system.

**Fundamental Rights:** Apart from existing fundamental rights in the previous constitutions of the country, the CDC recommended additions including freedom of the Press, Right to work, Right of every child to equitable treatment, Right to free health and medical services, freedom from discrimination in public service.

**Election Matters:** There shall be an electoral body called Electoral Commission responsible for the organisation and conduct of elections in Nigeria.

### 3.5 The Constituent Assembly and Its Assignment

This body was inaugurated by the FMG in December 1976. It consisted of 230 members out of which 41 were appointed by the FMG. The remaining members were elected indirectly by means of a system of electoral college based largely on local government units.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee Containing the Draft Constitution. 1976, Vol. 2, p. 177.  
<sup>7</sup>O. Ollawa, *Op. cit.* p. 125.

The assignment of the assembly was two-fold:

- (i) To scrutinise and re-examine the draft Constitution, amending individual articles where necessary, rewording and toning-up different passages.
- (ii) The task of legitimising on its largeness which in effect makes it more representative than the Constitution Drafting Committee.

Apart from this explicit role, the CA served as a springboard for political regrouping. To be precise, it was from this forum that real political jostling for the Second Republic commenced. It was therefore not surprising that most members of the CA featured prominently in the five political parties that were later formed and fielded candidates for the 1979 general elections. The assembly was to do a thorough job of scrutinising and synchronising the documents of the draft constitution. Stimulated by extensive public discussions and contributions from learned societies, mass media and by written submissions of numerous individuals and citizens, the CA debated every aspect of the constitution and eventually submitted the revised edition to the Federal Military Government in August 1978.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted that most of the recommendations of the CDC received the approval of the Constituent Assembly. However, some areas attracted much debate, especially the proposal of executive presidency by the CDC. Proponents of Westminster system argued that the powers of the proposed Executive President were too extensive, and likely to encourage dictatorship, which Nigerians detested. Those in support of presidentialism believed that the system provided for direct election of president and vice-president by the whole country. It was intended to check the emergence of ethnic barons masquerading as national leaders, prevent sectional domination, and foster national unity. In the end, the advocates of presidentialism won the day but only after conceding few additional constitutional safeguards against the abuse of executive powers.<sup>9</sup>

Another area of dispute between the majority ethnic group and the minority in the assembly before the system was approved was on the modality for the election of the president. While the major ethnic groups were united on simple majority votes, the

<sup>8</sup>O. Ollawa.Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Shehu Shagari; *Shehu Shagari: Beckoned to Serve: An Autobiography*; Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria. 1999, p. 199.

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minority caucus wanted Nigerian politics to take into account the rural character of Nigeria with large and small ethnic nationalities. It was the view of the minority caucus that the plural character of Nigeria could be subsumed under the notion of “geographical spread” in terms of the minimum number of states. Eventually, a consensus was reached on two criteria. These are geographical spread in terms of the minimum number of states which was two-thirds of the states of the federation and the simple majority of the highest number of votes.<sup>10</sup>

This was followed by another tinkering exercise with the insertion by the FMG of 17 amendments to the revised draft constitution after which it was made public in January 1979 as the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> However, this amendment did not touch on the fundamental political reform of the regime as proposed by CDC and approved by the Constituent Assembly. Some of the amendments are:

1. Rejection of English as the only permanent National Language for the conduct of business in National Assembly. Section 51 of the constitution was therefore amended to ensure that Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba shall be additional languages of business in the National Assembly and shall be so when appropriate arrangements can be made for their use.
2. Also the composition of the officer’s corps and other ranks of the armed forces were amended to reflect federal character of the Federation.<sup>12</sup>

Given its strategic role in the integrating effort of Nigerian state, it is important that some contents of the constitution are examined especially those aspects that have to do with the party system engineering.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, 1979 Constitution sought to promote national unity and discourage sectional politics. It ventured to come to grips with some of Nigeria’s most persistent and pressing problems, mainly of national unity, regionalism and good government. These included (i) creation of executive presidency (ii) prescription that political parties should no longer exclusively be ethnically or regionally

<sup>10</sup> Omo Omoruyi. The winning of the April 2003 Presidential Election is a function of “Geographical Spread” and only Obasanjo and Buhari meet it. From [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian\\_presidential\\_election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_presidential_election). 2003 Retrieved, 28/2/2011. Prof. Omoruyi was a nominated member of the 1978 Constituent Assembly.

<sup>11</sup>Head of State speech on a nationwide Broadcast on September 21, 1978 entitled The Return of Party Politics: State of Emergency lifted.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The seventeenth amendment effected by the military government was contained in the Head of State speech to the nation, on September 21, 1978, heralding the lifting of ban on politics.

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based.<sup>14</sup> To be sure, the constitution, under the heading of “Political Objectives,” declares that the nation’s motto be extended from “Unity and Faith” to “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress”.

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Article 15 covers the promotion of national unity and discouragement of ethnicity. This underlined the direct principles of state policies that encourage national integration. This is to be achieved by prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association.<sup>15</sup>

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### 3.6 From Parliamentarism to Presidential System

The new democratic dispensation from 1978, as reflected in the 1979 Constitution, brought about structural and attitudinal changes. In institutional terms, there was a paradigm shift from the parliamentary system of the First Republic to presidentialism. According to the architects and promoters of this system (both the military and their civilian collaborators) such institutional design will be an integrative antidote to the restless sectionalism of the First Republic.

Electorally, the 1979 Constitution requires a successful presidential candidate to obtain a nation-wide mandate or popularity plus not less than one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the states of the federation and the federal capital territory, Abuja.

The transition programme drawn up by the military regime for the take-off of the Second Republic actually demonstrated its disaffection for parliamentary system by instructing the Constitution Drafting Committee to consider an alternative system of government. Parliamentary system was considered to have inherent danger of conflicts of authority and ethno-political interest between the ceremonial President and the Prime Minister.<sup>16</sup> This manifested in Nigeria's First Republic whereby the ceremonial President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, refused in his official capacity to call the Prime Minister whose party claimed to have won the 1964 federal elections to form the national government. Nigeria, for once, remained without government which could be seen as one of the

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<sup>14</sup>Cited in Jadesola Akande. 'An introduction to the Nigeria Constitution', London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1982, p.7.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in R. T. Suberu and L. Diamond. Institutional Design, *Ethnic Conflict Management and Democracy in Nigeria*; From <http://scholar.goggle>, 2003, p. 40. 2/11/2007.

remotest causes of the demise of the First Republic. As Suberu and Diamond further submit:

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The dependence of a government on a parliamentary majority in the context of endemic corruption in Nigeria would probably lead to even more expensive logrolling to form and maintain governments and possibly the frequent holding of government's hostage to expensive "side-payments" and sheer gross bribery in exchange for fending off votes of no confidence.

Even Nigeria's brief democratic experience in the fourth republic with frequent resort to impeachment and removal of legislative officials is a signal that parliamentarism may still bring a repeat of the ugly situation of the First Republic.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, presidentialism is perceived to have the capacity to foster greater ethnic unity. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo opines that:

The greatest advantage of the presidential system is that the country is the constituency of the President. He is obliged to know the country and seek support across the country. Even if he is a tribal baron, his horizon and outlook will be broadened by the end of the national campaign.<sup>18</sup>

The truism of this assertion is premised on the stringent electoral distribution requirement a successful presidential candidate must meet. This requirement compelled aspirants and their various political parties to mobilise votes across ethnic enclaves, thus providing for broad participation among various ethnic nationalities.

Flowing from the foregoing is the fact that presidentialism is considered to be compatible with African indigenous kingship or chieftaincy traditions. Under this system, the president plays a unique role as a symbol of national unity by virtue of being Chief Executive of the federation and his direct election by the whole nation, voting as one constituency.<sup>19</sup> To be sure, Article 12b of the 1979 Constitution spells out terms, procedural principles and qualifications relating to the candidate and elections of the Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It declares that the President would deem to have been elected:

- (a) If he had majority of the Yes votes cast at the presidential election.
- (b) If he had not less than one quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at

<sup>17</sup> Cited in R. T. Suberu and L. Diamond. *Institutional Design*, *Op cit*; p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Obasanjo; *Constitution for National Integration*, Lagos: Friends Foundation Publishers. 1989, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in R. T. Suberu and L. Diamond. *Op cit*, p. 45.

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least two thirds of the States which make up of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The implication of these constitutional requirements is that a candidate who contests and wins presidential election in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society must have received a legitimately wide territorial mandate from the electorate not just by scoring the highest number of votes but in addition a quarter of the total votes cast in at least two-thirds of the constituent states of the federation. It also implies that the electoral requirement tacitly assumes that, for political leadership to be latent or manifest in creating a Nigerian nation from conglomeration of tribes and other linguistic groups within a common political unit then, the political acceptability of such leader should cut across ethnic boundaries.

In spite of the merits attached to it, the system is not without criticism. It is argued that there is a sense in which the system may have exacerbated some defects of Nigerian politics. Firstly, the huge financial cost associated with federation-wide campaign is seen to constitute an invitation to the further monetisation and corruption of politics which remain the very bane of Nigerian public life.<sup>20</sup>

While this may be true, it cannot be admitted that corruption is only associated with presidentialism. It should be recalled that one of the reasons for the intrusion of the military into politics in 1966 was the problem of corruption, for which the politicians were indicted.

Presidentialism is said to have the capacity to generate electoral deadlock going by what transpired during the 1979 presidential election.<sup>21</sup> It is also capable of exacerbating ethno-regional anxiety in Nigeria. Accordingly, much ethnic suspicion, convulsion and recrimination have been generated in Nigeria by the perception that such a singularly important position could fall into the hands of a politician from a rival ethnic group.<sup>22</sup> This argument may not be plausible going by the fact that the presidential electoral formula requires a successful candidate to obtain a nationwide majority or plurality of votes across ethnic boundaries.

On the balance, the presidential system is said to reflect the wishes of the people going by the constitutional discussions and conferences that followed its adoption into

<sup>20</sup> Cited in R. T. Suberu and L. Diamond. *Op ci*, p. 46.2/11/2007.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22, 2/11/2007.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23, 2/11/2007.

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Nigerian body politic.<sup>23</sup>

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### 3.7 Party Engineering and Presidential Electoral System in the 1979 Constitution

Another important electoral innovation brought into Nigeria's political terrain that ushered in civilian rule in 1979 was the party system. Political party as an institution plays a decisive role in the integration of a polity. This is because parties channel aggregate and express political demands. They play an important role in the management of conflict in societies divided along cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic lines.<sup>24</sup>

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Where they are ethnically-based, it results in centrifugal experience such as in Nigeria's First Republic. It is against this background that the architects of the 1979 Constitution instituted certain rules that discouraged the formation of political parties along ethnic lines.

Article 202 of the 1979 Constitution prescribes the conditions under which political parties may be formed.

- (i) To be eligible to operate as a political party, the composition of the members of the Executive Committee or the governing body of the Party should reflect Federal Character of Nigeria. This is interpreted to mean that the membership of the top hierarchy must be drawn from at least two-thirds of the 19 states of the federation.
- (ii) Registered political parties are expected to have their headquarters located in the capital of the federation with regional offices fully established in at least two thirds of all the states comprising the federation.
- (iii) It is also stipulated that any association wishing to function as a political party must open its membership to every Nigerian citizen, irrespective of his origin, sex, religion or ethnicity.
- (iv) Also its name, emblem or motto must not have any ethnic or religious connotation.<sup>25</sup>

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Section 12b of the 1979 Constitution requires that:

- (i) winning candidate for the post of the president must receive the highest number of votes cast at election and
- (ii) one-quarter votes cast at the election in each of at least two thirds of all the

<sup>23</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, Report of the Bureau, Lagos: Federal Government Printer, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> O. Ollawa. Op. cit. p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, The 1979 Constitution.

states in the federation. Thus, the president should not only derive his support from a very wide geographical spectrum but also provide the focal point of national leadership.

The prescription on party formation was a total departure from what operated in the First Republic where no specific rule, restraining party formation on regional basis, was put in place. The absence of such incentives created opportunity for the political class to fan the embers of ethnic tension and its attendant violence that characterised the short-lived First Republic.

Given the above prescribed electoral rules, as entrenched in the 1979 Constitution, the questions to be asked are:

- (a) to what extent has this altered the behaviour of the political elite?
- (b) how have such incentives promoted consensus politics?

An analysis of party politics in the Second Republic and the result of the presidential election are relevant in this regard.

### 3.8 Party Formation in the Second Republic

Even though there could be other subterranean political activities, full-fledged political activities commenced following by the pronouncement by General Olusegun Obasanjo, the Head of State, in mid-September 1978 when he announced to the nation the formal recognition of the 1979 Constitution. He declared:

Political recruitment and subsequent political support which are based on tribal or ethnic interest that contributed to the country's past misfortune must not be allowed to spring up again.<sup>26</sup>

In response, the Nigerian political environment became enlivened with renewed activities by political pundits in their chess game of forming political parties envisaged to control the government especially at the centre.

Oniororo observes that “before the hullabaloo that greeted the arrival of politics subsided, Chief Obafemi Awolowo announced the formation of his the Unity Party of Nigeria” (UPN).<sup>27</sup> Two weeks later there were 25 acclaimed political parties and by December 18, 1978 no fewer than 53 political parties were actually vying for public

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<sup>26</sup> The Head of State Speech, Gen. Obasanjo cited in Elections 1979: The Nigerian Citizen's Guide, Lagos: *Daily Times Publication*. p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Oniororo Niyi. *Politics, Dirty Politics*. Ibadan: Oniororo Publication, 1981. p. 18.

support. Out of these associations, only 17 had the mettle to apply for registration before 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1979, the deadline stipulated by the Federal Electoral Commission. (FEDECO). The proliferation of political associations seeking registration was seen as a demonstration of a resumption of political consciousness of the Nigerians.<sup>28</sup>

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Early in December 1978, FEDECO requested political associations seeking registration to send their applications to the Executive Secretary of the Commission. It warned that application for registration by any political association must be in strict compliance with the published guidelines. The guidelines stipulated among other things that any party that wished to register must send 10 copies of its constitution outlining the party's programmes and objectives. The commission later dispatched all electoral commissioners to all states of the federation to ascertain the support enjoyed nationwide by each of the parties that applied to the commission for registration as part of its screening exercise. At the end of this rigorous and tedious exercise, five political parties were accorded recognition by FEDECO. These were:

- (i) Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP)
- (n) National Party of Nigeria (NPN)
- (iii) Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP)
- (iv) Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)
- (v) Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)<sup>29</sup>

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The question to be asked is "In what ways have these electoral requirements influenced party system in the emerging republic? Put differently, is there any deviation of party system in terms of operation and behaviour of political elite compared with the First Republic? To this end, each of these registered parties is examined in terms of their formation and their performance in the presidential election.

Essentially, the five parties that emerged were generally viewed as the reincarnation of the former parties in the First Republic with only a change of name. They were best described as ethnic associations<sup>30</sup>. Many of which were formed in the Constituent Assembly. Aborisade and Olowu assert that the political groupings more or

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<sup>28</sup> Graf Williams. *State and Society in Nigeria*, Idanre: Afrografika Publisher. 1980, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> O. Ollawa. Op. cit p. 125 .

<sup>30</sup> Okoh; in R.F. Ola Ed. *Nigerian Political System, Inputs and Outputs Environment*, Benin: Ampik Press. 1981, p. 50.

less mirrored the pre-1966 political factions around individuals rather than programmes, only the old seem capable of mobilising sufficient capital and fulfilling FEDECO's condition within the prescribed period.<sup>31</sup> This position will be further clarified as we examine the formation of these parties.

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### 3.9 National Party of Nigeria (NPN)

National Party of Nigeria can be described as having the widest national appeal compared with other parties registered in the Second Republic. It can be said that by the mobilisation strategies of founding members of the party, it had on its train strong political personalities, though with bourgeoning background, across the country.<sup>32</sup> It can be said that it was a party that enjoyed diverse forms of political alignments from various ethnic divides, having in its fold both the old and new political entrepreneurs.

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The NPN had its foundation in the old northern politicians especially those originally in the defunct Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). The interactions and discussions among them especially among those who were members of the Constituent Assembly led to the formation of the Northern Movement which embraced an array of individuals from all political groupings in the north. Old politicians such as Inuwa Wada, Sule Gaya, Shehu Shagari, Aliyu Makama Bida and Shettima Ali Munguno were thus brought together in a close political framework. This grouping was also extended to the new breed politicians who had not featured in the political groupings of the north. They included individuals such as Umaru Dikko, Ibrahim Tahir, Iya Abubakar and Adamu Ciroma.

Given the reality of the innovation in Nigeria's electoral system which placed premium on the integration of the nation in which party formation and the emergence of new national leadership especially the executive president must follow, Northern Movement could not limit itself to its ethnic enclave. It therefore had to spread its tentacles to other geopolitical zones of the country. Indeed, expediency and willingness to cooperate in building a party with the maximum national appeal became the guiding consideration in the formation of the NPN. Moreover, a more national approach meant

<sup>31</sup> Aborisade and Olowu. "Development in Nigeria to Civil rule and Six months after" *Quarterly Journal of Administration*. 1981, 25.1 & 2:60.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* p. 146.



that the old guard in the north could join hands with established politicians elsewhere in Nigeria. To this end, politicians from the north had to align with others from other parts across the majority and minority ethnic groups.<sup>33</sup>

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By July 1978, Northern Movement had already evolved into a national party into which northern political figures such as Nuhu Bamali and Ali Monguno had succeeded in wooing from the south-west notable political personalities, though not without tainted character, such as Chiefs A. M. A. Akinloye, Richard Akinjide (south-west) and K. O. Mbadiwe from the east. The politicians from the north took their political recruitment to other geopolitical zones especially in the minority areas such as Benue State where Joseph Tarka became the pointman for NPN. His message was that his people had suffered greatly from being in opposition during the First Republic and he did not want them to have the same experience in the new dispensation. This was interpreted to mean being deprived of a fair share of public amenities and other social goods. Through Joseph Tarka, the Tiv accepted NPN as a party where their future localised ambition could be realised. This was contrary to their political belief in the First Republic projected by the United Middle belt Congress (UMBC). Another notable figure from the minority was Aper Aku who eventually became the NPN candidate for the gubernatorial election in Benue State.<sup>34</sup>

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In another move to ensure the emergence of a party with the widest national spread, the NPN made inroad into the south-east zone and succeeded in winning Igbo advocates with national as well as local reputation. These were prominent figures like Dr. Nwafor Orizu who briefly acted as Nigeria's president after the first military putsch of January 1966, Jerome Udoji, Nwakanma Okoro and J.O.J. Okezie.<sup>35</sup>

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The principle of zoning and power rotation remained one of the informal strategies employed by various parties for the purpose of enjoying widest support, beginning from the Second Republic. The zoning formula, derived from the constitution's federal character principle, was adopted in selecting presidential candidates by political parties especially the National Party of Nigeria. The principle was also extended to other positions to be shared by other geopolitical zones. This was seen as a means of ensuring

<sup>33</sup> Richard Joseph. Op. cit, p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> *Daily Times*, Lagos 13 November, 1978.

ethnic balancing.<sup>36</sup>

Shehu Shagari contends that zoning principle was adopted to reflect Nigeria's federal character, foster a sense of belonging and regulate cut-throat competition. He further explains the benefit of zoning and power sharing in Nigeria's political system as follows:

Zoning as a whole offers wider choice and representation by ensuring that numerically large groups do not squeeze out small ones. Moreover, zoning encourages regional cooperation rather than rivalry since contests are not between sections. It also meant that every section of the country could in the long run produce the country's president or at least have a fair crack of the whip.<sup>37</sup>

Dr Alex Ekweme bares his mind on the reason for supporting zoning principle:

I am from the South East and I am interested in having somebody from the South East become president of Nigeria in my lifetime. It would be very sad for me to die believing that South East is not part of Nigeria. So we must work out a system that would ensure that every zone of the country must have a chance to govern Nigeria. Having Nigeria means having everybody in Nigeria, and that is to some extent, one of the *raison d'être* for our original submission of zoning and rotation.<sup>38</sup>

The NPN zoning scheme, a relatively rigorous exercise, was a crucial factor in the electoral success of the party in the Second Republic. In this arrangement, the presidency was zoned to the north-west, predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani, the vice presidency to the Igbo the (east), the party chairmanship to the Yoruba ( south-west), the Senate presidency to the South-South and, effective from 1983 general elections, the office of the speaker of the House of Representatives to the Middle Belt or North Central zone.<sup>39</sup>

This arrangement, especially the presidency, was not without controversy mostly among those who felt such could scuttle their presidential ambition. Olusola Saraki who came from a disadvantaged zone by the arrangement contended that NPN was not a zonal party but a national party. To Chuba Okadigbo, presidentialism was not regionalism and

<sup>36</sup> Suberu and Diamond. *Op cit.* p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> Personal interview, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari, December 5, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Dr. Alex Ekwueme, August 7, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari, December 5, 2010.

zoning is a manifestation of regionalism. However, Richard Akinjide defended the position of the party as merely obeying the provisions of the constitution.<sup>40</sup>

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The zoning arrangement produced from the northern zone Shehu Shagari, Adamu Ciroma, Olusola Saraki, Maitama Sule, Iya Abubakar, Ibrahim Tahir and Joseph Tarka. At the end of the convention held in December 1978 by delegates from across the country, Shehu Shagari obtained 978 votes on the first ballot which put him well ahead of Yusuf Maitama Sule from Kano State with 564 votes and Adamu Ciroma from Borno State with 293 votes. However, Shagari's vote did not give him absolute majority of the 2,245 delegates that the party's constitution required. The withdrawal of other candidates nullified the need for a second ballot, hence Shehu Shagari secured the ticket of the party as its flag-bearer.<sup>41</sup>

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As part of the ethnic-balancing strategy, the vice presidential slot was zoned to the southern part of the geopolitical zone of the country. This also brought about horse trading among the power-brokers from the zone. In this direction, gladiators for the second position included K. O. Mbadiwe and Joseph Ways (who had initially made available his personal office in Lagos) for the party's secretariat. However, none of these men succeeded as Alex Ekwueme, a wealthy architect from Anambra State, who had earlier contested for state gubernatorial nomination, was eventually picked.<sup>42</sup>

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It can be said of the NPN that it was a party of the heavyweights. Although it harboured personalities of burgeoning characters, the fact still remained that it brought together a remarkable collection of senior and respected politicians from all over the country. Though accused of having strong links with the northern establishment championing northern interests, it had many members from the southern states and from the former Middle-Belt, who were influential in their various ethnic domains.<sup>43</sup> Little wonder, Shehu Shagari describes National Party of Nigeria thus:

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☺ We were a party of all social classes and groups – the rich, the poor, professionals, academics, business people farmers, women and the youth, of all ethnic backgrounds.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Daily Times, 30 November, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> Nigerian Tribune 22 January, 1979.

<sup>42</sup> West Africa 18 December, 1978, p. 2519.

<sup>43</sup> West Africa, 20, November, 1978, p. 2275.

<sup>44</sup> Shehu Shagari. *An Authobiography Beckoned to Serve*, Ibadan, Heinemann. 1999, p. 207.

### 3.10 Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP)

The party was launched in Lagos in September 1978. It was originally a fusion of three groups that secure membership across the country. These were the National Union Council led by Alhaji Waziri, Club 19 formed by members of the Constituent Assembly drawn from the 19 states and led by Mr. M.T. Mbu from the east and the progressives led by Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya of Yoruba extraction. The party initially was led by a wealthy northern businessman, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri.<sup>45</sup> The initial composition of the founding members and the personal efforts of its leadership to reach out to the length and breadth of the country gave the party a national outlook. However, the nationalist posture began to dwindle mainly regarding the modalities for the organisation and structures of the party, particularly the desirability or otherwise of one person combining the post of the chairman and the presidential candidate as founding the party's constitution. While a group loyal to the chief financier of the party, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri, favoured the combination of the two positions by one personality, the other group led by Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya from the south-west called for the splitting of the two positions.

In the bid towards this objective, an amendment to the party's constitution was moved by the group loyal to Ogunsanya at the party's convention held from November 16 to 18, 1978 in Lagos. However, the amendment was rejected by the loyalists of Alhaji Waziri. The rejection of the amendment by the Waziri group, which was in the majority, orchestrated the walkout of the faction led by Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, the veteran politician from Lagos State and the protem chairman of the NPP before the convention.

Given the fact that Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri enjoyed the support of the majority of party members at the convention, he was overwhelmingly elected both as the party chairman and the presidential candidate. Reacting to Alhaji Waziri's election to the two positions, Chief Ogunsanya announced his expulsion and that of his main backers such as Chief Kola Balogun from Oyo State.<sup>46</sup> The expelled members joined forces with Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, a political heavy weight of Igbo extraction, to form Nigeria Peoples Party. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe eventually became the presidential flag bearer while Prof. Ishaya Audu from the north became the running mate.

<sup>45</sup>*West Africa*. 4 December, 1978, p. 2397.

<sup>46</sup>*West Africa* 4 December, 1978, p. 2397.

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### 3.11 Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP)

The party emerged out of the crisis of confidence that broke out among the three major associations that formed a political party. These groups were the National Union Council, Club 19 and the Council for National Unity and Progress. Initially, the party had the prospects of becoming national in outlook, going by the recruitment efforts of the founder, Ibrahim Waziri, to ensure federation-wide spread of the party. Waziri's business ventures, which enabled him to traverse the country, gave him a vantage point to attract associates from virtually every part of the country. His initial deft political move in late 1978 almost brought about a political change in Nigeria's body politic. This was because young political aspirants from the minorities of the mid-west, middle belt and east who had forged a working alliance with former NCNC politicians from Igbo and Yoruba states within Club 19 decided to join forces with Waziri, a "northern liberator" with a strong (NPC) background.<sup>47</sup> This means Waziri, given the fact of the electoral requirement not only for party registration but the race for the presidency, must intensify efforts to garner support across ethnic divides. Indeed, Waziri's untiring efforts in forming a national party with relative newness made him a "maverick" on Nigerian political scene whose party could pull together heterogeneous strands of political support that approximated 10% of the national vote in the 1979 elections.<sup>48</sup>

However, GNPP was largely built around Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri's personality. This is expected given his wealthy background. Ironically, his wealthy background did not stop him and his party from challenging the northern oligarchy which made him to castigate NPN, another party which had most of its stalwarts from the north, whose composition was made of powerful rich men and highly-placed northerners such as Shehu Shagari, Maitama Sule and Adamu Ciroma.

According to the old-wine thesis of party politics, GNPP is seen not only as an ethnic party, but that which has strong links with parties of the First Republic. It was argued that Ibrahim Waziri only retained his Bornu Youth Movement of the First Republic whose area of operation was restricted to the minority areas of Borno and

<sup>47</sup>Richard Joseph *Democracy and Prebended Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Ibadan: Spectrum. p. 144.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit.* p. 145.

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Gongola. Moreover, it is always recalled that he had Northern Peoples Congress background as he partook in the NPC government in the 1960s first as a minister of health and later economic development.<sup>49</sup> However, more than having connection with the past, the party was able to garner support outside the immediate ethnic environment of its major founder. It must be admitted that not only did the party have its strongest influence in the north as it was able to pose a stout challenge to the NPN in many areas of the north, it also had its strong presence among eastern minorities of Cross Rivers and River states.

Even in the southern part before NPP split, there was recognition that Waziri NUC and Club 19 were images that indicated its impact on party formation in the Second Republic. It was indeed the failure to hold this burgeoning alliance together that deprived Nigeria of the opportunity for forming its only new party in 1979.<sup>50</sup>

The ability of the GNPP to draw support from various ethnic divides was attributed to two factors:

- (i) The desire of young political aspirants especially from the north to break away from the northern oligarchy. This could be attributed to certain substantial socio-economic changes that had occurred in the mid-1960s with the emergence of young professionals, business icons and technocrats, which found GNPP an appropriate forum and avoid allying themselves with the old lackies as found in the NPN.
- (ii) The ability of the chief owner, Ibrahim Waziri, who was able to make a strong appeal to submerged antagonism within the northern states on the basis of a combined class and sectional appeal directed at the subordinate peoples and peripheral areas within the traditional northern polity and eastern minorities.<sup>51</sup>

These qualities identified in Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri probably aided his presidential ambition as he was nominated the flag bearer of the party without much contestation.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit.* ~~Ibid.~~ p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit.* p. 145.

### 3.12 Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)

Peoples Redemption Party was another party that had its offshoot from the northern part of Nigeria. Led by a prominent politician of the First Republic, the history of the party is traceable to the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) of the First Republic, which was a major opposition force against the Northern Peoples Congress.

Consequently, upon the lifting of ban on political activities in 1978, Aminu Kano initially fraternised with the Northern Movement, a political association which later metamorphosed into the National Party of Nigeria. When the Northern Movement, evolved into a national movement in mid-1978, Aminu Kano participated actively in its deliberations. However, as the NPN entered its final stage in selecting its protem officers to serve until the party's convention was held in December 1978, Aminu was offered the position of a protem publicity secretary in spite of his notable activities in the politics of the First Republic. Though demeaning, it was seen, not as an error, but a proof of the unacceptable radical posture the man was noted for. IN reaction, Aminu Kano pulled out of the party to go to a group that could promote his radical ideals and accept his leadership.

