Electioneering and Dialectics of Political Stability in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Democracy

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Abstract
This paper examines the crisis of electioneering in Nigeria, against the backdrop of untoward electioneering experiences in the country over the years. By way of exegetic interrogation of Nigeria's electoral history and trends, the paper observes that electioneering in Nigeria has been marred by contradictions that threatened political stability in the country. The paper submits that this scenario vitiates the prospect of sustainable democracy in the country.
Keywords: Electioneering; political stability; prebendal state/ politics; democratic dispensation.

1. Introduction

Party politics in Nigeria, over the years, has to a large extent mirrored the proverbial rat-race. State power has been sought by many with crudest desperation, and with the least regard for decorum and etiquette (Okoli, 2008). The underlying logic of partisanship has been sort of Machiavellian expediency; hence "the end justifies the means and he means being acquisition and appropriation of state power by all means and at all cost" (Okoli, 2007:1).

In effect, electoral politics in Nigeria has become a perplexing phenomenon, entailing the application of the most desperate and despicable tactics to clinch and maintain power. In this context, lawlessness, violence and impunity become indispensable elements of the electioneering experience. As brilliantly observed by Ake:

> We are intoxicated with politics. The premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures in order to win and maintain political power; our energy tends to be channeled into the struggle for power to the detriment of economically productive efforts (as cited by Diamond, 1984:905).

In his paper, an attempt is made to examine the character of electioneering in Nigeria with a view to underscoring its relationship with political (in)stability in Nigeria. The paper posits that electioneering crisis is a veritable threat to political stability, whose implications for democratic sustainability in Nigeria has been clearly ominous.

2. Conceptual Issues

Two key concepts form the thrust of this paper. The concepts are electioneering and political in/stability. For the purpose of shared understanding, it is important to consider the contextual meanings of these concepts in the light the focus of the paper.

2.1. **Electioneering:** This refers to the sum total of activities by which politically interested actors seek to canvass and win votes for a preferred candidate or political party. It also involves the partisan activities of the opposition party or parties dedicated towards wresting power from the incumbent party through strategic campaigns and mobilization. It is the practical manifestation of 'politicking' in the electoral process (Okoye, 1996). It further involves an effort to persuade or dissuade prospective voters in an attempt to gain partisan advantage in the electoral process (Bassey, 2013).

2.2. **Political Stability:** The concept of political stability is so widely applied and misapplied in political discourse. According to Hurwitz, (1973:449), "The concept of political stability is an excellent illustration of the fuzziness and confusion existing in political science research regarding concept formulation, operationalization and measurement". Generally, the concept of political stability comprehends the following scope of meanings and nuances:

   i. The absence of violence
   ii. Government longevity
   iii. The existence of a legitimate constitutional regime
   iv. Absence of structural change, and
   v. A multifaceted societal attribute (Hurwitz, 1973: 449).

More conventionally, political stability has been conceived from the point of view of absence of domestic civil conflict and violent behaviour. Hence, "a stable polity is seen as a peaceful, law-abiding society where decision-making and politico-societal change are the result of institutionalized and (…)functional procedures and not the outcome of anomic processes which resolve issues through conflict and aggression" (Hurwitz, 1973: 449).

Simply put, political stability means the prevalence of peace, political order and sustainable progress in a polity over a period of time. It is characterized by amiable civil relations and peaceful socio-political change that forecloses systemic variability, uncertainty, volatility, insecurity, disequilibrium and flux. Political instability therefore refers to the prevalence of precarious political ambience characterized by systemic crises and turbulence that threaten the safe functioning of the political system.

2.3. Correlating 'Electioneering' and 'Political In/Stability': The crux of this paper is to establish how electioneering is operationally related political stability in the context of Nigeria. Electioneering, in this context, is the independent variable while political in/stability is the dependent variable. The underlying assumption herewith is that electioneering tends to engender conditions that threaten or negate political stability. In other words, the character of electioneering in Nigeria tends to impede actualization and sustenance of political stability. This would be evidenced in the spate of crises and violence that have characterized the electioneering experience of Nigeria over the years.

