

The Albatross Called Primary Elections and Political Succession in Nigeria

L'ALBATROS CONVOQUE DES ELECTIONS PRIMAIRES ET LA SUCCESSION POLITIQUE AU NIGERIA

Marietu Tenuche^{1,*}

¹Department of Political Science, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State Nigeria

*Corresponding author.

Address: Department of Political Science, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State Nigeria
Email: drtenuche@yahoo.com

Received 30 June 2011; accepted 25 July 2011

Abstract

Political Succession in Nigeria has been crisis ridden largely because the options for citizens to determine who rules them is foreclosed prior to elections and these is done during primary elections, thereby undermining elections as the expression of popular will and a means to guarantee and defend democratic norms and values. The concern of this piece is to examine the relationship between flawed primaries in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections in Nigeria and the deeply flawed outcome of the elections that were characterized by irregularities and violence. The study is an empirical analysis of the nature of primary elections in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria as documented in purposefully selected Nigerian dailies, the reactions and counter reactions of leading political opposition leaders, institutions and agencies that are involved in the electoral process, reports from National and International Observers and its implications for sustainable development and democratic consolidation.

Key words: Primary elections; Political succession; Political parties; Democratic values; Political behaviour

Résumé

La Succession politique au Nigeria a été monté en grande partie par la crise des options concernant les citoyens afin de déterminer qui les règles est forclos avant les élections et ceux-ci est fait lors des élections primaires, compromettant ainsi les élections comme l'expression de la volonté populaire et un moyen afin de garantir et de défendre les normes démocratiques et des valeurs. Le souci de cette pièce est d'examiner la relation entre les

primaires erronées dans les élections de 1999, 2003 et 2007 au Nigeria et en général le résultat profondément erronée de ces élections qui ont été caractérisées par des irrégularités et de violence. L'étude est une analyse empirique de la nature des élections primaires dans les six zones géopolitiques du Nigeria comme documenté dans délibérément certains quotidiens nigériens, les réactions et les réactions des principaux dirigeants contre l'opposition politique, les institutions et organismes qui sont impliqués dans le processus électoral, des rapports d'observateurs nationaux et internationaux et ses implications pour le développement durable et la consolidation démocratique.

Mots clés: Les Élections primaires; La succession politique; Les partis politiques; Des valeurs démocratiques; Le comportement politique

Marietu Tenuche (2011). The Albatross Called Primary Elections and Political Succession in Nigeria. *Canadian Social Science*, 7(4), 121-130. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720110704.063>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720110704.063>

INTRODUCTION

The democratisation process in Africa has become a matter of international discourse largely due to the nature of the election process. The electoral process is characterised by violent conflicts as exemplified by the outcome of elections in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Guinea, Niger and Cote d'Ivoire. International attention is now focused on Nigeria and Liberia both scheduled for general elections in 2011. The stable succession processes in the older democracies has not only engendered political stability, continuation of, or changes in public policies that impact positively on the economy, but also a system that has entrenched cherished democratic values among the citizenry.

A number of cogent reasons have been advanced for this development, one of which is the thesis that for most part, the State is the main source of primitive capital accumulation in Africa (Joseph (1997), Jega (2002), Ojovbaire, 2007). There is therefore, a desperate attempt by the ruling class to win and retain state power for unfettered access to state resources. This assertion has proven to be true judging by the enormous amount of public fund stolen by chief executives of states as exemplified by Robert Mugabe, Mobutu Sese Sekou, Sani Abacha, Charles Taylor, to mention but a few.

We may deduce from Ojovbaire's (2002) explanation for poor governance in Nigeria that due to the prolonged military rule in most African States, the executive arm of government is over-developed and as such, assumed relative autonomous powers when compared to the other arms of government whose power and roles were largely obliterated during military regimes. The executive arm therefore, having remained largely unperturbed by prolonged military rule has grown in strength and influence, a situation that is not eroded with the advent of democratic rule. Continuing, Ojovbaire submitted that the drive for primitive accumulation has logically converted the executive into the epic centre of power relation.

Ibeanu (2007:299) commenting on the increasing dominance of the executive arm of government opined that the development is not peculiar to Africa but rather, has assumed a global dimension as acknowledged to by former British Prime Minister – Gordon Brown. Ibeanu's explanation is that the phenomenon has its roots in the objective characteristic of monopoly capitalism. Under this regime, the capitalist state more than ever before is directly involved in the economy coupled with an extraordinary expansion in the state's economic apparatuses. The immediate implication of this development, Ibeanu observed, is that the state takes the lead of directing the economy rather than playing the role of maintaining and reproducing the external conditions of production. In the process, the economic function of the state takes precedence over its political function. This situation unmasks the true character of the state as the "Executive Committee" managing the affairs of the dominant class.

In this new capacity Ibeanu reflected, the executive becomes less democratic and more repressive emasculating in the process institutionalised political opposition while subjecting the party to the thralldom of the serving Executive (Ibeanu, 2007:300).

