

## **OPPOSITION POLITICS AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Precisely, democracy is seen as a political system that is characterized by periodic and free elections in which politicians organized into political parties, engage themselves in competitive polls to form government. After most of the recent elections, new types of nondemocratic government have come to the fore, competitive authoritarian regimes, in which autocrats submit to meaningful multiparty elections but engage in serious democratic abuse. These regimes have formal democratic institutions, but their leaders circumvent and ignore them so often that they cannot be described as democratic. This study seeks to assess and evaluate the impact of electoral democracy in Nigeria, especially in terms of the performance of the Opposition in 2019 general election, and make a projection regarding a vibrant democratic space that will go beyond routine elections to speak to the issues preoccupying the Nigerian masses. The study adopted the pluralist theory for its framework of analysis and relied on documentary method of data collection. In the analysis of data, the paper relied on the use of qualitative-descriptive tool and content analysis. It was established that there is deficiencies in the intellectual and ideological capacities of political leaders that often impact on the choices made by political parties and hence on the desire to extend a stay in office, despite the efforts of the opposition. The paper recommended among others that, democratic principles should be strictly adhered to by political parties during election, and that political parties should be embedded on shifting from political predatory metaphors of grievance, greed, forgery and griotism to embrace a new political patriotic dispensation of values, views, genuineness and vision.

Keywords: **Democracy, Election, Political Party, Good Governance, Opposition.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership succession is the problem facing Nigeria since independence. The system and period of transferring power from one government to another is always faced with tension, massive rigging, ballot snatching, and purloin of outright violence, aggressiveness in recent times, especially given the number of death resulting from post-electoral conflict, with that of 2019 adjudged (Sakue-Collins, 2017, Araba & Briamah 2015), the unscrupulous involvement of the security agencies and the worst method, the vote buying, which had really marred electoral democracy in recent time. There had been serious anxiety anchored on the fact that leaders are imposed. The problem then before the inception of democracy had been attributed

to the persistent interruption by the military, since 1960. With commencement of democracy in 1999, there was optimistic anticipation about leadership progression in the country, but this was invalidated, the results of all elections conducted were seriously accompanied by these anomalies. With the commencement of democracy, there was formation of political parties. The three main political parties during the First republic (1960-66) were seriously afflicted by ethnicity and were regionally based, with Nigeria People's Congress (NPC), National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and Action Group (AG) being more accepted and obtaining their support and administration patronage to people of the North, East and West respectively. Thus, only five political parties out of fifty political associations that applied for registration were eventually registered. These parties were the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) (Simbine, 2013). Taking the argument further and offering explanation to the events that culminated in the termination of the third republic, Simbine (2013) affirmed that: During the aborted Third republic, two political parties were registered and allowed to operate namely, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). Thereafter, under the Abacha transition programme, eighteen political associations applied for registration as political parties, out of which five were registered, viz: The Congress for National Consensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP). The noticeable economic failure and deficiency of distinct ideology made former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Bola Ige, to illustrate the parties as "five fingers of a leprous hand" Abdulsalami's transition programme fundamentally threw up three major political parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Momoh2013).

In the march towards the Fourth republic, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) initially approved provisional registration to nine (9) political parties in 1998 (Simbine, 2013). What became the three dominant parties in 1998 viz Alliance for Democracy (AD), Peoples Democratic party (PDP) and All Peoples Party (APP) later (ANPP) had huge military presence both in their formation and membership, particularly the latter two parties. The 1999 elections ushered in the Fourth Republic. Three political parties contested the elections. These were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The political parties that had wanted to employ the emerging democratic order were 24 (Abdu, 2002). A most important attribute of the Fourth Republic is the large number of political parties, that principally do not seek to contest elections, but which are in more ways inadequate and personality serving in roles and interests. Though the number of political parties was 30 in 2002, 33 in early 2006 and 50 in 2007, only 16 fielded candidates in the 2003 General Elections while only 26 contested the 2007 General Elections. Even the parties that contested the elections were merely “sequential machines for electoral contests” (TMG, 2003).

Consequently the major parties, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) have been overwhelmed by profound internal crises, chaos, frequent tensions and mayhem manifested in factional struggle, exclusions and counter-expulsions, multiple executives and dual offices. Thus, while about 30 political parties contested during the 2003 elections, the number grew to 63 as the 2011 elections drew near. As of April 2013, only 25 political parties are accepted by the election management (Simbine, 2013). With the registration of the new political parties; All Progressives’ Congress (APC) which is a product of a amalgamation from the three major opposition parties: Action Congress of Nigeria, All Nigerian people’s party, Congress for progressive Change and factions of two other parties) People’s Democratic Movement

