

Multi-Partism in the Third Universal Theory, the Deployment of Instruments of Alienation and People's Participation in the Conduct of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.

Jude Chiedozie OKWUADIMMA and Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU

Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA.

[0188] Abstract

This study interrogated the popular participation in the conduct of representative democratic elections in Nigeria against the backdrop of the tenets of Muammar Gaddafi's Third Universal Theory with keen emphasis on the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Specifically, it identified how the multi-Partism in Nigeria's representative democratic system were a critical factor in people's participation in the conduct of the 2023 general elections. While literature abound, interrogating the place of the multi-party instrument of governance in representative democracy, efforts have not been made to examine the impacts of the activities of this institution on popular participation in the conduct of elections in Nigeria, hence this study. Adopting a critical qualitative research design, the paper relied on secondary source of data collection, and employed the textual analytical technique to present and analyze collected data. While relying on critical and logical sense of evidences, the study established that the Multi-Partism in Nigeria's Representative Democratic System, through the deployment of the instruments of alienation such as zoning, consensus candidacy among others, affected popular participation in the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

Keywords: Alienation, General Elections, Multi-Party System, Political Participation, Third Universal Theory.

Introduction

The success of representative democracy in fulfilling its promises to the common man begins and ends with the success of the electoral processes. This is owing to the fact that credible elections are at the core of representative democracy, with the all important roles ranging from affording the people the opportunity to choose their leaders, to creating avenues for accountability in governance. The fact that representative democracy doesn't allow for everybody to be in government in person but rather through representation, suggests that the process of electing those representatives must be such that it pays greater attention to and takes into cognizance, the aspirations, choices and the general will of the entire citizenry. The above becomes imperative owing to the fact that it is unrealistic and indeed a malign illusion to believe that the people can have the power to make the leaders act in a way that suggests that it is really the people that are ruling themselves (Dunn, 1999), especially when the leaders are elected without the consent of the people.

The conduct of elections, which Muammar Gaddafi views as one of the major instruments of governance under representative democracy, has been a source of great concern in Nigeria since the return of multi-party democracy in 1999. In fact, Omotola (2010) opines that in Nigeria, elections have been one of the main problems of the democratization process. He further argues that "elections under Nigeria's Fourth Republic were characterized by ineffective administration at all stages and levels (before, during and after), resulting in damagingly discredited outcomes". Isma'ila and Othman (2016) rightly observe that the challenges facing the conduct of democratic elections in Nigeria manifest in three forms viz: the manipulation of rules, the manipulation of voters and the manipulation of voting. To them, the manipulation of rules entails the distortion of electoral (and party) laws to favor one party or contestant, conspicuously, "when the rules administering candidacy prevent certain political forces from contesting elections, or when large sectors of the adult population are excluded from voting". On the other hand, the manipulation of voters suggests the distortion of voters' preferences. "The first one involves illicit forms of campaign tactics that are deceptive and that violate campaign finance laws or severe bias in media coverage of the election. The second form consists of alteration of how preferences are expressed at the polling station, through vote-buying or intimidation in the aim of increasing the vote of a specific political force. Lastly, voting manipulation manifests in the form of "electoral maladministration, such as ballot-box stuffing, misreporting, under-provision of voting facilities in

opposition strongholds, lack of transparency in the organization of the election, bias in the way electoral disputes are adjudicated in the courts, and so on" (Birch, 2009 in Isma'ila and Othman, 2016: p. 104).

The above raise concerns over the enthronement of a dictatorial governing body, "since the majority of the electorate is ruled by an instrument of governance, they did not vote for but which has been imposed on them" (Gaddafi, 1975). Muammar Gaddafi had also expressed some concerns in his Third Universal Theory, over the tendency of the multi-party system such as practiced in Nigeria's representative democracy, to intensify the struggle for power while creating unnecessary crisis of disunity and division among the citizens. In line with the forgoing, this study focuses on popular participation in the conduct of representative democratic elections in Nigeria with emphasis on the 2023 general elections and how it interfaces with the activities of the multi-party system as highlighted in the Muammar Gaddafi's Third Universal Theory.

Review of Related Literature

The Muammar Gaddafi's Third Universal Theory

The Third Universal Theory is the intellectual responses of Muammar Gaddafi to the challenges of representative democracy globally. In this theory, Gaddafi referred to the Western system of representative democracy, as nothing but a travesty. The basic tenets of the Gaddafi's Populist-Socialist Third Universal Theory are outlined in a three-part publication known as "The Green Book". Describing the theory, Muammar Gaddafi states thus:

The Third Universal Theory is a prelude to the total freedom of the popular masses from the shackles of injustice, from despotism, from political domination and economic exploitation, ultimately leading to a society for all mankind. In this society, everyone shall be free; everyone shall have equal power, wealth and weapons so that freedom shall totally and definitively prevail." (Gaddafi in Martin, 2012: p.116).

Gaddafi conceives the Third Universal Theory as an ideology, when accepted by the Third World countries, could resist the imperialism tendency of the two-dominating political-ideological systems, and that could guarantee the protection of the vulnerable individuals in the developing societies of the third world. For Gaddafi (1975: p.1), "the instrument of government is the prime political problem confronting human communities (The problem of the instrument of government entails questions of the following kind. What form should the exercise of authority assume? How ought societies to organize themselves politically in the modern world?)". It is specifically, this political problem of the instrument of government confronting the entire world that the Green Book has come to solve.

The Third Universal Theory posits that "all political systems in the world today are a product of the struggle for power between alternative instruments of government". And while this struggle may be peaceful or violent, as can be seen among classes, sects, tribes, parties or individuals, the outcome is always the victory of a particular governing structure - be it that of an individual, group, party or class - and the defeat of the people; which translates to the defeat of genuine democracy.

The concept of representative democracy remains a very complex and most times a highly paradoxical one. When a candidate wins with a simple majority, such as 51% of the total votes, it can lead to a situation where nearly half of the electorate may feel disenfranchised and governed by an entity they did not support. This phenomenon can result in a governing body that represents only a minority, particularly when votes are split among multiple candidates. In such cases, the winner may not necessarily represent the majority's interests, leading to a form of dictatorship masquerading as democracy. As Gaddafi rightly maintains, this can be seen as a falsification of genuine democracy, where the governing body prioritizes its own interests over those of the people. This raises important questions about the nature of the representative democracy and how it can be a true representative of the people's will. At this point, dictatorship which is characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or group, often without checks on their authority, now shares the same meaning and features with the representative democracy. No doubt, the above ultimately results in the reckless suppression of individual rights and freedoms, as well as a lack of accountability and transparency in governance.

The Third Universal Theory conceives the party system as a modern instrument of dictatorial government which enables the minority to rule over the majority. To Muammar Gaddafi, "the party system is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief". The group of persons described above, having a common objective to achieve (political

power), come together to form a party, impose their will, or extend the dominion of their beliefs, values, and interests to the entire society. Accordingly, the existence of multi-partism in representative democracy intensifies the struggle for power, and this eventually results in the abandonment of any achievements for the masses and of any socially beneficial plans. Actions such as these are paraded as a justification to mess up with the image of the ruling party so that the opposition party can emerge and take over power from the ruling party. These parties do not usually take up arms against one another in their struggle, but rather, they resort to denouncing and denigrating the actions and policy decisions of each other. This battle which appears unavoidable as one of the major features of representative democracy, is mostly fought at the expense of the totality of the vital interests of the society. Some, if not all, of those higher interests almost always will fall victim of the struggle for power between instruments of government, "for the destruction of those interests supports the opposition in their argument against the ruling party or parties... consequently, the interests and programs of the society become the victims of the parties' struggle for power". Such struggle is, therefore, politically, socially, and economically destructive to the society, despite the fact that it creates political activity. Thus, the struggle results in the victory of another instrument of government; the fall of one party, and the rise of another. It is, in fact, a defeat for the people, i.e., a defeat for democracy. Furthermore, parties can be bribed and corrupted either from inside or outside. (Gaddafi, 1975: p. 3-4).

Gaddafi likened parties' struggle for power to tribal struggles. Tribal or sectarian struggles have enormous negative and destructive effects on the society which are identical to the negative and destructive effects of party struggles in the society. By implication, Gaddafi was of the opinion that the aggressive struggle for power that characterize the party system (especially in multi-party states) under representative democracy pose a serious threat to the unity and progress of the overall society. Hence, he posits that "a society torn apart by party feud is similar to one which is torn apart by tribal or sectarian conflicts". The intricate problem in the case of democracy is reflected in the nature of the instrument of government, which is demonstrated by conflicts of classes, parties and individuals. The elections and plebiscites were invented to cover the failure of these unsuccessful experiments to solve this problem. The solution lies in finding an instrument of government other than those which are subject to conflict and which represent only one faction of society; that is to say, an instrument of government which is not a party class, sect or a tribe, but an instrument of government which is the people as a whole. In other words, we seek an instrument of government which neither represents the people nor speaks in their name (Gaddafi, 1975: p. 6).