The radical posture of the party was not different from that of the NEPU. Aminu Kano demonstrated his ideological posture just as in the NEPU days by constituting a formidable force against the northern establishment especially the NPN, as he did against the NPC. The party was seen as that of commoners. It is also noted that in its radical posture he was the only prominent politician amongst all who convincingly made a case for the freedom and quality of women for political offices.

However, his mobilisation effort that drew enthusiastic followership did not match the NPN especially in the north, and the party could not make significant impact in other parts of the country to qualify as a national party. However, with the adherence of enough party splinters in the west and the east, the party was able to qualify for registration according to the requirements of the electoral decree.<sup>52</sup> Mallam Aminu Kano from the north was picked as the presidential candidate with Dr Samuel Ikoku from the south east becoming the running mate.

<sup>52</sup>Richard Joseph.Opcit, p. 148.

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### 3.13 Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)

Unity Party of Nigeria, like its counterparts had strong links with a party of the First Republic – the Action Group. The same personality, Chief Awolowo, who was the arrow-head of Action Group, became the founder of the UPN with essentially the followership made up of those that were with him in the First Republic.

Joseph<sup>53</sup> asserts that the formation of the Unity Party of Nigeria was based on four major dimensions; three explicit and avowed, the fourth implicit and often disavowed. The first dimension was the research and planning which though had been operating underground since the first military putsch in 1966 came into the open and went into full operation as soon as Awolowo got the conviction that Murtala Mohammed meant what he said in 1975 on the return to civil rule.

The major task of the outfit was sponsoring of writing research papers on the socio-political and economic state of the nation. The outfit also acted on the directive of Chief Awolowo to take active part in the 1976 local government elections, and the subsequent election of delegates into the Constituent Assembly.

The delegates that belonged to Awolowo's camp in the Constituent Assembly thus had two important assignments to carry out. Apart from the national duty of reviewing the proposed 1979 Constitution, they were to ensure the mobilisation and recruitment of the unaffiliated members into their about-to-be-born political party. This political grouping often resorted to meeting at Ikenne and Apapa, both being the residences of Chief Awolowo.

The second dimension was the personal efforts of Awolowo in the recruitment of new members especially those outside the Yoruba heartland who were needed to give the party the required national outlook for its registration and success in the presidential election.

The third dimension was the meetings of Committee of Friends who were political associates of Awolowo in the days of Action Group. The Committee of Friends was formed after the first coup in 1966.<sup>54</sup> The fourth dimension was the ethnic consolidation

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit* p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid* Richard Joseph. *Op cit* p. 149.

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of the Yoruba. Of these four strategic dimensions, one that was new, unique and even most compelling was the political diplomacy of Awolowo to reach out to other ethnic groups as a rational actor wanting to win the position of presidency based on new presidential electoral formula<sup>55</sup>.

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In pursuance of this, Awolowo clearly and publicly made it clear that he no longer wished to be regarded as the leader of Yoruba, a general title he earned after he was released from prison in 1967 and during his leadership of the western delegation at the abortive constitutional conference that year.<sup>56</sup>

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In doing this, Awolowo, with his political machinery, went to the north on an all-important political adventure. This was confirmed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari:

Chief Awolowo made extensive contacts, and produced well ahead of his rivals blue print of a political party and its agenda. I was one of those privileged enough to be invited to his Park Lane residence while I was at CA. His purpose was to build a party that would include northern, eastern and western politicians who really mattered and could help unify the country.<sup>57</sup>

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In the north however, Awolowo did not record much success. Shettima Ali Monguno of Borno State confirms Awolowo's unfruitful effort:

Like many of my Northern colleagues, I was invited by Awolowo to come and talk with him, he indicated he wanted to be President. I told him that this was premature... He had written a letter that he wanted to see me but I did not like the idea of one person, setting himself up like that and expecting others to fight for other jobs.<sup>58</sup>

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Awolowo did not take kindly to the remark. To him, the rebuff he got from the core Northerners he tried to draw to his political camp seem to suggest "they were under oath to the late Sardauna of Sokoto". As he continues:

All those I thought were qualified from the North felt it was an affront to offer them the post of Vice President. They thought it

<sup>55</sup> Richard Joseph. *Opcit* ~~bid~~, p. 150.

<sup>56</sup> L. Bolaji. *Shagari: President by Mathematics*, Ibadan, EPP Press. 1980, p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Personal interview conducted with Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 8 December, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> This was a personal commentary by Alhaji Ali Mungono in an interview granted to Richard Joseph cited in *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria*.

was their birth right to be number one so they spurned the offer.<sup>59</sup>

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In the south-east also, he did not succeed in winning the support of prominent Igbo figures like the former Eastern Region Premier, Dr Michael Okpara. In spite of the roadblock to Awolowo's political recruitment effort in the east, he was able to win to his camp a young promising Igbo/Onitsha lawyer, Philip Umeadi, who was eventually picked as his running mate in the 1979 presidential race. As Jakande, a core Awoist, describes the choice of Philip Umeadi:

The choice had certainly been made for electoral reasons and had been firmly calculated piece of strategy. Chief Umeadi could certainly deliver the Ibo votes influencing particularly young Ibos.<sup>60</sup>

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This was an area where Chief Awolowo needed all the support he could get as there were ill feelings towards him arising from the events that followed the civil war.

It must be said of the party that in terms of structure and composition, UPN differed from other parties such the NPN, NPP, PRP where political offices were separated from party functionaries. In the Unity Party of Nigeria, top party hierarchy was fused with political office. This probably was for the purpose of party discipline and cohesion. Just as Awolowo doubled as national party chairman and presidential candidate, so it was at the state level where gubernatorial aspirants doubled as chairmen of the party.

In spite of the foregoing criticism, the party was seen as the best organised the most articulate and most sophisticated of the five parties. It also had the advantage of being led by the indomitable, highly intelligent, versatile and hardworking Chief Awolowo who was the first to announce the formation of his party a day after the ban on partisan politics was lifted.<sup>61</sup>

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It is therefore not surprising that Awo's candidature both as the national party chairman and presidential flag bearer in 1979 and 1983 was never a subject of contestation within the party hierarchy. Phillip Umeadi from the south-east was picked as the running mate for the purpose of ethnic balancing and as a grand strategy to win Igbo

<sup>59</sup>*New Nation*. Lagos. 1979. Vol. 2. No. 2.

<sup>60</sup>An interview with Alhaji Lateef Jakande on November 14, 2010. He was founding member of Unity Party of Nigeria and Executive Governor, Lagos State between 1979-1983.

<sup>61</sup>L. Bolaji. *Op cit*, p. 30.

votes. It is to be noted that all the political parties that contested the presidential elections adopted zoning arrangement for the position of the president and the running mate.

### 3.14 Analysis of 1979 Presidential Elections

The 1979 elections in general and the presidential election contest, in particular, were significant for certain reasons.

Firstly, the elections offered the opportunity to experiment a new type of democratic government with certain electoral innovations thought to be capable of engendering democratic consolidation and thus national unity which Nigeria, as a deeply-divided society, had to contend with. Secondly, it signified the terminal phase of military rulership. The 1979 elections indeed were meant to usher in freedom from military dictatorship which had been in operation for 13 years. To Ollawa:

... the elections represented the most significant phase of almost fourteen years of military rule and could therefore be classified as critical elections.<sup>62</sup>

Towards ensuring effective participation of the citizenry which had been subjected to autocratic rule over the years, efforts were made by relevant institutions to educate and arouse the consciousness of the people. Months before the election, the federal department of public enlightenment, the mass media and the political parties took various measures to make the Nigerian electorate believe that their vote was not only very important but also that the 1979 general elections represented the most important civic duty to be performed by Nigerians since the attainment of independence.

Moreover, the Federal government did not fail in its responsibilities to warn the politicians to desist from inflammatory speeches or utterances that had sectional undertone which might plunge Nigeria back to its former state of ethnic chauvinism.

The military government early in January under the chairmanship of the Major General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, Chief of Staff, in Lagos held a meeting with the leaders of the five registered political parties described by Ogunsanwo as old warriors where an agreement was reached for not only a hitch-free campaign but also to ensure free- and-fair election.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup>West Africa, 22, January, 1979, p. 140.

<sup>63</sup>L. Bolaji. *Op cit*, p. 30.

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It should be noted that the method of presidential campaign, to a large extent, revealed the behaviour of the elite which in a way influenced the political and voting behaviour of the electorate. It is thus important to briefly examine the context and method of campaign of these parties as they prepared for the presidential election.

It was widely acknowledged that for the first time in Nigerian political history, presidential aspirants of the parties were forced to traverse the entire country seeking votes. More significantly it was satisfying that their presidential aspirants had a relatively free entry into other parts of the country without the violent resistance by opposing ethnic based parties to such in the First Republic.<sup>64</sup>

The National Party of Nigeria in its presidential “flash tour” ensured that its candidate visited all the 19 states of the federation having in its campaign trail leaders of the party from various geopolitical zones. Shagari once boasted in his campaign that none of the parties drew larger number of influential people from all ethnic groups in Nigeria than NPN: “Which other presidential candidates can come here with 19 followers who are genuine representatives of their different states?”<sup>65</sup> To emphasise the primacy of Nigeria’s unity, unlike in the First Republic, Shagari affirmed: “we can no longer afford a divided Nigeria, National Party of Nigeria was truly committed to its policy of “One Nation, One Nigeria”.

Chief Awolowo also made efforts in spite of his age, to travel the entire country twice during the electioneering armed with his four cardinal programmes and the message of the imperativeness of Nigerian unity. The UPN kept on harping on its manifesto and the need to build a united nation. According to UPN manifesto:

 Our commitment is to the building of one nation, we make the basic assumption that all our existing ethnic groups are products of historical process and by virtue of the continuation of the historical process; all these ethnic groups will ultimately melt into one Nigerian people.<sup>66</sup>

These efforts of Awolowo and his party in traversing the country, Bolaji observes, was for Awolowo to escape the snare laid for him in Section (202) of the 1979 Constitution which forbids political parties to be formed on ethnic basis and the vote-

<sup>64</sup> L. Bolaji. *Op cit. Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Times* January, 20 1979, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Times* January 10, 1979. p. 16

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pooling requirement for any aspirant to win the presidential contest. Moreover, it was to prove wrong the detractors who were castigating Awolowo as a sectional leader. In comparative terms, it can be said that 1979 presidential electioneering was relatively peaceful and violence-free, compared with that of the First Republic.<sup>67</sup>

Appeal to religious and tribal sentiments was less emphasised. This might not be unconnected with the electoral requirements or guidelines of the electoral body that forbade the use of religion and ethnic sentiments in drawing support for various electoral contests. To Bolaji, no overt attempts were made to exploit ethnicism by the five political parties that contested the election. There was however an exception as there were covert clever moves especially with the entrance of Dr Nnamdi Azikwe into the presidential race which introduced ethnic sentiments into the contest and thus strongly provoked the memories of the First Republic.

The five political parties contested the presidential elections in 1979 with candidates having running mates from various ethnic groups. Their ethnic profiles are presented below:

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<sup>67</sup>L. Bolaji; *Op cit* p. 40.

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**Table 1: Ethnic Profiles of Presidential Candidate and Vice in 1979**

S/N	PARTIES		FLAG BEARER	ETHNIC ORIGIN
1	GNPP	Presidential candidate and	Waziri Ibrahim	Hausa / Kanuri (North)
		Vice	Robert Nnaji	Igbo (South-East)
2	NPN	Presidential candidate and	Shehu Shagari	Fulani (North-West)
		Vice	Alex Ekwueme	Igbo (South-East)
3	NPP	Presidential candidate and	Nnamdi Azikwe	Igbo (South-East)
		Vice	Ishaya Audu	Hausa/Fulani (North)
4	PRP	Presidential candidate and	Aminu Kano	Hausa/ Fulani (North-West)
		Vice	Samuel G. Ikoku	Igbo (South-East)
5	UPN	Presidential candidate and	Obafemi Awolowo	Yoruba (South-West)
		Vice	Phillip Umeadi	Igbo (South-East)

Source: Compiled by Author.

It can be noted from Table 1 that all the registered political parties that contested the 1979 presidential elections observed zoning principle in the choice of the presidential candidates and their running mates. When presidential candidates were picked from a particular zone, the candidates for the vice came from another zone. From Table 1, it can be deduced that, in the 1979 presidential election, the presidential candidates and the vice oscillated between the five of the six geopolitical zones for the north-east, north-west, north-central, south-east and south-west. This arrangement is a demonstration of the belief of political actors in zoning and rotation of offices. More importantly, the NPN as the winning party at the centre implemented the principle of zoning and rotation in the distribution of positions.

The candidates' running-mates were picked from other zones different from the zones of the respective presidential candidates. Obviously, this was a strategy of attracting vote across ethnic groups.

We can now examine the result of the presidential election, in order to determine the voting behaviour of Nigerians in 1979. Moreover, the analysis of the data enables us to measure the effectiveness of the electoral rules in mitigating the influence of ethnicity on Nigerian politics.

An examination of Table 2, showing the number of votes cast in the 1979

presidential election, reveals crucial points in relation to both the influence of ethnicity and the objective of constitutional/electoral engineering of the Second Republic.

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**Table 2: 1979 Presidential Election Result**

State	Total Votes Cast	Shagari/ NPN- Votes	Share of Votes	Awolowo/ UPN- Votes	Share of Votes	Azikwe/ NPP- Votes	Share of Votes	Ibrahim/ GNPP- Votes	Share of Votes	Kano/ PRP- Votes	Share of Votes
Anambra	1,209,038	163,164	13.50	9,063	0.75	1,002,083	82.88	20,228	1.67	14,500	1.20
Bauchi	998,683	629,989	62.48	29,960	3.00	47,314	4.74	154,218	15.44	143,202	14.34
Bendel	669,511	242,320	36.19	356,381	53.23	57,629	8.60	5,242	1.23	4,939	0.73
Benue	538,879	411,648	76.38	13,864	2.57	63,097	11.71	42,993	7.98	7,277	1.35
Borno	710,968	246,778	34.71	23,885	3.35	9,642	1.35	384,278	54.04	46,385	6.52
Cross River	661,103	425,815	64.40	77,775	11.76	50,671	7.66	100,105	15.14	6,737	1.01
Gongola	639,138	227,057	35.52	138,561	21.67	27,856	4.35	219,911	34.09	27,750	4.34
Imo	1,153,355	101,516	8.80	7,335	0.64	999,636	86.67	34,616	3.00	10,252	0.89
Kaduna	1,82,712	596,302	32.12	92,382	6.68	65,321	4.72	190,936	13.80	437,771	31.66
Kano	1,220,763	243,423	19.94	14,973	1.23	11,082	0.91	18,482	1.51	032,803	76.41
Kwara	354,605	190,142	53.62	140,006	39.48	1,830	0.52	20,251	5.71	2,376	0.67
Lagos	828,414	59,515	7.18	681,762	82.30	79,320	9.57	3,943	0.47	3,874	0.47
Niger	383,347	287,072	74.83	14,155	3.69	4,292	1.11	63,273	16.50	14,555	3.79
Ogun	744,668	46,358	6.23	689,655	92.61	2,343	0.32	3,974	0.53	2,338	0.31
Ondo	1,369,849	57,361	4.19	1,294,666	94.51	11,752	0.86	3,561	0.26	2,509	0.18
Oyo	1,396,547	177,999	12.75	1,197,983	85.78	7,732	0.55	8,029	0.57	4,804	0.32
Plateau	548,405	190,458	34.73	29,029	5.29	269,666	49.17	37,400	6.82	21,852	3.98
Rivers	687,951	499,846	72.65	71,114	10.33	98,754	14.35	15,023	2.18	3,212	0.46
Sokoto	1,348,697	898,094	66.59	34,102	2.52	12,503	0.92	359,021	26.61	44,977	3.33
Total	16,846,633	5,683,857	33.77	4,916,651	29.18	2,822,523	16.75	1,686,489	10.02	1,732,113	10.28

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**Source:** Adapted from Ollawa 1989, *The 1979 Election in P.P. Ekeh, P. Cole and G.O. Olusanya eds; Nigeria since Independence: Politics and Constitutions; the First 25 years;* Ibadan: Heinemann Publications, p. 135.

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The data revealed that each of the five political parties that contested the presidential election essentially had strong presence among their various ethnic groups. This however did not suggest that no new grounds were penetrated by the parties.

As the data revealed, out of the five candidates that contested the presidential election, only one satisfied the electoral requirement which stipulated that, to win the presidency, a candidate must receive at least 25% of the votes cast in at least two-thirds of the states. In the race, the NPN received the minimum requirement of 25% in 12 states and scored 19.94% in the thirteenth state, that is Kano State. The presidential candidate of NPN also had the highest number of votes, totaling 5,683,857 or 33.77%. This was closely followed by the UPN flag bearer, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who scored



4,916,651 or 29.18%. Awolowo met the electoral requirement of 25% of the votes cast in six states. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NPP received 16.76% of the popular votes of 2,822,523 or 6.75%. He was able to receive the mandatory of 25% votes in only three states. The next presidential candidate in the order of electoral strength was Alhaji Aminu Kano of the PRP who obtained 10.28% of the popular votes and received at least 25% of votes in Kaduna and Kano states. Last in the performance list was the GNPP Presidential candidate, Ibrahim Waziri who obtained popular votes of 1,686,489 which represents 10.02% and could only muster 25% in three states.

Given the performance of the five parties in the electoral contest, the Nigerian election management body charged with the responsibility of conducting election declared Shehu Shagari of the NPN as the winner of the presidential contest. This was sequel to the fact that the candidate satisfied the provisions of Section 34A, subsection (1) (c) (i) of the Electoral decree No 73 of 1977 by receiving the highest number of votes in the presidential election. Moreover, he also satisfied the provision of subsection (1)(c)(ii) of the same section,<sup>68</sup> since he obtained not less than one quarter of the votes cast in the election in each of at least two-thirds of all the states of the federation. To arrive at this, FEDECO interpreted the applicable clause in the constitution mathematically as two-thirds of votes cast in 12 states and at least one-sixth of votes cast in the thirteenth state of the federation.

The declaration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as president-elect of Nigeria by FEDECO was trailed by legal contestation. The UPN leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo did all he could within the ambit of the law, to challenge the declaration. However, the Supreme Court on September 26, 1979 put a final stop to the legal battle when it upheld the decision of the Special Election Tribunal that had initially confirmed legally the decision of FEDECO.

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<sup>68</sup>*Electoral Decree* No 73 of 1977, Lagos Federal Ministry of Information Section 34.

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### 3.15 Presidential Election: Beyond Ethnic Consideration

The foregoing analysis has the tendency of giving impression that the election was more or less an ethnic census. The result of this election has been interpreted to mean different things to different analysts. Some authors have argued that Nigeria's Second Republic was more or less based on ethnic consensus. This means that ethnic consideration remained a decisive factor in the success of the candidates.

Idahosa and Otogbile<sup>69</sup> argue that the voting pattern in Nigerian election in the Second Republic was a reflection of the ethnic colouration of the political parties. This was because the five political parties had dominance in their various ethnic domains. They observe that UPN, which is seen as a Yoruba-dominant party, won in all the south-west states. The data presented demonstrates that UPN had 92.619 of the votes, in Ogun where the flag bearer came from. The party scored 82.3% in Lagos State, 94.5% in Ondo, and 85.78% in Oyo. This was applicable to all other political parties where the distribution of voting preferences was based on ethnic consideration. For instance, the NPN had its strongest presence in the northern states where its presidential candidate recorded the highest vote Benue 76.38, then in Niger 76%, Sokoto 66.58%, Kaduna 43%, Kwara 53.2%, and Bauchi 62.48%.

The NPP stronghold, politically, was Imo State with 86.65% and Anambra 82.3%. The PRP recorded its highest support electorally from the home base of the leader, Kano, with 76.41% of the total votes cast. Alhaji Waziri confirmed ethnic superiority in his home base, Borno, with 54% and 34% in Gongola. Thus, it was concluded that Nigeria's political behaviour has not changed appreciably as reflected in this ethnic voting. To this end, Abdulazeez observes:



If one is to define Nigeria from old figure of the election result, one would quickly conclude that Nigeria is probably a confederation of scarcely interrelating autonomous political community. Each party consolidated its support in its home ethnic areas. The tribal boundaries of the ethnic groups of Nigeria have now been confirmed as the influence boundaries of the five political Parties.<sup>70</sup>

Eleazu also shares this line of thought in his concluding analysis of the voting behaviour and pattern of the electorate in Nigeria's Second Republic when he avers that:

<sup>69</sup> "S. A. Idahosa and Otoghile; Ethnic Politics and Election in Nigeria; the 1979 and 1993 Presidential Election in Comparative Perspective"; *Benin Journal of Social Sciences*, 2000, 8 & 9.1 & 2 : 118 – 119.

<sup>70</sup> Musa Abdulazeez "Return to Square One" in *Afriscopes* vol. 9, No. 7, July 1979

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Though each presidential candidate chose his running-mate from different ethnic group, the usual pattern of voting of Nigerians, especially the ethnic components, did not change.<sup>71</sup>

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However, the foregoing analysis of the performance of these parties and their candidates among the major ethnic groups does not foreclose the fact that they still made efforts to penetrate the hitherto “difficult” states in the First Republic. This becomes glaring as we analyse the performances of these parties in the minority areas.

**Table 3: Voting pattern in “Minority States” in the 1979 Presidential Elections in Percentage (%) in Order of Performance**

States	NPN	UPN	NPP	GNPP	PRP
Bendel	36.19	52.3	8.6	1.23	1.35
Benue	76.38	2.57	11.71	7.98	1.35
Borno	34.71	3.35	1.35	54.04	6.52
Cross River	64.40	11.76	7.66	15.14	1.02
Gongola	35.52	21.67	4.35	34.09	4.34
Plateau	34.73	5.29	49.17	6.82	3.98
Rivers	72.65	10.33	14.35	2.18	0.46

**Source:** The 1979 Presidential Election result released by the Federal Electoral Commission.

The introduction of presidentialism and other institutional designs such as electoral requirements on party formation, federal character principle on sharing of party offices and political appointments put the minority ethnic groups at a vantage position to act as balancers in deciding who emerged as Nigeria’s executive president. These socio-political realities thus, for the first time in Nigeria’s political history, placed the minorities on an equal status, if only theoretically, with their major ethnic counterparts in Nigeria’s political resource, that is the presidency. This enhanced political status of the minority ethnic groups, places them in a position to design the best strategy to adopt to maximise the available opportunity in the political game. The move affected the voting

<sup>71</sup>E.O. Eleazu. “The Constitutional Structure and Development of Nigeria” in R.B. Goldman and A.J. Wilson eds From Independence to State-hood Managing Ethnic Conflict in Five African States London: Francis Publishers 1984, p. 30.

pattern of the electorate in the minority states during the Second Republic presidential electoral contest.

In deciding where the minority groups would pitch their political tent, two issues became paramount which commanded the attention of the electorate. The first was the economic advantage and the second, which perhaps was more important, was the political power position of the minority vis-a-vis their major ethnic groups. As such, the minority group had to evaluate the five political parties to decide which one would champion their aspirations. That is, placing them in proper position in the political equation for the benefit of the group. The result of the presidential election as shown in Table 3 indicates that the National Party of Nigeria was the most favoured party. It took the lead in the penetration effort of the minority states. In spite of the fact that the NPN presidential candidate hailed from Sokoto, a core Hausa/Fulani state, the party recorded a mean score of 50.65% of the total votes cast in the minority states.

In the eastern minority states, it captured 72.65% in Rivers State which was a landmark effort compared to the GNPP that came second with 15.14% and the UPN with 14.35%. In the western minority of Bendel State, it struggled to emerge second with 36.19% which was more than 25% of the electoral requirement to recognise the performance of the party in the minority states. In Benue State, NPN recorded 76.33%, and the success of the party could be attributed to the cooperative efforts of political notables such as Joseph Tarka of the former UMBC and Joseph Wayas who eventually became the senate president and found it comfortable to ally with the party. In Cross River, NPN secured 64.40% votes.

The remarkable performance of the National Party of Nigeria in these minority areas justified the claim of its nationwide support, which was what the electoral design envisaged.

The Great Nigerian Peoples Party also had its fair share of votes beyond its ethnic domain. In terms of electoral strength, it had a percentage of 17.35% in the presidential election. It garnered 15.14% in Cross River and 15.42% in Plateau State. This may seem negligible, yet it showed an improvement in performance in terms of territorial spread when compared with what obtained in the First Republic.

On the other hand, the NPP put up a good performance in the northern minority

area of Plateau State by winning 49.17% of the total votes in the presidential election. This was largely attributed to the singular effort of Chief Solomon Lar from Plateau State. This was to be expected as his leading role in the anti-sharia campaign in the Constituent Assembly earned him a lot of respect from his ethnic group. With a combination of popularity and ability to focus on issues which appealed to the people's crucial needs and aspirations, Lar succeeded in mobilising the majority of the electorate in Plateau State solidly behind the NPP. This singular feat proved unreliable the statement that NPP was an ethnic party confined to the major Igbo states of Anambra and Imo.<sup>72</sup>

The Unity Party of Nigeria, a party accused of being confined to the Yoruba states, made efforts to go beyond its ethnic domain. In Bendel State, a Yoruba state aligned in the First Republic with the NCNC under the leadership of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, but instead of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe taking over Bendel State as he was wont to do, UPN had 53.23% of the total votes cast. In Gongola, a Kanuri – dominated state and home state of one of the presidential candidates, the party scored 21.6%. It also polled 11.76% in Cross River State. Awolowo was believed to have performed creditability in Bendel State based on its four cardinal programmes especially the free education programme. This meant that Bendelites, rather than voting on ethnic sentiments, acted on issue-oriented consideration. The Peoples Redemption Party however remained restricted to Kaduna and Kano states, the latter being the home base of its founder, Mallam Aminu Kano.

The above analysis of the 1979 presidential election result reveals certain facts upon which the major hypothesis of the electoral incentive in the management of ethnic politics can be tested. The presidential election in terms of the voting behaviour of the electorate showed a cross-ethnic pattern which arguably remained the most spectacular feature of the election. This, Bolaji sees as the wonder of the 1979 general elections in which a political party with national spread can be said to have emerged.<sup>73</sup>

Political parties distributed national and state positions among various ethnic groups. Presidential candidates complied with the political parties' regulation by picking

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<sup>72</sup>O. Ollawa. *Op. cit.* p. 154.

<sup>73</sup>L. Bolaji. *Shagari: Op. cit.* p. 40.

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their running-mates from other geopolitical zones region as a grand strategy to attract group vote across ethnic divides.

The zoning and power-sharing mechanisms have generated inter-ethnic cooperation in politics and government not only in the northern or southern states but also between northern and southern states especially between the major ethnic groups, which have remained a political dilemma since Nigeria's political independence.

### 3.16 **1983 Presidential Election and Electoral Design**

The 1983 presidential election is another attempt to consolidate Nigeria's democratic rule since 1979. More importantly, it was another opportunity to experiment the reality of the emerging presidential electoral system of the Second Republic and for the civilian elite to showcase ability to conduct free-and-fair election without the supervision of the military class as it happened in 1979.

### 3.17 **Prelude to the Presidential Election**

The same electoral rules for the 1979 election in terms of party registration and presidential electoral formula were applied.

The electoral incentive had important effects on the political parties in nominating their presidential candidates and running mates, spreading across north-south geopolitical constituencies. Unlike 1979 presidential election, six political parties were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission to contest. They were Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP), Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP), and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).

### 3.18 **Party Nomination Process**

The National Party of Nigeria faced the greatest huddle in who becomes its flag bearer. This was due to the interest of many politicians, who assumed that once the party ticket had been won, becoming Nigerian president was almost a reality, given the fact that the party was in power. Moreover, the zoning principle of the party created another bottleneck. The reason for this was the fact that zoning principle agreed that another Zone

B from the south was expected to provide the next candidate, while at the same time the incumbent president, from Zone A, had shown interest to recontest.

At the end of the political exercise, Zone A (the northern zone) from where the incumbent president came from won the party ticket at its convention held at the National Arts Theatre, Lagos on 12 June, 1982 with about 2,707 delegates. The Zone B that lost out was however compensated with the post of the party's national chairman, which also retained by Chief A. M. A. Akinloye. He actually played a leading role in scuttling the ambition of his kinsman M.K.O. Abiola, and instead ensured the victory of Shagari from the northern zone. Unlike the NPN, other political parties had a smooth-sailing process as most of the nominations were more of consensus instead of internal democratic process.