(PDM), Independent Democrat (ID) the number of the political parties still stand at 25. In 2019 general election registered parties were up to 91. In 2019 election, even the most radical of the opposition failed to go beyond what Celestin Monga has termed ‘slogans in line with populist illusions’ (Ngwane, 2014). In other words, altering emancipation desires into structured ideological values seemed an assignment ahead of the authority of the opposition parties. In view of the fact that the quest for political pluralism came down to the system of multipartyism, opposition parties are anticipated to be alienated from and autonomous of the ruling party, (Olukoshi, 1998). During the 2019 election, some opposition parties in Nigeria on the other hand alleged that the actual setback brazening out political change went afar of political party, emancipation requests, in that some of the politicians shove from one party to another unsystematically, but is an inclusive sanitization of the semi-authoritarian arrangement which the party in authority had appear to personified, with the approach of none always compliance with the constitution by the president and his cabals, unfulfilled promises of suppressions of actors of insecurity and unbalanced fight of corruption among others. To them structured ideological philosophy hinged on constitutional reforms and the putting in place of energetic democratic organizations, and restructuring, which is paramount is not adopted. With no clear constitutional stipulation on the status of opposition parties in Nigeria unlike country like Mozambique and United States of America, where the Opposition is considered as a government in waiting, opposition parties in Nigeria have through different electoral progressions given themselves a political distinctiveness. It has assumed the position of a ritual where, every four years people scamper around to participate in an ‘event’ (or festival) as though they are undergoing a cleansing process that automatically secure their wellbeing for the years ahead. Democracy, political participation, and election have been the subject of thorough rational discourse in current era. There was power of institution in the unconstruction of electoral democracy, and present substitute understanding of election as a

process-in-practice as opposed to ‘processes in theory Sakue-Collins, (2017). The role of electoral institution in Nigeria has been the subject of contention over time. From the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) of 1959 to the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) of 1960; the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) of 1978 to the National Electoral Commission (NEC) of 1987; and, the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) of 1995 to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of 1998 till date, and still subsisting, the tale is all the same: plausible elections with doubtful processes and results leading to contestations, accusations and counter- charges, and occasionally violent conflicts. The numerous alteration of nomenclature nevertheless does not materialize to amount to change in approach, as recent political bustles and processes has continued to astonish spectators (Aribisala, 2015, Zaggi, 2015, Sakue-Collins, 2017) the conduct of these electoral umpires had marred electoral democracy and the authentic activities of the opposition party clinch to a new political patriotic dispensation of values, views, genuineness and vision. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess and evaluate the impact of electoral democracy in Nigeria, especially in terms of the performance of the opposition in 2019 general election, and make a projection regarding a vibrant democratic space that will go beyond routine elections to speak to the issues preoccupying the Nigerian masses.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY**

To construct a clear meaning of electoral democracy, there will be need to understand the concept democracy, without its ideologies there would not be elections. Normally, it is not easy to define or demarcate the concept of democracy mainly because of the varied methods as dictated by different nations. It is seen as “manifestly vague and flexible concept with contentious meanings” (Popoola, 2007). The word “democracy” has its remote origin in the Greek word *demokratia* (*demos*-the people, plus *kratia* (from *Kartos*)-sway, authority) meaning “the rule by the people”. The impression of this conveys a form of government where the people directly take decisions by themselves without representation as in the Greek

City State or indirectly by representation as it is presently, in most states of the world today. Speiser (1958), defined it as a free society in which government is based upon the consent of an informed citizenry and is dedicated to the protection of the rights of all; even the most despised minorities. The implication of this is that a government can only be free if it takes into consideration the views of all the constituent parts of the community. Taking another view of the matter in the Indian case of Thapper (1950), it was said that it allows for freedom of speech and the press laid at the foundation of all democratic organization; this is because without free political discussion, no public education so essential for the proper functioning of the processes of popular government is possible (Nwabueze, 1982). This is however, subject to the security of the state so that some degree of control is permissible in the interest of security, so long as it is reasonably necessary for that purpose. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides the basis for the operation of democracy in Nigeria by proclaiming equality, justice, welfare of the people as the primary goal of government dignity of human persons, and equality of opportunities. It follows from the above that there are certain minimum characteristics which a democracy ought to possess. (i) Sovereignty of the people which connotes that leader must do according to the people's wish and whatever the people oppose is avoided by the ruler. (ii) Equality of all members of the community to express a view on the way the society is being governed, irrespective of his/her standing in the society. (iii) Popular consultation and majority rule, that is, there must be an understanding that when the enfranchised members of the community disagree as to what ought to be done, the last word lies in some sense with the larger number and never the smaller. That is, the majority of the electorate and not the minority should carry the day. There is also the need for provisions of basic freedom for the citizen and political competition for power to be organized through political parties. The totality of the concept envisages that the society is organized in a way that no individual or a group of individuals will lord it over the generality of the people. This appears to be the bane of democratic rule in Nigeria where today the concept of political "godfatherism" has dominated the political landscape. This development negatively contributed to the stunted growth of democracy in Nigeria and fundamentally affected its sustenance, also affecting the elections in the nation, thereby not given credence to electoral democracy. There are complexities in the society which was the result of the spread of capitalism and industrialization and which led to modification of the practice of direct democracy as it was generally conceptualized (Abdulraheem, 2006). This led to what is now known as representative democracy. This is the defining mechanism for democracy as characterized by party politics and competition by way of election. Fukuyama (1995) defined