The Activities of the Multi-Party System and Popular Participation in the Conduct of Representative Democratic Elections in Nigeria: Political Parties in democratic societies such as Nigeria, are indispensable voluntary and informal associations of society, where people share commonly understood values, customs and attitudes to their role in politics (I-IDEA, 2007). Kura in Kura (2011) ideally views political parties as "formally recognized organizations whose members share certain common values, ideals and aspirations about how society should be politically, socio-culturally and economically organized for the common good and aspire to translate these ideals and values through the control of government by placing their representatives in a competitive free, fair and honestly conducted elections, without harassment, intimidation and threat of violence". For Odigwe (2015), a political party is not just an organized participant in the government – an organized group, a formal organized group with structures, hierarchy and leadership, but also a mediator between the people and the government, and as a platform on which public officers seek to attain government office. Odigwe also agrees that political parties remain a successful instrument for the actualization of a democratic system. Collaborating the views of Odigwe, the reports by IRI (2020) notes that political parties are critical to democratic governance, linking citizens and government and acting as a platform for citizens to influence government. In line with the foregoing, Omotola in Musa, Ibietan and Deinde-Adedeji (2020) aver that political parties are indeed 'makers' of democracy, and as such, have been so idealized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them. While maintaining that political parties remain the only platform in Nigeria for democratically elected leaders to emerge, Abba and Babalola (2017) reiterate that elections in Nigeria cannot be thought of without political parties as there is no provision for independent candidacy in the country's constitution.

On the other hand, a multi-party system according to Ojo (2022), is a party system in which the effective number of parties in full political operations is greater than two. Ogunkorode (2019) contends that a Multi-party system suggests a number of political parties different from each other but with the same goal and equal opportunity of contesting for elective positions. In his analysis, Ojo (2022) notes that in some democracies, maximum number of five political parties are allowed, while in some, such

as Nigeria, the constitutions are silent about the maximum number of parties that can evolve. He further notes that in a multi-party system, the parties can control government either as separate entities or through coalition, which is very uncommon in a two-party system. Ogunkorode (2019) went further to argue that multi-party system in Nigeria is prone to many challenges ranging from intra party and inter party conflict, which often affect the nation's democracy.

A critical evaluation of political parties in Nigeria over the years shows that their manifestos have always clustered around leftist, rightist, centrist, conservative or progressive ideological spectrum. However, one common denominator is that the attitudes and characters of majority of the politicians have always defied the theory and practice of any known conventional party system. What this suggests, therefore, is that the problem with constitutional democracy in Nigeria is not basically about the adoption of either multi-party system or two-party system. Rather the problem with Nigeria dwells centrally on the political elite who place parochial sentiments above national interests. Suffice it to say that the heterogeneous composition of Nigeria is not hostile to either multi-party or two-party system, rather, it is the hostile dispositions of the political elite to the tenets and ideologies of multi-party or two-party system that have always jeopardized the country's democratic experimentation (Ojo, 2022: p.257).

In agreement, I-IDEA (2007) states that political parties, as instruments of collective action in Nigeria parties are the creation of the political elite in a bid to control the resources and personnel of government in order to implement an ideology or a political programme. In fact, for Omilusi (2016), not only have political parties in Nigeria abandoned their traditional roles in a democracy, their activities equally and shamefully constitute more of a clog in the wheel of the democratic system of government. Momoh (2010), maintained that so long as party system in Nigeria was concerned, there was no longer anything like political education, consistent and sustained financial membership, regular grassroots meetings, except when elections are at hand. As such, party executives are imposed by one tendency against another tendency in the interplay of internal contestation for the soul and heart of the party. In line with the above, Abba and Babalola observe in their studies that: Contrary to all democratic norms, values and best practices, parties in Nigeria are run not through elected party leaders but through a clientele arrangement that every person elected into position of power and authority automatically becomes the leader of the party in his own domain. The political history of Nigeria reveals that from 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule to date, elected executives superimpose their interests, as well as candidates on the rest of the party. These godfathers/kingmakers are so influential that they turn their respective parties into their personal fiefdoms. Ironically, the main casualties in all these are the political parties. For instance, PDP party leaders interviewed claimed that the "culture" of candidate imposition cost the party the 2015 presidential election. (Abba and Babalola, 2017: p. 127).

(Olorunmola, 2016) decries the costs of running of political parties and funding of campaigns which are beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen and since political parties in Nigeria lack membership base from which to generate funds bit by bit in running these parties, the parties resort to the godfathers for easy and painless means of raising funds for party activities. A very remarkable phenomenon in the structures of the party system in Nigeria is the fact of the suppression and strangulation of internal democracy, conspicuously in the process of selecting candidates for the nation/state wide elections or the intra-party elective positions. This is seen in the manner political gladiators create unnecessary tensions, struggling by all means to grab positions within the party all in a bid to exert some level of authority in the decision making process of the party. "The 2015 general election gives a lot of insight into this. The APC's success at the polls may be a result of the cracks in the wall of the governing party (PDP). Prominent members of the PDP, including governors, senators and members of the House of Representatives left the party for the APC, shortly before the general election. One area of dispute was candidate imposition" (Abba and Babalola 2017: p. 128).

Belittling the Nigerian political party system, Onwe, (2015) likened them to "public liability companies, whose actual owners are the rich shareholders who put in both material and financial effort for its establishment and control its operations". These party owners pay little or no attention to the interests of poor party members let alone that of the poor masses, knowing fully well that intra-party elections could be won without them. To that effect, Fanon explains that the native elites believed that the party's role was to supervise the masses, "not in order to make sure that they really participate in the business of governing the nation, but in order to remind them constantly that the government expects from them obedience and discipline." The native bourgeoisie, in the words of Fanon, first tried to govern "with the help of the people, but soon (governed) against them" Presbey (1998).

According to the report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance cited in Omilusi (2013: p.132), party leaders are elected and candidates nominated for elective positions during the party congresses. However, the elections are usually pre-determined and party bosses tend to have the final say in the selection of leaders. They further noted that this process gives room for incessant internal party crisis across parties in the country. Sadly, party bosses or godfathers are unwilling to allow internal party democracy, a circumstance that leads to frequent conflicts and constrains the development of parties as popular organizations. They further observed that over the years, these party bosses have developed comprehensive techniques for eliminating popular aspirants from party posts and for preventing them from being nominated for elective positions.

According to the I-DEA's Report in Omilusi (2016: p.37), Nigerian party leaders/godfathers have a wide range of techniques with which they eliminate people from party primaries, including: **(a)** A declaration by powerful 'party owners', party barons, state governors, godfathers and so on that those entitled to vote must support one candidate and other aspirants must withdraw. Since these people are very powerful and feared in their communities, their declarations carry much weight. **(b)** Zoning and other forms of administrative fiat are used to exclude unwanted aspirants simply by taking the party zone out of the seat or position in question to an area where the aspirant being excluded is not indigenous. **(c)** Aspirants who oppose the godfathers' candidates are often subject to violence by thugs or security personnel. **(d)** Money, a significant factor in party primaries, is used to bribe officials and to induce voters to support particular candidates. Since the godfather generally has more money than the 'independent' aspirants trying to gain access, many are eliminated because they simply cannot match their opponents' spending. **(e)** One disturbing technique is what Nigerians call 'results by declaration', whereby an aspirant wins a nomination or election, but polling officials simply disregard the results and declare the loser as the winner.

For Ojo (2022), the problem with parties in Nigeria is never the choice of multi-party or two-party which is not even an aberration. The issue remains the political elite who unduly indulge in identity politics at the detriment of conventional guiding principles of party system. Iwara (2004) in Ojo (2022) rightly stressed that undue influence of identity politics on the socio-political engineering of contemporary Nigeria in all ramifications remains a hindrance to democratic consolidation. He opines that "the prominence of identity politics in Nigeria's political process is so overwhelming that politicians canvassing for voters' supports have always placed ethnic, religious and social sentiments above the strength of ideas, arguments and programs that emanate from party system-based conventional political ideology". In line with the above positions, the reports of the International Republican Institute (2020) noted that in Nigeria, political parties tend to be organized along ethnic, religious or geographic lines rather than around ideological issues. On the other hand, Odigwe (2015) maintained that the problem with political parties in today's Nigeria is not the absence of laws guiding their activities. Collaborating the above, Abba and Babalola (2017) note that issues relating to internal party democracy and political inclusion are conspicuously spelt out in several regulatory instruments such as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), Party Constitutions, the Electoral Act, Party Manifestos, etc. For instance, article 1 of the INEC Regulations for the Conduct of Political Party Primaries for the nominations of candidates into various positions provides that: A political party seeking to participate in any election organized by the commission (INEC) must conduct primaries, wherein all eligible members of the party must be given equal opportunity to participate in the primaries of the party for the purpose of selecting candidates for elective positions.

The above provision notwithstanding, Abba and Babalola (2017) observed that Nigerian political parties do not comply with this proviso, instead, artificial rules and/or conditions are created to exclude the underrepresented or unwanted groups from emerging as candidates. In the same vein, Jega (2015) argued that the terrible issue of substituting candidates after primaries was to be blamed on the flaws and inconsistencies in the electoral act which gave rooms for such impunity.