The executive arm therefore is not concerned with imbibing core democratic values in the power game as the ultimate goal for seeking power is to secure access to state resources. The mission of the executive arm is to exert its influence on all political institutions, structures and processes, political parties inclusive, thus condemning rulership to the phenomenon of personal rule.

Political parties in democratic regimes are expected to grow and develop as autonomous political institutions

for the articulation and aggregation of common interests, ideas and values to those who subscribe to them for the purpose of competing for and possibly winning power to seek a wider dissemination and acceptance of the values and principles they hold dear.

It naturally follows therefore, that government in a democratic regime should reflect the core values of a ruling party as the constitutional structure of political parties and the party fortunes will naturally key into the essential elements of internal democracy. Where the Executive takes control of the political parties, the values of the party takes the back stage.

One major avenue for testing the true adherence to democratic principles is via the primary elections. Primary elections provide the platform for the political parties to select credible candidates to contest elections, while applying the cherished attribute of democracy which is to provide opportunity to the populace to make informed and free choices of those to rule them. Primary elections in a party system are therefore a major test of the entrenchment of true democracy in any society.

Where the core values of democracy that includes fairness, competition, moderation and the rules of the game, i.e. the ante-indeterminacy of the electoral process (Jinadu, 2006), are discountenanced and have little or no relevance, it gives way to the rule of force and struggle for power at all cost and by all means whether fair or foul. It naturally follows that where party primaries are compromised, the options for citizens to determine who rules them is foreclosed. This development naturally evoke responses from the informed public, party members, institutions and agencies that are involved in the electoral process and the international community with negative consequences for the nature of the conduct of general elections and the electoral processes. In Nigeria, the immediate noticeable reactions are the defection of losers of party primaries to other political parties, violent conflicts and protests and political assassinations.

There is therefore a cause effect relationship between the core values imbibed and practiced by political parties and their behaviour in politics. The answer to the research question posed for this study therefore is to critically assess the relationship between core democratic values and political behaviours.

The paper is divided into 5 sections. The introduction is followed by a presentation of methods of data collection used for the study. The third section presents the discourse on the notion of democratic values and political behaviours. The core values imbibed by selected political parties as demonstrated in their behaviours during the conduct of primary elections is discussed in this section. The fourth section presents the empirical materials illustrating the link between the core values imbibed by political parties and the conduct of primary elections that led to the general elections of 2003, 2007 and the 2011 elections in Nigeria. The fifth section is the

conclusion. This contains the summary of findings and recommendations reached from the findings.

1. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework on which the study is anchored, assumes two things:

a) The perception of an actor of what the state and the political party represent define his role within a political party.

b) A notion of politics in general or electoral competition in particular as the continuation of warfare by some other means and politics as an end in itself.

2. THE STATE AND POLITICAL PARTIES: SOME CONCEPTIONAL CLARIFICATIONS

There appears to be a consensus that the primary goal of political parties is to win political power in order to control and exercise political power. (Yaqub 2002 & Onuoha 2003) cited in Saliu and Mohammed (Wikipedia). The success of the party is determined by the party's level of institutionalisation, cohesion and social base. To achieve its primary objective, parties have the task of political recruitment, mobilisation, education, breeding consensus, providing alternative world views, etc. For parties to attain enduring stability in a democratic setting, they must become established and set clearly defined values. Parties should acquire party coherence defined as the degree of congruence in the attitudes and behaviour of party members. Of course, where the values of a system are clearly defined it naturally moulds the behaviours of members. If the goal of political parties is to seek political power to control the state, then the perception party members have of the state also condition the values exhibited by parties. Reading Ibeanu earlier referred to, the perception of what the party should be for those who control the state also becomes an area of interest for the study. Oyovbaire's observation on the four factors that has impacted on governance can also be said to have shaped the values political parties hold dear in Nigeria. First is the prolonged authoritarian rule by the military in Nigeria. The praetorian order succeeded in moulding the values of the party leaders in the authoritarian fashion of military dictatorship. This is further deepened by the increasing role of ex-military officers in politics (see Adekanye, 1999). As leaders of the leading political parties – PDP, ANPP, APGA and now CPC – ex-military officers now in politics cannot divorce themselves from their military background.

The ex-military officers participating in the political process in Nigeria do have their entrenched mindset and perception of politics. Their conceptions, attitudes and orientations about politics appear already formed. Their

colored perceptions of politics and electoral competition largely determined what they did as political actors throughout their foray into politics. There is therefore a casual relationship between their perceptions of politics and their actions as political actors.