a democratic country as one that grants “its people that right to choose their own government through periodic secret ballot and multiparty elections on the basis of universal and equal adult suffrage”. The idea of representative government as epitomized by liberal representative democracy has been criticized for discriminating against the poor and does not allow the generality of the people to have control over their representatives. This position was championed by Toffler (1989) that: “Representative government does not change the structure of power. Nowhere do the people exercise the real political control. Election merely provides the illusions of equality and exercise of power. Elections are no more than reassurance rituals. Election takes place intermittently but the exercise of influence by the elites goes on uninterruptedly. Everywhere the gap between the representatives and the represented widens” (Abdulraheem, 2006). Ake, (1993). argued that the only democracy that will appeal to the masses in the continent must be: “a social democracy which goes beyond abstract political right and takes concrete economic and social rights seriously”, a democracy of empowerment which invests heavily in the upliftment of ordinary people so that they can participate effectively in governance and be more competitive in promoting their material interests. The critics also argued that cultural differences from where the idea of participatory or representative democracy developed and what exists in developing economies and that of the less developed countries is a major factor in its implementation. It was argued that there is nothing that can be regarded as democracy in general terms but rather democracy as dictated by the history of each society (Kuna, 1996, (AbdulRaheem, 2006). This was the view of Schumpeter (1942) when he posited: “Democracy is a political method, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decisions and hence, incapable of being an end in itself”. Adedeji (1995) also shared this view as he contended that democracy is only a means to good governance. Two views have been expressed on the duty of representatives. The former is called theory of instructed representation or telephone theory of representation while the latter is the theory of uninstructed representation (Appadorai, 1975). The theory of telephone representation has been criticized on the ground that it is not possible for the representative to state all his total views because of time constraints. Deliberation in parliament is made ineffective because the representative has arrived at his final decision before deliberation commences. The approach is immoral in the sense that as the approach demands the sacrifice of others in favour of his views, it has the tendency of affecting the quality of legislation and it also emphasizes local interest. The other approach is also too loose where the agent becomes the principal and has total and absolute discretion to even compromise the position of his constituents. A balance



between the two extremes is what representative should be and since this is just a means to an end then, the best form of leadership today is still the representative democracy, (Wahab & Muhtar, 2010). It is paramount to note that without democracy there is no need for election. In the other way round without a free and fair election there is no true democracy, which means for there to be a good opposition in politics, there should be free and fair election in a democratic process. Araba & Braimah (2015) put this into perspective as follows: An election itself is a procedure by which the electorate, or part of it, choose the people who hold public office and exercise some degree of control over the elected officials. It is the process by which the people select and control their representatives. The implication of this is that without election, there can be no representative government. A closer look at election as a major plank in democratic process reveals three broad categories of distinct but inextricably linked activities: preparing the grounds and the enabling environment for equitable participation of all, as well as establishing the grand rules of the game; organisation, mobilisation and coordination of the participants; and the adjudication, regulation, legislating, and presiding over these processes. In fact there are three set of interrelated activities making up an election in democracy. This is in accord with Akindele's (2011) assertion that elections are not simply the events that occur on Election Day; rather it is the totality of activities and events before, during, and after voting. Obiyan & Afolabi (2013), & Ugbudian (2015) corroborate this by noting that elections are series of activities leading to voting as a selection process. Thus in studying election as a system in a democratic process, one ought to examine how the opportunities provided for at each of these stages are truly competitive. However, to lump these activities together and treating them as a single colossal method or distinct occurrence can only be done at the theoretical and practical peril of the society concerned. Furthermore, while election is almost generally accepted as a legitimate process or means through which citizens of a country elect and select their representatives in government, the institutional making/workings of this means is often neglected and the fact that, this means can be usurped institutionally to render the entire process illegitimate is something that has been conspicuously absent in political analysis on democracy (Udu 2015; Zaggi 2015). One truth that is evident is that, there is rare electoral democracy in practice that can bring about an effective opposition in politics