In all these, according to Muammar Gaddafi, what suffers is real democracy and when democracy is under attack, the greatest losers are the poor masses who are denied true participation in the governance of their affairs. Accordingly, every democratically elected governments owe their legitimacy to the extent of popular participation in the electoral processes of the country by the citizens. That is to say that government under representative democracy becomes reasonable only when they are established by the concerted will of the greatest number of the population.

Othman, Osman & Mohammed (2018) warn that poor or non-participation in political process results in many damages not only to the state but also to the citizens in a variety of ways which include criminality, broken homes, corruption, dictatorship, political upheaval of a state and other damaging

consequences to the society. Stolle and Hooghe (2011) also believe that political participation is highly important; giving that it generally affects and determines the performance of the government, secures legitimacy for the government, affects public and private lives of the citizens and ensures democracy. Bakker and Vreese (2011) opine that political participation is a tool for democratic commitment by the citizens through membership, voting in elections, acquiring political knowledge and education. However, Falade (2014: p.17) observes that the Nigerian political system and acts of governance as presently constituted is alien to and does not encourage the mass participation of people in politics. Accordingly, Nwaubani (2012) laments that political corruption has eaten deep into the electoral system of Nigeria. According to him, electioneering campaigns, party nominations, and other related electoral procedures were fraught with bribery, fraud, and outright financial corruption. Nass (2012) warns that the bastardization of elections in Africa especially in Nigeria puts the legitimacy of the government as well as the whole democratic system in questions. Kwasau (2009) declares that the Nigerian political structure demonstrates an increasing decline in the people's interest in political process. Collaborating the above view, Ojukwu et al note that the average Nigerian has been so severely disappointed, frustrated and devastated by the character of Nigerian electoral processes to the extent that they have fallen into either apathetic and indifferent or exceeding skeptical. According to them:

...Nigerian citizens and voters have been 'bitten' several times in politics and in elections. The civic duty of going out to vote in elections had become very dangerous, exposing voters to risks of being assaulted or injured or killed by armed thugs doing the bidding of some politicians, or by some deranged militants and terrorists. If they succeeded in casting their votes unscathed, they watch helplessly as the votes were stolen, or the election results purchased from cooked election and security officials, such that for all practical purposes, their votes don't count. In the circumstances, many citizens have withdrawn from the electoral process and/or have become extremely skeptical about the value and utility of elections (Ojukwu et al, 2019: p. 61).

While Diamond (2015) opines that the continuous declining of voter turnout is one of the signs of democratic ill-health or what he generally termed 'democratic recession'. Nwankwo, Okafor and Asuoha (2017) lament that the declining level of voter turnout in Nigeria is a major cause for concern because elections are bedrock of democracy and the length and breadth of participation in election is one key measure of democratic performance. Accordingly, the long history of the lived experiences of inequality, marginalization, oppressions, discriminations, institutionalized violence and economic exploitations suffered by the numerically Superior masses in the hands of the numerically inferior political class in Nigeria have cumulatively created in the psyche of the former, the feelings of Political powerlessness and normlessness (psychological violence) resulting in unending apathetic political behavior (see Okwuadimma and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2021).

Method of Data Collection/Analysis

The study adopts a Critical Qualitative Research Design. The major objective of critical research design is to critique existing socio-political phenomena while exerting frantic efforts to emancipate the people from oppressive social situations. It therefore relies on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source of data collection for this study involves the use of a Key Informant Interview (KII) to extract the views of stakeholders that have first-hand information and experience on the subject of investigation. Accordingly, ten (10) key informant interview participants were purposively selected from among Scholars of Political Science and International Relations.

For the secondary sources, the study also relies specifically on running documents such as government gazettes, including the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the 2010 and the 2022 electoral act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended); Nigerian Political Parties' constitutions, Nigerian law reports, other official reports especially those from the electoral umpire the Independent National Electoral Commission, etc. The study also adopts Textual Analysis as the suitable method of data presentation and analysis to classify and analyze collected data.

Discussion

Zoning/Rotational Candidacy in Nigeria's Multi-Party System and Peoples' Participation in the Conduct of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: The Third Universal Theory projects the party system in representative democracy as a modern instrument of dictatorial regime which enables the minority to rule over the majority. To Muammar Gaddafi, "the party system is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a

shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief". The group of persons described above, having a common objective to achieve (political power), come together to form a party, impose their will, or extend the dominion of their beliefs, values, and interests to the entire society. In line with the foregoing, a respondent in category B in this study, Samuel N. C. Nwagbo raised concerns about the nature of party politics in Nigeria, according to him: I have argued severally that election on the basis of choices of political parties is not actually a participatory democracy because it is just a means of assisting the political elites to consolidate their interests.

This is true because the elites are the ones that determine who emerges through the party process as the party's candidate. So calling the people now to vote on the basis of what the elites have decided within the parties' caucuses is tantamount to inviting the people to play the role of mediators in the elites' struggle for power to ensure that one emerges at the end. To me, political parties and their activities constitute a setback to the ideals of democracy because looking at the number of political party members and the population that are not associated with party politics, you will discover that the former is highly insignificant. I can by the way of estimate tell you that over 90% of Nigerians do not belong to any political party while less than 10% may identify with one party, but the former are expected to make their political choices based on the skewed options presented to them by the latter who are numerically insignificant (*Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, personal interview, 17th June, 2025*).

The Constitution and the electoral laws in Nigeria granted the people the rights to participate in and take charge of their political space and at the same time ceded all these powers to the political parties. The party system in Nigeria became so powerful to the extent that they constitute themselves as the greatest impediment to the citizens' participation in politics. The Constitution and the electoral laws in Nigeria empowered the party system in a manner that placed everything politics under the control of political parties. The implication of the above is that politics in Nigeria is centered on the political parties with little or no attention to the people. This has made the struggle for power among the political parties in Nigeria a very fiercely and contentious experience. A respondent in category B in this study, Augustine Onyishi, PhD rightly captured it thus:

The truth is that those who have made politics their career occupation would do anything possible to protect their interests. Politics as a business venture in Nigeria have been monopolized that the gatekeeping mechanisms do not permit the common man to come close to it, one of those mechanisms is the continued refusal to allow for independent candidacy. It is just like some business ventures such as the telecommunications industry, one who's not a billionaire does not go close to it. Think about how much these politicians pegged their respective expression of interest and nomination forms in the 2023 general elections. It was designed to alienate the common man and that's why they will never allow for independent candidacy and that has seriously affected popular participation (*Senior Political Economy Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, direct personal interview, April 14th, 2025*).

The Third Universal Theory had maintained that the existence of many parties intensifies the struggle for power and this results in the neglect of any achievements for the people and of any socially beneficial plans. In their bid to cling to power, political parties in Nigeria have invented several politically alienating tools such as the zoning/rotation formula, which Muammar Gaddafi considers by all standard, as undemocratic. Given the intense struggle for power characteristic of the Nigerian political elites, zoning as an informal arrangement was devised by the Nigerian elites in the course of their informal political exchanges (Ambali and Mohammed, 2016).

In the views of Akinola (1996), zoning is an attempt by the political elites to formalize a pattern whereby the geo-ethnic origin of the national leader alternates from one election to the other. Within the Nigerian context, zoning or rotational power sharing represents a conscious effort to share key political offices as identified by the constitutional conference which includes the office of the President, Vice President, Senate leader and Speaker of House of Representatives by the six zones: North- East, North-West, Central Nigeria, South West, South-East and Southern minority on a rotational basis (Ambali and Mohammed, 2016). Zoning/ rotational candidacy arrangements in Nigerian politics are largely an individual internal party affairs. Article 50(1) of the PDP constitution did not only empower the party's National Executive Committee to set the guidelines and regulations for the nomination of candidates for elections into public offices but also bequeathed to her, the final authority for resolving all disputes relating to the choice of the Party' candidates for any election. Specifically, article 7 (3) (c) of the 2012 constitution of the PDP (as amended) reveals that the PDP strictly aims at "adhering to the

policy of the rotation and zoning of Party and Public elective offices in pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness". Article 20 (iv) (e) of the 2022 APC constitution (as amended) provides that: "without prejudice to Article 20(u) and (iii) of this Constitution, the National Working Committee shall subject to the approval of the National Executive Committee make Rules and Regulations for the nomination of Candidates through primary elections, All such Rules, Regulations and Guidelines shall take into consideration and uphold the principle of Federal Character, gender balance, geo-political spread and rotation of offices, to as much as possible ensure balance within the Constituency covered.

In the same vein, article 6 (9) of the 2001 constitution of the NNPP maintains that the party aims at "promoting the unity and political stability of Nigeria by instituting the principle of power sharing and rotation of key public offices among the six geo-political zones of the country". In preparation for the 2023 general elections, the chieftains of the All Progressive Congress, including President Muhammadu Buhari (as he then was) and the 19 progressive governors met at the presidential villa on the 22nd of February 2022 to strengthen their resolve in ensuring the party's success in the coming elections. The APC resolved in the said meeting to adopt a zoning formula that will swap offices held between the North and the South in such a manner that would ensure that all offices occupied by Northerners in the last eight years, would go to the South and vice visa. The party specifically resolved that the South would produce the next presidential candidate of the APC since the then incumbent was from the North while the national chairmanship would go to the North since the last occupant, Adams Oshiomhole, was from the South (Umoru, Agbakwuru & Yakubu, 2022).