The UPN at its fifth annual convention held in Lagos in December 1982 picked Chief Obafemi Awolowo (north) as its flag bearer with Alhaji Muhammadu Kura, the Makama Misai of Misau, Bauchi State (north) as his running mate. Kura was also the GNPP governorship candidate for Bauchi State in 1979 before defecting to UPN on 21 April, 1982.<sup>74</sup> NPP picked Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha, as presidential candidate at the party's fourth national convention in Jos. Dr Shettima Mustapha from the north, (Bauchi State) was named the vice-presidential candidate.

Waziri's candidate for the GNPP was unanimously ratified by 1,300 delegates from all the 19 states of the federation in its convention in Jos. He picked Dr Robert Nnaji from Imo State (South) as his running mate.

The PRP suffered a setback with the death of its leader, Mallam Aminu Kano who contested the 1979 presidential election. To this end, the party settled for a greenhorn, Alhaji Yusuf from Borno State and a Benin-based businesswoman as the vice-presidential candidate. The newly-registered NAP adopted its founder, Dr Tunji Braithwaite at the party's national congress held in Lagos on 20 December, 1982, with Alhaji Usman Girei, the chairman of the party in Gongola State as the running mate.

One important observation about the nomination of presidential candidates is the adoption of zoning/power-sharing arrangement among the north/south geopolitical zones. From the nomination, if the presidential candidate came from the north, the running mate

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<sup>74</sup>Oyeleye Oyediran. The 1983 General Elections in P.P. Ekeh, P. Cole and G. Olusanya eds. *Nigeria Since Independence: Politics and Constitutions the first 25 years*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publications, 1989. p. 173.

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was chosen from the southern zone. This could be a winning strategy of mobilising votes across ethnic divides, given the stringent electoral rules for winning the presidency on both plurality and geographic distribution of votes.

### 3.19 Analysis of 1983 Presidential Election

As for organisation of the 1983 general election, Section 140 (ii) of the 1979 country's constitution established the Federal Electoral Commission and charged it with the following responsibilities:

- (1) Organise, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the president and vice President and other elective offices.
- (2) Arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of political parties.
- (3) Arrange for the registration of persons qualified to vote and for the maintenance and revision of the registered voters.

The foregoing prescribed constitutional roles assigned to FEDECO underscore the fact that the stability of Nigeria's democratic future depended on it. When these roles are faithfully and objectively performed, the country stands the prospect of democratic stability and, where it fails, the country's political stability and unity is under threat.

As part of its constitutional responsibilities, the electoral commission announced the dates of 1983 general elections on July 23 1983 as follows: Gubernatorial (13 August), House of Representatives (27 August) and state assemblies (3 September).

The sudden change in the sequence of the elections, especially the presidential election, scheduled to be held first, unlike in 1979, drew a barrage of criticisms from the general public especially political parties. All the registered political parties apart from the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) rejected the time- table. To these parties, such change in the order of election from 1979 Electoral Commission seemed to demonstrate that it had been captured by the ruling party. Though the electoral agency advanced some constitutional reasons, such were not convincing enough.<sup>75</sup> To these political parties, the original order of the elections would have enabled their parties to establish their relative strength in various parts of the country, as in 1979. This would have enabled them to map

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<sup>75</sup>L. Bolaji. :*Op cit*, p. 40.

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the best strategy to compete against the ruling NPN in subsequent elections most importantly, the presidential race.<sup>76</sup> It was under this political atmosphere that the general elections were conducted. The controversial decision triggered electoral violence that greeted subsequent elections after the race for the presidency was conducted.

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As expected, the six registered political parties set out to seek electoral support across the country, with each party presenting its manifesto and programmes to the electorate as democratic norms dictate. However, the programmes of the parties that contested for the election were very much alike.

The GNPP believed that the nation's economy was in bad condition and therefore needed rejuvenation. The party thus promised (a) the diversification of the economy (b) increase high level manpower (c) effective price control measures. The party also promised a society free of violence and ignorance. Its slogan for the 1983 elections was "justice to the people, politics without bitterness" and "love and peace".

The PRP promised to revamp the nation's sick economy with special focus on agrarian revolution that would lead to abundant food supply and domestic self-sufficiency.

The NPN launched its manifesto and campaign at Gboko, Benue State on Saturday 27 January, 1983 led by President Shehu Shagari. Since it was the party in power, it promised to conform to its 1979 promises. It also promised free functional and qualitative education. On its part, the NPP chose the Race Course, Kano to launch its 1983 campaign on Saturday 26 February, 1983. The campaign emphasis was on change "change to put an end to the constitutional illegalities being committed by NPN". The party claimed it would work on five cardinal principles based on (a) the unity of the people of Nigeria (b) inalienable democratic right of all Nigerians (c) a purposeful economic progress for all (d) social justice for all Nigerians and (e) a genuinely independent Nigeria secure within a free Africa.<sup>77</sup>

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The UPN in its manifesto and electioneering launched at Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos on 29 January, 1983 promised to extend its four cardinal programmes of free education employment at all levels, integrated rural development, full employment of all

<sup>76</sup>Oyeleye Oyediran. Op. cit, p. 173.

<sup>77</sup>Oyeleye Oyediran. *Ibid.*-Op. cit p.73.

labour and free medical care, if voted to serve at the federal level.

The newly-formed NAP manifesto was radical in posture. The party believed that the only solution to Nigeria's endemic socio-economic crises is revolution. Launching its campaign on 27 February, 1983, the presidential flag bearer of the party was of the view that for democracy to be consolidated and nurtured in Nigeria, it must end the rule of the spoilers and the oppressors and yield the turf to actors who consider the well-being of fellow Nigerians important.<sup>78</sup>

Such were the manifestoes and programmes of the parties of which the electorate were to make their choice. Though election manifestoes and programmes are seen not to have direct bearing on the pattern of votes cast for a party in Nigeria, they remain an interesting embodiment of the political aspirations of organised Nigerians in their open, democratic and competitive bid to capture political power and govern. As such, they have contributed to the national debate over national political values, choices and the mapping of national direction. Moreover, from the campaigns and manifestoes of these political parties, emphasis was placed on issues rather than resort to ethnicity as a major tool for electoral mobilisation in order to receive the support of various ethnic groups across the country.

The presidential election took place on August 6, 1983 and it was conducted in a relatively peaceful atmosphere. Five days after the conduct of the election, at exactly 1.30 on the morning of 11 August, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was declared re-elected president of Nigeria by the FEDECO with a vote of 12,037,648, to 7,885,434 for his nearest rival, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. More importantly, Shagari obtained the minimum electoral requirement of 25% in 16 states of the federation compared with 12 states in 1979.<sup>79</sup> Table four presents the 1983 presidential election result.

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<sup>78</sup>Oyeleye Oyediran. *Op ci*; p. 173.

<sup>79</sup>New Nigerian 11 August 1983, p. 16.

**Table 4: Results of the Presidential Election 1983: Scores in Percentage**

State	GNPP	NAP	NPN	NPP	PRP	UPN
Anambra	3.12% 37,203	238% 18,979	33.26% 1,507,144	57.79% 65,258	1.39% 54,564	2.06% 98,974
Bauchi	2.09% 11,723	1.07% 8,653	84.57% 452,776	3.66% 53,306	3.06% 7,358	5.55% 566,035
Bendel	1.06% 19,897	0.79% 10,573	41.17% 384,045	4.85% 152,209	0.67% 6,381	51.46% 79,690
Benue	3.05% 179,265	1.62% 15,698	58.83% 348,974	23.31% 26,972	0.98% 26,996	12.21% 120,138
Borno	24.96% 16,582	2.19% 10,967	48.60% 696,592	3.76% 46,418	3.76% 8,229	16.73% 506,922
Cross River	1.29% 25,530	0.85% 37,318	54.18% 282,820	1.61% 148,095	0.64% 81,205	39.43% 160,720
Gongola	6.47% 52,364	5.07% 32,694	38.44% 398,463	20.13% 1,064,436	11.04% 18,370	21.85% 22,648
Imo	3.29% 80,862	2.06% 37,368	25.07% 1,266,894	66.99% 225,919	1.16% 300,476	1.48% 225,878
Kaduna	3.80% 15,252	1.75% 14,207	59.28% 383,998	10.58% 274,102	14.02% 436,997	10.57% 48,494
Kano	2.95% 7,670	1.19% 6,056	32.19% 299,654	22.98% 16,215	36.63% 3,693	4.06% 275,134
Kwara	1.26% 1,748	1.00% 8,636	49.25% 126,165	2.66% 119,455	0.61% 6,570	45.22% 1,367,807
Lagos	0.72% 12,984	0.53% 8,182	7.69% 272,086	7.28% 112,971	0.40% 8,736	83.38% 15,772
Niger	3.01% 6,874	1.90% 2,862	63.17% 43,821	26.23% 5,022	2.03% 4,449	3.66% 1,198,033
Ogun	0.55% 11,629	0.23% 10,566	3.47% 366,217	0.40% 20,340	0.35% 7,052	95.99% 1,412,539
Oyo	0.67% 18,612	0.42% 10,490	37.65% 292,606	1.48% 280,803	0.39% 11,581	59.39% 38,210
Plateau	2.85% 12,981	1.61% 15,061	44.86% 921,664	43.05% 151,558	1.77% 4,626	5.86% 251,825
Rivers	0.96% 46,752	1.11% 22,152	67.88% 2,605,935	11.16% 63,238	0.34% 24,280	18.55% 75,428
Sokoto FCT (Abuja)	1.65% 1,103	0.78% 977	91.83% 127,372	2.23% 4,156	0.85% 641	2.66% 1,102
Total Votes Cast	640,128	308,842	12,047,748	3,534,633	1,037,481	7,885,434

Source: Federal Electoral Commission, August 1983.

The result of the presidential election shows the performance of parties with reference to voting behaviour of the electorate across ethnic regions. A statistical breakdown of the election shows that the incumbent president satisfied the constitutional

requirements in 16 of the 19 states of the federation 84.21% during the 1983 election as against 12 states 63.2% during the 1979 elections.

From the analysis of the election, Shagari, among the contestants, showed an upward trend of electoral success compared to 1979. For instance, Alhaji Shehu Shagari satisfied the constitutional requirement in the Igbo-speaking areas of Imo and Anambra, unlike in the 1979 election. His success could be attributed to the factor of incumbency. Another significant factor was that the Vice President, Dr Alex Ekwueme, is Igbo from Anambra, so also is the charisma of former Biafran leader, Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, who was granted unconditional state pardon by Shagari in 1982.

The area where the incumbent failed to satisfy the constitutional requirements during the 1983 elections remained the Yoruba-speaking areas of southern Nigeria. These were Ogun and Lagos states. This is understandable, given the fact that this is the ethnic enclave of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the closest rival in the presidential electoral contest with Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

Shagari succeeded in meeting the constitutional requirements in the minority area of southern Nigeria and parts of the middle belt of northern Nigeria (Niger and Benue states). This could be partly attributed to the absence of tribal-based political parties in these areas contrary to the condition in the First Republic.

While the conduct of the presidential election remained relatively peaceful, subsequent elections in 1983 became largely corrupt and violent. Hiding under the success of the presidential election, the NPN attempted to consolidate its gains by forcing itself into areas, especially the Yoruba states, where it had failed to make appreciable electoral relevance. This attempt culminated in the demise of the Second Republic, especially in the Yoruba-speaking areas.

Joseph notes that “one major cause of electoral disorder in 1983 was the effort of the NPN to move from being a ruling party whose strength surpassed other parties to one which enjoyed a monopoly of power”.<sup>80</sup> In its effort to achieve this objective, the NPN targeted three strategic states. In the north, it was Kano, the most populous state in the nation; similarly, it went for Anambra and the Yoruba states. The opposition parties resisted and warned of the dire consequences of the move. The UPN, in particular,

<sup>80</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit*, p. 176

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promised to return fire for fire if NPN attempted to rig itself into the Yoruba states. One of the spokesmen of UPN, Chief Bisi Akande, the deputy governor to Bola Ige in the 1983 gubernatorial election, declared that if his party lost as a result of election rigging in the state there were two lines of action opened to it: the court of law or the people's court.<sup>81</sup> In another forum, Nigerian Tribune, a megaphone of the UPN sternly warned: "No party should allow the NPN to monopolize violence to rig election. Men of brawn are not only in NPN so let's watch"<sup>82</sup>

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Indeed, violence was virtually used by all the political parties to resist NPN's antics during the remaining elections in 1983. All attempts by the NPN to win Oyo and Ondo states during the gubernatorial election met with stiff electoral violence from other parties, especially the UPN. In Ondo State, for instance, the carnage was so horrendous that entire families of politicians were wiped out and hundreds of houses were burnt including the state headquarters of FEDECO. By the time the gubernatorial election was concluded, the entire nation had been enveloped by violence. Indeed, by September 1983, election crises had almost degenerated into a state of war.<sup>83</sup> And, by December 1983, the victory claimed by the NPN was abrogated by the intervention of the military, thereby bringing to an end the democratic experiment of the Second Republic.

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### 3.20 Conclusion

This chapter examined various engineering tools crafted by the military administration that brought into being the Second Republic from 1979 to 1983. These included presidential system of government, presidential electoral system of intertwined federal-wide electoral requirement for winning the post of president, constitutional prescription for party registration and organisation. It was the first time in Nigeria's electoral politics that political parties were registered based on meeting specific electoral requirements of territorial spread in terms of membership and party's acceptance of the principle of federal character in sharing offices. Instead of ethnic chauvinism characteristic of the First Republic and its ruinous effect, the country witnessed a party system that was becoming national in outlook. The presidential electoral system further

<sup>81</sup> Daily Times, 16 August 1983.

<sup>82</sup> West Africa, 22 August, 1983.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Joseph. *Op cit*, p. 176.

reinforced the 1979 presidential election that brought about consensus politics in Nigeria's political terrain. The NPN enjoyed broad-based support while the salutary spread of votes won by other four political parties, gave all the parties stake in the new republic. A respondent who was also a member of the CDC attributes this success to design of electoral rules for party politics:

This design, I will not say, has helped, it has helped considerably. One thing the constitution emphasized is that if you win in the total votes, you must go behind your immediate environment. The constitutional design of parties and electoral laws on presidentialism has reduced the animosity between ethnic regions.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Personal Interview with Prof. Oyeleye Oyediran, 10Septemebr, 2010.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE 1993 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC

#### 4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, we x-rayed the transition programme with its introduction of certain electoral engineering tools, including rules on party formation, presidential electoral laws and the impact on the political calculus of the politicians and the electorate.

However, the massive rigging that characterised the 1983 elections and the consequent eruption of violence could not allow these innovations to stand the test of time. Indeed, Nigeria simply drifted in a predictable crisis. It is against this background that this chapter reviewed another attempt by the military that also introduced additional innovative electoral mechanisms into the political sphere of the aborted Third Republic.

The intervention of the military on December 31, 1983 led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari was thus regarded as a timely initiative to save the nation from disintegration. To Suberu:

it will never be known for certain what effect the political circumstances of the NPN would have had on the efficacy of the central government, had the military not intervened to end the second republic.<sup>1</sup>

However, the renewed militarisation of the civil society and the alleged absence of a clear commitment by the Buhari/Idiagbon administration to restructure the economy and the articulation of a political programme which would pave the way for a quick return to civil rule, provided another platform for a palace coup led by Major General Ibrahim Babangida on August 25, 1987.<sup>2</sup>

It is against this background that this chapter examines the institutional mechanisms designed by the Babangida administration towards solving the lingering political instability in the nation. They were the innovative institutional designs of two-party system presidential electoral system, and specifically the option A4 device meant for free-and-fair election .

<sup>1</sup>R. T. Suberu; Political Opposition and Inter-governmental Relations; *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*. 1990, 28:31.

<sup>2</sup> Editorial Introduction; 1988/89. *The Quarterly Journal of Administration* 23.1& 2:3.

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#### 4.2 Babangida's Transition Programme

In order not to be caught in the web of accusation levelled against his predecessor, Babangida's administration embarked on a grandiose reform project which was constructed on two pillars. (i) an economy hinged on structural adjustment programme (SAP) and (ii) political transition programme.

Specifically, the political agenda commenced with the inauguration of a Political Bureau by the Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida on January 13, 1986. As he declares:

Today we commence the search for a new political order, the setting up of the Political Bureau is the first step towards evolving a viable political order. Indeed this morning's ceremony is intended to kick off as it were the national debate on a viable political ethos and structure of our dear country.<sup>3</sup>

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Babangida further states the importance of a new political order that will serve as a springboard for a strong and dynamic economy:

Apart from the immediate and more visible problem of salvaging our battered economy our other task is to bring about a new political culture which like a veritable fountain head would bring forth a stable, strong and dynamic economy.<sup>4</sup>

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To be able to bring about this objective, the Political Bureau had the following terms of references:

- (a) Review Nigeria's political history and identify the basic problems which have led to our failure in the past and suggest ways of resolving and coping with these problems.
- (b) Identify a basic philosophy of government which will determine goals and serve as a guide to the activities of governments.
- (c) Collect relevant information and data for the government as well as identify other political problems that may arise from the debate.
- (d) Gather, collate and evaluate contributions of Nigerians to search for a viable political future and provide guidelines for the attainment of the consensus objective.
- (e) Deliberate on other political problems as may be referred to it from time to time.

<sup>3</sup> An Address by General Babangida, at the inauguration of the Political Bureau at Abuja on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1986 entitled "The search for a New Political Order" as contained in the *Report of the Political Bureau*, produced by Directorate for Social Mobilisation "MAMSER", Abuja, March 1987, pp. 4-6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, pp. 4-6.



Acknowledging the significance of this institutional engineering, Omoruyi<sup>5</sup> notes that Babangida's transition experiment is situated within the empirical global reality with two interrelated points:

- (i) That the Babangida's transition to civilian rule is intendingly a programme of democratization involving (a) institution building, behavioural and attitudinal changes.
- (ii) That the Babangida's transition programme has unique elements which must be rooted in the political history of Nigeria. This means that the aim of the political transition programme consists in the strategic changing of Nigeria's political terrain characterized by ethno-regional schism of the past Republics.

Stressing the relevance of this institutional framework for the emergence of a new political order that would strengthen Nigeria's unity, Sambo<sup>6</sup> notes that:

...the Bureau offers opportunities to social forces to participate in determining the future of Nigerian State and therefore seeks to improve their collective control over their institutions.

#### 4.3 The Political Bureau and its Recommendations

The Political Bureau was a 17-man committee comprising educationists, political scientists, psychologists, historians, dramatists, journalists, labour leaders and women. Determined to succeed in its national assignment, the bureau announced, through its chairman, 28 areas which it wished to cover. These were the economy and politics, among others. To this end, it invited memoranda from the general public that could facilitate the realisation of the objectives for which it was set up. In the course of its assignment, the committee met for upward of 27 months, about 149 times, deliberated on 27,324 oral and written memoranda, visited 301 local government areas. This was done for wider consultation on the political future of the country.

The bureau, which was headed by Professor J. S. Cooney, set in place a far-reaching agenda for the take-off of the aborted Third Republic. Indeed the report of the bureau is a documentary source on the essential elements which shape political behaviour

<sup>5</sup> Omoruyi, 'Designing the Nigerian Transition Programme' in O. Omoruyi, D. Schlosser, A. Sambo and A. Okwuosa ed, *Democratisation in Africa: Nigeria perspective Volume 1*, Benin City, Hima and Huma htd, 1994, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Sambo, *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria: Possibilities and Limitations* in O. Omoruyi D. Schlosser, A. Sambo and A. Okwuosa eds. *Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian perspective*. Vol. Benin City Hima & Hima Ltd 1994, p. 211.

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in Nigeria. It is also a theory of politics in the sense that it proceeded from a solid theoretical base to explain the enormous problems which any attempt at democratic institutional building in Nigeria must grapple with.<sup>7</sup>

Among other things, it recommended:

- (i) Introduction of socialist party in the country.
- (ii) Adoption of a two party system of government with a uni-cameral legislature in the Centre and in the States.
- (iii) Setting up of a Directorate of Social and Political Mobilisation.
- (iv) A review of the 1979 constitution and appointment of four commissions on political party, and elections, population, Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal as well as a Revenue and Fiscal Commission.
- (v) 1990 as the terminal date of military administration (majority Report). The minority Report however recommended 1992 as the terminal date, stating that Second Republic collapsed because the transmission programme of Obasanjo from 1977-1979 was executed hastily.<sup>8</sup>

Consequent upon its submission, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) met on 18 May, 1987 to consider the report. An inner committee headed by Major General Paul Omu was set-up to study the report and it eventually recommended 1 October 1992 as the handing over date which the government accepted.

#### 4.4 White Paper on the Report of the Political Bureau

It should be noted that the government reached a broad consensus on the bureau's substantive recommendations. However, the white paper rejected these:

1. The bureau's recommendation of adoption of socialism which the government viewed as tantamount to the imposition of ideology.
2. Unicameral legislature at the federal level.
3. The new name of the electoral body, proposed as National Commission on Political Parties and Election, rather the white paper chose National Electoral Commission.

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<sup>7</sup>Federal Republic of Nigeria; *Report of the Political Bureau*; Lagos; Federal Government Printers; 1987; p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 42.

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4. The tenure of the chief executive at the federal and state levels, for a non-renewable one term, five-year tenure for the president and the governors.
5. Electoral system for legislative representation on the basis of territory.
6. Special provision for the representation of labour and women in each arm of the legislature. Rather, government position is that the principle of equality should be applied for the upper chamber and that of the lower chamber should be on the basis of population.<sup>9</sup>

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#### 4.5 Two-Partism : An Antidote for Integration?

Prominent among the recommendations of the Political Bureau in the restructuring of Nigeria's socio-political terrain was the party system. This is hardly surprising, given the integrative or disintegrative roles party politics can play in a polity. More importantly, Nigeria's political history of the first and second republics confirm the disintegrative function of political parties, many of which were formed on ethnic sentiments to either win or retain power within a particular section of the country.

Specifically, the bureau, having weighed options before it, that is multiparty system and one-party system, recommended a two-party system, with only one dissenting member favouring one party system.

The central argument of the bureau was hinged on the belief that such an arrangement would lead to Nigeria's politics being based on principles and not ethnicity. It was argued that since political party groupings had tended to revolve around the country's three major ethnic cleavages (Hausa/Fulani) in the north, Igbo in the south-east and Yoruba in the south-west, such an arrangement would force groups to work together.<sup>10</sup>

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The bureau's recommendation of two-partism was approved by the government to the extent that it was entrenched in the stillborn 1989 Constitution. It must be emphasised that while this major institutional design remained the major innovation in Babangida's framework of transition to civil rule, it attracted divergent opinions from the academia, policy designers and the general public.

<sup>9</sup> White Paper on the *Report of Political Bureau* Cited in Tunji Olagunju, A. Jinadu & S. Oyovbaire. 1993. *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria* (1985-1993) Lagos: Spectrum pp. 166-167.

<sup>10</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria; 1987 *Report of the Political Bureau*, p. 42

Justifying the acceptance of the shift from multi-party system to two-partism, General Babangida informed that it remained one of the major strategies for overcoming the problems of the past experiences with party politics in relation to inter-ethnic and impersonal feuds:<sup>11</sup>

...the system had the distinct advantages of simplifying the choices available to the electorate and encouraging cohesion in a land of pluralistic interests. Nigeria was said to be historically evolving a de facto two party system from the multi-party system, but one that was raven by ethno-communal animosities, in addition to being characterized by the personalization around ethnic chieftains and a warped mobilization strategy which led to the marginalization and de-politicization of party members.<sup>12</sup>

The decreeing of two-partism was therefore to adopt this rather negative historical trend in such a way as to offer the prospect for a de-ethnicised, mass-oriented, participatory and grassroots-based party politics.<sup>13</sup>

Babangida further declares that multiparty system was rejected because the system:

Gives practical expression to the widely accepted need to avoid the noise, the clamour, the confusion and the violence which had been the bane of our partisan political experience. This experience derived from the multiplicity of parties which are built around personalities who were anointed by some ethnic groups. What we had in the second republic were more or less tribally oriented political parties, the prescription in the 1979 Constitution notwithstanding.<sup>14</sup>

Adeniran, another advocate of the two-party proposal, who also was a member of the Political Bureau, carefully articulated the following in favour of this design.

- (1) That the tasks before Nigerians in the next few decades are urgent and extremely difficult and would therefore require some degree of regimentation.
- (2) That the two-party system provides the electorate with the opportunities of choice and this enables the masses to determine who governs them and how

<sup>11</sup> Text of speech delivered by General Babangida on September 7, 1987, in Abuja on the occasion of the inauguration of the Constitution Review Committee, in Tunji Olagunju and Jinadu Adele (eds.) *Portrait of a New Nigeria*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Olagunju Tunji , Jinadu A.S. Oyorbaire (eds). *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria (1985 – 1993)*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd. 1993, pp. 166-169.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp, 209 – 210.

they are governed.

- (3) And that two-partism is best for Nigeria's heterogeneous society. This is because, unlike in the past when ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments dominated the political scene, issues, -not persons and parochialism- will predominate in the electoral process.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the avalanche of benefits put forward by two-partism adherents, it attracted barrage of criticisms especially among the intellectuals who saw two -partism as an undemocratic contraption, since the parties were not allowed to evolve historically as found in advanced democracies such as Britain and more importantly, America that Nigeria is trying to copy.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the fear was expressed that two-partism could even polarise political cleavages on regional (North/South) or religious Muslim/Christian bases, which could be as potentially dangerous, if not more than, polarisation along ethnic lines. This is the position of a former governor of Lagos State, Lateef Jakande:

...religion and region are deep in the Nigerian heart and cannot be swept away by fiat. The way the military could have done that was by making an application to God to get a completely new consignment of Nigerians free from all evils.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, sceptics began to perceive Babangida's ideological prescription of a little to the left and a little to the right in ethno-regional term as "a little to the north and a little to the south."<sup>18</sup> The south is perceived to be dominated by Christians while the north is Muslim-dominated, with the former begrudging the latter of its unfair ascendancy in national politics having produced most of Nigerian leaders. It was thus assumed, perhaps wrongly, that the progressives would take over the Social Democratic Party (SDP) while the conservatives subscribe to the National Republication Convention (NRC).<sup>19</sup>

The benefit of hindsight, however, faults the claim of polarity of the two parties along ethno-regional divide. Instead, as the result of the presidential election later

<sup>15</sup> Tunde Adeniran, *The Two Party System and the Federal Political process* (Unpublished Manuscript). 1993, p. 11

<sup>16</sup> Oyeleye Oyediran and Adigun Agbaje, Party System and Democratic Transition in Nigeria, *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 1991, Vol. 27, No. 2, p. 214.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in the "Editorial" of *West Africa*, 16 – 22 October, 1989

<sup>18</sup> Cited in A.Akinola; Manufacturing the Two Party System in Nigeria; *Journal of Common Wealth and Comparative Politics*. 1990, 28: 322

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 322.

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demonstrated, the two-party system remains a single successful device in the integrative effort of the Nigerian state, especially in party politics.

In spite of the criticism, however, the Federal Military Government, determined to ensure the successful take-off of this reform, set in motion various institutional apparatuses. One of such was the electoral agency which was christened the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

#### 4.6 The National Electoral Commission

To ensure the emergence of the two parties, the military administration in 1987 promulgated a decree entitled “National Electoral Commission (NEC) 1987 Decree”. This decree established an electoral agency charged with the responsibilities of organising the basis and rules for electoral process. The National Electoral Commission was to organise, conduct and supervise all elections and matters pertaining to elections. The Decree No. 8, 1989 which is an amendment to Decree No 23 of 1987 empowered the commission to provide clear guidelines, rules and regulations for the emergence, recognition and registration of two political parties and determine their eligibility to sponsor candidates for any of the elections referred to in the amended Decree.<sup>20</sup>

Sequel to its establishment and its assigned roles, the National Electoral Commission came up with certain electoral guidelines which sought the emergence of national parties that should promote national integration and discourage ethnicisation of politics. The guidelines included the following:

- (i) Each political association shall state the particulars of its registered members: their number, ages and residential addresses to facilitate physical confirmation.
- (ii) Such membership should reflect federal character of Nigeria.
- (iii) All associations were to present their constitutions and manifestoes reflecting their positions on a wide range of issues.
- (iv) Copies of membership list and staff were also to be submitted along with application form.<sup>21</sup>

These requirements may be considered too stringent, considering not only the cost

<sup>20</sup>A Sambo, Op. cit p. 211.

<sup>21</sup>F. Badejo, ‘Party Formation and competition’ in Diamond, K. Greene and O. Oyediran eds. *Transition Without End: Nigerian society under Babangida*, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers. 1991, p. 179.

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implication, but also the limited time frame. Indeed, the guidelines were considered unserious. It was widely insinuated that, even if political associations were given one year, they would not be able to meet the standards set in the document. Soyinka comments rather cynically:

...that any party which fulfilled the conditions of the NEC should be automatically disqualified, because it could only mean they had been organizing before the ban was lifted.<sup>22</sup>

One of the leaders of the aspiring political associations also considered NEC's requirements as unrealistic. The people felt it was rather unrealistic for NEC to expect political associations to register an average of one million supporters who were required to provide passport photographs at a total cost of 10 million naira and still proclaim that members of such parties are the common people of Nigeria.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the spate of criticisms, political activities began in earnest, and the country erupted in various forms of alignment and re-alignment of political forces.