3. **The Locus of the Study: Nigeria in Brief**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located in West Africa. It borders Benin Republic, Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic. It has a south coast along the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean.

Nigeria is divided into thirty six (36) states and one Federal Capital Territory (FCT: Abuja). In 1960, Nigeria gained her independence from Great Britain after being a British Protectorate since 1900. Other relevant details concerning the national profile of Nigeria are highlighted in Table 1 showing hereunder.

Table 1: Nigeria Basic Profile

POLITY	State Type	Federal State
	Government Type	Presidential Democracy
	Independence	October 1, 1960
	Colonial Master	Britain
	Official Designation	Federal Republic of Nigeria
	Capital	Abuja, formerly Lagos
GEOGRAPHY	Total Surface	923'768km^2 (Coastline 853km)
	Provinces/States	36 States and 1 Federal Capital Territory (Abuja)
	Official Language	English
DEMOGRAPHICS	Climate	Equatorial in South, tropical in the centre, arid in North
	Population	154' 720'000 (2009 estimate)
	Religions	Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10%
	Ethnic Groups	More than 250: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%, etc.
ECONOMIC ENDOWMENT	Industrial and Agricultural Resources	Crude oil, coal, tin, columbite, palm oil, peanuts, cotton, rubber, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cattle, corn, fish, etc
NATIONAL ASPIRATION	Governance	Good governance through democracy
	Development	Sustainable development through pro-market reforms/transformation programmes
	Security	Sustainable security through territorial and human security drive

Source**:** World Health Organization (2012); authors' modifications apply.

Politically, Nigeria has been a systematically challenged aspiring democracy. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's aspiration towards democracy has materialized in various democratic transitions and dispensations, amidst sundry crises and contradictions. Table 2 hereunder gives insights in this regard.

Table 2: Democratic Dispensations in Nigeria (1960-2014)

DISPENSATION	LIFE SPAN
1st Republic	1963-1966
2nd Republic	1979-1983
3rd Republic (Abortive)	1988/89-1993
4th Republic (Current)	1999 - Date (2014)

Source: Authors

In all of these dispensations, party politics in Nigeria has remained a thorny issue. With particular reference to electioneering, the situation has been characteristically critical, throwing up the worst of anomalies. In short, electioneering in the country has come be associated with political crisis and instability.

4. Theoretical Premise: The Prebendal Character of the Nigerian State/Politics

Crisis associated with electioneering in Nigeria would be better understood if situated within the organic context in which the conduct of politics takes place (Gonidec, 1981). The context in question is a typical prebendal state with 'larger than thou' personae (Okoli, 2009). The Nigerian state plays a dominant role in the national life in the face of the apparent underdevelopment of private capitalist enterprise (Unobe, 2003; Animashaun, 2010:5). Being a major facilitator of the capitalist development process, the Nigerian state has assumed the role of a major owner of the means of production. Buoyed by the 'oil boom' of the early 1970s, the state effectively assumed a rather domineering influence and posture in all facets of the national political economy (cf. Jega & Ibeanu, 2007:30). This made the state not only the biggest spender of resources but also the largest employer of labor as well as the paramount guarantor of social and economic security. As observed by Joseph (1991:56), the 'oil boom' of the 1970s accentuated "the centrality of the state as the locus of the struggle for resources for personal advancement and group security." In this context, state power becomes an instrument of private capital accumulation. According to Ake:

> [T]he state is everywhere and its power appears boundless. There is hardly any aspect of life in which the state does not exercise power and control. That makes the capture of state power singularly important (1996:23).

This peculiarity of the Nigerian state promotes prebendal politics wherein state power is sought by all and sundry as a means of personal material aggrandizement (Joseph, 1991; Okoli, 2009). Politics in this context, therefore attracts inestimable premium; thus in a bid to capture state power, the political elite, rather than promote opportunities for political competition, tend to limit or vitiate same (Okoli, 2008). Politicking, thus, becomes a matter of warfare by factions of the power elite. In this desperate, Hobbesian struggle, party politics and electioneering become rather obfuscating. It is within the ambit of the foregoing that one can plausibly conjecture the desperation of the Nigerian political elite for state power as evident in the brigandization of the electoral process by way of political violence. As Ake succinctly opines:

> The character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of state makes the capture of state power irresistibly attractive. The winners in the competition for power win everything, the losers lose everything, Nothing can be worse than losing, nothing, better than winning. Thus, everyone seeks power by every means, legal or otherwise and those who already control state power try to keep it by every means. What emerges from this is a politics which does not know legitimacy or legality, only expediency (1976: 7).