Against the long established tradition enshrined in her constitution, the zoning committee of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in April 2022, recommended that the presidential ticket of the party in the 2023 elections be thrown open to all the zones of the country. This was against the calls and expectations that the party would as a matter of principle and tradition, zone the presidential ticket to the South ahead of the 2023 general election. While the 37-member committee maintained that zoning in the party was affirmed for other positions, it concluded that the ticket for the presidential election is thrown open this time around due to exigency of time (Iroanusi, 2022). The lacuna created by the above decision of the committee gave rise to the North-South divide within the party, leading to the formation of the G.5 group with the attendant crises that have engulfed the party till date.

Table 1: ZONING ARRANGEMENTS ACROSS PARTIES IN THE 28 STATES THAT HELD GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.

S/N	States	Parties	Zones Favoured by the Zoning Arrangements
1.	Abia	PDP	Abia Central and North zones
2.	Adamawa	PDP, APC	Adamawa Central
3.	Akwa Ibom	APC, PDP	Akwa Ibom North-East
4.	Bauchi	APC	Bauchi North
5.	Benue	APC, PDP	Benue North-East and Benue South
6.	Borno	Nil	Nil
7.	Cross River	APC, PDP	Cross River South
8.	Delta	PDP, APC	Delta Central
9.	Ebonyi	PDP, APC	Ebonyi North, Ebonyi Central
10.	Enugu	PDP	Enugu East
11.	Gombe	Nil	Nil
12.	Jigawa	APC	Jigawa North-East
13.	Kaduna	LP, ADC	Kaduna South
14.	Kano	NNPP	Kano South
15.	Katsina	Nil	Katsina North
16.	Kebbi	Nil	Kebbi South
17.	Kwara	PDP	Kwara North
18.	Lagos	Nil	Nil
19.	Nasarawa	Nil	Nil
20.	Niger	APC, PDP	Niger South
21.	Ogun	Nil	Nil
22.	Oyo	Nil	Nil
23.	Plateau	PDP, APC	Plateau Central
24.	Rivers	PDP, APC	Rivers South-East
25.	Sokoto	APC, PDP	Sokoto East
26.	Taraba	PDP	Taraba North
27.	Yobe	Nil	Nil
28.	Zamfara	Nil	Nil

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023>. Compiled by the Researcher

Table 1 above shows the pattern of zoning arrangements across parties in the states that held gubernatorial elections in the 2023 general elections. States such as Borno, Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Yobe etc. where the already existing zoning principles were not adhered to was because the incumbent governors were contesting for their second terms. It is pertinent to note that zoning of political positions to a particular section or group in a zero-sum manner translates to absolute alienation of the other sections or groups from their own political affairs. The Third Universal Theory had maintained that any instrument of governance in democracy that allows for exclusion of any form is nothing but a travesty of democracy. On the other hand, Abba and Babalola (2017) lament that elites within the Nigerian political parties do not often comply with the provisions of their party constitutions and other electoral laws, instead, artificial rules and/or conditions (such as zoning) are created to exclude the underrepresented or unwanted groups from emerging as candidates.

In their expression of the feeling of perceived alienation in the 2023 elections, the Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG) had warned the ruling party, All Progressive Congress (APC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and other parties to jettison the idea of zoning ahead of the 2023 presidential election. According to the spokesman of the group, Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, "the move by the South to threaten Northern people's right to franchise is a deliberate attempt to bastardize democracy, cause greater instability in the guise of a contentious, undemocratic power shift arrangement and therefore downright unacceptable" (Nnabuife, 2021). The group went as far as tagging any political party that maintained on denying Northerners the right to contest the presidency as an enemy of the North. Expressing worry over his imminent exclusion as a contestant in the 2023 presidential race, Senator Ahmad Lawal, a Northerner from Yobe state laments that: Our major problem is the suspicion between the different ethnic groups. Otherwise, why will someone bother where the president comes from? Let the president come from anywhere but what we need is leadership that will give sense to the people and provide everything within the constraint of resources that the people need. But when we suspect each other, that is when people crawl back to their ethnic enclaves (Lawal in Omolaoye, 2021:1). Reacting to the zoning of the Abia state governorship position in the 2023 general elections to Abia North and Central Senatorial districts, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, a candidate in the said election from Abia South, urged the People's Democratic Party, PDP, supporters in Abia State to disregard the document, stating that it speaks of imposition of candidate. He maintained that the move to zone the governorship position to Abia North and Central Senatorial districts was a ploy to unconstitutionally alienate him from the gubernatorial race and must be resisted by all means. According to Abaribe: While any member of PDP has the right to support anybody for any elective position in Nigeria, it cannot be to the exclusion of any other member...By virtue of section 42(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, no person or body can exclude Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe from contesting and winning the 2023 elections in Abia State (Abaribe in Usman, 2022:1).

The same scenario played out in Cross River state where the anti-zoning elites such as Sen. Jerigbe Agom Jerigbe maintained that there was never a point the state became the private property of any group of persons. Therefore, should anyone have the desire to govern the state in 2023, he/she should get into the field and prove his or her worth to the electorates (see The Nation, Nov. 21, 2021). In Plateau state, some stakeholders from both APC and PDP and some other parties vehemently opposed the idea of zoning in the 2023 gubernatorial election citing the need to enthrone meritocracy in the election of candidates into the governorship position of the state. Additionally, they argued that since all the three zones have taken turns to produce the governors of the state, it was no longer fashionable to maintain the undemocratic rotational arrangements against the principles of meritocracy (The Nation, March 27, 2022).

Expression of Interests/Nomination Form Fees and Peoples Participation in the Conduct of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: According to I-IDEA (2007), political parties in Nigeria are creation of political elite whose major preoccupation is to control the resources and personnel of the government. Given their prebendal nature, the party system in Nigeria is structured in the form of a joint-stock company whose rich shareholders, the political elites, employ the tool of huge capital investments to establish and maintain the control of their operations in the hope of huge returns. The above character of the party system in Nigeria has set the cost of running party activities, including the purchase of nomination forms and funding campaigns beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen of Nigeria (Olorunmola, 2016). To Muammar Gaddafi, "the party system is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief". Being a system that thrives on propaganda, Gaddafi notes that the multi-party system in representative democracy is a demagogic

system where votes can be bought and falsified and in such, the poor people are unable to compete in the election campaigns, and the result is that only the rich get elected. In line with the foregoing, a respondent in category B in this study, Samuel N. C. Nwagbo raised concerns about the nature of multi-party politics in Nigeria, according to him:

I have argued severally that election on the basis of choices of political parties is not actually a participatory democracy because it is just a means of assisting the political elites to consolidate their interests. This is true because the elites are the ones that determine who emerges through the party process as the party's candidate. So calling the people now to vote on the basis of what the elites have decided within the parties' caucuses is tantamount to inviting the people to play the role of mediators in the elites' struggle for power to ensure that one emerges at the end. To me, political parties and their activities constitute a setback to the ideals of democracy because looking at the number of political party members and the population that are not associated with party politics, you will discover that the former is highly insignificant. I can by the way of estimate tell you that over 90% of Nigerians do not belong to any political party while less than 10% may identify with one party, but the former are expected to make their political choices based on the skewed options presented to them by the latter who are numerically insignificant (*Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, personal interview, 17th June, 2025*).

Table 2: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST/NOMINATION FORM FEES (IN NAIRA) FOR PRESIDENT, SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE POSITIONS ACROSS PARTIES IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.

S/N	Party	Presidential Expression of Interest/Nomination Form Fees (in Naira)	Senate Expression of Interest/Nomination Form Fees (in Naira)	House of Rep. Expression of Interest/Nomination Form Fees (in Naira)
1	APC	100,000,000	20,000,000	10,000,000
2	APGA	30,000,000	10,000,000	7,000,000
3	APM	18,000,000	2,500,000	1,500,000
4	PDP	40,000,000	3,500,000	3,000,000
5	PRP	10,000,000	1,500,000	250,000
6	NRM	19,000,000	2,200,000	1,100,000
7	SDP	35,000,000	3,000,000	1,700,000
8	ZLP	23,000,000	2,000,000	700,000

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Table 3: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST/NOMINATION FORM FEES (IN NAIRA) FOR GOVERNORSHIP POSITIONS ACROSS PARTIES IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.