## **OPPOSITION POLITICS**

A group of people or political party in a multiparty political system that is opposed to or criticizes continuously the government or political party in power. In politics, the opposition comprises one or more political parties or other organized groups that are opposed to the government. It is the party that goes against another party. These in most cases do not agree to what the sitting government represents. The Network of Ethiopian Scholars (NES) Scandinavian Chapter, in her June 30, 2005 release, ‘put the opposition in a democracy in perspective’ argued that in a democracy, there are many types of people who ordinarily wish to stand for election, some may even be people who do not share the same world view. And once an election is held, which is regarded as free and fair, and a set of the people succeeded in persuading the majority public who got more votes than their competitors, it is a fact that those that lost the election have to live with the victorious ones within the period of the rule, as guaranteed by the constitution, and the losers must be ready to wait till the next election. The operative and operational position, hence, is “free and fair election”. This appears to be utopian especially in the less developed economies of the world. There cannot be any perfect election anywhere in the world because it is a human endeavour. There can however, be an election that can be regarded as generally representative of the views of the majority of the electorate. Where an election is characterized by rigging, manipulation, violence, vote buying, thuggery, inadequacy or insufficiency of electoral materials, substantial non compliance with electoral rules, it may be difficult to conceptualize the position of the opposition to such regimes. Despite the above flaws the study, assume that there must be opposition parties, whether the elections were free and fair or not, in the sense that, parties that could not grab the majority vote, announced as the winner or got the ticket after election is assumed as opposition. The opposition has a lot to do for the sustainable developments of the nation, by checkmating the party in power.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The pluralist theory is more germane in the understanding of the study and considered quite appropriate in this work. The theory of pluralism espouses diversity in a society containing competing unite of power. Important theorists of pluralism include Robert, A. D. (who wrote the seminal pluralist work, *Who Governs?*), David Truman, and Seymour Martin Lipset. In

pluralism, the central government acts as a mediator rather than an all-powerful position that rules unchallenged. This fits well in the original creation of the United States, where the Founding Fathers wished to move away from the very centralized, elite government of England. Pluralism encourages competition between groups as they try to come up with the best way to deal with issues, so the society continues to move forward. Although there is value to theory, it is not an official system recognized by the United States government. Pluralism is the theory that many different groups run a country, rather than individuals. Pluralism critiques direct democracy and instead puts power in groups, such as unions, civil rights groups, lobbies and coalitions. This theory does not necessarily mean that all groups are equal or have the same amount of power. Pluralism is especially relevant for the Nigeria, which has a decentralized government with many powers given to individual states, which then give powers to local governments to further decentralize power. Within each level of government there are also different branches that control different parts of the system so that no one person or group has too much power. Separation of power and the system of checks and balances is an essential part of pluralist theory. The central question for classical pluralism is how power and influence are distributed in a political process. Groups of individuals try to maximize their interests. Lines of conflict are multiple and changing as power is a continuous bargaining process between competing groups. There may be inequalities but they tend to be disseminated and evened out by the diverse forms and distributions of resources all over a population. Any change under this view will be dawdling and incremental, as groups have diverse interests and may act as "veto groups" to destroy legislation. The existence of diverse and competing interests is the basis for a democratic equilibrium, and is vital for the obtaining of goals by individuals. A polyarchy, a circumstance of open competition for electoral support within a significant part of the adult population, ensures competition of group interests and relative equality. Pluralists stress civil rights, such

as choice of expression and organization, and an electoral system with at least two parties. Three of the major tenets of the pluralist school are (1) resources and hence potential power are widely scattered throughout society; (2) at least some resources are available to nearly everyone; and (3) at any time the amount of potential power exceeds the amount of actual power. Finally, and perhaps most important, no one party is all-powerful unless proven so through empirical observation. An individual or group that is influential in one realm may be weak in another. Pluralists believe that with few exceptions power holders usually having a relatively limited scope of influence. It follows therefore that no one group or party is sufficiently powerful to control the context of Nigeria society grappling with corruption, insecurity, ethnicity, unemployment, and other socio-political cum economic issues, which are the major obstacles towards achievement of sustainable development goals. This is so because the complexity and multiplicity of ethnic group is compounded by an equal multiplicity and complexity of religious beliefs of the peoples of Nigeria (Ogunna, 1999). Applying the theory to the study, the opposition parties should form a coalition with the party in government and strictly act as a check that will balance the governance of the ruling party with any little position they grasp in any tier of government in Nigeria. It does not necessarily mean that a party must be in power to strictly adhered to democratic principles, by so doing there will be a shift during election of the mode of individual political party present for elective position, also despite all manipulations there will be room for more coalition in government, using the good works of the opposition as a parameter by the voters. Consequently there should be a shift from political predatory metaphors of grievance, greed, forgery and griotism from both opposition parties and the party in government. Being aware of the character of Nigeria state, of the party in government monopolizing every government agencies, including the judiciary, the Peoples Democratic Party, the major opposition party in 2019 presidential election could have used the finances used in court cases, in developmental issues, focusing on poverty

alleviation, youth empowerment, and education enhancement by so doing joining in tackling the problem in the society. This measure directly or indirectly will not only show case the opposition party but will curtail corruption, and bad governance. The party in power will have no option but to gear towards ameliorating hardship knowing too well that the opposition can take upper hand to woe the citizens with their good works if care is not taken. this positive attitude of giving way to the party that the electoral commission had announce as the winning party will go a long way in allowing the party in power to use government finance judiciously. The money that the party in power uses in court may directly or indirectly come from the treasury of government, these resources can be used for development. It is highly imperative to embrace a new political patriotic dispensation of values, views, genuineness and vision from both the party in power and the opposition parties for electoral democracy to prevail in a pluralistic society like Nigeria that need the pluralist theory to succeed.