5. Some Perspectives on Electioneering Crisis/Political Stability in Nigeria

Contemporary political literature and narrative in Nigeria identifies politicking as the bane of national stability (Okoye, 1996, Okoli, 2013; Ngare, 2012). Crises pertaining to electioneering have been a veritable dimension of threats to political stability in Nigeria. This issue has been variously interrogated by scholars and analysts over the years. According to Animashaun (2010:3) "The history of Nigeria democratic experiments demonstrates that elections and electoral politics have generated so much animosity which threatens the corporate existence of the country".

The characteristic desperate orientation of party politics in Nigeria has found expression in all aspects of the electoral process. It has, indeed, manifested in acts of electoral violence and brigandage. As observed by Obakhedo:

> Pre-election campaigns, election-time, and post-election periods are usually violent, with campaigning in many areas beset by political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political factions (2011:103).

Similarly, Ogundiya and Baba (2007) point out that Nigeria's electoral experience has been fraught with excesses which present elections in that context as a course of instability. In effect,

> Elections in Nigeria have historically been conflict-ridden. The campaigns proceeding elections are invariably marked by pettiness, intolerance and violence (cited in Fagbehun, 2013:8).

With particular reference to the political crisis of 1964-1966, Ojo (2012) identified electioneering as one of the critically culpable factors. In his words, "pre- and post-election violence in the defunct Western Region created unprecedented political instability" in Nigeria (2012:6). The violent character of electioneering in Nigeria over the years demonstrates the Hobbesian logic of partisanship in that context. Thus, "With unprecedented political thuggery and uncontrolled violence, characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property, election period in Nigeria is best described as warfare" (Abbas, 20122: n.p).

The spate of electioneering crises is Nigeria has been rightly traced to the prevalence of 'prebendal culture' wherein the state is misconceived as "the clearing-house for jobs, contracts, and official plunder" (Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011:23). This has made the quest for power pertinently intense and violent. In effect, politicians and other politically inclined individuals indulge in partisan politics with the functional mindset of desperation, impunity and irresponsibility. The obvious lack of moderation in their partisan dealings (Fagbehun, 2013) is at the roots of the incessant electioneering crises in Nigeria.

By and large, electioneering crisis in Nigeria is closely associated with the prebendal character of the state (and politics) in that context. This interplays with the syndromic power-desperation of the political elite to compel a political culture of normlessness, indiscipline and impunity.

6. Historical Contexts and Trends of Electioneering Crisis in Nigeria (1960-2011)

For further situate the contextual and analytical background to this work, a review of history and context of electioneering crisis in Nigeria is germane. This forms the concern of this section of the paper. The foremost elections in independent Nigeria were conducted 1959 and 1964 prior to Nigeria's relapse into military dictatorship. Since then, the process has continued to decline considerably while the process has been fraught with violence. Fwatshak, et al (2009: 255) and Nnoli (1980:237) opines that not a single decade has passed since independence without major cataclysmic crises. Some of the crises have been associated to the conduct of elections. Cases in point include the Western regional elections crisis in 1965, the 1993 election crises, and the 2011 post election crises.