S/N	Party	Governorship Expression of Interest/Nomination Form Fees (in Naira)
1	APC	50,000,000
2	APGA	15,000,000
3	APM	11,000,000
4	PDP	21,000,000
5	PRP	2,500,000
6	NRM	8,250,000
7	SDP	16,000,000
8	ZLP	12,000,000

Source: Compiled by the Researcher

Tables 2 above shows the amounts different political parties pegged their expression of interest and party nomination forms for the presidential, senate and house of representative elections in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. From table 2 above, APC pegged her presidential expression of interest and nomination form at N100, 000,000, while that of the senate and house of representative were N20, 000, 000 and N10, 000, 000 respectively. APGA pegged the presidential expression of interest and nomination form at N30, 000, 000, the senate at N10, 000, 000 and the house of representative at N7,000, 000. The PDP sold their presidential expression of interest and nomination form for N40, 000, 000, the senate and house of representative for N3, 500, 000 and N3, 000, 000 respectively. As shown in table 3 above, the APC sold her expression of interest and nomination form for the governorship at N50, 000, 000, PDP sold hers at N21, 000, 000 while APGA pegged hers at N15, 000, 000.

According to the report of the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), about 133 million People, representing about 63% of the total population of over 200 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor. This is a country where the National Minimum Wage for the workers as at the period of the 2023

general elections was barely N30, 000. It is also pertinent to note that as at 2023, 15 out of the 36 states of the federation were unable to pay the N30, 000 minimum wage that was passed into law in 2019 (see Jaiyeola, 2023). Impliedly, it would take a professor in a Nigerian university who decided to save his entire monthly salary of barely N500, 000 about 20 years to be able to purchase the expression of interest and Nomination forms of the APC for the 2023 presidential election. A civil servant whose monthly earning is barely N100, 000 may have to save his entire monthly pay for more than 100 years to be able to purchase a party nomination form in Nigeria. A respondent in category B in this study, Augustine Onyishi, PhD rightly captured it thus: The truth is that those who have made politics their career occupation would do anything possible to protect their interests. Politics as a business venture in Nigeria have been monopolized that the gatekeeping mechanisms do not permit the common man to come close to it, one of those mechanisms is the continued refusal to allow for independent candidacy. It is just like some business ventures such as the telecommunications industry, one who's not a billionaire does not go close to it. Think about how much these politicians pegged their respective expression of interest and nomination forms in the 2023 general elections. It was designed to alienate the common man and that's why they will never allow for independent candidacy and that has seriously affected popular participation (*Senior Political Economy Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, direct personal interview, April 14th, 2025*).

The implication of the above is that about 133 million Nigerians that have been said to be living in multi-dimensional poverty and indeed the majority of wage earners in Nigeria were basically alienated from the conduct of the 2023 general elections by the reason of the amounts political parties pegged their expression of interest and nomination forms which were far above the reach of average Nigerians. Reacting to the news of the APC's N100, 000, 000 expression of interest and nomination forms, Chika Ohaji in Olowolagba (2022) opines thus: If you are an average citizen, that means you are not qualified. A country where the minimum wage is 30k, invariably a youth, a middle-income earner cannot come out. Democracy to the dust. Surprisingly, Sen. Iyorchia Ayu, the National chairman of the PDP (as he then was) expressed shock over the APC's N100, 000, 000 expression of interest and nomination forms despite that his party was guilty of the same offense. According to him: The incompetent APC presidency has now run the economy aground, making Nigeria the "Poverty Capital of the World." How then can impoverished APC aspirants buy minations at such prohibitively high costs? And yet, only recently he preached "Equal opportunity" to them. By this latest insensitive action, the APC has disenfranchised thousands of her youths, and dashed the hopes of millions of Nigerian youths who applauded President Buhari when he signed the Not Too Young to Run Bill into law in 2018. It is most insensitive, and mind-boggling. In fact, all those buying the N100m and N50m nomination forms should be investigated for fraud (Ayu in Ailemen, 2022)

Defending the above allegations, Dr Betta Edu, the APC women leader (as she then was) confessed party raised the amounts for their nomination forms in order to alienate those she tagged unserious contenders in the election (see ThisDay, 22nd April, 2022).

Consensus Candidacy and People's Participation in the Conduct of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: Abba and Babalola (2017) had upheld that elites within the Nigerian political parties do not often comply with the provisions of their party constitutions and other electoral laws, instead, artificial rules and/or conditions are created to exclude the underrepresented or unwanted groups from emerging as candidates. One of such artificial rules and/or conditions is what is known in the Nigerian party lexicon as 'consensus' arrangement. The so-called consensus arrangement is usually one of the ways party big wigs especially those that are about to serve out their constitutional terms in that particular political office, anoint a candidate which they superimpose on other contenders and the party members. For Ugwuanyi (2022), consensus arrangement has become a dangerous instrument of exclusion, disenfranchisement and manipulation, which in all ramifications is against the spirit of democracy and does not in any way benefit the people. A respondent in category B in this study, Samuel N. C. Nwagbo concurred with the above when he raised concerns about the nature of party politics in Nigeria, according to him: I have argued severally that election on the basis of choices of political parties is not actually a participatory democracy because it is just a means of assisting the political elites to consolidate their interests.

This is true because the elites are the ones that determine who emerges through the party process as the party's candidate. So calling the people now to vote on the basis of what the elites have decided within the parties' caucuses is tantamount to inviting the people to play the role of mediators in the elites' struggle for power to ensure that one emerges at the end. To me, political parties and their activities constitute a setback to the ideals of democracy because looking at the number of political party

members and the population that are not associated with party politics, you will discover that the former is highly insignificant. I can by the way of estimate tell you that over 90% of Nigerians do not belong to any political party while less than 10% may identify with one party, but the former are expected to make their political choices based on the skewed options presented to them by the latter who are numerically insignificant (*Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, personal interview, 17th June, 2025*).

The Third Universal Theory emphatically conceives Consensus arrangement as nothing but fraud against democracy. According to Gaddafi, it is more absurd in such arrangement where people are silenced by the modern conception of democracy by reducing their right to express their free will to a mere yes or no expression. In such arrangements as consensus, the people are not given the right to express the reasons why they said yes to candidate A as the consensus candidate and why they said no to candidate B. This is because the decision was in the actual sense taken on behalf of the people. Little wonder the theory had maintained that "there can be no representation in lieu of the people and that representation in such regard is fraud". In fact, Gaddafi conceives the so-called consensus arrangement as an oppressive and tyrannical system. Unfortunately, cabals within the political parties in Nigeria have made frantic efforts to institutionalize and legitimize the so-called consensus arrangement as one of the major instruments of alienation at their disposal. In line with the foregoing, a respondent in category B in this study, Augustine Onyishi, PhD rightly captured it thus:

The truth is that those who have made politics their career occupation would do anything possible to protect their interests. Politics as a business venture in Nigeria have been monopolized that the gatekeeping mechanisms do not permit the common man to come close to it, one of those mechanisms is the continued refusal to allow for independent candidacy. It is just like some business ventures such as the telecommunications industry, one who's not a billionaire does not go close to it. Think about how much these politicians pegged their respective expression of interest and nomination forms in the 2023 general elections. It was designed to alienate the common man (*Senior Political Economy Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, direct personal interview, April 14th, 2025*).

For instance, article (28) of the Labour Party constitution allotted to the National Executive Council of the Party the powers to formulate guidelines and regulations for nomination of candidates for election into public offices at all levels. In addition, article 28 (ii) provides that: Where the National Executive Council identifies a credible and nationally acceptable person, it shall nominate and present such a person for ratification only at the National Convention as the Party's presidential candidate. The idea that a very few members that constitute the party's National Executive Council are given the powers to choose a candidate that should be credible and nationally acceptable suggests an arrangement that encourages imposition of candidate while leaving the elective positions at the mercies of the highest bidders. Little wonder Mr. Peter Obi who was a candidate in the PDP, was hurriedly imported into the Labour Party and immediately imposed on other party candidates and members as the consensus candidate for the 2023 presidential election. On the other hand, article 20 (i) of the 2022 APC constitution (as amended) states thus: Unless otherwise provided for: a. All Party posts prescribed or implied by this Constitution shall be filled by democratically conducted elections at the respective National Convention or Congress subject, where possible, to consensus, Provided that where a Candidate has emerged by consensus for an elective position, a vote of "yes" or "no" by ballot or voice shall be called, to ensure that it was not an imposition which could breed discontent and crisis. One wonders how a vote of "yes" or "no" by ballot or voice will be sufficient to determine whether a consensus candidate was imposed on others or not. Common sense suggests that what is being sought for in such "yes" or "no" voting is a simple majority. If that is the case, how can one substantiate that those in the minority that vote "no" to a consensus candidate will not feel discontent that imposition has taken place? Unless the above provisions of the party constitution interprets that any single negative vote will nullify the entire "yes" vote to consensus candidacy, which in itself is undemocratic.

Again, what is the need for anointing a particular candidate in the name of consensus, since there will still be a "yes" or "no" vote by ballot or voice to legitimize the action? Who decides the particular candidate that will be presented as a consensus candidate? This is nothing but imposition of candidate backed up by the party's constitution. In a bid to impose a candidate on the party, President Muhammadu Buhari (as he then was) in his address to the Progressive Governor's Forum on 31st May, 2022, pleaded with the forum and indeed other party stakeholders to support and allow him to

handpick his successor who would become the party's standard bearer in the 2023 general elections (see appendix 1). In another turn of event, Abdullahi Adamu, the then national chairman of the APC presented Sen. Ahmed Lawan to the meeting of the 25-member National Working Committee he convened in the Party's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday 7th of June 2022, as the 'anointed candidate' of the party (see Akinkuotu, Olorok, Folorunsho-Francis, Angbulu & Tolu-Kolawole, 2022). A move that generated serious conflict and intense power struggle among other candidates as well as party stakeholders from the Southern party of the country.