Adekanye's description of Obasanjo as a Machiavellian Prince in action, is an apt assessment that is applicable to the ex-military officers who have ventured into the Nigerian political terrain. For like Machiavelli, and Mao Se Tung, they believe that politics is a continuation of warfare by some other means. In reference to the Prince, Adekanye (1997) concluded that for the Machiavellian school of thought, the act of politics is merely an adaptation of the general rules and principle of military discipline and heroism laid down. In a war situation, the end justifies the means and for the military, heroism lays in winning the war at all cost and by any means as part of ones commitment to the pursuit of "duty, honor, and country." Adekanye has shown that this central point about the substitutability of political and military roles in Machiavelli is also very much what ex-military officers believe in. For both ex-military officers and Machiavelli, politics and warfare are two sides of the same coin. To the ex-military officers therefore, politics is more or less a do-or-die affair. It is a zero sum conception of politics as a battle, not competition between groups or individuals unrestrained by any rule and aimed at a total annihilation of ones opponents.

In the kind of liberal democratic framework that the 1999 constitution envisages, politics is meant to be a competition, you win some and lose some, and all are "part-winners" at the end of the day. A key aspect of politics in that kind of constitutional framework is that there is commitment to the values of trade-offs, sharing, conciliation, accommodation, balancing among competitors, and above all some agreed rules of the game. However, in the world view and perceptions of the ex-military officers, politics is total. It is a battle where there is no room for accommodation, value sharing and tolerance; ones opponents are enemies and the end should be the rules and dictates of the powerful for the final outcome and the battle is conquest. His (Obasanjo and his military colleagues) view of politics and electoral competition is obviously not in keeping with the underlying ethos of the constitution.

On the face of it, the military as a profession appear to share the view about the generalized need for morality in politics. For the military is about honor, and certain things are not considered good for the professional soldier. Some military officers (Adekanye: 1999 pg:67) consider politics as a dirty game that is not good for the military profession and not honorable for a soldier whether in or out of uniform. That view of politics sees the latter vocation as characterized by "crookedness" "lies and deception" "jostling for positions" "political bickering" "cross carpeting" "rumbling discourses" "circumlocutions"

“electoral chicanery” “thuggery and hooliganism” “crass materialism”. This is the view held by most professional soldier about politics and the politicians.

Yet in April 2007 and subsequently, as in deed in all past elections held after the successive military regimes from 1978 to 2003, an increasingly large number of top retired military generals had always participated. A few examples include General Shehu Musa Yar’adua (rtd), General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd), Lt. Gen T.Y Danjuma (rtd), Maj. General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau (rtd), Maj. General Abdullahi Sarki Mukhtar (rtd), Late Maj. General Abdul Kareem Adisa, Maj. General Mamman Kontagora, Maj. General David Jemibewon (rtd), Jonah Jang, General Muhamadu Buhari (rtd), leader and presidential candidate of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) for the 2011 general elections (Adekanye 1999; Addendum).

The National Assembly at the same time included top retired military representatives like General David Mark, General Tunde Ogbeha and Maj. General Ike Nwachukwu (rtd) of these, the first has since not only been “returned” after the April 2007 election but became the President of the Nigerian Senate, that is the no 3 person in the land (thanks to the helping hand of the departing Obasanjo presidency). Under former President Obasanjo, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had Retired Colonel Ahmadu Ali as the chairman after two civilian figures-Chief Barnabas Gemade and Chief Audu Ogbeh successively presiding over the party’s affairs had been shown the way out. Colonel Ali was one of the chief architects of the PDP’s “success” in the April 2007 election. Finally, of course, Chief Obasanjo did not leave office on May 29, 2007 until he had concluded arrangements that ensured his being personally installed chairman Board of Trustees of the PDP. The whole scenario raises the question, are retired military officers actually different from the civilians, or does their involvement in politics automatically change their orientation?

The “sins” of politicians listed above that make them detested by the military profession are known and applied in military strategy. The professional soldiers turned politicians know that some of their political strategies are not alien to the military profession after all. Within the military, stratagems such as keeping ones objectives, strategies and options closer to ones heart, getting ones opponents guessing about one’s intention, dissimulation, trickery and deception, and coming up with surprise moves and application of brutal force are recognized and applied within the military profession. The retired military men in politics in Nigeria know some of these strategies and have put them to good use. The case of former President Obasanjo is remarkable in this regard. For example, throughout the “third term debate” Obasanjo left everyone guessing as to what his position was on tenure elongation (Lai Olurode (ed) 2006). For the 2007

election, Obasanjo painted a picture of a preparation that would guarantee a level-playing ground for all interested parties. In a broadcast to the nation on the occasion of the 46th independence of Nigeria, Sunday 1st October 2006, President Obasanjo stated that “..... if we are to make steady and sustainable progress, we must collectively resolve to fight political corruption and violence, election manipulation, the imposition of candidates, the culture of empty politicking and the marginalization of women in the power and political process.....” He also said “we must see politics not as an end in itself but as a means of getting the very best for the society to provide service for all.” This statesman like speech could not have prepared anyone’s mind for the crude principles the President adopted in the 2007 elections. The President’s rhetoric prior to the election was matched by the unbrazen use of State instruments and institutions of coercion to prosecute the April 2007 election (Adekanye, 1999 and Tenuche, 2007).