Anifowose (1982) posits that electioneering crisis occurs in the context of group struggles to seek, hold, or maintain power. Ugoh (2004) argues that electioneering crisis holds adverse implications for national progress. It often manifests or substantiates in the form of thuggery, arson, looting, falsification of results, riots, kidnapping and politically motivated assassinations.   Democracy in pre-independence Nigeria witnessed a litmus test in the 1959 federal elections. Anifowose (1982:56) notes that the 1959 elections were fraught with violence and intimidation of political opponents, stuffing of ballot boxes and wanton destruction of lives and property. He maintains that the proximate cause of violence was the defeat of Action Group party in the contest and, subsequently, declaration of emergency rule in western region by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1962. This was in addition to the existing feud in Action Group which ended in the deposition of Chief S.L. Akintola, the premier of the defunct Western region, from office. These electoral conflicts heightened tensions among party loyalists and eventually led to the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo and Anthony Enahoro, among others, on charges of treasonable felony in 1963.

Post (1963:170) affirms the use of violence in 1959 elections and emphatically attributes this to the use of common stratagem by all the dominant parties namely NPC, AG and NCNC. These parties relied on ethnic affiliation and regional strategy to win election. Violence was also engendered by of intolerant posture of the ruling parties of the then defunct regions in Nigeria to opposition parties (Nnoli, 1980:238). For instance the NPC in Northern region used state power to stifle the opposition United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) supporters in the aftermath of 1959 elections in Tivland. This symbolized a case of partisan tyranny and culminated to the Tiv political upheavals - the 'Nande Nande' and 'Atemtyo' in 1960 and 1964 respectively.

The 1964 federal elections and 1965 western regional elections were maiden post independence electoral

processes that also recorded unprecedented crises. Anifowose (1982:62) argue that the mayhem of 1964 was based on the desire to control the centre between NPC, AG, NNDP and NCNC. The desire to win elections at all cost culminated into stiff competition between the parties and the emergence of United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and Nigeria National Alliance (NNA). The political maneuvers that followed led to series of attacks, counter attacks and assassinations of perceived political opponents. Although government banned public meetings and processions to curtail the spread of violence, many sinister actions continued underground.

The Nigerian state was still a fledgling democracy by 1965 and so the same scenario was repeated in Western regional elections. The election brought violence because the dominant regional party wanted to increase its majority in the legislature, thus bringing chaos to the entire region as soon as election results gave overwhelming victory to Akintola's NNDP. Protests and demonstrations broke out in form of riots, arson, looting, murder and destruction of lives and property. Nnoli (1980:235) observes that another electioneering crisis occurred during the NCNC campaign in Kano as a response to self-government crises at the House of Representatives Lagos. Similarly, an inter-party rivalry between NCNC and AG over supremacy in the drive for independence increased. The North reciprocated violently against the backdrop that the region was alleged to have colluded with the British to perpetrate colonial rule. Kurfi (1983:24) argues that the carnage, irregularities and controversies surrounding the 1964 and 1965 elections was responsible for the collapse of the First Republic, following the military intervention of 15th January 1966 championed by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu.

The 1979 elections, like the previous ones, were fraught with violence. There were allegations and counter allegations of fraud and violence between the existing political parties, notably NPN, NPP, GNPP, PRP and UPN. Kurfi (1983) and Ugoh (2004:172) contend that various parties raised alarm on various forms of electoral malpractices. These allegations ranged from abduction, use of thugs, intimidation, and falsification of results to corruption on the part of the electoral umpire. There was also allegation of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) staff colluding with political parties to rig elections. On the other end, the intra-party electoral process of choosing candidates was fraudulently carried out. These problems were worsened by the actions of the ruling NPN, which was believed to have employed the use of federal might to intimidate and terrorize political opponents throughout the country.

The western states of Oyo, Ondo and Ogun experienced the worst forms of violence. Kurfi (1983) avers that, in most of these states, party agents caught indulging in any form of malpractice were summarily lynched to death or soaked with petrol and set ablaze. In Ondo state for example, the fierce contest was between Chief Michael Ajasin of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Chief Akinwale Omoboriowo of NPN. The mayhem experienced was unimaginable in Nigeria's political history. Some party supporters were burnt to ashes, NTA in Ogun State which was hitherto used as an instrument of propaganda was burnt down; FEDECO staff and policemen were besieged by irate mob and burnt to ashes. The degree of lawlessness became unprecedented that the Second Republic abruptly ended with another military intervention on December 31st, 1983.