### **ELECTION AS A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS**

Democracy normally can be seen ‘as a process of ruling unquestionably, well-established in the standard with the purpose of people in any society ought to have freedom to choose their own political, economic, social, and cultural structure’ (Makinda, 1996, Mesfin, 2008). Additionally, the concept of democracy is generally used to illustrate a political system designed to enlarge the involvement of average citizens in government the authorities of which are undoubtedly defined as well as limited. On the other hand, the naissance supports of a democratic political arrangement, whether considered brittle or conventional, remain unquestionably elections, which can basically be taken as the most serious and perceptive means by which all citizens can peacefully select or get rid of their leaders, (Anglin 1998, Mesfin, 2008). Categorically, elections are the major apparatus that ‘coerce or encourage the policy-makers to pay attention to citizens’ (Powell 2000, Mesfin, 2008). Definitely, the

winning political party of the elections, or ruling party, is envisaged as holding temporarily the mandate of the whole citizenry, in as much as it continues to win elections. Correspondingly, political opposition is held to be legal, justified and essential because there will basically be no real test of the proficiency of the ruling party without such opposition in elections.

Accordingly, elections need the existence of a multiparty system so that citizens create a political pronouncement by voting for the competing candidates fielded by different political parties sharing divergent visions and presenting diverse options. There is universal conformity among political scientists that one of the indispensable components in a vigorous democracy is the existence of lasting opposition that seriously verifies the day-to-day proceedings of the ruling party (Ionescu & de Madariaga 1968, Kiisa 2005). Actually, the ruling party tries to run the government so as to safeguard their verification and increase public support, being aware that if they fail to do so they may lose office. The opposition parties point out defects in the ruling parties' public policies and make substitute proposals, hoping that the voters will entrust them with power in the next tenure. 'The opposition, then, is basically a government-in-waiting' (Kiisa, 2005).

Consequently, in any political configuration, the democratic litmus test will be, by default, the peaceful swop of governmental authority by the opposition winning elections and constituting a government, and the ruling party quietly accepting the results and not responding with hostility, terrorization, forgery and unconstitutional, unlawful, partial court judgments. This has happened in 2015 general election where the ruling party acknowledged its defeat. Mainwaring (2001) noted, 'opportunities for new parties were constrained, not lawfully, but relatively as a product of the low turnover.' In 2019 general election many parties emerged and registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),

These parties include: Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party ANRP, Accord A, Action Alliance AA, Action Democratic Party ADP, Action Peoples Party APP, Advanced Allied Party AAP, Advanced Congress Of Democrats ACD, Advanced Nigeria Democratic Party ANDP, African Action Congress AAC, African Democratic Congress ADC, African Peoples Alliance APA, All Blending Party ABP, All Grand Alliance Party AGAP, All Grassroots Alliance AGA, All Progressives Congress APC, All Progressives Grand Alliance APGA, Alliance for a United Nigeria AUN, Alliance For Democracy AD, Alliance for New Nigeria , Alliance National Party ANP, Alliance of Social Democrats ASD, Allied Congress Party of Nigeria ACPN, Allied Peoples Movement APM, Alternative Party of Nigeria APN, Better Nigeria Progressive Party BNPP, Change Advocacy Party CAP, Change Nigeria Party CNP, Coalition for Change C4C, Congress of Patriots COP, Democratic Peoples Congress DPC, Democratic Peoples Party DPP, Freedom and Justice Party FJP, Fresh Democratic Party FRESH, Grassroots Development Party of Nigeria GDPN, Green Party of Nigeria GPN, Hope Democratic Party HDP, Independent Democrats ID, Justice Must Prevail Party JMPP, Kowa Party KP, Labour Party LP, Legacy Party of Nigeria LPN, Liberation Movement LM, Mass Action Joint Alliance MAJA, Masses Movement of Nigeria MMN, Mega Party of Nigeria MPN, Modern Democratic Party MDP, Movement for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy MRDD, National Action Council NAC, National Conscience Party NCP, National Democratic Liberty Party NDLP, National Interest Party NIP, National Rescue Movement NRM, National Unity Party NUP, New Generation Party of Nigeria NGP, New Nigeria Peoples Party NNPP, New Progressive Movement NPM, Nigeria Community Movement Party NCMP, Nigeria Democratic Congress Party NDCP, Nigeria Elements Progressive Party NEPP, Nigeria for Democracy NFD, Nigeria Peoples Congress NPC, People For Democratic Change PDC, Peoples Coalition Party PCP, Peoples Democratic Movement PDM, Peoples Democratic Party PDP, Peoples Party of Nigeria PPN, Peoples