Second is the class character of the economy in which unearned wealth in the form of corrupt accumulation of state funds by a few individuals has tended to shift power relations away from the majority of the people. This is further accentuated by the reality that as a fast failing state to which Nigeria is now classified, the state becomes a coveted price to be won at all costs and by all means whether fair or foul.

All this has culminated in the growth and expansion of personal rule where the laws and constitution no longer guide state action. Personal rule is getting entrenched because the prolonged military rule to a large extent favoured the executive arm which remained in place during military regimes. These four factors alluded to by Oyovbaire have in no small ways shaped the values of political parties in Nigeria with serious implications for political succession.

The obvious fall out of these developments is that rather than transform into viable political institutions, parties in Nigeria over the years have not changed but characterised by features that portend danger to the democratisation process. All political parties therefore share the same features. This probably explains the case of carpet-crossing among party members to the opposing political parties with ease.

3. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Central to the discussion of this study is the perception members of political parties, specifically party leaders have of politics as demonstrated by their conduct at party primaries as documented in selected Nigerian dailies and the impact of this on the nature, conduct of elections and political succession in Nigeria.

The study patterned along an earlier study by the author adopted what may be described as a discussive method of political analysis using a combination of

primary and secondary materials as sources of data. The secondary ones include an analysis of relevant texts on the subject of politics as a vocation, as a competitive game and also texts on the subject of politics as a continuation of war by some other means. These texts include Robert Dahl (Modern Political Analysis), Machiavelli (The Prince), Nnoli (Introduction to Politics) and Anifowose (Theoretical Explanation of Political Violence). The secondary sources also focused on the analysis on the subject of the state as defined by Liberal and Neo-Liberal schools. The texts include Harry Gulborne (The State in the Third World Societies), Richard Joseph (Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic) and Jega (Identity Transformation and the Politics of Identity under Crisis and Adjustment in Nigeria). Texts that discuss the origin and traditional roles of political parties were also widely consulted. These are Sklar (Developmental Democracy in Comparative Studies) and Palombara and Werner (Political Parties and Political Development).

For the primary source used for deriving our data, we relied on four purposefully selected Nigerian dailies. The idea is to capture data not only from the six geopolitical zones in the country, but also to assess the conduct of ruling parties in different states of the federation.

The dailies consulted included the Guardian, the Daily Sun, Daily Trust and the Tribune. The selection of these papers was informed by the spread of the papers and their availability on the internet. The selection also took into cognisance the geographical spread of the country with a view to capturing the activities of political parties in the different zones. This is quite instructive as the leading parties in most cases have strong holds in particular geographical zones. Specifically, while the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has a strong presence in the North Central and South-South geographical zones, the Action Congress (AC) has a stronghold in the South-West while the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) has a strong base in the South-East. The North-East and North-West are under the aegis of the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP).

The period of systematic investigation was from July, 2002 to January, 2011. Specifically, the months preceding the general elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections were critically interrogated as they marked the specific periods within which the various political parties conducted their primary elections.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Empirical Evidence Linking Political Perception and Political Behaviour

The empirical evidence demonstrating our theoretical postulation in the preceding chapter are amply illustrated in the next section of this work. The first section is the

authoritarian character of political parties which is linked to the emerging strong characters of the State accentuated by prolonged military rule in Nigeria.

4.2 The Authoritarian Character of Political Parties and Primary Elections in Nigeria

In this section, four political parties are examined. They include the People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), and All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA). These parties can be described as the leading parties in Nigeria in the 4th Republic not because of the degree of their institutionalisation, but based on the fact that they have contested and won elections at various levels of government between 1999 to date. This is however not to suggest that they can be described as institutionalised, as Saliu & Mohammed (2011) observed, party institutionalisation is the process by which parties become established, acquire value and enduring stability. Given the performance in the variables used for measuring the degree of institutionalisation of parties, i.e. party age, count of splits and mergers, electoral stability, legislative stability and leadership change the leading parties are far from being institutionalised. Indeed, where these variables are critically used to evaluate parties in Nigeria's fourth republic, all the leading parties will score low.

One character that permeates all parties is the authoritarian nature and a high degree of centrality of the party structure and processes. The chairman of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in a recent interview in (Vanguard online www.vanguardng.com, Vol.25, No. 61285 of Friday 21st January, 2011, Pg 35) granted an interview on the occasion of his 72 birthday to a Vanguard Correspondent, Gbenga Olarinoye, said "nobody should accuse Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) of imposition because that is our style". Continuing, he said "...It is the leadership of the party that understands the manifestoes of the party and know what the people really want" (emphasis mine). The ACN Chairman concluded that, among the old democracies, it is only the United States of America that conducts primary elections in the selection of candidates. "In other older democracies like Britain, India and Canada, candidates are selected by the judgement of the party based on their competence and trustworthiness."