#### 4.7 Party Formation in the Third Republic

Following the lift of ban on political activities in May 1989 and subsequent inauguration of electoral agency for the electoral process, activities resumed in full force in Nigeria's political terrain. The entire country witnessed all manner of political alignments and realignments.

As expected the Constituent Assembly remained a comfortable ground for political interests to be articulated in preparation for the next political dispensation. Essentially, in the Constituent Assembly various groups emerged. Most of these groups were largely ethnic associations. Thus the consensus/democratic group coordinated by Ibrahim Dasuki were essentially for the northern interest. Dasuki was seen as a rallying point for Hausa-Fulani hegemonic group.<sup>24</sup> The consensus group was also to represent the former National Party of Nigeria. Outside the assembly were Adamu Ciroma, former NPN stalwart and Uba Ahmed the former Secretary-General of the NPN who provided the needed support to broaden the base of the association.

Another group that eventually proved formidable in the politics of the Third

<sup>22</sup> Cited in A. Akinola. *Manufacturing the Two Party System in Nigerian*. 1990, p. 313.

<sup>23</sup> F. Badejo. Op. cit p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p. 178.

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Republic was the Patriotic Front of Nigeria (PFN) whose mastermind was the retired Major General Musa Yar 'Adua of northern extraction who was the Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters from 1976 to 1979. Though he was not a member of the Constituent Assembly, he was formerly represented by a former Vice-Chancellor of the Ahmadu Bello University, Professor Ango Abdullahi. Baba Gana Kingibe, a diplomat and administrator who was in the kitchen cabinet of the Obasanjo era and former Ambassador to Greece and Pakistan also played major role in this horse trading politics. Trust Group was another political association formed at the Constituent Assembly. It was led by Chief Michael Ibru, a leading industrialist from the former Bendel State who insisted that the next president should come from the south. This group, in an effort to have a national spread, metamorphosed into new movement of new breed politicians who perceived that their success in business was enough to earn them the position of the president. Included in this new political association were Ahmed Joda of the Assembly Forum, Abba Dabo from the Middle Belt, Olusola Ogunsola, an Engineer from Ibadan, and Yomi Ademefun another Engineer from Ogun State.<sup>25</sup>

Another prominent group in the assembly comprised the former members of Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria and a number of people from the minority areas The Progressive Group was seen as a principal opposing camp to the Consensus/Democratic Group.<sup>26</sup>

These groups, as political events unfolded, began to change appellations, apparently in response to persistent warning by Babangida administration for the new breed not only to be surrogates of the banned political associations, but to desist from ethnic party formation. Sequel to this, the Consensus/Democratic Group ended up as Nigeria National Congress (NNC) with names of all presidential hopefuls such as Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, an engineer and publisher from the south-east, Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi, Alhaji Umaru Shinkafi from the north-central, Dr Ahmed Kusamotu and Rev. S. T. Ola Akande, the last two being from the south-western part of the country, so as to give the group a national spread.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of the political exercise and in line with the stipulated time by NEC,

<sup>25</sup> F.Badejo. *Op cit.* p 179.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>27</sup> F.Badejo. *Op cit.* 179

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only 13 political associations out of about 49 that submitted papers for registration for a place among the two parties to be registered were approved. These political associations were:

(1) All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) (2) Ideal Peoples Party (IPP) (3) Liberal Convention (LC) (4) Nigeria Labour Party (NLP) (5) Nigeria National Congress (NNC) (6) Nigeria Peoples Welfare Party (NPWP) (7) National Union Party (NUP) (8) Peoples Front of Nigeria (PFN) (9) Patriotic Nigerian Party (PNP) (10) Patriotic Peoples Party (PPP) (11) People Solidarity Party (PSP) (12) Republican Party (RP) and (13) United Nigeria Democratic Party (UNDP).<sup>28</sup>

To establish the authenticity of the claims made by these associations, NEC went on verification mission. It deployed its entire staff in all parts of the country to crosscheck the claims of these various associations. Through random sampling, NEC established that all the associations had in varying degrees made false claims on the extent of their presence across the country with respect to number staff as well as spread of offices. The findings of NEC revealed that these associations lifted names from voters register and affixed fictitious pictures on fictitious membership cards.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, NEC discovered that all the associations made exaggerated claims about their size and organisational strength. Although the leaders of the political associations boasted of millions of supporters, NEC found out that out of the sample size of 1,635,485 for all associations, only 467,132 were verified. This meant only 28.6% of the sample size were verified as authentic. It also implied that out of every 10 claims made by the associations, not more than seven could be verified. NEC concluded in its investigation that:



The associations were not only weak organizationally, but depended largely on few wealthy individuals. Besides they were very thin on ideas, exhibited little differences if any on ideology, and suffered from the personalization of politics which had led to intense factionalism.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, virtually all the associations were traceable to the banned political parties of the past who should be banned if the country was to move forward.

<sup>28</sup>West Africa, 1 May, 1989

<sup>29</sup>News Watch, 18 July 1989; p. 16

<sup>30</sup>F.Badejo.Op. cit p. 191.

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Given the findings of the electoral body, none of the political associations satisfied the electoral parameters to be registered.<sup>31</sup> Rather, NEC produced a shortlist of the top 6 of the 13 associations in order of priority in which they had best satisfied the conditions. The ratings are presented in Table 5.

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**Table 5: Overall Performance of Political Associations as Ranked by the National Electoral Commissions**

Association	Membership		Admin. Organ		Manifesto 20.00	Total 100.00	Ranking
	Size 25.00	Spread 25.00	Size 15.00	Spread 15.00			
Peoples Solidarity Party	8.70	5.30	9.30	8.10	12.5	43.90	1 <sup>st</sup>
Nigerian National Congress	4.30	7.80	9.70	8.50	12.30	42.60	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Peoples Front of Nigeria	5.20	5.20	9.40	7.90	13.50	41.20	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Liberal Convention	2.50	5.10	9.00	7.20	10.20	34.00	4 <sup>th</sup>
Nigerian Labour Party	.10	.90	4.20	3.60	9.10	17.90	5 <sup>th</sup>
Republican Party of Nigeria	.50	2.10	3.10	2.90	8.40	17.00	6 <sup>th</sup>
All Nigeria Peoples Party	.07	.30	2.10	1.50	7.80	11.77	7 <sup>th</sup>
Ideal Peoples Party	.03	.14	.94	.77	7.60	9.48	8 <sup>th</sup>
United Nigeria Democratic Party	.04	.17	1.68	1.39	5.80	9.08	9 <sup>th</sup>
National Union Party	.01	0.2	0.00	.02	7.88	7.93	10 <sup>th</sup>
Peoples Patriotic Party	.03	.20	1.10	.90	4.60	6.83	11 <sup>th</sup>
Patriotic Nigerian Party	0.0	0.0	.09	.07	3.30	3.46	12
Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party	.01	.02	.24	.17	0.00	.44	13 <sup>th</sup>

**Source:** National Electoral Commission, Report and Recommendations on Party Registration, September 1989, p. 23.

On October 1989, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) which was the military supreme decision-making body, met to consider NEC's report. In a nationwide broadcast, President Babangida announced the decision of the AFRC to disband the all the associations, thus rejecting outright, NEC's recommendation of the top six to be considered for registration. More pointedly, the military president observed that all the associations were rooted in ethnic and religious bigotry; as such, none could meet "our

<sup>31</sup> A. Akinola. *Op cit*, p 322.

vision of a new political order”<sup>32</sup>

He further quoted copiously from NEC report to demonstrate that PSP, NNC, PFN and LC were guilty of the sins of the old parties. Having reviewed and found inadequate all other options put forward by NEC, Babangida announced the creation or, better still, the imposition of two political parties and went ahead to name them. This was an innovation in the political history of the nation. In creating the two parties as against multi-party system, Babangida declares that two-partism will:

...give practical expression to the widely accepted need to avoid the noise, the clamour, the confusion and the violence which have been the bane of our partisan political experience. This experience derived from the multiplicity of parties which are built around personalities who were anointed by some ethnic groups. What we had in the second republic were more or less tribally oriented political parties, the prescription in the 1979 notwithstanding.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to the essential democratic principle of choice, the military government, through Babangida, went ahead to christen the two parties the National Republic Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with all members as co-joiners and co-founders.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter, the Federal Military Government embarked on building secretariats, appointing party officials at all levels and financing the party’s take-off. Also, it was the same government that drafted the programmes and constitutions of the two parties.



<sup>32</sup> Presidential address to the nation on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *African Guardian*, 16 October, 1989. p. 27.

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#### 4.8 The Emergence of Presidential Candidates

While the dissolution of former political associations spelt the political doom of certain politicians, the development created ample opportunity for another breed of gladiators especially those who played passive role in the formation of the dissolved political associations. Not quite long after the dissolution, the vogue of alignment and realignment began to evolve for proper positioning within the two manufactured parties. Majority of members of the defunct NNC, LC, and RPN pitched their tent with NRC while those of the PSP, PFN, LP found a home in the SDP fold.

Before the presidential primaries, various elective positions had been contested, and filled from local to national levels. This was effected through a new voting strategy christened Option A4. This was presumed to ensure the emergence of various positions, especially the national leadership. More importantly, where the presidential candidate came from became a hydra-headed problem, given the ethnic polarity of Nigeria.

As it was becoming an institutionalised procedure, zoning arrangement as an informal way of reaching a consensus among various ethnic configurations, became a useful tool in the selection process. The zoning principle essentially talks about distribution of party posts and political offices among different ethnic groups to ensure equity and thus promote national unity. Suberu<sup>35</sup> (2001) observes that “Nigerian politicians derived these ethno-political exchanges from the federal character provision of Nigeria’s post civil war constitutions”. Zoning arrangement thus became an ingenious measure adopted by Nigerian politicians to ensure ethnic balancing by ethno-regional allocation and rotation of political and party offices.

The initial presidential primaries conducted on August 1, 1992 produced from SDP, Major-General Yar’Adua, while the National Republican Convention produced Alhaji Adamu Ciroma and Umaru Shinkafi who were heading for a run-off election. However, the controversy surrounding the primaries in both parties led to the suspension of further election while the AFRC directed the National Electoral Commission to examine what went wrong.<sup>36</sup> The AFRC later met to deliberate on NEC’s findings and, in a nationwide broadcast on October 16, 1992, President Babangida alleged that the

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<sup>35</sup>R. T. Suberu *Institutional Design, Ethnic Conflict Management and Democracy in Nigeria*, <http://scholar.google>, 2002, p. 28. Retrieved 2/11/2007.

<sup>36</sup> African Concord, 1992, p. 20.

following offences were committed by the two parties:

- (i) The use of money to induce voters.
- (ii) Possession of false accreditation.
- (iii) Arbitrary cancellation and falsification of results.
- (iv) Over-voting and returning of results from places where no voting took place at all.<sup>37</sup>

On the account of the foregoing irregularities, government again announced the cancellation of the suspended primary elections. Not only that, it dissolved the executive of the two parties at all levels. Caretaker committees were imposed on both parties. NEC was mandated by government to fashion out a relatively trouble-free election process to produce a nationally-acceptable president.<sup>38</sup> As Babangida emphasises:

If the constitution makers failed to guarantee a prescriptive model of leadership as I had requested in my charge to the Constituent Assembly, this time around, the mechanism for realising a visionary realist will be setting in motion for selecting presidential candidates. We want to do everything to avoid or minimize the situation where candidates reject the results of an election and thereby pose a threat to the survival of the Third Republic.<sup>39</sup>

To this end, NEC came out with its so-called “eight non-conventional” options for the conduct of the cancelled presidential primaries’. The options were as follows:

- A1 = Selection through local government congress only.
- A2 = Selection through state congress only.
- A3 = Selection through national convention only.
- A4 = Selection of state congress leading to national convention.
- A5 = Selection from state and party flag bearers through ward, local government and state congresses leading to national convention.
- A6 = Selection from zonal flagbearers through state congresses and national convention.
- A7 = Selection by members of the national state assembly and local government council.

<sup>37</sup>Head of State’s Speech, *The Guardian* November 18, 1992.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid..

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A8 = All aspirants to proceed directly to contest general election.

Having reviewed the eight options, the Federal Military Government accepted Option A4. The government justified its acceptance of this electoral design on the ground that it is cheap for the candidates who hitherto would have spent much money on pictures or employ canvassers and agents or engage political advertisement companies. This process does not subject the actors to a business relationship because there is a community-value introduced. Option A4 is defined as essentially a Nigerian electoral method of selecting standard bearers of the political parties through a Modified Open Ballot System (the open secret ballot) in a four-stage ward, local government, state and national contest in which only winners at each stage would be qualified to compete in the next stage.<sup>40</sup> Thus, for each party, it is anticipated that there shall be up to 31 state flag bearers with one from each of the thirty (30) states and one from the Federal Capital Territory. Thereafter, a special national convention of delegates of each party shall be convened to elect the national flag bearer of the party in a national convention. This was to ensure the emergence of a grassroots leadership at various strata of government.

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#### 4.9 New Presidential Primaries

Before the new primaries established their lists of party members between 4 and 10 January 1993, the picking of nomination papers for the presidential primaries commenced on 11 January 1993. It was reported that no fewer than 68 members had collected nomination forms at the closing date, 38 from NRC and 30 from SDP. Among those that collected forms in the SDP were Chief M.K.O. Abiola from the south-western part of the country and Alhaji Bashir Tofa of NRC who was from the northern. After the clearance exercise by NEC, the contest for the parties' presidential primaries commenced with Option A4 as electoral rule for the exercise.

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<sup>40</sup> Bola Akinterinwa. The Presidential Election Imbroglia in Larry Diamond, Kurk Greene A. Oyediran Diamond et al; *Transition without End, Nigerian Politics and Civil Society under Babandiga*, Ibadan: Vintage Publishers. 1997, p. 120.

#### 4.10 Presidential Primaries of the Social Democratic Party

The Social Democratic Party held its convention on 27 March 1993 in Jos to pick the flag bearer of the party. The contestants were Chief M.K.O. Abiola from the south-west, Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe from the north, Chief Ralph Obioha (east) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from the north-central, and Mrs. B. Sarah Jubril from the north-east. However, the contest was mainly between Chief M.K.O. Abiola, Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. After a tension-soaked final ballot in Jos, Abiola went home victorious with 2,683 votes, with a close finish of 2,456 votes polled by Baba Gana Kingibe.<sup>41</sup> It was reported that Abiola's victory was apparently facilitated by the last-minute withdrawal of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from the race and the relentless campaign for Abiola's candidature by party elders. Atiku's move followed intense lobbying by coordinators of Abiola's campaign organisation, especially party chieftains from the west, north and east. The lobby strategy was to work on Atiku through the Shehu Yar 'Adua group. The Yar'Adua group, it was observed, had to withdraw and support Abiola, fearing that Kingibe's victory would whittle down its prominence.

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#### 4.11 Primaries of the National Republican Convention (NRC)

The NRC national convention was held in Port Harcourt while the SDP was holding its own in Jos. However, the party's presidential primaries were not as keenly contested when compared with the SDP's. The only visibly serious candidate for NRC primaries was Bashir Tofa who enjoyed the full support of the party executive and the northern elements who were mainly the powerful members of the party. The outcome of the primary election supported this assertion.

Bashir Tofa led the 29 aspirants with a staggering 4,472 votes to beat the second contestant Dr Joe Nwodo Jnr from the south-east with 2,660. Nwodo polled 1,812 votes. Pere Ajuwa from the south-south polled 1,404 votes and Tafida, from the north who had been speculated as the most favoured candidate, managed to poll 1,062 votes thereby coming fourth. Nwodo from the east, expected to give Tofa a good fight, withdrew and later announced his support for Tofa. At the final stage of the election, Tofa polled 4,281

<sup>41</sup> The Guardian Newspaper, 28 March 1993. p. 41.

while Pere Ajuwa got only 575 votes.<sup>42</sup>

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#### 4.12 Selection of Vice Presidential Candidates

The selection of vice presidential candidates was another hurdle the two parties had to clear before the commencement of the electioneering campaign. However, this did not prove to be much of a problem to the National Republican Convention. This was because the party had zoned the post to the east and specifically to a Christian-dominated ethnic group. It was relatively easy for Tofa to pick Dr Sylvester Ugoh, a former Minister in Shagari administration, contrary to expectation that George Nwodo who withdrew his candidature to back Tofa during the second ballot vote in Port Harcourt would be given the post.

However for Abiola, it was a herculean task. His party had zoned the vice presidential ticket to the north-east, but the Christian Association of Nigeria insisted he must choose a Christian from that zone. While Abiola himself favoured that choice, none of the Christians he chose was acceptable to the elders of the party.<sup>43</sup> The issue was so serious that it took considerable time to resolve. It was revealed that it took about 64 meetings by the caucus of the party before Babagana Kingibe, former party chairman and second to Abiola in the primaries, was finally chosen.<sup>44</sup> Even though the Christian Association of Nigeria opposed the candidature of Kingibe, it was gathered that for political expediency he had to be chosen. Having settled the problem of vice presidential candidacy the stage was set for the parties to commence electioneering campaign.

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#### 4.13 Campaign for the Presidential Election

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Owing to lack of time, various means of reaching the electorate were adopted by the two parties. Prominent among such was the media with captivating words and each candidate striving to outmanoeuvre the other. Newspapers were flooded with advertisements portraying the personalities of the two candidates. The NRC was also involved in psychological propaganda based on previous elections where it claimed to have greater numerical strength than the SDP.

Another innovative aspect of the campaign was the programme organised by the

<sup>42</sup>*African Concord* 5, April, 1993. p. 34.

<sup>43</sup>*The Guardian Newspaper* March, 1993. p. 42.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.* p. 42.



Nigerian Television Authority where the two candidates faced the audience and millions of Nigerians watched, obviously to determine a better candidate. At that forum, Abiola was adjudged a better candidate. He demonstrated his intellectual dexterity and proper grasp of Nigerian problems compared with Basir Tofa.

On the other hand, the presidential television debate seriously damaged the image of the NRC flag bearer by portraying how ill-prepared he was. Chief Abiola not only enjoyed the massive support of the press but also the competence of his campaign team which did a commendable job. The campaign organisation was innovative, more disciplined and better-funded. In contrast, the NRC campaign was poorly-coordinated and planned. Through the competence of its campaign organisation, Abiola became a household name throughout the country.

#### 4.14 June 12 Presidential Election

Indeed, the road to June 12, 1993 election had been long and tortuous not only to politicians but even the electorate. In fact, the transition programme was designed in a manner to dampen the morale of not only the politicians but the entire citizenry. It was indeed full of gyration, as Suberu<sup>45</sup> observes:

...that by the beginning of the series of ward, local and state primaries that culminated in the revised national primaries and conventions of the Parties in March, 1993, the electorates had become deeply dispirited, and the civilian political class humiliated and depleted by the violent gyrations and elongations of the transition programme.<sup>46</sup>

Despite these frustrating efforts of the military junta, Nigerians were resolute to see the end of the military in the governance of the country. They ensured a peaceful presidential election. The June 12, 1993 presidential election, more than ever, attracted the attention of the whole world with international observers on ground to witness its conduct.

The presidential election took place with the Modified Open Ballot System. More than 10,000 ballot boxes were provided for the 110,466 polling stations. Accreditation

<sup>45</sup> R. T., Suberu, 'Crisis and Collapse: June –November 1993' in Larry Diamond, K. Greene and O. Oyediran eds. *Transition Without end, Nigerian Civil Society Under Babangida*, 1997, p. 308.

<sup>46</sup> Akinterinwa, B. The 1993 'Presidential Imbroglio' in Larry Diamond, K. Greene & O. Oyediran eds, *Transition without end: Nigerian Politics and civil society under Babangida*, 1997. p. 288.

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took place between 8.00a.m. and 10.00 a.m. The voters were obliged to queue up in a single line. The voting system, contrary to the previous ones, made it difficult to know the choice of a voter. The actual vote was cast by secret ballot. The sorting out of voting cards and the counting of votes were carried out in different polling booths in the presence of the representatives of NEC, the political parties and the voters, with the national and international monitoring groups alert at some collation centres.<sup>47</sup> It was said by the generality of observers and the two parties that the election was free, fair and peaceful. Therefore, despite all odds, the June 12 presidential election was peaceful, free and fair. The election represented a watershed in Nigerian history.<sup>48</sup>

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#### 4.15 Analysis of 1993 Presidential Election

Osaghae<sup>49</sup> has observed that efforts at analysing election results in Nigeria and indeed Africa, assume a large measure of predictability. If voters are not propelled by ethnic, religious, regional or sectional loyalty, then the electoral process are manipulated to install favoured candidates by incumbent authorities or wealthiest candidates. However, 1993 presidential election was an exception to this proposition.

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Though the complete result of the election was not officially released, based on an order of an Abuja High Court restraining the electoral body from doing so, the ones released and those collated by local and foreign monitoring groups provided enough data capable of eliciting information on the performance of the two parties and their presidential aspirants.

Indeed, the election presents an opportunity to measure the impact of the institutional designs on ethnicity as a major determining variable in Nigerian politics. This is captured in Table 6, taking cognisance of the ethnic voting pattern of the electorate and the subsequent performance of the two candidates across ethnic boundaries. Of the total vote of 14, 29, 396 cast, Chief M.K.O. Abiola and Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe of SDP won 8,341,309 (58.3%) and Alhaji Tofa of NRC scored

<sup>47</sup>Bola Akinterinwa, The 1993 Presidential Imbroglio in L. Diamond, K. Greene & O. Oyediran eds. *Transition Without End: Nigerian Politics and civil society under Babangida*, 1997, p. 288.

<sup>48</sup> Ibrahim Tahir was one of the Northern elites, and a Second Republic Minister The Comment was made during an interview he granted the *Guardian Newspaper* on June 12 (1993) Presidential election. See the *Guardian* 29 June, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> E.E. Osaghae. *Managing Ethnic Conflicts under Democratic Transition in Africa; The Promises, the Failure, and the Future*, State and Civil Society, Dakar: CODESRIA. 1992.

5,952,087 (42.6%). The distribution of votes won across various ethnic groups by the presidential candidates, were presented for further analysis.

The results released by EMB before the annulment showed that SDP's M.K.O. Abiola and Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe won 8,341 (58.36%) whilst NRC's Alhaji Tofa scored 5,952,087 votes (42.6%). The comprehensive result and the performance of the presidential candidates and their parties across ethnic-geographic zones of the country are presented in Table 6.

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**Table 6: Voting Pattern in the 1993 Presidential Election (A): Election Result in Hausa-Fulani States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Bauchi	847,274	513,077	60.56	334,197	39.4
Jigawa	228,388	98,836	39.0	38,552	61.0
Kaduna	726,573	336,860	46.36	389,713	54.64
Kano	324,428	154,809	47.72	169,619	52.28
Sokoto	469,986	372,260	79.21	97,726	20.79
Katsina	442,176	271,000	61.3	171,169	38.7
Kebbi	286,974	209,872	73.1	77,102	26.9
Yobe	176,054	65,133	36.99	110,921	63

**Source:** Newswatch Magazine vol. 17, no 26, June 28.

The voting pattern in Table 6 demonstrates that the Hausa-Fulani preferred NRC's Tofa. However, Abiola shows strong electoral relevance by defeating his opponent in his (Tofa) home state (Kano) with 52.28% of the total votes cast while Tofa scored 47.7%. Not only that, Abiola was able to score the 25% minimum electoral requirement in all the states in the Hausa-Fulani-dominated states except Sokoto.

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**Table 7: Voting pattern in the 1993 Presidential Election (B): Election Results in South West States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Ogun	484,971	59,246	12.22	425,725	87.78
Ondo	964,018	160,994	15.7	803,024	83.3
Osun	437,334	72,068	15.5	365,266	83.5
Oyo	641,799	105,788	16.48	536,011	83.52
Lagos	1,033,397	149,432	14.46	883,965	85.54

**Source:** Newswatch Magazine Vol. 17, no 26, June 28.

The result in From Table 7, Yoruba-dominated areas show that there was still the presence of ethnic voting as the Yoruba candidate swept the area. The performance of Tofa was poor compared with Abiola in the northern zone; Tofa was rejected electorally by voting behaviour in the south-west zone.

**Table 8: Ethnic voting in the 1993 Presidential Election (C): Election Results in South Eastern States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Enugu	427,190	233,281	54.44	193,969	45.56
Imo	349,902	193,202	55.22	156,700	44.8
Anambra	371,282	159,258	42.89	212,024	57.11
Abia	256,500	151,227	58.96	105,273	41.04

**Source:** S.A. Idahosa and A. Otoghile; *Benin Journal of Social Sciences*. 8 & 9 . 1 & 2: 124.

The result in Table 8 shows that both parties were nearly equally matched in the Igbo-dominated area, thus both crossing traditional ethnic barrier. However, NRC had a slight edge over SDP which could be attributed to the fact that the vice presidential candidate of NRC came from the zone.

**Table 9: Voting pattern in the 1993 President Election (D):  
Election Results in former Northern Minority States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Plateau	676,959	259,394	38.32	417,565	61.68
Benue	406,132	189,302	43	216,830	57
Borno	282,180	128,684	45.60	153,496	54.40
Kwara	352,470	80,209	22.76	272,270	77.24
Niger	357,787	221,437	61.90	136,350	38.10
Kogi	488,492	265,732	54.4	222,760	45.6
Adamawa	334,490	178,865	53.47	155,625	46.53

**Source:** S.A. Idahosa and A. Otoghile Benin Journal of Social Sciences. Vols 8 & 9, Nos 1 & 2, p. 124.

Table 9 shows that SDP candidate dominated in the voting pattern in the northern minority states, though NRC put up a good performance.

**Table 10: Voting Pattern in the 1993 Presidential Election (E):  
Election Results in the former South Western Minority States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Edo	308,979	103,572	33.52	205,407	66.48
Delta	472,278	145,001	30.7	327,277	69.3

**Source:** S.A. Idahosa and A. Otoghile; Benin Journal of Social Sciences. 8 & 9.1 & 2,; 124.

The election results in the former south-western minority states demonstrate that the SDP had a comfortable lead. However, the NRC also showed a strong presence by coasting more than 25% minimum electoral requirement.

**Table 11: Ethnic voting in the 1993 Presidential Election (F):  
Election Results in the former Eastern Minority States**

State	Total Votes	NRC		SDP	
		NO.	%	NO.	%
Akwa Ibom	414,129	199,342	48.14	214,787	51.86
Rivers	1,026,824	646,952	63	379,872	36.9
Cross-Rivers	342,755	153,452	47.08	189,303	52.2

**Source:** The above tables were carefully adapted from S.A. Idahosa and A. Otoghile *Benin Journal of Social Sciences*. Vols 8 & 9, Nos 1 & 2, p. 124.

As can be seen from Table 11, no political party/candidate dominated the voting pattern in eastern minority states. The two parties both enjoyed the support of the former eastern minority states almost equally.

From all the geopolitical zones, it can be seen that the SDP dominated only in the south-west zone dominated, yet the NRC registered its presence. This demonstrates a cross-cutting voting influence of the two parties.

In an important sense, the result of the election signalled a change in the voting pattern in the history of elections in Nigeria. It indicated that Abiola garnered historic victory that bridged the country's traditional ethnic, regional and religious lines. The result also demonstrated that SDP victory was unprecedentedly national in scope. Going by the result of the election, only in one of the 30 states (Sokoto) did Chief Abiola fail to obtain the one-third of the votes required in the two-thirds of the states in order to be elected. NRC could not obtain one-third of the votes required in seven states. Chief Abiola was able to secure the required votes in Alhaji Tofa's home state, Kano, with 52.28% of the total votes and in other geopolitical zones other than his own. Abiola had the required majority in his own ethnic domain, with 85% of the total votes cast in his home state of Ogun.

Alhaji Bashir Tofa though did not win the presidential election; the result demonstrated that he had a brilliant showing in certain ethnic domains other than his own. For instance, it was in the eastern minority state of Rivers that he garnered the highest number of votes, representing 63%, a figure quite higher than what he obtained in his home state. Apart from the south-western states, the National Republic Convention had an evenly-spread vote across the country as the data further demonstrates. Among

northern minority and the Igbo states, both parties matched each other equally. Even in the former south-western minority states such as Edo and Delta where the SDP had an edge, the NRC proved its electoral strength with 33.5% and 30.7% votes respectively.

On balance, the results of the presidential election in 1993 brought about a shift in voting pattern; it clearly shows the waning influence of ethnicity as a vote-catching strategy for ethnic political gladiators.

Indeed, Tahir, one of the core northern oligarchs rightly observes that the 1993 presidential election was an election that produced, for the first time, a national leader:

In point of fact, Nigeria does have the basis to call itself a nation. M.K.O was with fantastic and very high level of northern voter support and an incredible 50:50 share of the Ibo votes a predominant minority vote, no Nigerian has ever received that degree of voters support.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Alhaji Ibrahim Tahir was a founding member of NPN and a Federal Minister in Shagari's cabinet during the Second Republic. He made this assertion on June 12 presidential election, *The Guardian* June 29, 1993.