The Third Republic witnessed a prolonged military rule with an unending transition programme which never came to fruition. The military democratic transition necessitated the establishment National Electoral Commission (NECON) and a two party structure; the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) based on the recommendations of the Political Bureau of 1986. Until its dissolution in 1993, NECON conducted 1990 Local Government elections, 1991 Gubernatorial and National Assembly elections and 1993 presidential elections. The 1993 election was adjudged by transition monitoring groups as the freest and fairest elections Nigeria has ever conducted in her chequered political history. Sadly, however; the IBB regime annulled the election, which was presumed to have been won by Moshood Abiola of the SDP, apparently to satisfy primordial group interest. In view of the prevailing political situation, JDPC (2003) noted that the annulment provoked violence especially in the south-western states of Nigeria. This was followed by nationwide protests by National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) to depict their resentment. The situation later took a violent nature when protesters turned to looting and assassination in order to force General Babangida to rescind the annulment. Subsequently, the violence had a spill-over effect to major cities of the country, creating wave of national tension. Although the IBB regime handed over the reins of power to the Interim National Government of Ernest Shonekan, the annulment and the spate of violence that attended its occurrence nevertheless resulted into another military intrusion in politics, with General Sani Abacha making another unobtrusive entry into the political landscape. Nigeria sunk all the more into political instability as the military presence once again marked the demise of the Third Republic.

The Fourth Republic was ushered in by the 1999 federal elections; but these elections never differed from the previous ones conducted. The designation of the national electoral umpire changed from NECON to INEC; yet the change did not alter her attitude towards the conduct of free and fair elections. Political parties were allegedly involved in massive rigging, as well as use of thugs to harass opponents through active

connivance with security agents. The 1999 elections did not engender much violence chiefly because the Nigerian public was tired of military dictatorship and thus was desperate to see a form of democratic transition materialize.

By 2003 another general election was conducted. This was adjudged by international observers as the worst election ever conducted in Nigeria political history. Ugoh (2004) confirms this observation and particularly noted several cases of politically motivated Killings. Fwatshak, et al (2007: 268) point out some victims of political assassinations within the period to include: Theodore Agwato (principal secretary to Imo State Governor), Mr. and Mrs. Igwe (Onitsha branch chairman of Nigeria Bar Association and his wife), Jibola Olanipekun (former commissioner in Oyo State), Harry Marshall (ANPP National chairman South-south), Aminasoari Dikibo (PDP south-south national chairman), Eze Odumegwu Okonkwo (All Peoples Party Chairman, Nnewi south LGA of Anambra State), Philip Oluruniya (Kogi State chairman SINEC), and Funso Williams (Governorship aspirant PDP Lagos).

In the North-Central states of Nigeria especially Benue, Plateau, Kogi and Nasarawa states, Tsav (2003:33) posits that there were various degrees of electoral violence unleashed on Nigerians. In Benue state, for instance, Tarka, Gwer, Gboko, Buruku, Kwande, Ukum, Otukpo and Guma LGA's experienced the worst forms of electioneering crisis.   In Tarka LGA to be specific, the 2003 elections brought an orgy of violence on many residents of Wannune by a killer squad fondly called "STRIKERS". The group allegedly assassinated late Anyor Azua and many others; houses were also burnt and raided while many people were intimidated on the Election Day. The same scenario was repeated in Kwande LGA where soldiers dispatched to the area to guarantee security allegedly opened fire on ANPP supporters on April 12th, 2003 killing over 20 of them (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In Nasarawa state, Ajaero (2004: 16-24) avers that the political violence in Toto LGA between Bassa, Igbira and Gygbagi ethnic groups led to the assassination of Nasarawa state Commissioner for Women Affairs, Maimuna Joyce Katai. Nigerians became worried with the wave of violence in the country; but the Federal Government still could not contain the situation.