Olusegun Obasanjo as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and a leader of the PDP spoke in the same vein during the primaries preceding the 2007 general elections. At a get-together organised by the PDP to celebrate its victory at the polls in May 2007, Obasanjo declared that "it was abnormal for a National Assembly comprising mostly of PDP members to oppose a PDP led executive." Obasanjo asserted that there must always be collaboration between elected PDP members. As in his words, "it has to be that way because the PDP is the one that produces you to elective office. So, you must (emphasis mine) have allegiance to the PDP and the

nation. You did not just drop from the sky” (Vanguard, Sunday May 13th, 2007 – see Tenuche, 2009). This quote gives an insight into the behaviour and actions of the PDP leadership during the primaries preceding the elections. At the primaries, members who were considered “loyal” by the party leadership were rewarded with electoral victory even where they lost at party primaries while those considered “disloyal” members were not allowed to contest elections.

In Imo State, South Eastern Nigeria, although Ifeanyi Ararume won the PDP gubernatorial primary election, he was not put up as the gubernatorial candidate for the party. The electoral act used for that election stipulated that, for any political party who intends to change any of its candidate, it shall “give cogent and verifiable reasons”. The only reason given by the PDP for substituting Ararume’s name with that of Charles Ugwu, who scored 36 votes and took the 14th position in the primaries was that Ararume’s name was submitted in “error” (Vanguard Saturday September 30th, 2006, Pg 26 (also see Tenuche 2009). When Ararume took the matter to court, he was suspended from the party. The party brazenly declared that it was not submitting any name for the gubernatorial seat in Imo State following the Supreme Court verdict that Ararume remain the PDP gubernatorial candidate; he lost the election because the PDP denied him “support” as his case was not a “do-or-die” affair. President Obasanjo and the top party hierarchy just as the case with the ACN and ANPP had total control over who contested elections and who did not. For example, the Obasanjo grouse with the former Governor Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State and the Labour Party gubernatorial candidate of Ondo State (now Governor of the State) Olusegun Mimiko was that they refused to abide by the president’s directive that they should not contest the elections.

As for Mimiko (who later became Governor after a court ruling), the President declared at a PDP campaign rally in Ondo State that “Mimiko came to join us from AD; I even made him Minister without telling the Governor. But when he came to ask to be allowed to contest for gubernatorial election, I advised against it (Daily Sun Sunday February 10, 2007). Since he refused the party denied him support to contest the election and Mimiko was forced to defect to the Labour Party.

Gani Fawehinmi summed up the views of several reports on the hijack of the party by its leaders and specifically the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria when he said “since the PDP kicked off its presidential campaign on Saturday January 27th, 2007, General Obasanjo has turned the entire exercise to Obasanjo Presidential Campaign. He has failed dismally to draw a line between official presidential duties and the electoral campaign for a presidential candidate of his party, the PDP. He has virtually put Governor Musa Yar-adua in his pocket like an Australian Kangaroo, using presidential jets, presidential security, presidential

financial vote and all other paraphernalia of presidential authority to conduct the elections.” The build-up to the campaign proper, i.e. the primaries, was not different. Ugwu who was cleared to contest the PDP gubernatorial election, although he lost to Ararume at the primaries, confirmed the flawed process when he said “I did not win any election, I did not defeat anybody, I was “selected”. A newspaper correspondent also alluded to the non-democratisation within political parties when he said with reference to the PDP presidential primaries that “it was not an election but a coronation” (Daily Trust, December 18th, 2006).

The imposition of candidates at party primaries as occurred in the selection of candidates for the 2007 election is again being replicated in the build up to the 2011 elections. The position of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) was alluded to earlier in the paper. For the PDP, the scenario was the same Newspaper reports from all parts of the country and for most primary elections to the various elective offices at the State and Federal levels were trailed by allegations of imposition of candidates instead of the parties creating a level-playing ground for the best candidates to emerge from the party primaries.

Starting with the PDP which has the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan as a candidate in the election, the preparation for the party primaries suggested from the onset that the right of party members to elect candidates of their choice to contest elections was foreclosed as the party leadership made it clear that it has the sole right to determine who contested elections. Specifically, at a stakeholders’ meeting of South-South delegates of the party in Port Harcourt, Chief Tony Anenih, a leader of the party was reported to have said that the party would “deal with any party member who did not vote for Jonathan” at the presidential primaries (Daily Sun Editorial, Thursday January 6, 2011).

It was also widely reported in the dailies that Jonathan promised to give automatic tickets to governors who support him at the primaries. The former Chairman of the Party, Dr. Ekwesilize Nwodo promised the National Assembly members automatic tickets if they gave support to Jonathan at the presidential primaries. Reported cases of imposition of candidates by party leaders were reported across the country for the various offices and among the different political parties. Confusion trailed the PDP primaries as most candidates queried the list of delegates approved to vote for qualified candidates to contest the 2011 elections. The general complaints were allegations that the list of delegates to party congresses at the ward, local, state levels to elect candidates for the Houses of Assemblies, National Houses of Assembly and Governors to the National convention of parties for the selection of Presidential candidates was doctored by self-styled party elders. This has resulted in protests by aggrieved party members across the country.