#### 4.16 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated that apart from the existing innovative electoral design during the Second Republic, Babangida's regime introduced two-partism as a major incentive into the country's party politics.

Two-partism, designed by the transition regime, served as a major facilitating factor that influenced the outcome of the election. This design, as an electoral incentive, forced the political elite from different groups to dissolve themselves into the two manufactured parties. Moreover, the electorate had no choice than to align in their voting behaviour with any of the two parties which was against the previous experience of ethnic parties that were engaged in ethnic intolerance. More importantly, fears expressed about the probability of the two-party system resulting in the party of the north and a party of the south have been invalidated by the empirical evidence of voting pattern and structure of party membership. Rather, the voting pattern has demonstrated the ability of institutional mechanism to reduce north-south dichotomous politics that characterised Nigeria's First Republic party politics. Though considered as contrary to democratic ideal, two-partism as a doctrine of necessity or political exigency, produced a tendency capable of spawning democracy and further strengthening Nigeria's integrative process, if allowed to operate. However, personal ambition of the military president, General Ibrahim Babangida eventually undermined this possibility.

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**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**ELECTORAL SYSTEM DESIGN AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE**  
**4<sup>TH</sup> REPUBLIC**

This chapter is a further attempt to appraise the utility of electoral engineering tools for managing ethnic conflict and ensuring the election of broad, pan-ethnic president. It examines the existing and new electoral innovations and the three presidential elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007 and the extent to which the behavioural calculus of the political elite and the voters alike were influenced.

**5.1 Background to the Transition Programme**

The year 1999 was another opportunity of experimenting democratic rule in Nigeria. Towards this, another transition programme was set in motion through the military regime led by General Abdulsalam Abubakar. It was this transition programme that culminated the 1999 presidential election that produced Olusegun Obasanjo as president.

Abubakar's transition programme from military to civilian government was dictated by the prevailing circumstances of his time. It had its background in the failed attempts of the previous administrations to hand over to elected representatives of the people. It may be recalled that Babangida promised to hand over to a democratically-elected civilian when he assumed the position of head of state through a forceful takeover on August 27 1985. In due time, however, he failed to honour his word. To be sure, he presided over a long, often delayed transition-to-civil-rule programme which ended in a fiasco, when he annulled the June 12 presidential election, which was adjudged free-and-fair by both local and international observers.<sup>1</sup> Expectedly, a violent reaction from the civil populace led to the total breakdown of law and order. Acting under this pressure, the self-styled president resigned and appointed a caretaker government, referred to as the Interim National Government (ING), under Ernest Shonekan who hailed from Ogun State, the home state of the presumed winner of the election. The period was also characterised by political tension and cataclysm, particularly as a law court declared the

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<sup>1</sup>Orvis Stephen. Editors Introduction: Chronology of Nigerian Elections *Issue. Journal of Opinion*; 1999, 27.1:5.

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government illegal.<sup>2</sup>

The disagreement over June 12 election brought in another military faction led by General Sanni Abacha that terminated Shonekan's weak and illegal regime. Abacha disappointed the public as he refused to install Abiola as president. His regime was credited to have perpetrated the most extreme form of human rights abuses ever witnessed in Nigeria's history. Moreover, his transition programme earned him more condemnation due to its singular diabolism.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the many contradictions of the transition programme were summarised in three broad statements: (i) it amounted to a constitutional void (ii) its ultimate object could be discerned, ab initio, and (iii) it excluded critical elements of both civil and political societies.<sup>4</sup> Even though, it organised a transition-to-civil-rule constitutional conference in 1994, the Abacha regime never approved the draft of the constitution the Constituent Assembly submitted for ratification. More poignantly, the transition's ultimate aim was the transmutation of the Sani Abacha to a civilian president. This created a serious credibility problem which aborted the programme, the image-laundering efforts of several government – sponsored organisations, notwithstanding.<sup>5</sup> The eventual demise of Sani Abacha on June 8, 1998 terminated the programme.

It is against this background of failed attempt at transition to civil rule that Abacha's successor, General Abdusalam<sup>2</sup>s put forward furnished a timetable for the return to democratic government immediately he took over as the head of state.

## 5.2 Abubakar's Transition-to-Civil-Rule Programme

Before the release of the programme, Abubakar, unlike his predecessor, embarked on a wide range of consultations among different ethnic groups and civil societies. This was aimed at creating an enabling environment and to gain public confidence in the envisaged transition programme.

<sup>2</sup>Orvis Stephen. *Op cit* Ibid. p. 27.1-5.

<sup>3</sup>Obadare. The Press and Democratic Regime Transition in Nigeria, Comparative Notes on the Abacha and Abubakar Transition Programme, *Issue: Journal of Opinion*. 1999, 27.1: 40.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. p. 39.

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Thus, three of the service chiefs and the Inspector General of Police anchored the grassroots consultations in various geopolitical zones of the country, comprising Benin, Port Harcourt, Lagos, Kaduna and Yola. The discussion centred on (i) The release of six political detainees (ii) formation of Interim National Government, (iii) Cancellation of elections held since 1996 and (iv) the date for final handover to civilian government. It also involved the international community, which afforded the head of state opportunity to play host to several envoys and heads of mission of African, European, Asian and American countries in Abuja. One of the participants, Tony Liloyd, who was the British Deputy Minister of State for African Affairs, confirmed after a meeting with Abubakar on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1998 that he had a constructive exchange with the head of state on the way forward.<sup>6</sup>

During the mobilisation across the nation, pressure was mounted on the new regime to discontinue with the transitional programme of Abacha, his predecessor. These pressures came from both civil societies and the political elite. The pressure mounted on the government during the nationwide consultations propelled Abubakar to design a transition programme whose life span was the shortest compared with his predecessors.

Following these consultations, the head of state, General Abdusalami Abubakar in a nationwide broadcast on July 1998 tagged “The way forward” unfolded the decisions of government on certain issues of national importance:

1. The dissolution of Abacha’s transitional programme and consequently the dissolution of existing political parties.
2. The establishment of a new electoral body with the necessary enabling law to replace National Electoral Commission of Nigeria. The electoral body will have the responsibility for registration of new political parties.
3. The terminal date of the military regime.

Abubakar further revealed that, under the new dispensation, every Nigerian citizen would have equal opportunity to form or join any political party of their choice in accordance with the guidelines to be issued by the electoral commission on the registration of political parties. Giving his reason for this action, Abubakar observes:

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<sup>6</sup> *Newswatch Magazine* August 3, 1998, p. 14.

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Our most recent attempt at democratization was marred by manoeuvring and manipulation of political institutions, structures and actors. In the end we have only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained.....<sup>7</sup>

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### 5.3 Inauguration of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

As a follow up to his earlier broadcast to establish a new electoral body, General Abubakar on August 1998, announced the establishment of Independent National Electoral Commission to replace the National Electoral Commission. The commission was given two weeks to draw up and release a comprehensive timetable for the conduct of the general elections. The timetable must take into account the handing over date of 29 May, 1999. Abubakar said that it was imperative to give limited time frame because his administration had promised the Nigerian people that it would hand over the reins of government to an elected government on May 29, 1999.

It should be noted that unlike the previous transition programme of the Babangida regime that set-up various institutions for the mobilisation of the populace, only INEC was to take care of the election.

The Independent National Electoral Commission was headed by Ephraim Akpata, a retired Supreme Court Judge. Apart from its chairman, the commission was made up of 13 other members. Notable among them were Shehu Musa, former chairman of National Population Commission, Shehu Galadanchi, a professor of medicine and former Vice-Chancellor of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto; Ladan Baki, a seasoned civil servant and Adamu Bawa Muazu who was the commission's secretary.<sup>8</sup>

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### 5.4 The Transition to Civil Rule Time-Table

Before the release of the time-table for the conduct of the election, INEC officials met in Abuja on August 1998 with representatives of political associations to discuss modalities for party organisation. Even though there was no consensus on the modalities, for registration or the number of parties to be registered, INEC carried along opinion leaders of various political associations. The modalities for registration reflected the

<sup>7</sup>*Newswatch Magazine August 3, 1998* ~~ibid~~, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>*Newswatch August 24 1998*, p. 23.

earlier discussions between INEC and these political entrepreneurs. For instance, it was reported that the commission had accepted most of the recommendations of August 1998 between the commission and the politicians.<sup>9</sup>

It was also reported that the criteria for the registration of associations and spaced-out elections as spelt out by INEC followed the advice of these political associations.<sup>10</sup>

According to the electoral management body, the transition-to-civil-rule timetable would take the following sequence:

- |                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| August 1998              | - | Preparation by the Commission   |
| August – September 1998  | - | Party Formation and Registration  |
| August – November 1998   | - | Voters Registration Exercise/Production of Voters Registration  |
| November – December 1998 | - | Local Government Council Election   |
| December – January 1999  | - | Governorship/State Assembly Elections   |
| January – February 1999  | - | National Assembly Election/Presidential Elections   |
| March, 1999              | - | Run-off Election if any for National Assembly and Presidential. Inauguration of Local Government Councils Nationwide:- to be announced at a later date. Swearing-in of Governments to be announced at a later date. |
| May 29 1999              | - | Swearing-in of the elected President and Final Disengagement. <sup>11</sup>   |

### 5.5 Party Formation and Party Registration

According to the criteria released by the Independent National Electoral Commission, all political associations seeking registration were to pay a non-refundable fee of ₦100, 000 to the commission.<sup>12</sup> This was small compared with the amount previously required under the defunct National Electoral Commission which was ₦500.000. There were other criteria that had been waived under the new dispensation. For instance, it will not be necessary for an association to show that it has a number of

<sup>9</sup>*Newswatch* 7 September, 1998. p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>*Newswatch* August 24, 1998, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid*, p. 25.

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card-carrying members in each state and the Federal Capital Territory or that it was organised in at least two-thirds of the council areas in each of the state of the federation. According to INEC chairman, “The Exercise of transporting lorry loads of genuine or fake registers of members to INEC offices no longer exists”.<sup>13</sup> This waiver serves as a relief to political associations which hitherto had been subjected to stringent requirements by previous electoral agencies. It can, therefore be viewed as an improvement on the previous requirements for party formation in Nigeria.

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However, there were innovations introduced for political party registration under the new transition programme. Apart from the reduction in the amount to be paid for an association to be registered as a political party in Nigeria, December 5 local council election was a litmus test. According to this requirement, any party that failed to meet a 10% showing (later reduced to 5%) in 24 states of the federation will not be registered. According to Akpata:

Any party which fails to meet this requirement shall automatically lose its recognition and have its provisional registration certificate withdrawn, and it cannot contest or present candidates for subsequent elections in the present series to be conducted by the INEC during the transition.<sup>14</sup>

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For each political association to be registered as “political party, such is to forward its constitution, manifesto, logo and motto which must reflect issues of Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution.<sup>15</sup> Fundamental objective emphasises the imperativeness of national unity. Thus, the experiences of the political instability and ethnic nature of parties in the first and second republics propelled INEC to put following electoral hurdles against party formation along ethnic basis:

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- (a) Membership is to be opened to every Nigerian citizen, irrespective of place of origin, circumstance of birth, ethnic group, sex or religion.
- (b) Parties should accept the principles of power sharing and rotation of key political offices.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Newswatch August 24, 1998, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>Newswatch 7 September 1998, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Sat.Obiyan A. Political under Abubakar Transition Programme and Democratic Stability in Nigeria; *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*. 1999. 27.1:41.

To be regarded as open to every Nigerian, a political party must maintain functional branches in at least 24 states of the federation. Its name, motto, slogan and the identifying symbols shall not have any ethnic, religious, professional or other sectional connotation or give the appearance that its activities are confined only to a part of Nigeria. Party organisation also at the federal level should reflect federal character while at state and local government areas, party should take into account geographical group and cultural peculiarities.<sup>17</sup> The electoral rules are expected to engineer the emergence of national political parties.

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#### 5.6 Emergence of Political Parties

As it has become a norm in Nigerian political history, especially in the Second Republic, electoral politics formally commences with the registration of political parties. Expectedly, as soon as the guidelines for party registration were released, political activities among politicians commenced with renewed vigour. Twenty-six political associations applied to INEC for provisional party registration. After the verification of claims by INEC, nine were granted provisional approval on October 19, 1998. These associations were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP), Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), National Solidarity Movement (NSM) Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), United Democratic Party (UDP), and United Peoples Party (UPP).<sup>18</sup> These parties presented candidates for the December 5, 1998 local council election. Going by the result of the election, only three parties obtained the five per cent required votes in 24 states of the federation and were eventually registered as political parties. These parties were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

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It is relevant at this point to examine the emergence of the three major parties, their composition and their spheres of electoral influence with a view to determining how national or parochial they were.

<sup>17</sup>*Newswatch* 7 September 1998, p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* p. 43.



### 5.7 Alliance for Democracy (AD)

Alliance for Democracy could be described as a child of circumstance or, better still, a party that emerged as a result of mistrust among the political elite. This was because the major personalities that eventually formed AD were originally members of a political association or group known as G-34. The G-34 which comprised politicians from different ethnic groups in the country was in the early days of General Abacha's regime a strong opposition to the self-succession bid of the tyrant. Prominent among its members was Chief Bola Ige who became one of the founding fathers of Alliance for Democracy. He was also the arrowhead of a group called Peoples Consultative Forum in the G-34 which pulled out of the group on August 27, 1998. Bola Ige, former Governor of Oyo State, and leaders of the People Consultative forum (PCF), accused the G-34 of accommodating those who had campaigned vigorously for Abacha's self-succession. According to Bola Ige, the PCF and its allies were not of the same mind with some of the prominent people that later surfaced in G-34 To him, most of the entrants apart from the original G-34 were those who vigorously campaigned for Abacha's self-succession. Another member of the PCF, Chukwuemeka Ezeife argued that they left the G-34 for ideological differences. However, as events unfolded, these arguments did not amount to much. Ezeife eventually served under the same group that later transformed to Peoples Democratic Party as an adviser to the president elected on the platform of the party. Moreover, the reason put forward by Bola Ige was undermined by his action to serve under the same Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) formed by personalities he initially refused to associate with.

In its horse trading, the Peoples Consultative Forum, acting under the instruction of Afenifere, a strong Pan-Yoruba association, on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1998 contacted a faction of All Nigerian Congress led by Umaru Shinkafi, former presidential aspirant and former head of Nigeria Security Organisation (NSO) and chieftain of Democratic Unity,<sup>19</sup> a faction of New Era led by Chief Bode Olajumoke from the south-west who was a former vice chairman of the defunct United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP). These groups eventually merged to form a new party known as All Peoples Party.<sup>20</sup> The party with its

<sup>19</sup>*Newswatch* 14 September 1998, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*, p. 21.

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conglomerates was seen as formidable as it spread across ethnic boundaries. The Peoples Consultative Forum later withdrew from the All Peoples Party, accusing it, like the G-34, of harbouring people of questionable character. According to Abdulkarim who later emerged as the National Vice Chairman of AD, “Our grievances against the APP and other parties then was because of the presence of certain people of questionable character especially, those who shamelessly were in the forefront of the campaign for self-succession.”<sup>21</sup> Eventually, the People Consultative Forum with the active backing of the Afenifere metamorphosed into Alliance for Democracy. It should be further stressed that Alliance for Democracy constitutes a core of Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba organisation that dates back to the era of Awolowo. It is therefore not surprising that majority of Awolowo’s followers who were based in the south-west formed the nucleus of the party. This eventually reflected in the performance of the party in the subsequent elections held in the country, during the period under study. To Enemu<sup>22</sup>, therefore, AD was evidently a regional party whose support base was in the south-west where it won almost all elective positions.

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#### 5.8 All Peoples Party (APP)

All Peoples Party emerged as a product of alignments and realignments of political forces that emerged following the dissolution of the five political parties registered by the military administration of General Sani Abacha. In fact, G-34 was the major forum or an umbrella organisation in which the three registered political parties could be said to have their origins. As already indicated, G-34 comprised initially, 34 prominent Nigerian citizens across the country. They were politicians of diverse ideological persuasions, some desiring to become the country’s president. However, when the interest groups began to make attempts to transform the group into a political association, they began to fall apart into various clandestine groups. One of such was New Era led by Bode Olajumoke and former National Consultative Forum.<sup>23</sup> So, on August 28, these two groups joined others such as All Nigerian Congress led by Umaru

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<sup>21</sup>*Tell Magazine*, 1 March 1998, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Enemu Francis, *Elite Solidarity, Communal Support and the 1999 President Elections in Nigeria: The Unresolved Crisis: Issues, Journal of Opinion*, 1999, 27.1: 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Newswatch* 14 September, 1998, p. 21.

Shinkafi, Democratic Vanguard, a faction of New Era, Peoples Congress and Eastern Mandate Union (EMU). All these groups merged to form All Peoples Party.<sup>24</sup> The United Nigerian Democratic Party, led by Emmanuel Iwuanwu, a business and political heavyweight from the east and the National Unity Forum, a brainchild of Olusola Saraki, later joined the party, to make it stronger and more national in outlook.<sup>25</sup> The merging of these associations into a political party gave it a semblance of a national party as its membership transcended ethnic and geopolitical boundaries. One fact that cannot be denied of the party, like AD, was the presence of the old breed politicians who had been in the theatre of Nigerian politics over decades. It also comprised those who were at the forefront of advocating the transformation of Abacha from military leader to civilian president.

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#### 5.9 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

The Peoples Democratic Party evolved mainly out of the initiative of a group known as G.34. The group initially comprised 34 “eminent” Nigerians from all sections of the country, who resisted, vehemently, Abacha’s self-succession scheme.<sup>26</sup> Among were Dr Alex Ekwueme, a former vice president of Nigeria in Shehu Shagari’s government, from the south-east,<sup>27</sup> Chief Solomon Lar from the middle belt, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, a core northern conservative and a staunch member of the defunct National Party of Nigeria. Solomon Lar later emerged as the first National Chairman of the party while Dr Alex Ekwueme contested the presidential primaries of the PDP and later became Chairman, Board of Trustees of the party. Apart from this group, another noticeable one which made the party the strongest of all the three parties was the class of the retired top military brass. To be sure, the party, of all the three parties, had the highest concentration of the retired generals. These retired generals provided part of the vast fortunes and network of clients they had accumulated during their years in power.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the PDP to a large extent was the party of the military. As events later unfolded, the retired generals were mostly instrumental to the emergence of one of their

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<sup>24</sup> *Newswatch*, March 1978, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Newswatch*, March 1978, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Francis Enemuo. *Op.cit*; p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Lincola Joshua, The “Persistent” Federation: Nigeria and its Federal Future, *Issues: A Journal of Opinion*, 1999.27.1:13.

<sup>28</sup> <sup>28</sup> Francis Enemuo *Op cit*. P. 5

members, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as the president of the nation.

Another strong group that joined forces to form Peoples Democratic Party was the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM), the political machine left behind by the late retired General Shehu Musa Yar 'Adua. From all indications, the Peoples Democratic Party had the most national spread of all the three. In fact, the origin, composition and electoral support showed that it was not a reincarnation of a previous political party with an exclusive sectional or ethnic base. It was a representative of different sections of the country.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that, as in previous republics, none of the parties was formed on ideological principles. There was no fundamental difference between the APP and AD beyond known positions of their respective leadership on national issues. Regarding their manifestoes, the APP and AD were virtually siamese twins, with even the PDP appearing as a very close relative. In key areas including the much-taunted restructuring, federalism and derivation all three manifestoes can pass for photocopies of one another.<sup>30</sup> It was claimed that Chief Bola Ige was instrumental to the production of the constitutions<sup>31</sup> of the three registered parties Francis Enemuo has summarised the features of all the three parties as follows:

With no significant ideological differences, the parties were agglomerations of Nigerians notable individuals who had been more prominent in the past civilian and military regimes as well as handful of young wealthy professionals and business men.<sup>32</sup>

#### 5.10 Towards the 1999 Presidential Election

As it was in the previous presidential elections in Nigeria, political parties were to choose their flag bearers at presidential primaries. However, one significant thing about the 1999 presidential primaries was that there seemed to be a consensus among the three registered parties that the candidate must come from the south-east zone. The reason for this is ethnicity, which had been a contentious issue in Nigeria's political history. It was the contention of the south, especially the south-west (the Yoruba) that the northerners

<sup>29</sup>S. Obiyan. Political Parties Under Abubakar Transition and Democratic Stability in Nigeria Elections: Issues, *Journal of Opinion* 1999, 27.1: 43.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in the cover story of *Tell Magazine* February 22, 1999 on the Three registered political parties i.e. PDP, APP and AD.

<sup>31</sup> J. Ayoade; Confirmed this fact during the personal interview granted on the formation of Political Parties of the Third Republic.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Enemuo. *Op cit*, p. 6

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were not ready to relinquish power; moreover, the annulment of June 12 presidential election by high-ranking military officers of northern origin led by Babangida confirmed this palpable fear. For Nigeria to remain united therefore, it was stressed that political power must shift to another geopolitical zone. According to Adesanya, a leader of Afenifere, a pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, the only way forward for Nigeria's unity was the election of Yoruba as the next president after the demise of the presumed winner of 1993 presidential election, otherwise the Yoruba would begin to review their position in the Nigerian federation.

Our entire future as the Yoruba is threatened and there is pervasive feeling among our people as well as some ethnic groups in Nigeria, the time has come for us as a people to review the future of Nigeria federation and our place in it.<sup>33</sup>

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From the south-south and south-east, there was the same agitation for power shift. Eventually, the northern oligarchy conceded to the demand, but preferably to the Yoruba race. Thus, most of the northern political elite actively supported the candidature of the Yoruba during the presidential primaries in both APP and PDP; hence Yoruba candidates emerged as presidential flag bearers for the two parties. Enemuo reasons that:

Protestations by its Southern counterpart and rival, the manifest injustice in the annulment of June 12, 1993 election and enlightened self interest may have persuaded the northern political elite of the need for a power shift to the South.<sup>34</sup>

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Orvis agrees that this "unusual situation" in ethnically-charged Nigerian politics was brought about in part due to the widespread perception that power shift was necessary because Abiola was Yoruba, and the "political elite informally agreed that a Southerner, probably Yoruba, should be the next President"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Chief Adesanya made the declaration at a meeting held in Premier Hotel on August 3, 1998, on the *Way forward for Yoruba*, *Newswatch* August 17, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Enemuo. Op. cit p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Orvis Stephen. Editors Introduction: *Chronology of Nigerian Elections Issue, Journal of Opinion*. 1999, p. 6.

### 5.11 The Presidential Primaries of the AD/APP

One of the problems that rocked the boat of All Peoples Party and affected the chances of the party in the presidential election was the idea mooted by some party chieftains to go into alliance with the Alliance for Democracy. The intention of the alliance was to snatch victory from the jaws of the PDP. All the elections preceding the presidential election pointed to the fact that neither the AD nor the APP could match the PDP. While the PDP won 460 chairmanship positions in the December 1998 local government election, the APP won 178 and the AD 160. The gubernatorial election held in January 1999 followed the same voting pattern, with the PDP maintaining a comfortable lead. PDP won 20 governorship positions APP had nine and AD secured 6<sup>36</sup>. It was therefore clear to both the leadership of APP and AD that the only way to win the presidential election was through an alliance. More importantly, given the prevailing political circumstance and the electoral requirements for presidential race, AD and APP found it desirable to work together.

### 5.12 History of the Alliance

The first contact between the AD and APP was made in December 18 after the local council election. Ude Denta and Bola Ige of AD met with Mahmud Waziri and Bode Olajumoke of APP. A second group consisted of Yusuf Mamman, Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo and Ibrahim Waziri. They served as the contact point that pushed, articulated and concluded the alliance.<sup>36</sup> Shinkafi was the head of delegation from APP to Adesanya (AD) who also received them and gave his consent with a charge to link up with AD national executive. Agreements reached at these meetings included:

- (a) Power shift to the south
- (b) Return to true Federalism
- (c) Restructuring, revenue allocation based on derivation, integrity, credibility and transparency.

Subsequently, the working committee met where the agreement was signed and sealed.<sup>37</sup> A sub-committee was set up to work out criteria for picking presidential candidate. The committee worked out modalities to ensure that only candidates from the

<sup>36</sup>*Newswatch* March 15, 1999, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid*, p. 32.

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south, preferably the south-west, met the criteria, thereby frustrating the presidential ambition of personalities like Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu and Sola Saraki. Technically, the criteria, most of which were given by AD, edged out all APP.<sup>38</sup> Despite protests, politicking and murmuring, Saraki and others like Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu through the combined efforts of Ibrahim Waziri and Umaru Shinkafi were eventually edged out.

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Apart from Saraki, APP chieftains from the south-east did not take it lightly. This was because they felt it was their turn to enjoy the benefit of the power shift. M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, representing his ethnic group, described the adherence as an agreement between angel and evil. To him, Waziri was acting under pressure from the south-west chapter of APP without putting prominent party stalwarts in the picture of electoral agreements.<sup>39</sup>

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In spite of the protests against the alliance and, especially on the choice of presidential candidate, the combination of Olu Falae and Umaru Shinkafi was presented to the National Electoral Commission based on the agreement that they would contest on the platform of APP, as the presidential and vice presidential candidates respectively. It would be recalled that Falae came from AD while his running mate was a founding member of APP. This alliance between the AD of south-west and certain northern elements was a welcome development in Nigeria's political history as it was capable of bridging the north-south political cleavage.

### 5.13 The Presidential Primaries of the Peoples Democratic Party

The Presidential primaries of the PDP were the most contested of the three parties. The event took place in Jos with nine candidates vying for the position. They were retired General Olusegun Obasanjo from the south-west; Dr Alex Ekwueme, south-east; Don Etiebet, south-south; Alabo Tonye Graham Douglas, south-south; Jim Nwobodo, south-east; Francis Ellah, Rivers State; and Abubakar Rimi, north-central. However, the contest was mainly between Dr Alex Ekwueme, former vice president, also a founding father of the Peoples Democratic Party, and retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, a late entrant. Ekwueme was tipped to win, because according to his

<sup>38</sup>*Tell*, February 22, 1999.

<sup>39</sup>*Newswatch*, March 1, 1999, p. 10.

supporters, mostly his Igbo kinsmen, he had the requisite education, experience and integrity unlike his opponent. He was also a true civilian and had delivered his local government, state and zone to the party.<sup>40</sup>

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However, the projection failed. Before the election, the candidates deployed all conceivable resources to defeat each other. The campaign was effectively carried out on television, radio and in newspapers. Each candidate tried to win electoral support from all geopolitical zones within the party, adopting strategies ranging from ethnicity, sentiments, and monetary inducement to name-calling.

Apart from home support, Dr Alex Ekwueme relied on old friends in the north, especially allies in the defunct National Party of Nigeria. He enjoyed the solidarity of the Igbos. Indeed, one of the spokesmen for Ekwueme, Fidelis Amosike, ostensibly campaigning for his principal, took spaces in some national dailies, alerting party faithfuls thus: “PDP do not be hoodwinked, Obasanjo’s nomination will drown the party”. In another piece, friends of Alex Ekwueme declared that if PDP chose the wrong candidate, Nigerians would choose another party.<sup>41</sup>

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More than Ekwueme, Obasanjo enjoyed the solidarity of the retired generals including Babangida and former army chief of staff, General Theophilus Danjuma who doled out money to ensure the victory of Obasanjo. These retired generals, mainly from the north, were able to mobilise their civilian counterparts in the north to support Obasanjo.

The campaign became more intense as the presidential election drew close. The Ekwueme group flooded the convention venue and camp of delegates with an underground publication which carried anti-military messages. The delegates were urged to reject military dictatorship, looting of the treasury, and “cash-and-carry” democracy by retired generals. They were also urged to say no to missing 2.8 billion naira, to misappropriation of \$12.2 billion dollars, Gulf War windfall, and to election annulment.

The campaign to stop Obasanjo reached a crescendo on the day of the party convention when Ekwueme had an opportunity to address the delegates. He described himself as the best candidate who had served in a democratic setting. To him, anybody

<sup>40</sup> ~~Newswatch; March 1999~~ *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> ~~Newswatch; March 1999.~~ *Ibid.* p. 11.

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who got nominated for office apart from him would be an apprentice or a learner.<sup>42</sup> Obasanjo fired back when he addressed the delegates. According to Obasanjo, he had not only been tried at leadership level but at the top echelon of leadership and, therefore, more qualified than others, especially Ekwueme who had only played a second fiddle, apparently referring to NPN government.

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Ekwueme was also exposed to the wrath of the northerners as he was projected as an advocate of confederation which they detested. His opponents cited his role at the 1994 National Constitutional Conference where he eloquently advocated power shift and the creation of six ethnic regional zones with a weak centre. He was alleged to have also called for regional armies.