The 2007 elections according to Nnanta (2008:8) were the worst elections in terms of organization and the aftermath of violence. During the 2007 elections, the PDP-led government deployed the Army, Navy, Police, Air force and all Para-military services to presumably rig the election with the purpose to win. The Justice Development and Peace Commission JDPC (2007) notes that the 2007 elections marked a watershed in Nigeria's political history as the first successful civilian to civilian transition to civil rule. This notwithstanding, the 2007 polls was marred by electoral malpractices, including political assassinations, snatching of ballot boxes and falsification of results at collation centers, inter alia. The repercussions of this scenario resulted to wanton destruction of lives property in Benue state and other parts of the country. In Bukuru LGA, for instance, four people were killed in clashes between PDP and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), while in Guma LGA, an uncompromising INEC official was stripped naked and beaten by party thugs. In Gboko LGA Hon. Ageba, Utah the Local Government Transition Chairman was allegedly assassinated in partisan violence. Also, in Gwer-East LGA, violence erupted following the false disqualification of Dr. Donald Ayar Gwer as the PDP flag bearer for Benue State House of Assembly. The consequence of this crisis was destruction of lives and property according (Human Right Watch, 2007). The elections were severely criticized by virtually all election observer groups, domestic and international, that monitored and observed the elections (Nnanta, 2008:8).

The 2011 elections were poorly organized and conducted. The parties' political manifestoes were neither based on ideology nor any lofty ideals. Very corrupt politicians forced their way through their party primaries and became flag-bearers of their parties, thereby creating wave of crisis throughout the country. In Ondo state for example, 3 people were shot dead in Obanla Area because of clashes between supporters of PDP and the ruling Labour Party. In Ado-Ekiti, Ayo Kehinde and Michael Pindola, supporters of PDP, were assassinated according to Bamgbose (2012:213). The controversial declaration of presidential election results by INEC in favour of Goodluck Jonathan ushered in Nigeria another epoch of post-elections violence in Northern states of Nigeria.

In Niger state, trouble started with violent campaigns. In Suleja for example, hand-held explosives were thrown into the venue of the Niger East Senatorial campaign flag-off by unidentified persons. Angry youths protesting the results of the elections stormed the Nigerian Christian Coppers Fellowship Secretariat in Minna, locked the premises and set it ablaze. In Benue state, Rtd General Lawrence Onoja was shot and wounded in the face-off between supporters of PDP and ACN in Benue South-South Senatorial district. Similarly, Hon. Charles Ayede, another ACN chieftain, was also murdered by unknown gunmen.

In Zamfara state, thousand of youth went on rampage in Tsafe Local Government area of the state. Shops were destroyed and about three churches vandalized. Violence also broke out in Katsina state and escalated to many areas including Malumfashi, Kankara, Daura and Jibia claimed scores of cars and at least five

churches. In the same vein, Gombe state lost 17 people during post-presidential elections violence. According to Bamgbose (2012:212-216), there are abundant evidences of electioneering crisis nationwide with wanton destruction of lives and property. The spate of killings and destruction of property during elections since 1959 - 2013 points to one of the de-democratizing tendencies in Nigeria.

7. The Degenerating Trajectory of Electioneering and Party Politics in Nigeria
In tandem with the foregoing, the electoral history of Nigeria can be conveniently rehearsed under two different historical phases, namely elections conducted by civilian administration and those conducted by military regimes. The former refers to the elections of 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007 and 2011 while the later has to do with the elections of 1979, 1992 and 1999 (Iyayi, 2004).

These dispensations of elections have been equally characterized by abnormalities and irregularities. The elections held under civilian administrations were characterized by abuses largely occasioned by the self-succession and regime perpetration bid of the incumbents (Jinadu, 2008). The failure of these elections "was due to the reluctance of the incumbent regime to allow a level playing field, in case they lost their grip of power" (Iyayi, 2004:7).

With reference to the elections held under the military superintendence, systemic irregularities abound. As Iyayi (2004:7) recounts:

> The 1979 elections, for example, produced the 12 2/3 controversy, which the Obasanjo military regime resolved in favour of its interests. The election of 1992-93 were frequently delayed, cancelled, postponed and adjusted to produce a result predetermined by the military. In the event that this did not happen, results of the June 12, 1999 were brazenly annulled by General Babangida on the excuse that the military was uncomfortable with them. The 1999 election results were also predetermined. Acting in concert with neo-colonial and imperialist interests, the dominant coalition within the local ruling class drafted General Obasanjo into a political process that ended with him being declared the winner of the process. All these processes occurred with flawed electoral rules, without legitimate and valid constitutions, with electoral agencies under the firm jackboots of military rulers.