In the same vein, incumbent Governors across the 36 States, irrespective of party affiliation, have become notorious for handpicking and imposing candidates who would succeed them on the party members, while utilizing all the state apparatus within their disposal to suppress any resenting voice. The assumption of the position of the "Party Leader" in the state by these Governors afford them with the moral justifications to always impose their will on other members of the party. For instance, the then governor of Rivers State, Mr Nyesom Wike singlehandedly handpicked his Accountant General of the state, Sim. Fubara who was declared wanted by the EFCC, as his successor and went ahead to impose him on the party by hijacking the majority of the party delegates. Compounding the ugly situation immediately after the sham of primary election was concluded, Governor Nyesom Wike said that; There is nothing anybody can do about it. We have gotten a candidate and everybody has to work to support this course. Everybody should see that this how almighty God designed it. Everybody cannot emerge candidate. (See Yafugborhi, 2022).

In Applying the same format as used by Governor Nyesom Wike (as he then was), Mr Udom Emmanuel, the then Governor of Akwa-Ibom state, handpicked his then Commissioner for Lands and Water Resources, Umo Eno and successfully imposed him on the party members by securing over 97% of the total votes cast by the party delegates (see Imukudo, 2022). In defense of his choice of a consensus candidate, Governor Emmanuel Udom (as he then was) stated inter alia thus: Let me say this emphatically, I mean well for this State, that is why I waited for God to show me the man who would continue with the pace of developmental strides we have started in the last six-plus years and then move the needle even further (see Ody, 2022). In a bid to defend the imposition of his Deputy, Nasiru Yusuf Gawuna on the members of Kano state APC, Governor Umar Ganduje (as he then was) cited the already existing tradition of Deputy Governors taking over from outgoing Governors to ensure continuity of projects initiated by the outgoing government. According to Ganduje:

We have all our development issues that we have documented and without continuity things will be bastardized and you will find out that you are not going far. We believe in issue of continuity. I could remember when I was a deputy governor and I became a governor during the Kwankwaso administration. We planned all the projects he executed together and we did the implementation together... So, ladies and gentlemen, that is why we decided to make all necessary arrangements and consultations to ensure that Dr Yusuf Gawuna emerges the gubernatorial candidate and we believe that this is a tag team to beat. There is no other political party in Kano that has the credentials and we believe we will win insha Allah (Agba, 2022)

Two things are common in all the States where the imposition of candidates in the name of consensus occurred: internal crisis and litigations. The alienated man, according to Fanon (1961), is not happy and comfortable in his oppressed, discriminated and dehumanized condition. Attempts to impose an anointed candidate on other contestants and party members in the name of consensus intensifies the struggle for power in a very unhealthy manner. Hence, Gaddafi in the Third Universal Theory avers that the aggressive struggle for power that characterize the party system (especially in multi-party states) under representative democracy pose a serious threat to the unity and progress of the overall society. Hence, he posits that "a society torn apart by party feud is similar to one which is torn apart by tribal or sectarian conflicts"

Parties' Ethno-Religious Politics in the Conduct of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: The political parties that participated in the 2023 general elections weaponized ethno-religious sentiments in the bid to have upper hands against one another in the execution of the election. Gabriel and Anaetie (2024) had rightly observed that "since the reintroduction of multi-Party democracy in Nigeria in 1999, ethnicity and religion are arguably the most profoundly complex issues that have influenced the electioneering process in the country". Elites within the Nigerian political parties do not often comply with the provisions of their party constitutions and other electoral laws, instead, they create artificial rules and/or conditions (including the weaponization of ethnic and religious sentiments) to exclude the underrepresented or unwanted groups from participating effectively in the electoral processes (Abba

and Babalola, 2017). Muammar Gaddafi in the Third Universal Theory reiterates that the party system is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief. In pursuit of these interests, parties in the multi-party system tend to become very aggressive in their conducts. Hence, Gaddafi avers that the aggressive struggle for power that characterize the party system (especially in multi-party states such as Nigeria) under representative democracy pose a serious threat to the unity and progress of the overall society. By implication, “a society torn apart by party feud is similar to one which is torn apart by tribal or sectarian conflicts”.

Admittedly, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, the Speaker of the House of Representatives (as he then was), lamented that the 2023 presidential and national assembly elections were mainly about ethnicity and religion rather than performance and competence of the candidates. According to him: It was a hard won battle not just for me but for many of our colleagues on the floor there. All 360 of us. Many were unlucky. Some were lucky. I used the word ‘lucky’ deliberately because this election was not as it should be, not so much about the performance of members whether on the floor or in their constituencies. It was about a lot of other things. It was about religion. It was about ethnicity. It was about so many other things which I hope that as we develop as a nation, one’s election would be based solely, or at least mostly on his or her performance on the floor and in the constituency (see Orizu, 2023). All Progressives Congress’ choice of Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, both Muslims, led to the emergence of the controversial “Muslim-Muslim Ticket” phenomenon and the pervasive use of religious rhetoric as never before experienced in Nigerian elections (Adebayo, 2025). Obviously, the choice of Muslim-Muslim joint ticket by the ruling APC in the 2023 presidential elections reignited ethno-religious consciousness in the mind of Nigerians while creating loopholes for other parties to exploit in their bid to achieve electoral success. In reaction to the choice of Muslim-Muslim joint ticket by the APC, elder statesman and South-South Leader, Chief Edwin Clark, the Bishop of Calabar, Anglican Communion, Rt. Rev Nneoji Egbe and Middle-Belt Youths, lamented that the idea was a threat to the country’s unity and well-being (Vanguard, July 12, 2022).

Specifically, Clark opined that: There is presently a sharp division in the country, even on religious lines, and all patriots are seeking ways to salvage the situation. Therefore, Alhaji Tinubu’s decision to take a fellow Muslim as his running mate will further worsen the situation in the country. He should know that patriotism is a quality of a good leader (Vanguard, July 12, 2022). Based on the foregoing, every other political party that participated in the 2023 presidential elections hinged their campaigns around the issues of religion and ethnicity. For instance, while Atiku Abubakar, the candidate of the PDP for the 2023 presidential election berated the APC for their choice of same faith ticket which he considers as unfair to a country like Nigeria, which is multi-ethnic, and multi-religious, he stated in his address to the Arewa Forum that what an average Northerner needed was a someone from the North and not a Yoruba or Igbo man to become the president (see Nigerian Tribune, July 22, 2022, Premium times, May 25, 2023). On the other hand, the candidate of the Labour Party, Mr. Peter Obi was severally accused of using churches and other religious institutions as his major campaign field in the 2023 presidential election. In his address, to the leaders of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) during their Standing Committee Meeting held on September 12, 2022 at St. Matthias House in Abuja, Mr. Peter Obi stated thus:

...for me, the issue of a credible election, especially as we approach 2023, [is] very critical. If we get it wrong in 2023, I am afraid you might not be meeting like this in a few years because our country has [sic] collapsed and it is very simple, so we must get it. What we are suffering today is a result of cumulative leadership failure over the years, and the church can no longer stay aside... Nigerians are the best you can get in the world and we have the energy to change this world all we lack is that we have criminals who have hijacked this country selling everything away and we are keeping quiet please the church wake up and take back your country God bless you (Adebayo, 2025: 7).

Mr. Obi’s call for the church to wake up and take back their country was a very controversial one that did not taste nice to the Northern political elites, especially the non-Christians. The most worrisome in the address was his opinion that “if we (the church) get it wrong in 2023, I am afraid you might not be meeting like this in a few years...” This statement suggests logically, that if the church fails to produce the president of Nigeria in the 2023 general elections, they will be facing a serious existential threat in a matter of few years. In fact, to the Labour Party and her Presidential candidate, Mr. Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential elections was nothing short a religious war. This was evident in the leaked viral

telephone conversations between Mr. Obi and Bishop David Oyedepo, the General Overseer of the Living Faith Winners Chapel. The transcript of the said telephone conversations reads thus:

Peter Obi: Good morning Daddy.

Bishop Oyedepo: Praise the Lord, how are you Sir?

Peter Obi: Fine Daddy, good morning Sir.

Bishop Oyedepo: Amen, in Jesus name we are going to get bright results.

Peter Obi: Thank you Daddy, when I hear these your calls and prayers, Daddy it's very dear to me. Like I keep saying if this works, you people will never regret the support.

Bishop Oyedepo: Amen! Amen! We look forward to God's intervention.

Peter Obi: Thank you, Daddy, I need you to speak to your people in South West and Kwara, the Christians in South West and Kwara, **this is a religious war.**

Bishop Oyedepo: I believe that... **I believe that... I believe that...** You know I did a release 'Nigeria Going Forward' and I am coming with the second one today. I wanted it out when they won't have any time to do damage control. But in the name of Jesus this would be a success. You know what I said in today's own? A sickling nation like Nigeria will require a strong and healthy personality. I said anyone whose source of wealth could not be verified should not have access to governance. So all we are doing is appealing to the conscience of people to know where to go. But I want to assure you, in the name of Jesus, that the result will be favourable.