At the end of the primaries, Obasanjo polled the highest number of votes to clinch the presidential ticket. Obasanjo had 1,658 votes out of 2,471 delegates that voted, 521 voted for Ekwueme, Don Etiebet 106, Alabo Tonye Graham Douglas 71, Jim Nwobodo got 59, Philip Asiodu and Francis Ellah got 12 votes. The analysis of the election showed that Obasanjo was the only aspirant who got bloc votes from his geopolitical zone and penetrated the catchment areas of other aspirants.<sup>43</sup>

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Several factors have been attributed to Obasanjo's electoral success; they ranged from the moral and financial support he enjoyed from his former military constituency, and the active support of northerners who regarded him as a trusted friend of the north.

#### 5.14 The 1999 Presidential Election

After the conclusion of the party's presidential primaries, the three registered political parties began nationwide campaign to seek electoral support for their candidates across the length and breadth of the country. It should be noted however that the short period between the time for campaign and election did not offer opportunity for enough mobilisation of voters.

Much of the campaign was done on radio and television. The PDP had an edge over others in this enterprise, probably because of its financial muscle which transcended the other two parties combined. Shortly after the presidential primaries in Jos, Obasanjo's campaign organisation mounted a campaign that was regarded as one of the most

<sup>42</sup> ~~Newswatch, March 1999, Ibid, p. 10.~~

<sup>43</sup> ~~Newswatch; 1 March 1999, Ibid, p,10~~

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expensive in the history of democracy in Nigeria,<sup>44</sup> Obasanjo's multi-million naira campaign dominated the pages of major newspapers and magazines in the country as well as prime time on both radio and television stations across the country. The campaign secretariat was also equipped and well-staffed.

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However, Falae's campaign organisation was said to be starved of fund. The APP/AD alliance seemed to have the kind of money at the disposal of Obasanjo for his campaign. This partly explained the failure of AD/APP to win the presidential election. Falae began his campaign in the east on February 19, 1999 where he pledged to halt the marginalisation of Igbo. Appealing to Igbo ethnic sentiments, Falae recalled, "Although we say there was no victor, no vanquished in Nigerian civil war, but you have continued to suffer we must bring that to an end"<sup>45</sup> Umaru Shinkafi led the campaign in the north, the reason being that he belonged to the core north and should be able to know how to win the electorate in this geopolitical zone.

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Obasanjo flagged off his campaign on Monday 25 February 1999 in Maiduguri with an entourage of five former PDP presidential aspirants. It was different from the AP/AD alliance where the issue of presidential election had split the chieftain of the party who were supposed to stand by Falae on his campaign tours. Ekwueme for instance was active in Obasanjo campaign. More than this, he chaired the general's fund-raising dinner and was in his entourage during the campaign to the east.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the choice of Falae as the AD/APP candidate created rancour in the APP. Powerful party financiers and presidential aspirants such as Dr Sola Saraki and Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, instead of working for the success of the candidate, directed their supporters to vote for the Peoples Democratic Party.

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The presidential election was held on February 27, 1999 as it was stated in the transition time-table drawn by the Independent National Electoral Commission. To give credibility to the conduct of the election, especially before the international community, observers were invited. About 12,000 people were accredited to observe the election and probably to guarantee its free-and-fair execution.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that the number of

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<sup>44</sup>*Newswatch* 8 March, 1999, p. 10

<sup>45</sup>*Newswatch* 8 March, 1999 *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup>Enemuo Francis. Op. cit p.6.

the observers far outstripped that of 1993 elections due to the importance attached to the election.

However, there were reported cases of election malpractices. Local and international observers reported that the three parties inflated votes and were involved in fraudulent practices. However, they considered the outcome of the election as reflecting the wishes of the majority of Nigerians. According to Jimmy Carter, former US President and Head of Foreign Observers, in a letter to INEC chairman on Monday 5 March 1999:

.....Regrettably it is not possible to make accurate judgment about the ———\_outcome of the Presidential election, but all other groups including ——— the\_ones dispatched by O.A.U said the election reflected the ———wishes of Nigerian people.<sup>48</sup>

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**Table 12: Official Results February 27, 1999, Presidential Election**

STATE	No. of Total Vote Cast	APP: Chief O. Falae		PDP: Gen. O. Obasanjo (RTD)	
		No. of Total Votes	% of Total Votes	No. of Total Votes	% of Total Votes
ABIA	535,918	175,095	32.67	360,823	67.33
ADAMAWA	845,107	177,868	21.05	667,239	78.95
AKWA IBOM	883,273	152,534	17.27	730,744	82.73
ANAMBRA	883,178	199,461	23.94	633,717	76.06
BAUCHI	1,176,511	342,233	29.09	834,308	70.91
BAYELSA	610,032	152,220	24.45	457,812	75.05
BENUE	1,252,957	269,045	21.47	983,912	78.53
BORNO	915,975	334,593	36.53	581,382	63.47
C/RIVER	876,156	295,468	32.35	592,688	67.65
DELTA	816,574	240,344	29.43	576,230	70.57
EBONYI	345,921	94,934	27.44	250,987	72.56
EDO	679,784	163,203	24.01	516,581	75.99
EKITI	713,690	522,072	73.15	191,618	26.85
ENUGU	835,586	195,168	23.36	640,418	76.64
COMBE	844,539	311,381	36.87	533,158	63.18
IMO	736,106	314,339	42.70	421,767	57.30
JIGAWA	548,596	237,025	43.21	311,571	56.79
KADUNA	1,676,029	381,350	22.75	1,294,679	77.25
KANO	904,713	222,458	24.59	682,255	75.41
KATSINA	1,193,397	229,181	19.20	964,216	80.80
KEBBI	512,229	172,336	33.64	339,893	66.36

<sup>48</sup> Newswatch 15 March, 1999, p. 41.

KOGI	984,710	476,807	48.42	507,903	51.58
KWARA	659,598	189,088	28.67	470,510	71.33
LAGOS	1,751,981	1,542,969	88.07	209,012	11.93
NASARAWA	597,008	173,277	29.02	423,731	70.98
NIGER	871,130	140,465	16.12	730,665	83.88
OGUN	475,904	32,340	68.83	143,564	30.17
ONDO	101,787	68,474	83.37	33,323	16.63
OSUN	794,639	607,628	76.47	187,011	23.58
OYO	921,178	693,510	75.20	227,668	24.71
PLATEAU	672,442	173,370	25.78	499,072	74.22
RIVERS	1,565,603	213,328	13.63	1,352,275	86.37
SOKOTO	354,437	198,829	56.10	155,598	43.90
TARABA	871,039	81,290	9.33	789,749	90.67
YOBE	311,578	165,061	52.98	146,517	57.02
ZAMFARA	380,079	243,755	64.13	136,324	35.87
FCT	99,022	39,788	40.18	59,234	59.82
TOTAL	29,848,441	11,110,287	37.22	18,738,154	62.78

Source: Francis Enemu, 1994; *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*. ~~1994~~-27.1:41.

### 5.15 The Results of the Election

By the requirements of the 1999 Constitution, to win the coveted position of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a candidate must win the majority of the votes cast at the election in not less than one-quarter of at least two-thirds of all states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.<sup>49</sup>

Based on the results of the election released by INEC, Olusegun Obasanjo had not only won by comfortable majority, it was a landslide victory. He scored 62.73% of the votes cast compared to 37.22% by Olu Falae of AD/APP alliance. Moreover, Obasanjo recorded at least 25% of the votes in 32 of the 36 states in addition to Abuja. He enjoyed national acceptability rather than sectional or parochial support. However, it should be pointed out that ethnicity still coloured the minds of the electorate especially in the south-west. The electorate in the south-west maintained a usual pattern of electoral behaviour where there was an AA/APP bloc vote for Olu Falae of the Alliance for Democracy. Even though both Obasanjo and Falae are Yoruba kinsmen, they preferred Olu Falae who was seen as the “true son of the soil” unlike his opponent who managed to secure just 25% of the votes in only one of the states of the south-west. Obasanjo was perceived to

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<sup>49</sup>Newswatch March 1999, p. 41

have betrayed the Yoruba race especially in 1979 when he did not hand over to Awolowo, his kinsman. Obasanjo was therefore hated for the allegation that he did not support the presidential bids of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and M.K.O. Abiola, who were his kinsmen. As head of state, he handed over to President Shehu Shagari against the wish of his Yoruba kinsmen who wanted him to hand over to Awolowo. He was therefore seen by the Yoruba as a man that could not be trusted to defend the interests of his race.

To the northerners, however, the campaign and the refusal to vote for Olu Falae were essentially driven by the rationale that he was a Yoruba irredentist whereas Obasanjo could be trusted to preserve, if not enhance, the interest of the north.<sup>50</sup> Adamu Ciroma had once declared why the northerners preferred Obasanjo:

Frankly speaking and I am sure most Northern leaders will agree with me, the North benefited more when Obasanjo was Head of State between 1976 and 1979 than any other administration in this country.<sup>51</sup>

The south-east, that is Igbo preferred to vote en masse for Obasanjo probably because they were not certain of being welcome in the AD/APP alliance and supporting it would amount to taking a political risk. Moreover, since all the governors-elect, most local government chairmen and national legislators in the Igbo south-east zone had been elected on PDP platform, switching loyalties at that point would be suicidal, politically. They believed that their voting power for the PDP may be transformed to political power if Obasanjo won on the platform of PDP.<sup>52</sup> It would, at least, fetch the Igbos portfolios and federal presence in Igbo land.

The alliance between All Peoples Party and AD gave Olu Falae some electoral support in the north, which made him to enjoy a degree of national acceptance. The alliance, if it could be maintained is a welcome development and a right move in managing ethnic tension that has characterised Nigeria's political behaviour.

The presidential election in 1999 could be said to enjoy a degree of departure from the old voting pattern of ethnic politics. This however was made possible partly because of the limited number of parties that restricted the choice of the electorate.

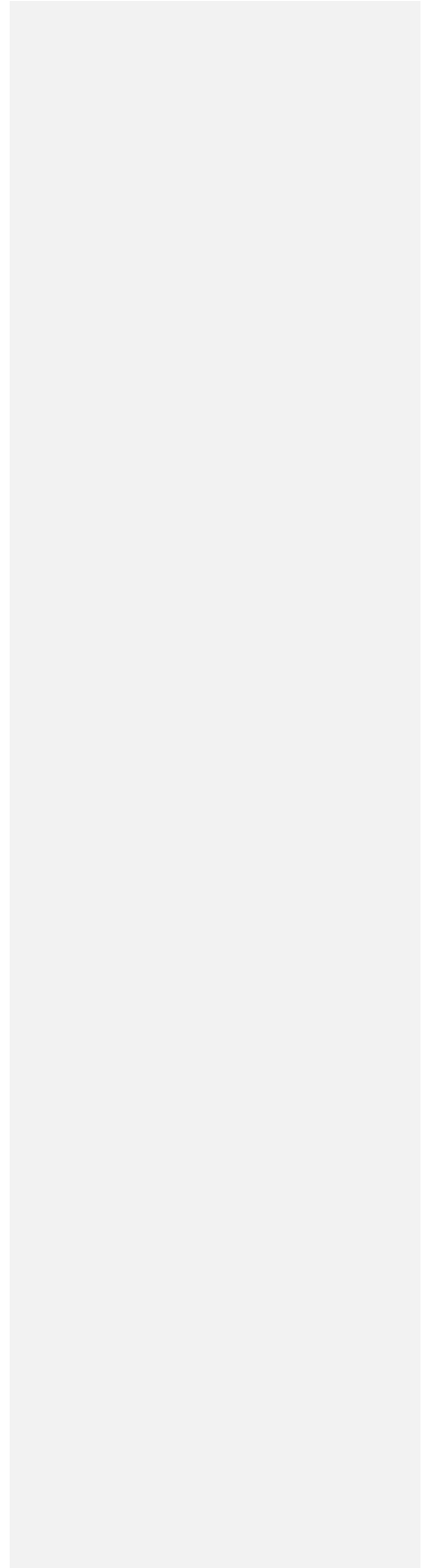
<sup>50</sup> Francis Enemu. Op. cit, p. 46.

<sup>51</sup> Kola Olufemi. The Limits of Electoralism, *Issues: Journal of Opinion*, 1999, .27.1:1.

<sup>52</sup> Francis Francis, Op. cit. 47.

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### 5.16 The 2003 Presidential Election: Background to the Election

2003 general elections were significant in certain respects; it was another opportunity to further consolidate the fragile democratic orientation institutionalised in 1999. More importantly however, it was an election supervised by an incumbent civilian regime. It could be recalled that attempts by incumbent government to nurture democratic system through electoral process had either stopped midway or been mired in recriminations that ultimately led to military intervention.<sup>53</sup>

It was thus expected that certain institutional measures capable of consolidating the fragile democratic regime be put in place. As the usual practice, preparations for the conduct of elections commenced with the recognition and registration of new political parties, registration of voters, and nomination of party candidates.

### 5.17 Registration of Political Parties

One essential element of Nigeria's electoral process since the beginning of Second Republic is the registration of political parties as a mechanism of regulating Nigeria's party system. The same initiative was repeated in 2003.

The institutional device engaged the attention of INEC. However, the exercise led to litigations bothering on certain provisions of 1999 Constitution relating to party formation and registration.

In 1999, only three political parties, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and People's Democratic Party were legally recognised. However, the number of political parties proliferated due to legal battles won by associations that sought recognition as political parties and went to court to contest certain provisions of the 1999 Constitution and the 2002 Electoral Act.

Section 221-229 of the 1999 Constitution set the parameters for the establishment of political parties in Nigeria. It is stated specifically in Section 221 that no association other than a political party shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses.<sup>54</sup> Specifically, Section 222 restricted the formation of political parties and conditions to be fulfilled

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<sup>53</sup> B. Ngbokwu, B., Nigerian Tribunals and the 2003 Election, Lagos: Legal Defence Centre. 2003, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 Constitution; Lagos.

before an association could be registered as a political party.<sup>55</sup>

Apart from the constitutional provision, the entire third part of the 2003 Electoral Act comprising 29 sections was devoted to political parties and addressed issues such as powers of INEC to register political parties, symbols of political parties and monitoring of the parties.

For the purpose of the exercise, INEC released an eight-paragraph document containing requirements and intimate details regarding every association desiring to be registered as a political party.<sup>56</sup> These requirements, described as draconian, were however not welcome by the associations seeking registration.

In spite of the protests and total rejection of the guidelines, INEC went ahead with the guidelines. To show its seriousness, the commission dispatched as usual, its staff throughout the country to authenticate the claims of various political associations. The result of the verification exercise found only three new political associations qualified to be registered as political parties. The registration of the three new parties was announced in Abuja by INEC Chairman, Abel Goubadia. These parties were All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), National Democratic Party (NDP) and the United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP).<sup>57</sup>

Not satisfied and even bitter about this pronouncement, the aggrieved political associations including National Conscience Party (NCP), Community Party of Nigeria (CPN) and the People Redemption Party (PRP) took INEC to the Federal High Court seeking the nullification of the requirements presented by the electoral management body as unconstitutional.



<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> B. Ngbokwu, *Nigerian Tribunals and the 2003 Election*, Lagos: Legal Defence Centre; 2003. p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Thisday June 23, 2002, p. 4.

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In his judgment, the presiding judge, Justice Jonah Adah granted the reliefs sought by the associations, declaring that:

The 1999 Constitution remains the supreme document guiding the registration of political parties<sup>57</sup>. This implies that INEC cannot prescribe guidelines for the registration of political parties outside what the conditions stipulated by the 1999 Constitution<sup>58</sup>.

Similarly, the court's judgment meant that once a political association fulfilled the requirements of the constitution, INEC was under obligation to register it as a party. The judgment of the Court of Appeal was contested by INEC at the Supreme Court. After weighing arguments on both sides, the highest court in the country declared as follows:

- (i) There is no doubt that INEC has power to register political parties and the National Assembly can legislate in regards to the exercise of these powers. Such actions from either of the INEC or National Assembly should not undermine the limits of such powers as stated in the Constitution.
- (ii) The registration of political parties in Nigeria is governed by the provisions of the Constitution of Nigeria. This is in the sense that the ultimate source of any registration of parties must be traced to the Constitution but not in the sense that the Constitution itself must make direct provisions relating to the registration of its mechanisms.
- (iii) The power of the National Assembly to an act empowering the INEC to register political parties will only be validly exercised if such an act is in conformity with the provision of the 1999 Constitution<sup>59</sup>.

Where the requirements for registration stated in any guidelines or in the Act are not purely administrative or procedural or evidential or substantive conditions for eligibility beyond the conditions prescribed by Section 222 of the 1999 Constitution, such guidelines or provision would have enlarged the conditions of eligibility in Section 222 and be consequently void notwithstanding that they may have been described as requirements for registration<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> B. Ngbokwu, Op. cit p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> INEC and Anor vs Balarabe Musa (2003) 3 NWLR (pt 806) 72; cited in Basil Ugockuckwu Center 2004, p. 16-17.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 16-17.

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The foregoing established the fact that the condition for party registration ultimately lays with the constitution, though INEC is empowered to put in place certain parameters for the conduct of election, such must not undermine the provision of the constitution.

In spite of this judgment, controversies still surrounded the condition for registration between the political association seeking registration and the electoral management body. While the political associations interpreted the judgment to mean automatic registration of political parties, the government and INEC took the position that the judgment did not compel the commission to give certificate of registration to the five political associations that instituted the suit. This issue lingered until the Chief Justice of the federation made a clarification in a meeting held with the parties involved that the court's judgment could not have meant automatic registration for political associations since that did not form part of their prayers from the courts.<sup>61</sup>

As he further declares:

The court is not Father Christmas. It can only grant what was asked. The associations did not ask for any order compelling INEC to register them, they could have got it, but since they did not ask, the court did not grant it.<sup>62</sup>

Following this, INEC relaxed in its prescriptions for party registration, which eventually opened the space for more political associations, totalling 30 political parties that contested the 2003 general elections.

### 5.18 Presidential Party Primaries

The registration of 30 political parties was followed by the selection of presidential aspirants from different political parties through the process of party primaries.

Party primaries form an important aspect of presidential democracy. It is a mini election before the main election. It is a means of nurturing democratic values especially among contestants within political parties and to ensure that such candidates at party level enjoy the confidence of their members.

<sup>61</sup> "Agabi; INEC not compelled to register new parties". *Thisday* November 13, 2003. pp. 1 & 6.

<sup>62</sup> "New Parties; Tortuous Route to Registration"; *Thisday* December 5, 2002, p. 13.

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Moreover, party primaries afford a political party the opportunity of electing individuals to its executive position and nominate candidates to contest election in its name. It is in essence to ensure internal democracy within the party.

To show the importance of this procedure, Section 222 of the 1999 Constitution requires political parties to reflect in their constitution provisions on the nomination of the candidates whom the party will sponsor during the various elections.<sup>63</sup>

However, the 2003 party primaries, in general and presidential primaries in particular, were as acrimonious as it was in 1999 general elections. This became visible following various suits filed by aggrieved candidates from various political parties involved in the 2003 general elections.

A legal defence centre that conducted a fieldwork on the level of litigations by aggrieved members confirmed this assertion when it reported that:

In 2003, the political parties as usual took egregious liberties with the right feelings of their members whose right to stand for elections were trampled upon.<sup>64</sup>....

The report thus concludes:

The behaviour of the parties in most cases called to question the real worth of the party primaries when results announced at their conventions were liable to be reversed by party officials operating under diverse prescriptions.<sup>65</sup>

In spite of this damning report, it is relevant to examine the conduct of the primaries especially the presidential contests, as they reveal the modalities for the emergence of the presidential candidates from various geopolitical zones, and more importantly, the ethnic character of such exercise.

In this light, we shall examine the party primaries of three political parties that made remarkable impact electorally during the 2003 presidential election. These parties were the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and the All Progressive Party Alliance (APGA).

<sup>63</sup> Section 222 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Lagos.

<sup>64</sup> The Comprehensive report is contained in a book published by Legal Defence Centre, Lagos titled "Nigeria: Tribunals and the 2003 Elections", 2004, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Basil Ugochukwu. The Comprehensive Report on Party Primaries during the Preparation for 2003. General Election in Basil Ugochukwu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

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### 5.19 Peoples Democratic Party's Presidential Primaries

One of the contentious issues the PDP had to grapple with during the 2003 general elections was the zoning principle of the party. This became important since the party had not been consistent on the unwritten but gentleman principle. To honour the aspiration of Obasanjo for the second term would tantamount to limiting the chances of other aspirants. The issue became more compounded when a chieftain of the party, also a staunch supporter of the incumbent president for second term, Chief Tony Anenih an influential federal minister earlier declared in 2001 that there was no vacancy in Aso Rock.<sup>66</sup>

The initial protest came from the northern elements of the party such as Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, a former governor of Kano State and Chief Barnabas Gemade from Benue State who also was once the national chairman of the party. Abubakar Rimi headed to the Federal High Court, Abuja contesting an amendment to the PDP's constitution authorising the zoning arrangement which he argued contravened the provision of the Nigerian constitution. Rimi specifically requested:

A perpetual order restraining the defendants; the party and its chieftains from conducting the party's convention save in accordance with the provisions of the party constitution which guarantees a democratic society through the operation of the rule of law, equity, justice and to give all members equal opportunity to participate in all the activities and affairs of the first defendants.<sup>67</sup>

This however did not prevent the party from organising its presidential primaries on January 6, 2003 with Dr Alex Ekwueme from the south-east, and former vice president of the country, challenging the incumbent president. Indeed, January 6 remains a crucial day in the history of PDP, the self-acclaimed largest party in Africa. It was at this convention in Jos that the party eventually picked its presidential flag bearer for the 2003 presidential election. Delegates from different zones of the country had converged on the venue for the presidential slot. The delegates per geopolitical zone are shown below.

<sup>66</sup> Thisday Newspaper 13 December, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in *Thisday* December, 11, 2002, p. 5.

**Table 13: Total No. of Delegates from the Six Geopolitical Zones**

South-East	574
South-South	669
South-West	433
North-Central	600
North-West	764
North-East	502
Total	3,542

Source: *Newswatch* Magazine January 20, 2003, p. 27.

The above figures reveal the preponderance of the northern delegates and their strategic importance in determining who emerges as the presidential candidate. It means that whoever will emerge must garner enough support from the northern zone of the country. Political calculation therefore favoured the northern zone to dictate who carried the day. This necessitated the political horse trading by the two major contenders, the incumbent president from the south-west, and Dr Alex Ekwueme from the south-east, who made a second attempt at a similar contest during the 1999 exercise.

Ekwueme was initially tipped to win the election, given the fact that he was credited to have the backing of most of the governors who initially opposed the candidature of Obasanjo for the second term. Moreover, his entry was seen as an alternative to the overbearing influence of Obasanjo in the party against the north, which had an axe to grind with him, for the perceived marginalisation of the north especially in the distribution of political resources such as juicy ministerial positions in the federal cabinet.

However, the political sagacity of Obasanjo's campaign organisation, anchored by Chief Tony Anineh from the south-south and Theophilus Danjuma, a personal friend of Obasanjo, thwarted this opposition.

To ensure his emergence, the political machinery of Obasanjo enlisted strategies considered essential, with Theophilus Danjuma serving as the chief executor of the project. The strategies were mainly twofold:

- (i) Politics of intimidation.
- (ii) Financial inducement of the delegates.

There was the politics of intimidation essentially targeted against the south-south and south-east governors who were the major pillars behind Ekwueme’s aspiration. In the first instance, there was the threat of withdrawal of tickets from the governors who were desperately interested in running for a second term. The governors were also threatened that the security agencies were fully aware of the property they had acquired illegally from government treasury. Failure to support Obasanjo would therefore lead to their exposure and investigation by anti-graft commission. To show the seriousness of the allegation, Danjuma, the Minister of Defence presented security report on each of the governors.<sup>68</sup>

The second strategy for the winning streak was the financial inducement to the delegates. It was reported that more than ₦3billion was moved to “Legacy House”, the campaign headquarters of Obasanjo-Atiku re-election organisation. Sources indicated that each delegate got ₦110, 000. 00.<sup>69</sup>

The Ekwueme camp, in turn did not fold its hands. It went ahead to almost double the amount Obasanjo gave the delegates, offering ₦200, 000.00 per delegate. Ekwueme’s financial muscle is traceable to Babangida’s support of ₦250m, apart from Ekwueme’s personal contribution to the project.<sup>70</sup>

With the double-edged sword of Obasanjo’s strategy coupled with the backing of northern delegates coordinated by Adamu Ciroma and Theophilus Danjuma, Obasanjo overwhelmingly defeated Ekwueme and other opponents with the following figures:

**Table 14: No of votes scored by presidential aspirants**

PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANT	NO OF VOTES (DELEGATE)
Olusegun Obasanjo A. (South-West)	2,642
Alex Ekwueme (South-East)	881
Abubakar Rimi (North-West)	159
Bernabas Gemade (North-Central)	17

Source: *Newswatch* Magazine January 20, 2003.

<sup>68</sup>*Newswatch*, January 20, 2003, pp. 27–28.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid*, p. 29.

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The poor performance of Rimi and Gemade was not unexpected since the zoning policy of the party had favoured the southern part to produce the presidential candidate for the 2003 election.

### 5.20 ANPP and the Quest for the Emergence of a Presidential Candidate

ANPP was another political party that presented candidate for the 2003 presidential election. It held its presidential primaries on January 8, 2003. However, it was more of endorsement of an anointed candidate rather than enactment of the normal democratic process within the party. At the convention, retired General Muhammadu Buhari was adopted as the consensus candidate. His adoption however brought with it skirmishes among other contestants, especially the south-eastern part to which the presidential slot was initially zoned.

While other aspirants of northern extraction such as Lema Jubril, Umaru Shinkafi, and Dauda Ibrahim found it easy to step down for “their own” candidates other aspirants like Rochas Okorochoa, Jim Nwobodo, Ume Ezeoke and Perre Ajuwa from the south-east could not fathom the decision of the party leadership to endorse the candidature of Buhari and Chuba Okadigbo as presidential aspirant and running mate, respectively. Registering their protests, Ume Ezeoke, on behalf of others from the southern zone, accused the party hierarchy of fraudulence. As they pointed out, “the process of choosing our presidential aspirant lacks transparency”. No single southern presidential candidate was involved in the process of choosing consensus presidential candidate. They therefore concluded that “by the manipulative tendencies of the state chairman and governors of ANPP, Buhari has been imposed on the party.”<sup>71</sup> This agitation later affected the performance of the party in the election.

However, the governors who were mainly from the northern part reasoned that supporting the southern candidate would constitute electoral liability, given the performance of the party in the previous elections in the south. In spite of this, ANPP muddled through its presidential primaries with Buhari from the north-west and Dr Chuba Okadigbo from the south-east emerging as the presidential candidate and the

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<sup>71</sup> “Boycott of the Big Five” – *Newswatch*, January.20, 2003, p. 42.

running mate respectively.

### 5.21 All Grand Progressive Alliance (APGA)

APGA was another newly-formed party that scaled through the electoral formalities for registration and had the courage to present a candidate for the 2003 presidential election. However, APGA was a political party whose major agenda was how the Igbos would be reckoned with in the scheme of Nigeria politics. In actual fact, its founders were majorly of Igbo extraction.

The chairman and founders of APGA never hid their intention to use APGA as the platform that would guarantee proper reintegration of Igbo people into the mainstream politics in Nigeria. Ojukwu, a prominent Igbo leader, further confirmed the desire the day he defected to the party: “I thank God that today Nigeria has for the first time gotten a party founded and headed by an Igbo man”.<sup>72</sup>

Chief Okorie the founder and the chairman of the party publicly urged Ndigbo, a mainstream political organisation of the Igbo to regard APGA as their own and restated the party’s commitment towards having its presidential candidate from this zone. This was in spite of the fact that the chairman emerged from the south-eastern zone.<sup>73</sup> In line with this ethnic messianism, Odumegwu Ojukwu who led the unsuccessful civil war to take Igbo nation out of the Nigeria, was unanimously adopted as its presidential flag bearer.<sup>74</sup>

### 5.22 The 2003 Presidential Election

2003 presidential electoral contest started with 30 political parties but only 20 or two-thirds of the registered parties presented candidates for the position of president. Proliferation of political parties in the 2003 elections, unlike in 1999 when only three political parties contested, could be attributed to the legal battle fought and won by aspiring political associations against INEC, wanting to be legally recognised as stipulated in the Nigerian’s 1999 Constitution and the 2002 Electoral Act. The proliferation of political parties created the initial logistic problem for INEC. It had to

<sup>72</sup>*Newswatch*, October.14 2002, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid*, p. 3.

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seek for more funds which were not originally budgeted for; it even solicited foreign assistance to cope with technicalities of the computer-related arrangement which its effective operation.<sup>75</sup>

However, one notable point is the fact that all political parties subscribed to the policy of zoning for the purpose of rotating and sharing the selection of candidates for the topmost positions of the president and vice president in a south-north geopolitical cycle. This was reflected in the choice of presidential candidates and their running mate. Once the presidential candidate came from a zone, the running mate was awarded to another geopolitical zone.