4.3 Responses to the Poverty of Internal Democracy Among Political Parties in Nigeria

The immediate fallout of compromised primary elections since the commencement of the 4th Republic has been tragic for the democratic project in Nigeria. Some of these include the bitter conflicts between “Godfathers” and their “anointed Political Sons”, gruesome murder of candidates, inter-party violent conflicts, carpet-crossing, ballot snatching and kidnapping and elongated judicial processes that ended up annulling the election of those that claimed victory at the polls.

In a number of well-publicised cases across political parties, bitter conflicts ensued between elected candidates who were ab-initio imposed on the party and the electorate by self acclaimed Godfathers. The election of Chris Ngige of the PDP in Anambra State was the worst case scenario. Andy Uba, a chieftain of the ruling PDP with the support of the PDP leaders in Abuja gave support to Chris Ngige to emerge as the PDP candidate in Anambra State and he went ahead to win the election in 2003. Ngige was alleged to have reneged on some agreement with his Godfather and he was let lose in Anambra State, resulting in the kidnapping of Ngige, the sitting Governor. Armed youth gangs took control of the government house and unleashed terror on the state capital under the watchful eyes of state security agents. Ngige managed to complete his term in office in 2007.

In Enugu State, Nnamani also had to contend with his Godfather – Jim Nwobodo – while in Kwara State, Mohamed Lawal’s disagreement with his Godfather – Olusola Saraki – resulted in violent conflicts in the state between the supporters of the duo. In Oyo State, Lamidi Adedibu gave support to Senator Rashid Ladoja. When Ladoja also reneged on some agreements between the two conflict ensued. The resultant conflict also resulted in violent conflicts between their supporters on a number of occasions. As reported in the Editorial of Daily Sun of Tuesday, January 11, Pp 18, the so-called Godfathers impose their candidates on the electorate not to provide services for the good of society. Rather, the money spent to impose the candidates is seen as “investments in political manpower and as avenue to corner illicit government contracts and to loot public treasury”. Conflicts arose usually because once in power, the “political son” attempt to create a power base; to wrestle power from the Godfather and ensure unfettered access to state resources. This results in violent conflicts as the stakes are high in attempts to milk the state resources.

A second outcome of rigged primaries is the high rate of politically related killings. In most cases, security agents were not able to apprehend the killers. The murder of Funsho Williams in Lagos, June 2006 and Ayo Daramola in Ekiti State in August, 2006, both PDP gubernatorial candidates, were among a recorded 280 reports of election-related deaths over an eight week period ending in March, 2007 (Tenuche 2009, 052 Journal

of Public Administration and Policy Research).

In the build-up to the 2011 elections politically related killings that are linked to the conduct of primary elections are on the increase. The ANPP Gubernatorial Candidate in Borno State – Modu Gubio along with six other party members were shut and killed on 27th January, 2011. Before the murder of Gubio, the National Vice-Chanmin (North-East) of the ANPP was also killed. The Secretary to the Labour Party in Ondo State was also murdered on January 1st, 2011. The Daily Sun Newspaper (Tuesday, January 11, 2011) also reported cases of politically related murder in Oyo State that led to the arrest of a serving Senator. There were also reports of politically related killings in Ogun and Niger States. The incidences of arrests of youth gangs with weapons have been on the increase. The proliferation of light weapons and the rising cases of the use of bombs has assumed a serious threat to security in the country.

A third feature of compromised primaries is the senseless cross-carpeting among parties. This confirms the poverty of ideology among party members. The process of party formation is loose. The Daily Sun sarcastically pointed to the fact that the ideal character of parties is still largely missing in Nigeria as individuals have the “signal sense of privately and surreptitiously registering a party to be kept aside for the rainy day”. Where candidates fail to secure a chance to contest election, they move with ease to other parties that will present them as candidates for election. Citing the case of Dr. Abubakar Olushola Saraki, a leading member of the ruling PDP who crossed over to a minority party essentially to aid his daughter secure a place as the gubernatorial candidate of the party. A serving Vice President, Atiku Abubakar had to decamp from the party on whose platform he came to power in the build up to the 2007 general elections.

In all cases of alleged manipulation of party primaries, accusing fingers are pointed at the leaders of the party often referred to as Party Elders or Eminent Party Leaders with the tacit support of State Governors and at the Federal level the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Happenings in Nigeria since the commencement of the Fourth Republic suggest that these chief executives have also taken over the leadership of political parties. Party Chairmen are often removed with impunity by the political party under the directive of the Governors or the President. Between 1999 when Obasanjo took over as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and 2007 when he ended an eight-year tenure, the chairmanship of the party was replaced three times. First was the removal of Audu Ogbah who was replaced by Barnabas Gemade and then Senator Ahmadu Ali. Within a period of one year of assuming office as Head of State, the chairmanship of the PDP has been changed twice under Goodluck Jonathan. The chairmen often attribute their removal to the high-handedness of the leadership of the party often pointing accusing fingers at the chief executives.