Progressive Party PPP, Peoples Redemption Party PRP, People's Trust PT, Progressive Peoples Alliance PPA, Providence People's Congress PPC, Re-build Nigeria Party RBNP, Reform and Advancement Party RAP, Restoration Party of Nigeria RP, Save Nigeria Congress S.N.C, Social Democratic Party SDP, Socialist Party of Nigeria SPN, Sustainable National Party SNP, United Democratic Party UDP, United Patriots UP, United Peoples Congress U.P.C, United Progressive Party UPP, Unity Party of Nigeria UPN, We The People Nigeria WTPN, Yes Electorates Solidarity YES, Young Democratic Party YDP, Young Progressive Party YPP, Youth Party YP, Zenith Labour Party ZLP. These parties were restricted not forcefully rather by low supports of Nigeria core politicians or elites who could have made a great impart to the general citizens and finance these new opposition parties to greater height. Another structure of check may be power-sharing (Budge & Keman 1990). Power-sharing harmony is typically fashioned when the ruling party's assurance and authority are severely weakened even though it remains strong enough to implement control over the most significant institutions. These was seen in the 2019 general election where, All Progressives Congress (APC), produced the president but could not secure all the seats in the upper and lower chambers of the national assembly, the senate is made of both the ruling and the opposition parties, also in the South East where APC is not vibrant, the major opposition party the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), clings almost all the governorship seat with another opposition party. This was due to the weakness of APC in the geopolitical zone and power was shared, there by the opposition party who was before the last dispensation the ruling party for sixteen years is struggling to be in power. The establishment of a power-sharing agreement has the benefit of bestowing numerous sort of authority to the leading party devoid of dishonouring the opposition. This could ease the ruling party's nervousness of losing all as well as dreading of impending retaliations, though, at the same time, it might lighten the opposition's concern that the ruling party might have somehow rigged the



elections as it is applicable in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria, PDP the core opposition party appealed in court querying the victory of the presidential candidate of the ruling party APC in the election. The critical aspect of it was that it proves to be more authentic and may additionally demoralize the already insecure faith of Nigerians in democracy. That also happened in Kenya after the 2007 elections, but only after the unanticipated post-elections confusion which killed 1 000 of its citizens, drove 300 000 from their homes and constituted a considerable setback for its image as Africa's show case of democracy and stability, (Afrobarometer 2006, Chege, Mukele & Kabebere 2007, Mesfin, 2008). Election happen to be a suitable way of choosing and changing political leaders because it is commonly understood to provide identical chance to citizens to vote and be voted for, in spite of constitutional constraints (Udu , 2015). Political leaders are to be elected by the people, via a structure presumably offering both the electorates as well as contestants unobstructed right to vote also to be voted respectively, and doing so within the framework of a level playing ground for all. Consequently guarantying level handedness of the different activities alongside with procedures is the burden of the democratic process, and the degree to which, individually and collectively, they are adjudged as balanced is the extent to which the legitimate reassign of political power is said to be democratic (Akindele 2011; Obiyan & Afolabi 2013). The impact of this development as an essential component of liberal democratic institution, which is unconstrained involvement, in any form, of all qualified adult members is the perfect nature of democratic arrangement. In addition, this method imbues the coordination of the authority to bestow and reassign legality from the people (the governed) to their elected government (the governors) (Osumah & Aghemelo 2010). The point is that to occasion difficulty of any sort to mass involvement or to a fragment of it thereof, is to place the practice against itself and this, in itself, is an atrocity to democracy or representative government. Araba & Braimah (2015) set this into viewpoint as follows: An election itself is

a formula by which the electorate, or part of it, select the people who hold public office and apply some measure of power over the elected officials. It is the method by which the people select and have power over their representatives. Connotatively without election, there can be no representative government. To bend this practice invariably means the government springing from it is automatically illegal to the point that it does not receive its endorsement from the approval of the people. Put another way, a process that destabilizes the right of a people to choose/select their representatives invariably dispute their authority to apply control over those representatives, since they have miniature or no say on who emerge or how they win. Equally, voted representatives conduct themselves with miniature or no sense of accountability to the people once they are convinced their endorsement is not from the people, but moderately attained from a tilted process. Connotatively every step in the process of electing representatives matters in a democratic society. Huntington (1991) noted that election is of “greater significance in all democratic regimes” to the extent that it, definitely structures the nucleus of democratic distinctiveness so that it is almost unfeasible to talk on the subject of democracy without election. According to him, a political system is democratic to the extent that its most powerful decision-makers are chosen through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which practically all the adult population is qualified to vote (Huntington 1991). Huntington upholds that this procedure of selection must be distinguishing in showing lack of nepotism and even-handed in the manner by which such selection procedure and its interconnected activities are carried out. Consequently it is not adequate for election to be periodic if its measures are not free from personal, parochial, and institutional prejudice. More so, the overall character of an election is the cumulative expression of the different interrelated processes leading up to it (Akindede 2011, Obiyan & Afolabi 2013, Ugbudian 2015). Consequently, election, appropriately understood, is the amalgamation of methods leading to the selection of political