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<sup>75</sup>T.A. Akinyele. The Nigerian Election that broke the jinx, *West African Review*.2003, p. 5.

Akinyele observes that:

This is done to give each party the semblance of a national party so as to garner enough votes to satisfy the prerequisite of adequate geographical spread for winning election.<sup>76</sup>

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**Table 15: Result and Ethnic Profile of Presidential Candidates and their Running Mates**

Party	Presidential and the Vice Presidential Candidate	Ethnic Origin	Total Votes Scored	% of Valid Votes	Quotas
AN-PP	Buhari Muhammadu	North	2,710,022	32.19%	19 of 25
	Vice: Okadigbo Chuba William Malachy	South			
AP-GA	Ojukwu Chukwuemeka Odumegwu	South	1,297,445	3.29%	2 of 25
	Vice: Bayero Sani Ibrahim	North			
AP-LP	Okereke Osita Emmanuel	South	26,921	0.07%	0 of 25
	Vice: Abdullahi Tukuru Alhaji	North			
ARP	Yahaya G.K. Ezemue Ndu	North	11,565	0.03%	0 of 25
	Vice: Hajia Asmau Aliyu Mohammed	North			
BN-PP	Nnaji Ifeanyi Chukwu Goddwill	South	5,987	0.02%	0 of 25
	Vice: Suleiman Mohammed Awwal	North			
DA	Ferreira Antonia Abayomi Jorge	South	6,727	0.02%	0 of 25
	Vice: Eboigbe Ehi	South-south			
JP	Christoper Ogenebrorie Okotie	South	119,547	0.30%	0 of 25
	Vice: Habib Mairo Naturiya (Mrs)	North			
LD-PN	Christopher Pere Ajuwa	South	4,473	0.01%	0 of 25
	Vice: Mohammad Nasir	North			
MDJ	Yusuf Muhammed Nasir	South	21,403	0.05%	0 of 25
	Vice: Melford Obiene Okilo	North			
MM-N	Mojisola Adekunle Obasanjo (Mrs)	South	3,757	0.01%	0 of 25
	Vice: Mohammad Ibrahim	North			
NAC	Agoro Olapade Roland Aremo	South	5,756	0.01%	0 of 25
	Vice: Aminu Garbati Abubakar	North			
NAP	Tunji Braithwaite	South	6,932	0.02%	0 of 25
	Vice: Hajia Maimunatu Lata Tombai	North			

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

NCP	Ganiyu Fawehinmi	South	161,333	0.41%	0 of 25
	Vice: Jerome Tala Gopye	North			
NDP	Ike Omar Sanda Nwachukwu	South	132,997	0.34%	0 of 25
	Vice: Habu Fari Aliyu	North			
NN-PP	Kalu Idika Kalu	South	23,827	0.06%	0 of 25
	Vice: Jawi Abdul Rahman Paga	North			
PAC	Sarah N.Jibril	North	157,560	0.40%	0 of 25
	Vice: Elemosho Babatunde Tajudeen	South			
PDP	Olusegun Obasanjo	South	24,456,140	61.94%	32 of 25
	Vice: Atiku Abubakar	North			
PMP	Nwankwo Auwucha Arthur	North	57,720	0.15%	0 of 25
	Vice: Batubo Bennett Raymond	South			
PRP	Musa Abdukadir Balarabe	North	100,765	0.26%	0 of 25
	Vice: Okafor Ernest Ngozi	South			
UN-PP	Nwobodo Jim Ifeanyichukwu	South	169,609	0.43%	0 of 25
	Vice: Goni Mohammed	North			

**Source:** Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), April, 2003.

Table 15 vividly reveals the effort of the political associations to reflect zoning principle in the choice of candidates and running mates. It should be noted that no political party presented its flag bearer and running mate from the same geopolitical zone. Rather, attempts were made to spread to other zones, even though some of these parties were yet to be known across ethnic divides of the country. It also shows the performance of all the presidential candidates in the election to what extent they were able to meet the minimum requirement of 25% votes in two-thirds of the federation.

From the results, even though 20 parties presented candidates for the election, only three political parties were worthy of recognition in terms of performance across geographical spread. PDP, ANPP and APGA had the largest shares of the votes of about 97.5% of the valid votes, leaving only 2½% votes for the remaining 17 parties.

**Table 16: Summary of the Result of the Presidential Election of the Three Leading Contestants.**

S/NO	Party	Candidate	Total Valid Vote	% Votes	Geographical Spread 25% votes
1	ANPP	Muhammadu Buhari	12,710,222	32.19%	19 of 25
2	APGA	Odumegwu Ojukwu	1,297,455	3.29%	2 of 25
3	PDP	Olusegun Obasanjo	24,456,140	61.94%	32 of 25

**Source:** Adapted from the results of the 2003 Presidential Election released by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), April, 2003.

From Table 16, the three presidential candidates were drawn from three major ethnic groups: Muhammadu Buhari (Hausa/Fulani, north), Odumegwu Ojukwu (Igbo, south-south), and Olusegun Obasanjo (Yoruba, south-west). Table 16 also demonstrates the electoral strength and the ability of each aspirant in various parts of the country. Buhari from ANPP scored the minimum electoral requirements of 25% in 19 states of the federation, representing 32% of the total votes; Odumegwu Ojukwu of APGA obtained 25% of the requirement in only 2 states, while the declared winner of the presidential electoral contest, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, scored 25% of the votes in 32 states of the federation, representing 61.94% of the total votes.

Moreover, two of the presidential candidates were from the south. The general belief was that the position of presidency had been wittingly or unwittingly conceded to this geopolitical zone of the country. The emergence of Buhari was seen to represent a discordant position of some aggrieved northern elements within the PDP hierarchy who felt marginalised and therefore found solace in the candidature of the ANPP flag bearer.

The result of the presidential electoral contest is further broken down into six geopolitical zones to show the geographic spread of the parties and enable us find out how the candidates were able to meet the objectives of the country's constitutional engineering and other electoral requirements towards the emergence of a national party that could serve as instrument of national integration and democratic stability as against the experience in Nigeria's First Republic.

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**Table 17: Voting pattern in the 2003 Geographic spread of the Presidential Candidates**

**Table 17 (A): NORTH-WEST ZONE IN %**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Jigawa	1,101,909	80	00.2	18	01.1
2	Kaduna	1,918,365	45	00.4	53%	00.8
3.	Kano	2,172,182	74.9	00.5	22.7	01.9
4.	Katsina	1,653,161	76.2	00.2	23.0	00.6
5.	Kebbi	815,219	65	00.5	33.4	01.1
6.	Sokoto	929,085	73.3	00.7	25.0	00.9

**Table 17 (B): NORTH-CENTRAL**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Benue	1,213,843	40.8	00.5	54.6	04.1
2	Kogi	863,989	36.4	00.3	61.2	04.1
3	Kwara	574,369	29.6	00.4	68.0	01.9
4	Nasarawa	729,266	33.5	00.2	64.6	01.8
5	Niger	983,206	39.7	01.2	49.5	09.6
6	Plateau	1,050,370	30.9	00.6	67.3	01.2

**Table 17 (C): NORTH-EAST**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Adamawa	1,280,204	29.8	00.2	69	00.8
2	Bauchi	1,680,542	62.1	01.1	36	00.1
3	Borno	1,120,152	65	00.3	34	00.7
4	Gombe	976,136	52.9	00.2	46	00.6
5	Taraba	906,069	21.9	00.1	76.6	01.4
6	Yobe					

**Table 17 (D): SOUTH-EAST**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Anambra	862,193	0.92	34.4	54.1	04.2
2	Ebonyi	796,625	02.0	02.6	94.5	
3	Enugu	1,126,945	01.7	15.7	79.7	
4	Imo	1,016,481	05.3	27.7	64.6	

**Table 17 (E): SOUTH-SOUTH**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Akwa Ibom					
2	Bayelsa	738,165	02.5	00.0	96.0	01.6
3	Cross River	1,233,321	00.9	00.2	97.9	01.0
4	Delta	1,142,622	02.4	01.3	94.0	02.4
5	Edo					
6	Rivers	2,160,133	02.0	00.3	92.7	05.0

**Table 17 (F): SOUTH-WEST**

	States	Total Votes	ANPP % of Votes	APGA % of Votes	PDP % of Votes	% of Votes of others
1	Ekiti	325,881	02.3	00.4	92.4	04.9
2	Lagos	1,628,748	07.1	08.3	69.3	15.2
3	Ogun	1,361,251	00.1	00.0	99.9	00.0
4	Ondo	888,863	03.6	00.5	94.6	01.3
5	Osun	611,593	02.3	00.2	95.2	02.2
6	Oyo	882,571	02.8	00.5	93.9	02.7

**Source:** Compiled by author from the result of 2003 presidential election released by INEC.

Table 17(A-F) is a comprehensive result of the 2003 presidential election showing the performance of the three leading political parties: PDP, ANPP and APGA in the six geopolitical zones of north-west, north-central, north-east, south-east, and south-south and south-west.

In the north-west zone, -ANPP not only had the highest votes, but spread its electoral strength throughout the zone Table 17 (A). It won the required 25% geographical spread in all the six states in the zone with the highest of 80% of the total

votes in Jigawa State. This was followed by PDP, securing 25% mandatory geographical spread in five of the six states with 50% of the total votes in Kaduna State. APGA did not win in any of the states, having only 0.079% as the highest total votes in Sokoto State.

In the north-central (Table 17 B), both PDP and ANPP won the mandatory 25% electoral requirement in all the six states. PDP however led in all the states, having the highest number of 68% votes in Kwara.

In the north-east (Table 17C), PDP and APP were the two leading political parties, with PDP having the highest votes in Taraba State (76.6%) while APP did not garner enough votes in the same Taraba State. However, it was only in five states that APP won 25% geographic votes.

It was only in the south-east zone (Table 17 D), where Chief Odumegu Ojukwu the presidential candidate of APGA showed any electoral relevance. He won the mandatory 25% votes in Anambra with 34.4% of total votes and 27.7% of total votes in Imo State. This was the zone he hailed from. PDP still had the highest votes spreading across the four states in the geopolitical zone.

In the south-south zone (Table 17E), PDP dominated the political scene by winning in all the five states (result for Edo State not available) of the zones.

From Table 17(F) in the south-west, the voting pattern was totally different from what obtained in 1999. The result of the presidential election showed a sudden change in the voting behaviour of the electorate compared to 1999 presidential election when PDP could not win in any of the states. The result depicts PDP having an overwhelming majority in all the six states. The two other political parties did not even win a mandatory 25% in any of the states.

This show of performance deserves further explanation, given the fact that it was the same PDP the electorate in the south-west rejected with their votes in the 1999 presidential election.

### **5.23 Politics of Mainstream and Obasanjo's Victory in the South-West**

An interesting aspect of the 2003 presidential election was the performance of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the PDP Presidential candidate, in the south-west geopolitical constituency of the country.

Unlike the 1999 presidential election, where the south-west totally and unequivocally rejected its kinsman, Obasanjo, for being a betrayal of the Yoruba ethnic agenda in 1979, we saw for the first time in Nigerian political history what Adebamwi<sup>77</sup> describes as “a political tremor” in the south-west where Alliance for Democracy, a dominant political party that controlled the south-west, crumbled like a pack of cards and surrendered power to the conservative PDP.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed the victory of the PDP represented the dethroning of the unquestioned kings of Yoruba politics, inheritors of the Awolowo mantle, the South West Nigeria had to make sacrifices!<sup>79</sup>

A major factor that facilitated this political development is the politics of mainstream designed by the political gladiators from the south-west within the hierarchy of the PDP. The result of the 1999 presidential election revealed how Obasanjo was humiliated by his kith and kin, thus making him not only a president without political base but one that relies on other geopolitical zones for his support.

This minority position from the ruling party (PDP) prompted Obasanjo and his political cohorts to design a mobilisation strategy capable of attracting the support of his immediate ethnic constituency. This strategy found its expression in what was termed “mainstream politics”. According to Adeniran, one of the propagators of this strategy, it is predicated on one major objective of “how the Yoruba<sup>80</sup> will occupy its rightful position in the scheme of Nigerian politics.

To him therefore:

Mainstream is a calculated struggle to counter Yoruba suffocation or estrangement within the dialectics of Nigerian politics.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> (This is Editorial comment in Guardian Newspapers on the lost of AD to PDP a conservative party that has never found its political bearing in the Yoruba ethnic enclave. The Guardian Newspaper, 2003 April 16, p. 63.

<sup>78</sup> The Guardian Newspaper, April, 2003, p. 64

<sup>79</sup> *The Guardian*, Editorial comment on the lost of AD a reincarnation of UPN, the dominant party in the Yoruba state during the Second Republic that lost the election to PDP a conservative party that has never found its political bearing in the Yoruba ethnic enclave.

<sup>80</sup> Wale Adebamwi. The Cult of Awo, the Political Life of a dead leader, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2008, 46.3:385

<sup>81</sup> Adeniran; *South West Entry into Nigerian Mainstream Politics: The Journey so far*; Paper presented on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of People Democratic Party, at Abuja, 2008, p. 17.



It is a form of ethnic equalitarianism through party political fusion and diffusion resulting in the modulated emergence of what is about the best for what is for all.<sup>82</sup> For the PDP, south-west politics, political mainstream has the objective to create a vision out of the political space called Nigeria. To them, mainstream politics aims at halting the dwindling fortunes of the south-west, then working on how its resources and capabilities will be maximised within a truly federal structure and projecting its credibility and hallowed cultural, socio-economic and political accomplishments and possibilities.<sup>83</sup>

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The efforts towards actualising this objective commenced with the search for a Yoruba presidential candidate within the party that has a semblance of national character. Through the efforts of some political gladiators from the south-west including Samuel Afolabi, Shuaib Oyedokun, Yemi Farounbi, Martins Kuye in collaboration with other ethnic groups, Obasanjo got the approval of the PDP to contest for the coveted position of the president, commencing from 1999.

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It was this gospel of mainstream politics that served as the major political strategy for Obasanjo to capture the south-west in the 2003 general elections and particularly the presidential election.

As the election drew near, the PDP concentrated on the south-west with the whistle-blowing campaign emphasising the need for the Yoruba to jettison confrontational/sectional politics and vote en masse for him, promising to give the Yoruba their fair share in the scheme of the country's national affairs. Chief Bode George, the vice chairman (PDP south-west) and close aide of Obasanjo testifies led to this:



For the first time I and Baba (that is Obasanjo) went on whistlestop covering six states in one day after the National Assembly, holding meetings with the elders, the traditional rulers convincing them that they should change their mind about PDP as a northern party and vote for Obasanjo.<sup>84</sup>

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Apart from this campaign, Obasanjo employed other strategies to attract votes in the south-west in the April 2003 election. Omoruyi summarises the strategy as follows:

- (i) Chief Obasanjo flooded the Yoruba land since 1999 with patronage to be

<sup>82</sup> Adeniran *Op cit*, p. 17.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid* p. 18.

<sup>84</sup> Bode George made this revelation in an interview with Guardian Newspaper April 26, 2003.

compared with what the AD in Yoruba could do for the people.

- (ii) He invited many Yoruba traditional rulers to Abuja as his guests on a frequent and regular basis. Thus the traditional rulers in the South West became the unofficial campaign agents for Obasanjo's men.
- (iii) Obasanjo made frequent consultation with important personalities in the private sector in Yoruba land. He sold to them his concept of Nigeria political mainstream in so many words and the enviable place of the people of the South West in that arrangement.
- (iv) He encouraged and supported the action of the leaders of the PDP in the Southwest under Chief Olabode George and Chief Sunday Afolabi
- (v) He sponsored an alternative to the Afenifere in Yoruba land, the Yoruba council of Elders. The group had, as one of its major assignments the mobilization of support for Yoruba President and two, to take over the South West and make it part of Nigeria's political mainstream.<sup>85</sup>

However, the emergence of Obasanjo as the winner of the 2003 presidential contest was not without contestation. The complaints and criticism came from the opposing parties and the election Observers both from within and outside the country.

The ANPP represented by retired Major General Buhari and his running mate, D. Chuba Okadigbo described the election as "fraudulent". According to a press release by ANPP, "The fraud in the name of election started on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003 with the National Assembly elections, continued on a much large scale with governorship and presidential elections"<sup>86</sup>

Buhari further alleged that election did not hold in several districts in the south-east and south-south and even in the few where elections held peacefully, especially in the north-west, east and north-central where elections held, results were not provided.<sup>87</sup>

Chief Ojukwu who contested under the platform of APGA rejected the result:

The charade that was called election had no relations with a free and fair electoral process which they purported it to be. The conduct of the election was thus seen as sheer banditry, robbery,

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<sup>85</sup> Omoruyi Omo "Obasanjo. How Obasanjo captured the Heart of Soul of South West, <http://www.dawodu.com.omoruyi20.htm>. Accessed 23/10/2009. p. 6-7.

<sup>86</sup> The Guardian April 25, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.4.

shameless effrontery by the authorities in Nigeria,<sup>88</sup>

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The damning report of the election observers further reinforced the allegation of the brinkmanship that characterised the election. Raising posers on the fairness and integrity of the voting process during the election in some states, three of the election observers, namely the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), the America-based International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) all agreed that voting in many states was marred by violence and irregularities.

While the claims of the opposing parties cannot be dismissed as being totally false or exaggerated, it has been argued that there was no way any other political party could have beaten the PDP in the contest, going by the wide margin between the PDP and other parties.<sup>89</sup>

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The international observers commended Nigerians for their resilience and patience, in view of the period of prolonged military regime in which democratic culture was in oblivion. The Commonwealth monitors concluded regarding the gubernatorial and the presidential elections as follows:

Nigeria's Presidential election, and governorship elections of last week, they were the first election for 20 years to have been organized under a civil government. They represent a landmark transfer of power from one civilian to another.

#### 5.24 The 2007 Presidential Election and Electoral Rules

The 2007 general elections and the presidential election, like others in the Fourth Republic, presented another opportunity for Nigeria, as a multi-ethnic society, to consolidate the gains of democracy. The election was conducted under an electoral system that emphasised the primacy of Nigeria's unity in terms of electoral requirements for political parties to win various elective positions especially the presidency on cross-ethnic platform.

It is noteworthy that sections 221, 222, 223 of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution deal with the condition for party registration, party symbols, sections 132 and 133 of the same

<sup>88</sup> The Guardian April 24, 2003, p.

<sup>89</sup> R. T. Akinyele. Election that Broke the Jinx; *West Africa Review*; 2003, 5:10.

constitution provide conditions for parties and their candidates to win the position of the president, emphasising the primacy of the principles of federal character and geographic distribution of votes across ethnic geopolitical constituencies.<sup>90</sup> Sections 82 and 83 of the 2006 Electoral Act<sup>91</sup> empower the Nigeria's electoral agency to monitor party congresses and conventions for the purpose of internal democracy and ensure the emergency of board-based party flag bearers.

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More importantly, the presidential election offered a chance of a credible transfer of power from one elected leader to another. The election was the first in which an elected president would be transferring power to another elected president, making it a litmus test of Nigeria's commitment to electoral democracy and the wider democratic ethos.<sup>92</sup>

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In the words of Suberu:

The 2007 elections presented such a promising opportunity for Nigeria to break with a legacy of violent political instability including multiple military coups and the collapse of abortion of three democratic Republics.<sup>93</sup>

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The presidential election which was held on 21 April, 2007 for the presidential electoral contest was preceded by primaries in the PDP, ANPP and AC in various geopolitical zones of the country. It is important that we examine how various presidential candidates emerged, more importantly the various strategies of zoning adopted for the exercise.

### 5.25 The PDP Presidential Primaries

The Peoples Democratic Party believed in the principle of zoning and power rotation in the distribution of political and party offices. Article 7 Subsection C of the party's constitution explicitly states that:

In pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness, the party shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and elective offices and it shall be enforced by the

<sup>90</sup>Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Lagos: Federal Government Printer.

<sup>91</sup>Federal Republic of Nigeria; 2006 Electoral Act.

<sup>92</sup>O. Albert. A Review of the Campaign Strategies, *Journal of African Election*. 2007, 6.2: 58.

<sup>93</sup>R. T. Suberu 'Nigeria's Muddled Elections' *Journal of Democracy*. 2007, 18.3:150.

appropriate executive committee at all levels.<sup>94</sup>

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On the basis of this policy, the Peoples Democratic Party organised its presidential primaries at the party's convention on Saturday 16, December, 2006. However, before the day of the convention, there had been a lot of horse trading among the political aspirants most especially from the south, which the incumbent president was believed to have favoured to produce the next president. This informed the efforts of the likes of Peter Odili, former Governor of Rivers State; Dr Sam Egwu of Ebonyi State, and Donald Duke of Cross River State who traversed the country with colossal sums of money to seek the support of party faithfuls. As the events unfolded however, President Obasanjo, the major power broker within the party, mandated the governors to look into their fold and present a consensus candidate.

The screening exercise that was first headed by former governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose, was later taken over by Lucky Igbinedion of Edo State. Four contestants came from the north and two from the south-south. The four from the north were Musa Yar'Adua, Abdullahi Adamu, Adamu Muazu and Aliyu Gusau; and from the south were Donald Duke and Sam Egwu.<sup>95</sup> At the end of the exercise, Yar 'Adua from Katsina State became the consensus candidate.

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Lucky Igbinedion, who was the chairman of the "Governors Forum" stated the reason for the choice of Yar'Adua:

The choice of Yar'Adua arose from the need to narrow the search for presidential candidate of the PDP to a one who in our opinion presents the best credentials and is generally acceptable across the country.<sup>96</sup>

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The adoption of Yar'Adua as the consensus candidate signified that the convention was going to be a formality.

<sup>94</sup>*The Nation* "PDP's double speak on zoning" June 13, 2010, p. 63.

<sup>95</sup>PDP adopts Yar'Adua" *The Guardian*, Saturday December 16, 2006. p. 1

<sup>96</sup> *The Guardian* December 16, 2006. p. 14.

However, in spite of the announcement of the consensus candidate, 12 other aspirants insisted that voting should take place. Accordingly, on the day of the convention Yar'Adua contested with 12 other candidates. Predictably, the result confirmed the superior decision of the party when Yar'Adua overwhelmed other candidates with 90% of the votes. The result of the election as shown in Table 18 demonstrates this assertion.

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**Table 18: Result of PDP Presidential Primaries in 2006**

Umaru Musa Yar 'Adua	3,024	North
Rochas Okorochoa	372	South-South
Aliyu Gusau	271	North
Jerry Gana	165	North
Bauba Marwa	127	South
Mike Akhigbe	113	South
Albert Horsefal	08	South
Ralph Uweche	03	South
Serah Jubril	04	North
A. P. Sawa	03	North
Mamman Kontagora	01	North
Ebitu Ukiwe	01	South

**Source:** The Guardian, Monday, December 16, 2006. p. 14.

In order to assuage any acrimony that could follow the adoption of Yar'Adua especially by the minorities who had cried marginalisation, the party decided to pick the running mate from the south-south geopolitical constituency. The most intriguing aspect of the choice of the party was that none of the defeated aspirants was found qualified. Odili, for instance, was not considered because he was not acceptable to the Ijaws; more importantly, he was seen to have acquired a larger-than-life image on the political turf and, therefore, would not make a loyal vice president<sup>97</sup>. It was also feared that His choice might lead to undue friction between the president and his vice as in the days of Obasanjo and Atiku. Donald Duke, another serious contender from the south, also lost out because he was seen as a man with his own vision and desire<sup>98</sup>.

Eventually, Goodluck Jonathan, of Bayelsa State, a relatively unknown political figure, who emerged as governor following the impeachment of Diepreye Alaimeseya in December 2005, was chosen by party. His choice was seen as a means of pacifying the

<sup>97</sup> The Guardian, December 10 2006. p. 14.  
<sup>98</sup> The Guardian, December 10 2006. p. 14.

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south-south geographical zone who had insisted they would not compromise on the presidency. Moreover, his choice was another design to win the votes of the southern minorities since no political party had picked its presidential running mate from this part of the country. Added to this was the fact that Jonathan is an Ijaw man, the dominant ethnic group in the volatile Niger Delta, and the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, which had never produced a military or civilian head.<sup>99</sup>

Jonathan himself believed his choice would go a long way in integrating the minorities into the mainstream of Nigerian politics. Moreover, this would give the Ijaws a sense of belonging in the Nigerian project. He believed that the north-south joint ticket of the ruling PDP had demonstrated that all Nigerians could aspire to the leadership of the country.<sup>100</sup>

He further declares:

My conviction is that the nomination of a vice presidential candidate from a minority group will at least give hope to the people and another way of assuring minority tribes that we will have a stake in Nigerian project. Before this time, we have this kind of feeling as if Nigeria is not for all of us. But things have changed with the kind of arrangement done by the PDP.<sup>101</sup>

#### 5.26 All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) Convention

All Nigeria People Party primaries were more of consensus. At the party's convention held on December 18, at the Eagle Square, Abuja, Major General Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the consensus candidate of the party. This followed the decision of Chief Pere Ajuwa from the south-south to step down from the race after much persuasion. To fulfil all political righteousness, the consensus motion for the affirmation of Buhari's candidature was moved by Senator Ibikunle Amosun from Ogun State in the south-west Nigeria and Senator Saidu Dambasau from north-central. After this, the chairman of the convention planning committee put the question for those in support of the candidate, and the response of was a thunderous "Yes" from the delegates.

With this arrangement, ANPP had played a smart political game in the choice of

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<sup>99</sup> Tell Magazine. "Whistle of the Strong Wind", January 8. 2007. p. 25.

<sup>100</sup> The Guardian, Dec. 20 2006. Part of the acceptance speech made by Goodluck after his nomination as the Vice President candidate.

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan "There is hope for minorities" in the *Guardian* Wednesday December 20, 2006.



its presidential candidate by ensuring that a northerner who could equally match the ruling PDP's candidate emerged. Chief Ume Ezeoke from the south-south was reported to have prevailed on other contestants to step down on ethno-religious grounds as Yar'Adua and Buhari were not only from the northern majority but both were also Muslims. Furthermore, Buhari was perceived to be more popular than Yar 'Adua, a relatively unknown figure in Nigerian theatre of national politics.<sup>102</sup>

Buhari eventually chose his running mate, Ben Obi, from the south-east, a combination expected to serve as springboard for mobilisation of votes across ethnic divides in the country.

#### 5.27 Action Congress (AC)

Action Congress convention, held in Lagos in January 2007, was a mere coronation of its anointed candidate, the former vice president who had defected from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party after a disagreement with his boss, Olusegun Obasanjo. Atiku's travail began in 2002, when he was reportedly implicated in the failed attempt by the National Assembly to impeach President Obasanjo. He was also alleged to be the mastermind of the failed attempt of Obasanjo's third term agenda. Having dumped PDP where he was a founding member, Atiku defected to AC to realise his presidential ambition.

At the convention of the party held on January 2007, the party chairman, Chief Bisi Akande, from the south-west handed the ticket of the party to him based on his electoral performance in the party primaries in which he was the sole aspirant with 5,782 votes.<sup>103</sup> With the ticket in his firm grip, Atiku described his former party, the PDP, a crumbling party. He subsequently picked Senator Ben Obi from the south-south as his running mate for ethnic balancing.

What has emerged from the choice of candidates of these parties is the consciousness of zoning principle among political parties in Nigeria. The impression was strong that a consensus was reached consciously or unconsciously that the post of the presidency had been conceded to a particular geopolitical zone of the country. It could

<sup>102</sup> Tell Magazine: Whistle of the Strong Wind", Jan. 8, 2007, p. 25.

<sup>103</sup> Tell Magazine *Op cit*, p. 32.

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not be mere coincidence that the three parties zoned the presidency to the north and the vice presidential position to the south having discovered that the chairmanship of the parties was conceded to another geopolitical constituency.

#### 5.28 Parties' Preparation for the 2007 Presidential Election

Being conscious of the electoral requirements for winning the position of the presidency, political parties having picked candidates for the presidency, began a nationwide campaign, forcing them to traverse the entire country.

Electioneering campaign plays an important role in the catalytic relationship between election, candidates and votes. They enable candidates to motivate the vote for them on the basis of the values and issues they present for consideration. Political campaign is defined as an effort to reach a certain goal. In particular, the term refers to involving or trying to involve mass participation with a particular issue, candidate most often through winning election.<sup>104</sup>

The goal of a political campaign is to reach as many as possible and persuade them to support their candidate. In an important sense, political campaign is a form of electoral mobilisation of the electorate for the purpose of winning election and thus gaining access to political power.

Depending on the position at stake, campaigns are carefully planned to appeal to the conscience of the people through various means. Campaigning thus involves political advocacy, lobbying and communicating. Political campaign strategies involve propaganda that evokes strong emotion, which helps a political candidate to bridge the gap between the real and imaginary world.<sup>105</sup> Such propaganda techniques involve.