The crisis in the ANPP that culminated in the disintegration of the executive arm of the party in 2007 resulted from a romance that occurred between the executive arm of the party and the leadership of the ruling People's Democratic Party. Oyovbaire's postulation that over the years, the executive arm of Government in Nigeria has been converted into the epic centre of power relations because of the control it has over the distribution of state resources appears convincing enough to explain the dominant role over political parties by the executive arm of government. Among the small parties, the ultimate goal of the leadership of these parties is to establish some relationship with the ruling party and specifically with the leadership of the parties. A common practice among these parties is that they declare support for the ruling party or the bigger party before the general election corroborating the position by Simbine (2007) that there are actually no discerning differences in the manifestoes, principles and values among parties, which explains once again the ease with which members of opposing parties fuse and flow into one another. In some cases, people obey the provision of the country's constitution by using the platform of a party to emerge as candidates for elections. Once elections are won, they cross over to the ruling party and therefore close to the chief executive of states. The executive arm of government and specifically the state chief executives have grown in power and influence to the extent that they not only control the outcome of primary elections, but also determine the outcome of general elections held after the primaries. Since 2007 elections in Nigeria, the Governors' Forum has become a major force to reckon with in Nigeria. Their growing influence in state affairs was so recognised by Goodluck Jonathon when he described them as the "engine" of the democratic process in Nigeria.

Prior to the 2007 general elections, only candidates that had the support of the Governors at the State level and the president at the National level allowed to contest elections. As already mentioned, even where such candidates did not win in the primary elections, they were presented as candidates for the general elections. The just concluded primary elections preparatory to the general elections in April, 2011, the scenario of imposition of candidates has remained. In all the cited cases of violent protests against the primaries reported in the dailies, party members accuse the leadership of the political parties at the State and National levels of candidate imposition. Party leaders across parties set aside the party rules guiding the emergence of candidates for elections and impose their favourites.

The immediate fallout of these developments is that issues of governance take the backstage while the dust raised by compromised primaries last. Again, the development set the stage for responses that are usually negative as preparations are made for general elections. It becomes obvious therefore that at the root of the discredited elections in Nigeria is the issue of

compromised primary elections where candidates are imposed on the electorate.

A number of reasons have been advanced as to why party rules and values are readily comprised. First of course is the executive power of the State Chief Executives which is extended to the control of political parties. Closely related to this are two related questions. First, who should own the party and second, how is membership generated. Ideally, parties are conceived as an association of like minds who come together to promote their ideals and set to contest and win political power. The issue of membership is critical because it has implications not only for the structure of the party, but also for the funding, participation and ultimately for the democratic process.

Baseline data on the state of political parties in 2010 revealed that only 28% of the 63, i.e 15 registered parties in Nigeria can be adjudged to have viable political structures. Only 8 of the 63 parties have a secretariat in Abuja. Only 8 won elections either at local, state or national levels. Of this number, only 3 successfully won election at the national level. 39 of the registered parties do not have party acronyms. For many of these parties, the main source of funding is the public grants given to registered parties.

Given this general feature of political parties in Nigeria, it is safe to conclude that their ability to engender a stable democratic process is limited, where a few individuals conceive the idea to float a party and make financial contributions to meet the conditions for and eventually get parties registered, then they exercise total control over the party. It then becomes easy for individuals to conceive and register a party waiting for a "rainy day" when it can be put to use to achieve private goals.

CONCLUSION

The paper sets out to examine the relationship between the values political parties hold and political behaviour of party members drawing empirical data from public statements of party leaders and the conduct of primary elections in Nigeria with particular reference to the Fourth Republic.

The study found out that the behaviour and rhetorics of leaders of political parties in Nigeria conveyed their perceptions of politics as warfare and the war being prosecuted is to access state power for primitive accumulation. All arsenals are there deployed by political parties to prosecute the war. The perception leaders of political parties have of politics in most cases informed the actions they take and actions taken by most party members. Most African leaders, Nigeria inclusive, are reluctant to relinquish power because it provides the easiest way to accumulate wealth. Where they are forced to relinquish power after their constitutionally approved tenure, they tactfully deployed undemocratic tactics to

install their own successors and in the process crushing any opposition. The response from the opposition groups and other members of the ruling class who are yet to access state power is also forceful. The fight to appoint candidates within members of the same political party is therefore no less forceful and in most cases violent. The starting point for violent contest for power therefore originates from the conduct of party primaries and this is why a study on party primaries should be of interest to researchers and policy makers.

Succession in Africa is still problematic, and also problematic is the search for the best possible option for instituting the democratic culture among political leaders and citizenry in Africa. A flawed primary election is likely to throw up candidates and eventually political leadership that lacks legitimacy and an electorate that is apathetic to future participation in the electoral process. This necessarily breeds insecurity, violent conflicts and instability that have continued to present a major challenge to the Nigerian leadership and to African states today.