The prelude to the 2015 general elections is now on course. A peep into the unfolding scenario in that regard adumbrates potential crises. Already, the political terrain has been fraught with tension as political/partisan forces align and re-align. There has been serious intra-party fracas within the ruling PDP, leading to massive 'rat-race' defections and counter-defections. The emergence of a splinter PDP in the process and its eventual merger with the opposition APC, among other things, has resulted in political dynamics that heat up of the polity. This observation is without any prejudice to the apparent signification of the development to effect that it may hold the possibility of engendering a viable progressive tradition of opposition in the democratic Nigeria. The attitude of the incumbent government to the unfolding developments has been one of orchestrated paranoia, which portends ominously for the forthcoming 2014/2015 electioneering.

Overall, the electioneering experiences of Nigeria over the years have been so curiously perplexing. In the main, they have been characterized by the following untoward tendencies:

i.   Massive frauds, intimidation of political opponents and state interference
ii. De-ideologisation and shifting alliances among the ruling class who are devoid of ideological conviction and direction
iii. Materialization of politics exemplified in the capital intensive nature of party politics
iv. Lack of continuity of party platforms leading to absence of traditions of sustainable party building (Iyayi, 2004; Okoli, 2007).

The foregoing scenarios have created a peculiar partisan ambience for Nigeria that makes the electoral processes and outcomes quite controversial and violence-prone. This fact is emphasized in Table 4 which sketches the character of general elections in Nigeria since independence.

Table 3: Highlights of the Character of General Elections in Nigeria (1960-2011)

ELECTION	POLITICAL PARTIES	NATURE /CHARACTER	OUTCOME(S)
1964 Federal Elections	2 mega alliance parties: NNA and UPGA	Irregularities and boycott by the opposition, UPGA	Controversy and crisis ultimately leading to military take-over in 1966
1979 General Elections	5 parties: NPN, NPP, UPN, PRP, UNPP	Irregularities and violence	Controversy resolved by the Supreme Court in favour of NPN
1983 General Elections	6 parties: NPN, NPP, UPN, PRP, GNPP, NAP	Structural violence and manipulation of the electoral processes in favour of the incumbent	Controversy leading to military take-over in 1983, Dec, 31.
1992-93 General Elections	2 parties: NRC, SDP	Arbitrary post-postponements, cancellations and state interference	National crisis arising from the annulment of the June 12, 19939 Presidential elections
1999 General Elections	3 parties: AD, PDP, APP	Irregularities and violence	Uneasy transition to civil rule, led by PDP
2003 General Elections	50 parties prominent among which are AD, AAP, PDP, APGA, LP	Violence and irregularities	Controversial self-succession by PDP
2007 General Elections	62 parties prominent among which are: ACN, ANPP, PDP, APGA, LP	Violence and irregularities	Controversial self-succession by PDP
2011	62 plus parties prominent among which are: ACN, ANPP, PDP, APGA, LP	Violence and irregularities	Post-election violence; regime perpetration by PDP

Source: Authors' compilation from various readings: Iyayi (2004); Uwakwe (2011), etc.

Practically, electioneering in Nigeria has been associated with sundry ills and untoward developments. For emphasis, these include human rights abuses, political assassinations, and bastardization of suffrage, widespread civil unrest, crises and violence, as well as abrupt, coercive change of government. With reference to the latter, the failure of the electoral process has often precipitated military takeover in the form of coup d'état. In this regard,

> (…) the controversial election of 1965 produced the coup d'état of January 1966. Again, the flawed elections of 1983 produced the military coup of December 31, 1983. Finally, Babangida's flawed elections of 1993 produced the Abacha palace coup of that year and paved way for his memorable dictatorship (Iyayi, 2004:1).