Peter Obi: Thank you Daddy.

Bishop Oyedepo: So relax yourself don't be apprehensive. Are you in Lagos or Abuja?

Peter Obi: I am in Onitsha now

Bishop Oyedepo: So you will be there for the election?

Peter Obi: Yes Sir

Bishop Oyedepo: Very good, that is where to be, I say all Nigerians have an equal stake, nobody has the right to claim that he is dashing something to someone, we are coming out of it, so how is the east generally?

Peter Obi: East is okay. East is correct.

Bishop Oyedepo: And the Middle Belt?

Peter Obi: It is okay, Middle Belt is okay but places like Kogi, Kwara and Niger are worrisome places.

Bishop Oyedepo: We will get to Kwara

Peter Obi: Fantastic, I went to Kwara and visited Olofa of Offa who told me that nobody had ever come here, with you no problem but the Christian community in Kwara and Niger, and I am also working in Kogi same way.

Bishop Oyedepo: Okay then I will target this clip to them; I will make sure it gets them.

Peter Obi: Thank you I will be looking forward to the release as well, please send it to me.

Bishop Oyedepo: Okay I will do that, God bless you.

Peter Obi: Thank you, Daddy (see Adeyemi, 2023).

Mr. Obi's unabated use of religious centers for campaign as well as his controversial viral "religious war" conversations ahead of the 2023 presidential elections were in total contravention to **section 92(3) of the Electoral Act 2022 (as amended)**, which states that: Places designated for religious worship, police stations, and public offices shall not be used for political campaigns, rallies, and processions; or to promote, propagate, or attack political parties, candidates, or their programmes, or ideologies.

On the other hand, following the defeat of Bola Tinubu in Lagos state in the presidential election, the gubernatorial election in the state held on Saturday 18 March 2023, witnessed all manners of ethnic sentiments and hate speeches aimed at dividing and inciting violence among residents of the state. For instance, in a viral video, the chairman of the Lagos State Parks Management Committee, Musiliu Akinsanya, also known as MC Oluomo was captured threatening the Igbos resident in the state to stay at home during the governorship election if they do not want to vote for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) candidates (see Orizu, 2023). The above threat generated a lot of tension among the Igbos and other non-indigenes of the state as the election day drew near. The threat by Oluomo was followed by the burning of the Akere spare parts market in Apapa, Ajegunle area of Lagos, occupied majorly by Igbo traders, by some alleged arsonists. Acknowledging the connection between the viral threat and the burning of the Akere market, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, the Labour Party's governorship candidate in the state admonished that politics should be about ideas and not violence.

According to him:

...Ajegunle people, do not be intimidated. We will rebuild together. Lagos is built on harmony and cooperation, it is the centre of excellence, despicable violence & fanning the flames of ethnic tension has no place in this beautiful state. We all have to live together in Lagos after the elections. No political ambition is worth the lives or livelihood of our people. No place should be threatened or destroyed for having differing political choices. It breaks my heart to see this happen in Lagos, it must end (see Silas, 2023).

The gubernatorial election of 18th March, 2025 in Lagos state witnessed an unprecedented level of electoral violence and voter intimidation targeted at places such as Apapa, Ajegunle, Okota, Isolo, Oshodi, and others areas where the Igbos populated (see Akoni, 2023).

In another development, the then Spokesman of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Bayo Onanuga sternly warned the Igbos against participating in Lagos state politics. As captured in his X page (formerly twitter), Onanuga tweeted that 2023 should be the last time the Igbos would interfere in Lagos politics. He warned that Lagos was not a no man's land or a Federal capital Territory but the home state of the Yorubas, therefore, Igbos should mind their business come 2027 general elections (see DSM, 2023 and Orizu, 2023). The ethno-religious sentiments that characterize the activities of political parties in the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria contravene the provisions of section 97 (1) of the 2022 Electoral Act (as amended) which reads that: A candidate, person or association that engages in campaigning or broadcasting based on religious, tribal, or sectional reason for the purpose of promoting or opposing a particular political party or the election of a particular candidate, commits an offence under this Act and is liable on conviction— (a) to a maximum fine of N 1,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both; and (b) in the case of a political party, to a maximum fine of N 10,000,000. As appealing as the idea of the need for a joint Muslim-Christian or Christian-Muslim ticket in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic Nigerian political terrain, the Third Universal Theory frowns at any arrangement that bars any individual from participating in an election because of same religion joint ticket. To be more specific, the theory maintains that any form of alienation, no matter how appealing it appears, is highly undemocratic as there is no form of exclusion in real democracy.

Conclusion

The multi-party instrument of governance remains one of the foundations upon which representative democracy is built. This is because in principle, multi-party system was designed to reflect the collection of the divergent will of the people. However, the Third Universal Theory conceives the party system as a modern instrument of dictatorial government which enables the minority to rule over the majority. To Muammar Gaddafi, "the party system is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief". The activities of the multi-party system in Nigeria are laden with actions such as zoning/rotation arrangements, party nomination forms, consensus candidacy, etc., which are conspicuously geared towards alienating the people.

Instead of acting as the bridge that links up the people with those who govern them, the multi-party instrument of governance in Nigeria's representative democracy, according to Gaddafi, now become a legal barrier between the people and the exercise of authority, excluding the masses from meaningful politics and monopolizing sovereignty in their place. The only feeling of democracy left for the people is the long queues to cast their ballots during the so-called representative democratic elections.

References

- Abba, S. A. and Babalola, D. (2017). Contending Issues in Political Parties in Nigeria: The Candidate Selection Process. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 11(1), 118-134.
- Adebayo, J. O. (2025). Daddy's Yes-Man and Muslim-Muslim Ticket: Analysing Religious Rhetoric in the 2023 Nigerian General Elections. *Communication and Linguistic Studies*. 11(1), 1-11. <http://www.sciencepg.com/journal/357/archive/3571101>.
- Adeyemi, I. (2023). Full Text: What Peter Obi, Oyedepo Said in Leaked "Religious War" Phone Call. Premium Times Newspaper, Available: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features/andinterviews/591397-full-text-what-peter-obi-oyedepo-said-in-leaked-religious-war-phone-call.html>. Retrieved on 21st March, 2025.
- Agba, G. (2022). Kano: Why We Chose Gawuna as my Successor – Ganduje. <https://leadership.ng/kano-why-we-chose-gawuna-as-my-successor-ganduje/>. Retrieved on 9th March, 2025.

- Ailemen, A. (2022). Nomination Fee: PDP Sees APC Inflicting Maximum Pain On Members <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/nomination-fee-pdp-sees-apc-inflicting-maximum-pains-on-members/>
- Akinkuotu, E., Olorok, F., Folorunsho-Francis, A., Angbulu, S. & Tolu-Kolawole, D. (2022). APC Presidential Ticket: Adamu's Consensus Plot Fails, 21 Aspirants in Battle Royale. <https://punchng.com/apc-presidential-ticket-adamus-consensus-plot-fails-21-aspirants-in-battle-royale/> . Retrieved on 8th March, 2025.
- Akinola, A.A. (1996), Rotational Presidency, Ibadan: Spectrum Publishers.
- Akoni, O. (2023). 2023 Elections: Lagos PDP Condemns Electoral Violence, Snatching of Ballot Boxes. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/03/2023-elections-lagos-pdp-condemns-electoral-violence-snatching-of-ballot-boxes/> . Retrieved on 23rd March, 2025.
- Ambali, A. R. and Mohammed, L. M. (2016). Sustainable Democracy and Political Domination: A Rotational Presidency among Nigerian Ethnic Groups. *Journal of Administrative Science* 13(1), 1-12. Available online at <http://jas.uitm.edu.my>
- Bakker, T. P., and Vreese, C. H. (2011). Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use, and Political Participation. *Communication Research*, 38(4), 451-470.
- Diamond, L. (2015). Facing Up to the Democratic Recession. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1): 141-55.
- Dunn, J. (1999). Situating Democratic Political Accountability. In Przeworski, A., Stokes, S. C. and Manin, B. (eds), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (pp.329-344). Cambridge University Press.
- Falade, D.A. (2014). Political Participation in Nigerian Democracy: A Study of Some Selected Local Government Areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Human Social Sciences: Political Science*. 14 (8).
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Francois Maspero Editeur.
- Gabrie, T. A. and Anaetie, J. A. (2024). Ethnicity, Religion and Party Politics in Nigeria: An Evaluation of the 2023 General Elections. *Journal of Public Administration, Policy and Governance Research (JPAPGR)*, 2(4), 9-18.
- Gaddafi, M. (1975). *The Green Book: Revolutionary Committee Movement*. (Unknown Publisher).
- IDEA (2007). Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook. Retrieved from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voting-fromabroad-the-international-idea-handbook>.
- I-IDEA (2007). Political Parties in Africa: Challenges for Sustained Multiparty Democracy: Africa Regional Report Based on research and dialogue with political parties.
- Ikoni, U. D. (2023). The Role of Judiciary in Strengthening the Electoral Process in Nigeria. A Discussion Paper Presented at the 2023 Legal Year Symposium Organized by the Benue State Judiciary on the 16th Day of September, 2023.
- Imukudo, S. (2022). Gov Emmanuel's Preferred Successor, Umo Eno, Wins A'Ibom PDP Governorship Primary. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/532486-gov-emmanuel-s-preferred-successor-umo-eno-wins-aibom-pdp-governorship-primary.html>. Retrieved on 9th March, 2025.
- Imukudo, S. (2022). Gov Emmanuel's Preferred Successor, Umo Eno, Wins A'Ibom PDP Governorship Primary. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/532486-gov-emmanuel-s-preferred-successor-umo-eno-wins-aibom-pdp-governorship-primary.html>. Retrieved on 9th March, 2025.
- International Republican Institute (IRI) (2020). The Role of Political Parties in Nigeria's Fledgling Democracy.
- Iroanusi, Q. (2022). 2023: PDP Zoning Committee Reportedly Throws Party's Presidential Ticket Open. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/522054-2023-pdp-zoning-committee-reportedly-throws-partys-presidential-ticket-open.html?tztc=1>. Retrieved on 17th February, 2025.
- Isma'ila, Y. and Othman, Z. (2016). Challenges of Electoral Malpractices on Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *International Review of Management and Marketing*. 6(8), 103-107.
- Jaiyeola, T. (2023). 15 States Yet to Pay N30, 000 Minimum Wage – CSO. <https://punchng.com/15-states-yet-to-pay-n30000-minimum-wage-cso/>
- Jega, A. (2015). Political Parties Lacks Internal Democracy. Available at www.thescoopng.com/2015/06/23/political-parties-lack-internal-democracy-prof-jega-lament.com.