Patriotic flag waving, glittering generalities, intentional vagueness over simplification of issues, rationalization, introducing unrelated herring issues using appealing, simple slogans, stereotyping, testimonials from authority figures or celebrities, unstated assumptions, and encouraging readers or viewers to jump on the band wagon of a particular point of view.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Cited in Albert, 'A Review of The Campaign Strategies', *Journal of African Election*, 2007, 6.2:59.

<sup>105</sup> IDASA; Capacity Building for Community Organizations, Pretoria: IDASA, 2007. p. 89.

<sup>106</sup> Isaac Albert. Op cit. p. 58.

–Apart from propaganda, other campaign strategies include conventional face-to-face contact, door-to-door, canvassing for voters at public meetings, whistle-stop tours, and the use of mass communication systems such as the television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, websites, online communities, solicited and unsolicited bulk-email, and mobile phones<sup>107</sup>.

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These various campaign strategies were largely engaged by major political parties in preparation for the 2007 presidential election. This became compelling for political parties in order to garner enough votes across ethnic divides in the context of the present realities of the country's electoral system design.

#### 5.29 Analysis of 2007 Presidential Election

The presidential election was held in April 2007 with about 18 political parties presenting candidates. Three of the political parties, PDP, ANPP, and AC presidential candidates Umaru Yar 'Adua (PDP), Muhammadu Buhari (CPC), Atiku Abubakar (AC), came from the northern geopolitical zone, while their running mates were from the southern axis. This again was to confirm the indispensability of zoning arrangement which the political elite have accepted as a norm for consensus politics in Nigeria. In what Suberu<sup>108</sup> describes as voting's most high profile result, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) indicated that the ruling Peoples Democratic Party's presidential candidate won with 24,638,063 votes (69.82%), followed by Buhari's ANPP who scored 6,605,299 (18.72%) while Abubakar of AC was third with 2,637,848 (7.47%) of the valid votes casts.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>108</sup> R. T. Suberu; *Op cit*: 50.

<sup>109</sup> Thisday 22 April 2007, *Yar Adua is President Elect*.

**Table 19: Summary of the 1 April 2007 Nigerian Presidential Election Result**

Candidates – Parties	Parties	Votes	%
Umaru Yar’Adua	Peoples Democratic Parties (PDP)	24,638,063	69.82
Muhammadu Buhari	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	6,605,299	18.72
Pere Ajuwa	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	89,241	0.25
Chris Okotie	Fresh Democratic Party (FDP)	74,049	0.21
Patrick Utomi	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	50,849	0.14
Ambrose Owuru	Hope Democratic Party	28,519	0.08
Emmanuel Okereke	African Liberation Party (ALP)	22,677	0.06
Lawrence Adedoyin	African Political System (APS)	22,409	0.06
Habu Fari	National Democratic Party	21,934	0.06
Maxi Okwu	Citizens Popular Party (CPP)	14,027	0.04
Bartholomew Nnaji	Better Nigeria Party	11,705	0.03
Emmanuel Obayuwana	National Conscience Party	8,229	0.02
Olapade Agoro	National Action Council	5,752	0.02
Mojisola Obasanjo	Nigerian Masses Movement	4,309	0.01

**Source:** Independent National Electoral Commission. Elections in Nigeria (<http://africanelections.trypod.com/ng.hotmail> retrieved 17/12/2010).

However, the process and the result of the election came under criticism both by local, international and other interested observers. The election was seen to represent the worst conducted in the political history of the nation. This was due to lack of transparency on the part of the electoral agency and the brazen manipulation of the election by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party.

If the 2003 general elections were hardly credible, the 2007 balloting was blatantly fraudulent. Majority of the independent observers described it as the worst that they had ever witnessed anywhere in Africa or beyond.<sup>110</sup>

Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel Laureate and fearless social critic, claimed that the brigandage was premeditated by a gang of four, namely the Nigeria Police Force’s (NPF) Inspector-General; the INEC chief, Maurice Iwu; PDP national chairman, Ahmadu

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<sup>110</sup> Cited in R. T.Suberu.Op cit: 152.

Alli and the principal of the gang, Obasanjo himself,<sup>111</sup> Both the local and international observers roundly adjudged the election as largely fraudulent. International Republican Institute USA summarises its findings as follows:

Under-age voting, voter registration list errors, stuffed ballot boxes, group voting, party observers and police instructing individuals on who to vote for, lack of privacy for voting, lack of results sheets and other materials, falsified result sheets and early closings.

Thus, the election showed that instead of guaranteeing citizens' rights to vote freely, the government and its electoral officials had actively colluded in fraud and in violence that marred the whole exercise as officials closed their eyes to human rights abuses committed by supporters of the ruling party and others.

In spite of the criticism that trailed the election, a balanced assessment reveals a level of relative credibility. Soyinka, while testifying before the Africa subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee in 2007, admitted that the results in some states such as Abia, Bauchi, Kano, Lagos and Zamfara reflected fairly accurately the electoral will of the people.<sup>112</sup> In a similar vein, observers from the Washington-based National Democratic Institute described having seen on April 21 a relatively smooth electoral process in some parts of the FCT, Niger, Plateau and Lagos State. In these places, polling officials and party agents generally operated professionally to produce a credible voting process on election days.<sup>113</sup>

It has been argued further that even in a free-and-fair electoral contest, Yar 'Adua could have won the election. The reasons for this are obvious:

The PDP enormous patronage and incumbency powers, the divided opposition, opponents such as Buhari (a former military dictator with a reputation for ethno-religious chauvinism and the AC's Atiku, arguably one of the most corrupt politicians in a country not noticeably short of them.

Despite the inadequacies of the electoral contest clearly associated with the ineffective and defective INEC and the brazenness of the ruling party, the fact that the election was held in an environment largely characterised by ethno-regional animosity

<sup>111</sup> Wole Soyinka, Election observers from <http://newsbbc.co.uk/2/hi/Africa> accessed 11 July 2009.

<sup>112</sup> R.T. Suberu. Op. cit. P. 156.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid p. 152.

remains a remarkable achievement. In spite of the brigandage, one remarkable thing about the 2007 elections is its insulation from Nigeria's combustible internal cleavages, the nature of the country's history of ethno-regional fissures including a secession war from 1967 and 1970). This containment is a product of power-sharing arrangement among the elite in the country's six geopolitical zones revolving around the northern and southern pivotal cycle.<sup>114</sup>

Moreover, while the claims of the opposing parties and the assessment of the election monitors on irregularities cannot be totally dismissed, there was no way other political parties and their candidates could have beaten the PDP in the presidential electoral contest, going by the wide margin between the PDP and other political parties.

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<sup>114</sup>R. T. Suberu, *Op cit.*, p. 152.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate the utility of electoral engineering as an effective institutional mechanism for the management of ethnicity in Nigeria's deeply-divided multi-ethnic society.

Taking the presidential elections from 1979 to 2007 as case studies, data were gathered mainly through secondary sources. This was supplemented with in-depth interviews of stakeholders in Nigerian politics including chieftains of political parties and Nigerian academics. The data were content analysed. The summary of the major findings based on the set objectives are presented in this chapter.

#### 6.2 Impact of Electoral Laws on Party System and Democratic Politics

Political parties are important agents of democratic stability and national integration. This is however dependent on their ideology and orientation. When parties are formed along ethno-religious lines, they promote sectional ideology at the expense of the unity and integration of the state. Nigeria's First Republic party formation and operation was riven by ethno-communal animosity and dominated by ethnic chieftains.<sup>1</sup> It was thus not surprising that party politics took the form of geo-ethnic struggles for supremacy, as the elections were perceived in adversarial terms and the mindset was to support the party perceived by the electorate as theirs.<sup>2</sup>

The failure of Nigerian electoral system to discourage party formation on ethnic basis in the First Republic contributed to the explosive ethno-regional schism that precipitated the military coup of January 15, 1966, and culminated in the collapse of the First Republic. This prompted the purposive innovative design of electoral rules that encouraged cross-cutting party formation. The country's 1979 and 1999 constitutions with other subsequent electoral acts deliberately provided incentives for party formation

<sup>1</sup> Olagunju Olatunji. Democratizing Nigeria through party system in O. Omoruyi, Schlosser, A. Sambo & A. Okwuosa eds. *Democratization in Africa Nigerian Perspectives*. Benin city: Hima & Hima Ltd. 1994, Vol. 1. p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> A. Jinadu. Competitive elections and the Multi-party System in Nigeria in O. Omoruyi, Schollosser, A. Sambo & A. Okwuosa eds. *Democratisation in Africa Nigerian Perspectives* Benin City: Hima & Hima Ltd. 1994, Vol. 1 p. 250.

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with national outlook. Part III of Section 222 of the 1999 constitution declares that no association by whatever name called shall function as a political party, unless:

- (i) the membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria, irrespective of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion or ethnic grouping.
- (ii) the name of the association, its symbol or logo does not contain any ethnic or religious connotation or give the appearance that the activities of the association are confined to a part only of the geographical area of Nigeria.

For the purpose of an election to the office of the President, the whole country shall be regarded as one constituency.

Section 133 specifically states that:

A candidate for an election to the office of the President shall be deemed to have been the only candidate nominated for election.

- (a) He has a majority of Yes votes over No votes cast at the election and
- (b) He has not less than one-quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two thirds of all the states in the federal and the federal capital territory.<sup>3</sup>

It was on the basis of these electoral rules that most political parties were registered. The formal recognition of political parties started in 1979, when five out of about 39 political parties were given certificate of recognition by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) on the basis of meeting federal electoral rules. In 1999 additional innovative electoral system design of 5% electoral strength requirement based on local government election by political associations saw the number of political parties reduced from six originally (1979 – 1983) to three (PDP, APP and AD). Though in 2003 the constitutionality of party registration was challenged by aspiring political associations, this did not fundamentally alter the overbearing influence of the existing political parties in terms of electoral strength across the nation. One remarkable effect of federation-wide electoral rules is the rise of decentralised polity-wide parties that are critical to the country's democratic stability. It can be stated that since the Second Republic, Nigerian party systems have been dominated by cross-ethnic big-tent parties,

<sup>3</sup> Federal Republic of Nigeria; *The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, p. 150.

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as “most of these parties are ‘broad churches’, encompassing all shades of opinion and ethnicity”<sup>4</sup>

This category includes the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) during the Second Republic, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) during the transition to the Third Republic, and the ruling Peoples Democratic Party that has been in government from the inception of the country’s Fourth Republic. In the accommodative venture, both the NPN (1979-1983) and the ruling PDP have succeeded in incorporating all the diverse ethnic constituencies that make up Nigeria into their folds. Membership of the parties reflects all the ethnic groups and this has earned them the credit of national parties. The incorporationist strategy has enabled the party to re-channel ethnic conflict, making it more of intra-party rather than the inter-party crisis which largely contributed to the demise of Nigeria’s First Republic party politics.

### 6.3 Electoral Incentives, Ethnicity and Voting Behaviour of Nigerian Electorate

The presidential election results in Nigeria under study, though not without problems, provided empirical data through which the voting behaviour of Nigerian electorate can be measured. A close examination of the results portrays a progressive decline in the prominence of ethnicity in the voting behaviour of the Nigerian electorate. The fact that politicians were forced to move out of their ethnic enclaves as rational actors to mobilise electoral support across ethnic divides brought about observable changes in voting pattern. Though the results of the 1979 and 1983 presidential elections portray the five parties as largely ethnic in terms of electoral support and re-incarnation of the ethnic politics of the First Republic since these parties retained their dominance in their former ethnic domains, yet there were areas that the parties made in-road into hitherto difficult political terrains.

National Party of Nigeria satisfied the two major electoral requirements, though under controversial circumstances, for winning the presidential election. These are: (1) federation-wide plurality of votes and (2) geographical spread. It recorded not only a minimum of 25% in 12 states and scored 19.94% in the 13th state, which is Kano, but

<sup>4</sup> Aiyede. Electoral Law and the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria, *Journals of African Elections*. 2007. 6. 2:47.

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also the highest number of votes. Though others could not meet these in the required states, they all made their presence felt in other areas apart from their ethnic domains. This performance could not be termed to be totally poor, given the history of deep-seated ethnic chauvinism in Nigerian politics. More importantly, this is an innovation that needed time to mature. As Oyediran, one of the members of the Constitution Drafting Committee of the 1979 Constitution, opines, “Had it been the system was allowed to mature, it would have signalled the beginning of new development in Nigerian political history”<sup>5</sup>

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The 1993 presidential election was a watershed in the history of Nigeria’s electoral process. This was because the result of the election substantially deviated from the existing ethnic voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate. The result of the election signalled a change in the voting pattern in the history of elections in Nigeria. Going by the result, only in one of the 30 states did Chief Abiola fail to enjoy the 25% electoral support of the required two-thirds of the states. Amazingly, Chief Abiola not only got 25% requirement in Kano State, the home state of his opponent, he also defeated him by receiving 52.28% of the total votes cast. Tofa could not enjoy a minimum electoral support of 25% of the electoral support from any of the Yoruba states which suggests that ethnicity still colours the political behaviour of this ethnic group. It was in the eastern minority states that Tofa gained the highest number of votes representing 63% of the votes, a figure higher than he obtained in his home state.

On the balance, the result of the presidential election in 1993 brought about a shift in voting pattern. As one of the core northern oligarchs testifies:

In point of fact, Nigeria does have the basis to call itself a Nation. M.K.O. won with fantastic and very high level of northern voter support and an incredible 50:50 share of the Ibo and predominant minority votes, no Nigerian has ever received that degree of voters support.<sup>6</sup>

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One major facilitating factor for this was the design of two-partism. The institutional design as an electoral incentive forced the political elite of different ethnic

<sup>5</sup> Oyeleye Oyediran – Personal Interview conducted on 28/06/2010.

<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim Tahir, Former Communication Minister in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. He was also a founding member of the National Party of Nigeria (1979-1983). He made the remark on June 12, 1993 presidential election, when he granted an interview with *The Guardian Newspaper* on June 29, 1993.

configuration to dissolve themselves into these two manufactured parties. Moreover, the electorate had no choice but to align in their voting behaviour with any of the two parties. Though seen as contrary to democratic norm, the institutional design produced a fruit capable of nurturing democracy and has the prospect of strengthening Nigeria's integrative project. However, the annulment of the election based on personalisation of power by the leadership of the military denied the country of the benefit.

The voting patterns in the 1999 and 2003 presidential elections were nearly a repeat of the experience of the aborted 1993 presidential election. In 1999, two political parties, the PDP and AD/APP alliance, fielded presidential candidates for the electorate to make a choice. The voting pattern demonstrated a cross-cutting ethnic voting pattern. The two presidential candidates received votes across ethnic enclaves. Chief Obasanjo got the minimum electoral support of the votes in 27 out of the 36 states of the federation with highest number of votes from ethnic regions other than his own. These were Akwa Ibom 82.7, Taraba 90%, Rivers 86%, Borno 63%. Chief Olu Falae of the AD/APP also got enough votes that qualified him to win the election on geographical basis by scoring 25% in 22 states and the Federal Capital Territory. More importantly, in the ethnic regions other than his own, he received electoral support in the far north (Zamfara 64.1%, Yobe 53%, Sokoto 56.1%, Borno 36%) and in the east (Cross River 32.2%, Imo 42%). Chief Olu Falae who claimed to have been denied the presidency through the rigging of the election for Obasanjo attributed his relative national acceptability to the AD/APP alliance and the choice of his running mate, which he said was capable of changing the dichotomous north-south political equation of the country.

The 2003 presidential election, though an election claimed to be widely rigged in favour of the incumbent, showed a growing national rather than sectional voting pattern in Nigeria. Though the number of political parties that contested the election increased to 27, only the PDP and ANPP made remarkable impact. The picture of the overall election demonstrated a voting pattern that tilted towards national acceptability of two of the three parties. The ruling Peoples Democratic Party received a minimum of 25% in 32 of the 36 states of the federation. The party that was initially rebuffed in the south-west got an unprecedented electoral support. This was attributed to two major factors: (i) the lackadaisical attitude of the AD chieftains who had taken the masses for granted in terms

of performance and (ii) the mainstream propaganda of PDP. APGA won 25% in only Anambra and Imo, confirming the fact that APGA was a party championing the cause of the Igbos. In spite of the inadequacies associated with the election result, an important fact emerged. The determination of who governs the country is no longer the exclusive preserve of a particular ethnic or sectional grouping. It also demonstrated the desire of Nigerians to have a leader who is committed enough to pursue the aspiration of the nation irrespective of his ethnic origin. The 2007 election was expected to consolidate the gains of the national dimension of the voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate, but for the electoral brigandage of the electoral management body. Notwithstanding this, the result of the election shows that ethnicity, though still visible in Nigerian politics, its hitherto overriding influence is becoming more diffused.

#### 6.4 Presidential Electoral System, Democratic Stability and National Integration

One of the innovative mechanisms at redemocratisation in Nigeria since the Second Republic is the adoption of presidential system with associated electoral incentives. Parliamentary system at independence promoted the political game of total inclusion and exclusion in Nigeria's party politics. Such precipitated the demise of the First Republic, the coup of 1966 and the civil war provoked by Biafran secession from 1966 – 1970. Against this backdrop, presidential electoral system is the most impressive effort at democratisation to mitigate societal division since 1979.<sup>7</sup> Under this arrangement, to be elected as president, a candidate according to sections 132, 133 and 134 of the 1999 Constitution, must satisfy the intertwined electoral incentives of

- (i) Winning plurality/majority of votes.
- (ii) Securing 25% of the votes in at least two thirds of the states of the federation.

The constitution further emphasises that the entire federation is the constituency of the president, giving the impression that the president is a symbol of national unity.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the requirement is to ensure that the president draws electoral support across ethnic enclaves. The incentives have also compelled political parties and their

<sup>7</sup>D. Horowitz; Comparing Political Systems; *Journal of Democracy Winter*, 1990, 9.165.

<sup>8</sup> The Federal Republic of Nigeria; 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Lagos; Federal Government Printer.

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candidates to campaign across ethnic divides. This design has promoted the politics of accommodation and conciliation rather than conflict. Moreover, the arrangement has produced moderate personalities rather than ethnic extremists as Nigerian president. Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Nigeria's first executive president attests that the system has checked the emergence of ethnic barons masquerading as national leaders, prevented sectional domination and fostered unity.<sup>9</sup>

To Chief Falae, another respondent and a former presidential aspirant in the 1999 electoral contest, the electoral system has the potentiality of fostering unity. However, meeting the requirement implies traversing the entire country in quest of votes. This not only poses a financial burden but a strenuous and stressful political adventurism.<sup>10</sup>

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#### 6.5 Zoning Arrangement as a Means of Ethnic Accommodation in Nigerian Politics

Zoning was another important innovation in Nigerian politics during the period under study. Beginning from the Second Republic is the development of an informal arrangement designed by the political elite christened zoning principle.

Since 1979, this arrangement has remained an innovative venture in the political game of politicians. Zoning/power-sharing formula is a response to the electoral incentives of federal character rule for winning the post of the presidency and other elective offices by political parties in Nigeria. Political parties in Nigeria since Second Republic have adopted this strategy for voter mobilisation and support sourcing across the country. Alhaji Shehu Shagari stated that it was the political strategy the National Party of Nigeria adopted to win the 1979 presidential election. The implementation of the zoning system remains a crucial factor in the electoral success of political parties in Nigeria. In 1979, NPN zoned the presidency to the north-west, the vice presidency to the Igbo in the south-east, the party chairmanship to the Yoruba south-west, the senate president to the south-south while the speaker went to the middle belt.

In the aborted Third Republic, the same zoning principle remained the guiding philosophy of the two parties in the choice of candidates for election. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) assigned the presidential candidacy to the south-west, the vice

<sup>9</sup> Extract from personal interview with Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Nigeria's First Executive President-December 8, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Chief Falae made the remark during the personal interview with him, on December 5, 2010.

presidency to the north-east, the national chairman and the deputy senate president to the north, senate presidency and the publicity secretary to the north-central zones and party treasurer to the south-east, while the post of the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives went to the north-west. On its own, the National Republican Convention (NRC) decided to zone its presidential nomination to the north-west while the vice presidential candidacy went to the south-east, the chairmanship of the party was zoned to the south-west while the post of the secretary was apportioned to the north-central zone.

With the commencement of Fourth Republic in 1999, zoning principle resurfaced as one of the accommodating strategies employed by the political parties. Given the unfolding political debate consequent upon the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential election believed to have been won by a southerner and its aftermath, the three political parties consciously conceded the post of the presidency to the south-west as a means of pacifying the ethnic group, which interpreted the annulment as a calculated attempt to deny it of its turn to rule the country.

As a concession to the agitation by the southern states for power shift, the three registered political parties zoned their presidential nomination and party chairmanship to the south-west and north respectively. The PDP awarded the ticket to Obasanjo, a retired military officer and the AD/APP ticket was issued to retired Secretary to the Federal Government, Olu Falae from the south-west. Atiku Abubakar (north-east) and Umaru Shinkafi (north-west) were picked for vice presidential candidates for PDP and AD/APP respectively. Having won the presidential electoral contest, the PDP with its zoning policy picked the senate president from the south-east, the post of the speaker went to the north-west. This zoning arrangement and power-sharing mechanism continued to be the dominant philosophy of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party. In 2007, when Yar 'Adua was declared president, he emphasised the primacy of zoning in Nigerian politics and promised to keep faith with the arrangement in PDP. Yar'Adua further restated the relevance of zoning and power rotation as established code of behaviour among Nigerian politicians in stabilising the polity. He declares:

Today there seems to be an established procedure which is the political arrangement of power shift. This has come to be an acceptance norm and tradition in Nigeria politics.<sup>11</sup>

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Indeed zoning whether in the PDP or any other party is neither dead nor dying, though the degree of adherence varies from one political party to another. Thus, zoning will continue and no party can underestimate its role or significance in Nigerian polity without hurting its chances of winning office.<sup>12</sup> When it is respected, zoning arrangement has the potentiality of enhancing the stability of the system and, when ignored, could fuel a corrosive current of ethnic discontent.

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## 6.6 Conclusion

Ethnicity remains a major factor in Nigeria's deeply-divided multi-ethnic society. It has proven to be a destabilising factor to democratic stability and unity of the country when not properly managed. Its debilitating effects were evident in the early termination of democratic experiment in Nigeria's First Republic and the eventual secessionist civil war that almost led to the disintegration of the country.

Nigerian federation since Second Republic has witnessed an array of phenomenal innovative electoral craftings designed to curb the potential challenges that ethnicity poses to democratic stability and the unity of the country. Nigerian electoral system design since the Second Republic reflects several constitutional and institutional architecture that scholars of ethnic relations in divided society prescribe as effective mechanism for the containment of potentially-destabilising ethnic conflicts.

The design of electoral laws has involved federation-wide rule for federal character principle in the allocation of political and party positions. Another is presidential electoral system of plurality and geographic distribution of votes across ethnic divides to win the elective post of the presidency. There is also a deliberate shift from parliamentarianism to presidential federalism, with specific intertwined electoral

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<sup>11</sup> President Yar 'Adua made the declaration while commending the Northern caucus of the PDP on their efforts to ensure the stability of the country after he was sworn-in as the Executive President in 2007, see *The Guardian* April 26, 2007. "Power shift Intact".

<sup>12</sup> Personal Interview with Alhaji Uman Shinkafi on the Imperative of Zoning Principle and Nigerian Unity on 5 July 2009.

incentives of plurality and geographic distribution of votes across ethnic divides to win the elective post of the presidency.

The consequence of such innovations is the development of the inventive and broadly-supported zoning arrangement by political entrepreneurs. Faced with the task of electoral incentive for winning the presidency and other elective positions like the governors across ethnic boundaries, political entrepreneurs' card for electoral mobilisation, they are now forced to act moderately in order to secure the support of other ethnic groups. Under this informal arrangement, political and party positions are now rotated or shared among various ethnic groups including the minorities who have always agitated for relevance in the scheme of Nigerian politics. The power-sharing proposal has resulted in political accommodation of various ethnic nationalities. Zoning arrangement has also tempered the hegemonic and secessionist tendencies of both the majority and minority ethnic nationalities respectively in Nigeria's party politics.

Moreover, the stability of the country has been enhanced through the instrumentality of presidential electoral system. Since the Second Republic, it has succeeded in producing the election of a moderate personalities rather than ethnic extremists as Nigerian President, most especially since 1999, the longest period of democratic rule in Nigeria's political history.

In an important sense, the fact that democracy has survived ethnic cleavages through several elections represents at the least a partial validation of electoral engineering as one of the effective mechanisms of moderating ethnicity within the framework of Nigerian politics.

However, electoral corruption that characterised most of the presidential elections has undermined the achievements that electoral engineering recorded in managing ethnicity in Nigeria's democratic process. Electoral fraud is the single most potent threat to democratic transition in Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> This electoral corruption is the most basic source of Nigeria's federal democratic instability. The 1983 general elections conducted by the civilian administration that was expected to consolidate Nigeria's democratic experiment in the Second Republic was truncated by massive, unimaginable rigging of the election

<sup>13</sup> E. E. Osaghae. *Op cit.* p. 28.

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by the ruling National Party of Nigeria with the active connivance of the country's electoral agency.

In a bizarre show of total disregard for popular will, the 1993 presidential election widely believed to be the freest-and-fairest in Nigeria's electoral history was annulled by the military. The election that had the potentiality of not only consolidating democracy, but capable of uniting and promoting mutual trust among ethnic nationalities was aborted and thus terminated the Third Republic.

If 2003 elections were described as largely fraudulent, the 2007 general elections generally, and the presidential election in particular, was still regarded by local and international observers as the worst election the country ever conducted. The conduct of the election was so brazen that the major beneficiary of the electoral brigandage, Umaru Yar'Adua admitted that the process of the election that brought him to power fell short of international standard. This compelled him to inaugurate a 22- man Electoral Reform Committee in August 2007 with the aim of overhauling the entire electoral system.<sup>14</sup> When election is fraudulent in terms of rigging, manipulation and annulment, the people's confidence in democratic governance becomes eroded and, in the main, a culpable government lacks the legitimacy to preside over the affairs of the citizenry.

It is noteworthy that free-and-fair elections in a liberal democracy presuppose open regular and competitive electoral politics in which results are uncertain and indeterminate. A representative democracy absolutely depends upon the integrity of elections. This is because the success or failure of a democracy is largely measured by election and the outcome of the election.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The Nation*, August 2007, Lagos, p 1& 2.

<sup>15</sup> A. Kurfı. *The Nigerian General Elections, 1959 and 1979 and the aftermath*, Ibadan: Macmillan. 1983, p. 259.

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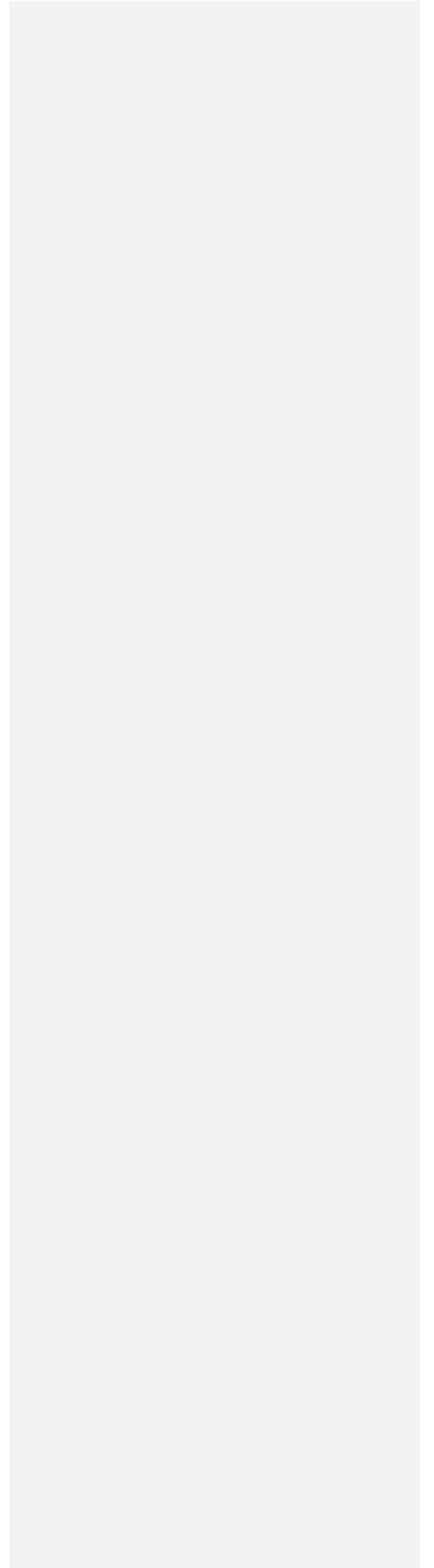
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Chief Olu Falae, Presidential aspirant on the platform of ADP/APP alliance in the 1999 Presidential Elections and Former Secretary to the Government of the Federation; 5 December 2010

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Prof. Oyeleye Oyediran. Professor of Political Science, member, 1978 Constitution

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