representatives. Commencing from when the ban of political activities was lifted or the publication of beginning of political calendar, registration of political parties, registration and validation of voters, demarcation of electoral constituencies, accreditation of voters and actual voting, collation and announcement of results. Therefore beyond the theoretical view of the procedure, election is a sequence of pragmatic practices which is personified as voting, and concludes with the declaration of results and publication of winner(s). election critically as a key board in democratic method discloses three broad categories of divergent but inextricably linked activities: preparing the grounds and the enabling atmosphere for impartial participation of all, as well as establishing the wonderful rules of the game; organization, mobilization and harmonization of the participants; the adjudication, regulation, legislating, and presiding over these methods.

### **THE PASSIVITY OF OPPOSITION PARTIES IN DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT**

Most opposition parties concern themselves with what happens during elections and not what takes place between elections and after election. In other words, within the four years that span governorship, legislative and presidential elections, and the years that span local government elections, the opposition parties do not join with the population on issues of daily survival ( availability of power, fuel price hikes, inflation, water outages, unemployment, industrial action, restructuring, insurgency, insecurities, among others). Nor organize to fight continuously against appalling government policies (IMF policies, sub-regional or continental disaffection). This is multifaceted by the poor presentation of some of the elected opposition party representatives in local councils, states and the National Assembly. The unadventurous grasps that, notwithstanding the opposition parties in Nigeria in the 2019 election showcased. There is little place for democracy in Nigeria because of one-party dominance, restriction of civil liberties, rigging, monopolization of the means of social media cum security agencies,

dictation of judiciary proceeding cum judgment by the party in power, monetization of politics, marginalization of civil society and some geopolitical zones, detrimental economic indicators, unemployment, insecurity, inadequate reserves, external imbalances, continuous suffering of economic, non-restructuring, food shortages, and the burden of debt servicing. To quote Achille Mbembe, it is necessary for the opposition to define a real strategy towards a social struggle (social democracy and democratic development) that is adapted to the present Nigeria conditions (Mbembe 2004, Ngwane, 2014). It is crucial for the oppositions to identify genuine approaches gearing towards societal struggles, (societal democratic system as well as Nigerians development), also by the oppositions parties candidate in power in any part of Nigeria doing better than their counterpart the party in power (APC) in office or political position, whether in Senate, House of Representatives or governorship position. The opposition should have and adopt mandates that promote democratization in Nigeria.

The main parties in Nigeria had been almost the same in formation, strategy positions, manifestoes, philosophical receptiveness and approaches (Omotola 2009, Akubo, & Yakubu, 2014). There is no clear cut difference between the political parties in 2019 general elections, members can change from one party to another without ideological change. The core interest of such people is not to perform creditably in the opposition party but to seek position for re-election if been rejected by their party or been appointed into one position or the other. Accordingly the parties are not showing governmental policies for different visions and plans of governance and expansion but links, divisions, cliques, and associations for control and resource struggles, ‘Deprived of apparent ideological uniqueness and obligation, and subjective based political principles’ (Omotola 2009).

The parties missing in ideological content as a proposal for action, classification, enlistment, legitimization and inconsistencies supervision (Nnoli 2003, Akubo, & Yakubu, 2014), the

parties have bowed to money distinctiveness, support and aggression, away from principles and plans, perhaps with a few exceptions, the performance of the parties in terms of organization, functions, operations and management has been miserably reduced (Nwosu 2008). The parties are not autonomous and popular institutes, as they are short of essential liberal internal machineries, homogeneous policies and regulations for definite discussion and joint decision making. The parties being platforms for personal, sectional and patronage struggles and interests, have lacked a strong directive, controlling, disciplinary and unifying nucleus that holds together (Omotola 2009). This had made the opposition politics in 2019 election to be inconsequential yielding less positive fruit.