- Kura, S. Y. (2011). Political Parties and Democracy in Nigeria: Candidate Selection, Campaign and Party Financing in People's Democratic Party. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13(6), 268-298.
- Kwasau, M. (2009). Electoral Fraud and Its Implications for Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*. 13(1 & 2).
- Martin, G. (2012). *African Political Thought*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Momoh, A. (2010). Democracy and Elections: Myths, Illusions and Realities. Being 3rd Annual Law and Social Development Lecture Delivered at Airport Hotel Ikeja October 25, 2010.
- Musa, D., Ibietan, J. & Deinde-Adedeji, O. (2020). Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Elite Theory Explanation. *AUDRI*, 13(2), 54-74.
- Nass, I. (2012). *Democracy, African Politics and Conflicts in a New World Order* ABIC Books and Equipment Limited.
- Nigerian Correctional Services (2024). Summary of Inmate Population by Convict and Awaiting Trial Persons as at 23rd December 2024. https://corrections.gov.ng/statistics_summary. Assessed on 6th January, 2025.
- Nnabuike, C. (2021). Presidential Election: Northern Coalition Warns PDP, APC, Others against Zoning. <https://tribuneonline.ng.com/presidential-election-northern-coalition-warns-pdp-apc-others-against-zoning/>. Retrieved on 17th February, 2025.
- Nwankwo, F.C, Okafor, P.U & Asuoha, G.C. (2017). Principal Component Analysis of Factor Determining Voter Abstention in South Eastern Nigeria. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*: 10(3) 249-273.
- Nwaubani, O. (2012). Elections, Electoral Malpractices and Electoral Reforms: Implications for Sustainable Democratic Culture in Nigeria. In Akpuru-Aja, A. and Ibe, A. (eds), *Repositioning the State for Development in Africa: Issues, Challenges and Prospects*; Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Odigwe, D. A. (2015). Nigerian Political Parties and Internal Democracy. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 4(2), 65-78.
- Ody, P. (2022). I Mean Well For Akwa Ibom, Gov Emmanuel Defends Choice of Successor. <https://punchng.com/i-mean-well-for-akwa-ibom-gov-emmanuel-defends-choice-of-successor/>. Retrieved on 9th March, 2025.
- Ogunkorode, O. O. (2019). Curbing the Challenges of Multi-Party System in Nigeria: The Need for Independent Candidature. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*. 84(2), 26-30.
- Ojo, O.M. (2022). Party System and National Integration in Nigeria: Multipartyism or Two-Party System. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 245 - 266.
- Ojukwu, U.G, Ukatu, C.N, Ohuoha M.I, & Nnakwue N.B (2016). *Fundamentals of Political Sociology*. Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Okwuadimma, J.C. and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, M. (2021). Frantz Fanon's Theory of Alienation, Powerlessness and Apathetic Political Behaviour in the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria. *SocialScientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*. 6(3), 60-74.
- Olorunmola, A. (2016). *Cost of Politics in Nigeria*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)
- Olowolagba, F. (2022). 2023 Presidency: APC N100m Form Discouraging Youths – Nigerians React. <https://dailypost.ng/2022/04/20/2023-presidency-apc-n100m-form-discouraging-youths-nigerians-react/>
- Omilusi, M. (2016). An Assessment of Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 4(1), 34-50.
- Omolaoye, S. (2021). 2023: Nigerians Can Pick President from Any Zone, Says Lawan. <https://guardian.ng/news/2023-nigerians-can-pick-president-from-any-zone-says-lawan/>. Retrieved on 17th February, 2025.
- Omotola, J. S. (2010). Elections and Democratic Transition Nigeria under the Fourth Republic. *African Affairs*. 109(437), 535-553.
- Orizu, U. (2023). 2023 Poll Amid Ethnic and Religious Sentiments. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/27/2023-poll-amid-ethnic-and-religious-sentiments/>. Retrieved on 13th March, 2023.
- Othman, M.F, Osman, N. & Mohammed, I.S. (2018). An Overview of Push/Pull Factors of Political Participation in Nigeria. *Journal of International Studies*. (14) 81-98.
- Presbey, G. M. (1998). Criticisms of Multiparty Democracy: Parallels between Wamba-Dia-Wamba and Arendt. *Taylor & Francis in New Political Science*, 20(1), 35-52, available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393149808429811>.

- Silas, D. (2023). Lagos: It Must End – Rhodes-Vivour Reacts to Fire Incident in Akere Motor parts Market. <https://dailypost.ng/2023/03/08/lagos-it-must-end-rhodes-vivour-reacts-to-fire-incident-in-akere-motorparts-market/>. Retrieved on 23rd March, 2025.
- Stolle, D. and Hooghe, M. (2011). Shifting Inequalities: Patterns of Exclusion Inclusion in Emerging Forms of Political Participation. European. *The THISDAY Nigerian Newspaper* Monday, April 8, 2019.
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).
- The 2022 Electoral Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)
- The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Updated with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Alterations (2010), 4th Alteration (2017) and 5th Alteration (2023).
- The Nation (2022). Plateau 2023: Zoning and other Issue Set the Pace. <https://thenationonlineng.net/plateau-2023-zoning-and-other-issue-set-the-pace/>. March 27th
- THIS Day (2022). N100m Presidential Form Meant to Shut Out Unserious Aspirants, APC Women Leader Says. <https://www.arise.tv/n100m-presidential-form-meant-to-shut-out-unserious-aspirants-apc-women-leader-says/>. April, 22nd.
- Ugwuanyi, I. (2022). The Consensus against Democracy. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/04/the-consensus-against-democracy/> April, 13.
- Umoru, H., Agbakwuru, J. & Yakubu, D. (2022). 2023: APC opts for Consensus, Zones Presidency to South. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/02/2023-apc-opts-for-consensus-zones-presidency-to-south/>. Retrieved on 15th February, 2025.
- Usman, S.A. (2022). Abia Governorship: Abaribe Tells PDP Members to Disregard Zoning Report. <https://dailypost.ng/2022/03/28/abia-governorship-abaribe-tells-pdp-members-to-disregard-zoning-report/>. Retrieved on 17th February, 2025.
- Yafugborhi, E. (2022). Rivers Guber Primaries: Wike's Choice, Fubara Wins. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/05/rivers-guber-primaries-wikes-choice-fubara-wins/>. Retrieved on 9th March, 2025.

Biographical Note

Jude Chiedozie OKWUADIMMA is a postgraduate student and a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. His area of specialization is Political Theory and Methodology of Political Inquiry. His research interests include African political thought, politics of development and underdevelopment in Africa, democracy and electoral politics in Nigeria, etc. He also has a number of publications in both local and international journals of repute to his credit. Email: jc.okwuadimma@unizik.edu.ng.

Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU, *PhD.*, is a Professor of Political Theory and Methodology of Political Inquiry, former Head, Department of Political Science and the current Dean, Office for Students' Affairs, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. He has published widely, his book publications are over a dozen titles—including *Methodology of Political Inquiry: Issues and Techniques of Research Methods in Political Science* (2006), *Africa in the March of Civilization* (2005) and *A Handbook on Critical Issues in Research* (2019) Email: mn.biereenunnabugwu@unizik.edu.ng.