As the former President, Federal Republic of Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo) rightly observed, the electoral process has always been flawed in Nigeria (see Guardian Newspaper, May 8th, 2007). This includes the party primaries preceding the general elections. There is the urgent need for the country to make amends if democracy is to be consolidated. The suggestions arising from the findings in the paper are; one, the traditional roles of political parties that include political mobilisation, recruitment, education, breeding consensus and providing alternative world views must be strengthened if necessary by creating instruments to enforce it. The Electoral Act in Nigeria has specifically provided for internal democracy within political parties. The recently concluded party primaries in Nigeria are the first test for the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria to see if this provision can be enforced. A lot of aggrieved members of political parties have challenged the results of party primaries citing the fact that the political parties did not abide by the provisions of the electoral act. The next step is for INEC to show that it can bite by enforcing the laws where they are flouted.

INEC however, requires the support and co-operation of the electorate and the support from Government where it has the political will to enforce all the laws of the land.

Two, there are ample example to show that ruling parties in Government are almost always interested in self-elongation. Once in power during elections, they will tamper with the electoral process using all the instruments of office available to them. The paper reiterates a position earlier proposed by the author (see Tenuche) that elections should be declared as emergencies where an impartial body, e.g. the judicial body, and not the ruling party determine elections.

Three, in Nigeria, a number of well-informed

citizens that include the former Head of State Olusegun Obasanjo and the Central Bank Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi have decried the over bloated remuneration of political officer holders. The fight to occupy positions of authority has therefore become a “do-or-die” affair. The remuneration of public office holders should be adjusted to reflect the current economic situation in the country.

Four, the long term solution to flawed electoral processes is a commitment by the rulers and the ruled to build up a democratic culture. For democracy to thrive, a lot needs to be done, for example, eradication of poverty, mass mobilisation, economic development, education, eradication of unemployment and demilitarisation of the polity. Such will facilitate the gradual build up of a democratic culture. It will be easier then to get the populace to invigilate, monitor and defend elections so that the one-man, one-vote slogan of the present regime is realised.

Five, the provisions of the electoral law specifically the punishment for violating electoral laws must be enforced and government needs to develop the political will to do this by ensuring justice and equity where it mattered.

REFERENCES

- Adekanye, J. B. (1999). *The Retired Military as Emergent Power Factor in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Heinemann Publishers.
- Anifowose, R. (1988). *The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*. Enugu, Nigeria: Nok Publishers International.
- Dahl, R.A. (1991). *Modern Political Analysis* (5th Edition). NJ.: Prentice Hall.
- Fawehinmi G. (2007). *The Misuse by General Obasanjo of Presidential Power to Campaign in an Election*. The Guardian, February 13, 2007. Press Statement 2007. Human Rights Watch Bulletin.
- Ibeanu, O. (2007). A Troubled Path to Democratic Consolidation. In Jega, A & Ibeanu, O (Ed.), *Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria*(pp. 295-304). The Nigerian Political Science Association.
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). (2000). Capacity Building Series No. 10, Sweden. IDEA (Chapter 10, 215)
- Jega, A. (2003). *Identity Transformation and Democracy in Nigeria. Continuing Dialogues for Nation Building the Politics of Identity Under Crisis and Adjustment in Nigeria* (pp.11-25). Revised Edition. Nordiska Afrikains in Collaboration with the Centre for Research and Development, Kano.
- Jinadu A. (2006). *Political Succession in Africa: The Nigerian Political Science Association Annual*. Billy J. Dudley Memorial Lecture.
- Joseph, R. (1991). *Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*. Ibadan: University Press Limited.
- Nnoli, O. (2003). *Introduction to Politics*. Enugu: SNAAP Press Limited.

- Machiavelli, N. (1961). *The Prince*. London: Penguin Books Limited.
- Nnoli, O. (2003). *Introduction to Politics*. Enugu: SNAAP Press Limited.
- Olurode, L. (Ed) (2006). *A Third Term Agenda: To Be or Not to Be*. Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Oyovbaire, S.E. (2007). *The Crisis of Governance in Nigeria*. Text of the Convocation Lecture Delivered on Thursday, 15th March, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- Palombara, J. L., & Werner, M. (Eds) (1966). *Political Parties and Political Development*. New York: Princeton.
- Report on Violent Conflicts in Nigeria. (2004-2005). Peace and Development Projects, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).
- Saliu, H., & Muhammed Abdulrasheed.(2001). *Growing Nigeria's Democracy Through Viable Political parties*. [html Version]. Retrieved from <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/publications/muhammedaa>.
- Simbine, A. (2007). The People's Verdict on Political Parties and Nigeria's Democratic Experiment: 1999-2001. In Sofiri J. P. and Ukoha (Eds.), *The Travails and Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria, 1999-2003 and Beyond* (pp.207-231). Centre for Advanced Social Science, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
- Sklar, R. (1984). Developmental Democracy in Comparative Studies. *Society and History*, 99.
- Tenuche, M. (2007). Rhetoric of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria. *Journal – State & Society*.
- Tenuche, M. (2009). Language of Politics and Political Behaviours: Rhetoric of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research*, 1(3), 54-65.