It follows from the foregoing that electioneering in Nigeria has to a large extent been the bane of political instability in the country. This is in view of the excesses and abuses of the political elites, most of which have been highlighted in the preceding sections of this paper. More importantly, the character of state in the Nigerian context tends to have compelled a partisan culture of immoderation among the political elites. In the context of electoral politics, therefore, the elites exhibit an electoral behavior that typifies the Machiavellian unscrupulousness and buccaneerism. For them, the end justifies the means, and the end must be pursued at all costs and all hazards. The inevitable outcome of this pattern of partisan disposition is political crisis and instability. How does this trend imply for the future democracy and political stability in Nigeria? This forms the focus of the next section.

8. Crisis of Electioneering in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Democracy

Crises associated with the process and conduct of elections in Nigeria have been one of the "de-democratizing tendencies" (Okoli; 2008:9) in the democratic Nigeria. . He observes that part of the problems in this regard is the popular tendency among politicians to trivialize the democratic process by reducing same to a power-grab affair. Accordingly,

> The understanding arising from equating electioneering with democracy further befuddles the political process because unnecessary emphasis has been put on the acquisition of power at the expense of fashioning out the core values that democracy is instituted to enshrine (Habeeb, 2013: para 3).

In his contribution, Fagbehun (2013: 4) alludes that electioneering crisis has immense and strategic implications for political stability and democracy. In his view, "political instability is a sign of a breakdown of democracy (Fagbehun, 2013:4). This is akin to the observation by Abbas (2012: n.d) to the effect that "the electoral politics has, of course, signaled serious dangers of democratic and partisan politics in Nigeria". The point being emphasized in the foregoing is that electioneering crises do not augur well for the practice and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. Operationally, such crises engender some systemic challenges that make consolidation of democracy, at best, problematic. By and large, the general implications of electioneering crises for democracy in Nigeria have been underscored thus:

> …the incontrovertible and overall conclusion that can be drawn from the history of elections and electoral practices in Nigeria is that they have failed to promote the emergence of democratic culture even within the limited application that it has within the bourgeois social order. Indeed, each set of elections seems to deepen the culture of violence, authoritarianism, abuse of human rights, corruption and crass materialism in Nigeria. Each succeeding election seems to perfect in even more pervasive sense, the abuses that characterized the earlier ones. Thus with each successive election, the ruling elites are not only mere and more isolated from the people, they also relate with them increasingly through violence, contempt, repression and authoritarianism (Iyayi, 2004:10).

The issue of electioneering has, to a very large extent, proven to be the vey antithesis of the democratic order in Nigeria. This contradiction has variously manifested in developments that impede and negate national aspiration to democracy. Such developments include:

i. Widespread electoral unrest and violence
ii. Inconclusive and controversial elections
iii. Failed transition programmes, leading to military takeover, etc.

The implication of the foregoing for national stability can be easily conjectured. In this regard, it is to be pointed out that the stability of a nation in a democratic dispensation largely depends on how the nation is able to manage its transition from one regime to another in an abiding resolve to uphold the democratic edifice. Crucial to this task is the critical issue of what the electioneering experience holds.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has sought to examine the nexus between electioneering and political stability in Nigeria. Looking at terrain of electoral process in Nigeria over the years, the paper observed that electioneering in the country has enmeshed by untoward tendencies which tend to have impeded sustainable political stability. These tendencies include electoral violence and unrest, controversial and/or inconclusive elections, as well as 'still-born' transitions. To mitigate this problem in the interest of democracy and national stability, the paper offers the following recommendations:

i. Divesting the state cum politics of its prebendal character by ensuring that state power is not used to advance selfish personal or group ends;
ii. Reforming party politics to ensure that stakeholders and practitioners alike see the venture as a healthy competition dedicated to the service of public good;
iii. Repositioning and revitalizing the party system to ensure that the ideals of moderation, fair-play, discipline and civility are upheld;
iv. Conscietizing the civil society to assume its rightful role of strategic stake-holding and vanguard-ship in the democratic process.
v. Implementing thorough-going comprehensive electoral reforms that would reposition the extant electoral legal instruments and institutions for better performance.

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