Whilst political parties are at the nucleus of de-democratisation in Nigeria, facts advocates that elections had been the weakest link in our search for democratic system in Nigeria (TMG 2003, Anifowose 2004, Ikelegbe, 2013, Akubo, & Yakubu, 2014). This principally arises from the fact that the agencies and groups that are approved to assist, organize and contribute in the elections have not taken the vocation with the best moral and specialized loyalty (ikelegbe, 2013). The political parties became vehicles for de-democratisation. They not just destabilized and prejudiced the highly damaged party primaries but they also determined its outcome. Ever since, internal party democracy and the selection of candidates have become a highly vexed issue. These group of people all constituted one-third of delegates (Momoh, 2013, Akubo, & Yakubu, 2014). These facts had made the opposition party to derail in competence and cannot compete favourably, with the party in power. Opposition parties need the association with advocate as well as the nitty-gritty of civil society. One of the most significant groups in the pro-democracy interest group is the campaigner elements in civil society, which include the human rights activists, minority rights groups, movements for the empowerment and participation of marginalized geopolitical IPOB, MASORB, NPC, women, youth forums and wing of various geopolitical zones, students and labour unions, the

religious bodies, and the media (Ake 2000). The oppositions in Nigeria did not built whole linkages with these groups in the 2019 elections. Yet it was the youth that gave power to succeeding opposition leaders turned Presidents in 2015 general election in Nigeria, in Senegal, like Abdoulaye Wade in 2000 and Macky Sall in 2012; it is the feminization of power policy that Paul Kagame of Rwanda survives on, (Ngwane, 2014).

### **THE BANE OF FACTIONALIZED OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP IN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA**

Since the creation of opposition parties, attempts at instituting an identifiable, credible and consensual leadership and programme have failed. Unlike other African countries that have a clear leadership within the Opposition (Gabon, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Zimbabwe), the case of Nigeria differs widely. PDP and its presidential aspirant Atiku Abubakar would have easily stood out as a rallying point as opposition leader owing to his Northern origin affiliation support, but he has been met with contempt for relatively ‘low performance of the party for sixteen years, the Northern-Fulani origin of the core opposition party presidential candidate, and the ruling party presidential candidate. Deficiency of designed Manifesto: To begin with, giving a manifesto would denote that an exact principle already exists within a political party. Nevertheless, such ideologies that would guide the well-planned manifesto do not exist in Nigeria. And even when they do exist, party members have little or no ideas of what their party stands for to allow them use such thoughts in winning the conscience of voters. Ojo (2008) articulated that it is embarrassing when candidates of political parties in Nigeria cannot engage in issues upsetting the people. emphasizing that such approach in a democratic system shows ineffectiveness and does not provide citizens the chance to make rational choices among parties and candidates. This is because there is no political

underpinning to use in determining the better choice, (Davis 2003 Ojo 2008, Adeagbo & Omodunbi, 2019).

Other notable complications in the process include the fact that the electoral successes of the incumbent party, the APC, were not popularly perceived to be a product of a clean electoral process. In most cases, the electoral processes were often stronghold, infused as they were by the abuse of the power of incumbency, disproportionate use of state resources, including security agents, national treasury, state-owned media, judiciary and so on. Another dimension of the problem relates to the fact that opposition parties too were unduly too fragmented and factionalized, making it difficult for them to organise as a genuinely attractive opposition and alternative government (Omotola, 2013; 2014).

In the circumstance, the urge to develop a formidable oppositional platform to dislodge the APC became very sturdy; hence the recourse of other opposition party dropping their ambition and presidential candidate ticket. It would be recalled that the APC was a product of the merger of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), and a breakaway faction of the All Progressive's Grand Alliance (APGA) led by Rochas Okorochoa, the Governor of Imo State before 2019 election. Aimed essentially at supplanting the PDP, the emergence of APC as a mega party made the contest for 2015 more intense, these was the expectation from the oppositions in 2019 general elections. (Omotola & Nyuykonge, 2015).



## CONCLUSION

The paper revealed that despite the potential of democracy in ensuring smooth power transfer, the failure of political leaders to observe the rules guiding the process portrays democracy as an incompetent system. It also reveals that the majority of political parties did not believe in the ethos of democracy. The 2019 election in Nigeria had been characterized by a high scale of electoral malpractices, money politics, electoral violence and the use of ethno-religious divide in order to influence the voting patterns of the electorates. From all indications, the green tree of nationhood has not yet borne the yellow fruits of national cohesion. Perhaps a new democratic transition bringing all active forces together in the core opposition party (the People Democratic Party), could help chart a new course that would go beyond routine elections and usher in bold, creative and indigenous development programmes that resonate with human and infrastructural progress. But before then it would be necessary for the opposition in Nigeria to shed itself of its embedded and shifting political predatory metaphors of grievance, greed and griotism to embrace a new political patriotic dispensation of values, views and vision. Therefore, the paper has concluded that orderly transfer of power depends on the wishes of political leaders, and for succession to be orderly; the paper recommends that all the parties involved in the process of conducting political processes should be committed to the rules of the game.

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