Re-fixing the "Clog in the Wheel": An Appraisal of Democratic Consolidation and Voting Behaviour in the 21st Century Nigeria

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Abstract:-Democracy, which is the most sought- after political arrangement in the modern world has been challenged in Nigerian political enclave. This paper observed the ethnic cleavage voting behaviour and interrogated the impact of same in consolidating the democratic credos in the 21st century Nigeria. Secondary source of data were utilized through observation method of data collection. Theoretically, the paper adopted social cleavage theory as a theoretical fulcrum around which the study oscillated. This model maintained among other things that in a multi-ethnic setting, socio-political issues always tend to follow the line of ethnic origin and sentiments. However, the paper generalised that the ethnic cleavage voting pattern in Nigeria stems from the political party formation and spread its tentacles to the citizens. Consequently, the ugly trend in all ramifications has made all efforts to fortify the democracy and its inherent principles in Nigeria a 'wild goose chase'. Therefore, the paper recommended that the government should revisit some electoral issues especially political party formation and membership to emphatically stress the need for parties to have national outlook, the electorate should be made to understand the negative implication of ethnic voting which more or less encourage government by incapable leaders, and the need for internal democracy in political parties to avoid ethnic sentiments. These recommendations when followed judiciously will go a long way in consolidating the fledgling democracy in the country.

Key words: *Democratic Consolidation, Election, Ethnic Cleavage, Political Party, Voting Behaviour,*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world over, the need for democratic governance cannot be over-estimated. This positive development stems from the fact that ordinarily everybody wants to be noticed in the scheme of things or better still in the decision-making circle. As a result, men fumbled dauntlessly in order to achieve this, through a compass like different forms of government which involved: an assembly of elders (gerontocracy), the committee of the wealthy (plutocracy), the nobles (aristocracy), and the experts (technocracy), before they landed to the acclaimed elixir of popular governance (democracy) which is government by the general populace (Igbokwe, & Okonkwo, 2015:207). This last form of political arrangement appears to be the best form of government, though; the debate over the credibility of the assertion is not the major concern of this enterprise. Rather, we are enthralled to interrogate the fundamental role of voting behaviour in consolidating the seemingly ideal form of government (democracy).

In order to elucidate further, Heater (1964:134) maintained that democracy is not only a form of government but a way of life or an attitude of the mind. Hence he went further to aver that democracy is 'essentially a method of organising society politically'. It is a system of governance in which the rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives. Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from two Greek words "demos" which means "people" and "cracy" which means "rule" or "government", literally "meaning rule by the people" however, all the attempts by extant authorities in defining the term emphasise the centrality of people (the majority) in the governance of the state (Obi & Oddih, 2006;36).

With the brief illustration of what democracy implies and the centrality of the choice of the people for its realisation, the question remains: What determines our choice of candidate in the context of political behaviour? And how do the political office holders manage and respond to the citizens in respect to their stewards? The questions in all intents and purposes beg for more questions, but for the purpose of realising meaningful outcome from the study, we should restrict ourselves to the issue of voting behaviour which will apparently form the problematique of this discourse. However, elections are cardinal and indispensible in the practice of the modern democracy. This is because the entire masses or community members cannot at the same time be in political positions, therefore representative democracy thrives through electoral process (Abada & Okorie, 2009:50).

In response to the above basic question concerning factors determining individual choice of candidature, Suberu (1991:52-54) outlined and discussed four factor such as issues, party identification, ethnicity and class. Furthermore, Okolie (2004:112) identified the following factors as the determinant of voting behaviour: ethnicity, religion, material consideration, personality of the contestants, party organisation and manifesto, campaign slogan and propaganda. Unfortunately, the consolidation of the fledgling democratic credos in the 21st century Nigeria appears to be a mirage because of some anomalous voting factors. Can you imagine a polity where ethnic and religious sentiments serve as guides for voting, class and material consideration as the basis for choice of candidate, to the detriments of issues and party ideology? These as a matter of fact breed a lot of quagmires starting from electoral processes to democratic governance. This is so because of the aphorism which avers that 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune', a person who wins election basically on ethnic or religious sentiments must correspondingly deliver based on the same sentiments.

Be that as it may, this paper is designed to interrogate the fundamental link between voting behaviour and democratic consolidation in the 21st century Nigeria. For the purpose of brevity and precision, the work is structured as follows: introduction, conceptualisation of terms like democratic consolidation and voting behavior; theoretical framework; party politics, principles and practices of democracy in Nigeria; party structure, ethnic voting pattern and the prospects of democratic consolidation in the 21st century Nigeria; conclusion and prognoses.

II. CONCEPTUALISATION OF TERMS

2. I. Democratic Consolidation

The polemics within the academia appear to account for vagueness of some concepts, to be free from this intellectual obfuscation and ambiguity, democratic consolidation shall be clarified. To begin with, consolidation of democracy implies the actual firmly fortification of the core ideas and ingredients defining democracy such as participation and accountability; that the people determine who govern them, and that those who govern give account of their stewardship, for instance, periodic election is one of the most important mechanisms for the realisation of the objectives of democratisation. It is also important to note that, elections are not only meant to ensure, confirm or re-affirm the legitimacy of the governors through a regular consent, but also to provide a fertile ground for democracy to thrive (Ogundiya & Baba, 2007 in Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016).

Essentially, democracy in the view of Okolie (2006:172) denotes a way of life in a society in which each individual is believed to be entitled to an equality of concern as regards to chances of participating freely in the values of that society. In a more limited sense however, it is the opportunity of the members of the society to participate freely in the decisions, which affect their live individually and collectively. The process on the other hands entails theoretical and practical stages, conditions and movements towards realisation of the democratic governance (in Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). Democratisation can be understood as a process subdivided into three phases: (i) the liberalisation phase, when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles; (ii) a transition phase, often culminating when the first competitive elections are held; and (iii) the consolidation phase, when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; Linz & Stepan, 1996).

The concept can therefore be regarded as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through elections or through the administration of the accepted policies. It is a government founded on the principle of rule of law which is against arbitrariness, highhandedness, dictatorship and also antithesis to military regime (Kwasau, 2013:183). The conceptualisations of democracy above by different authorities logically centre on participation and accountability. Therefore, consolidation of democracy on the other hand implies the maintenance, fortification and sustainability of the fundamental principles of democracy. In the same vein, Diamond in Okonkwo & Unaji, (2016) sees democratic consolidation as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation such that all significant political actors believe that popular rule is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. It also connects the act of reducing the probability of the breakdown of the system to the point where democracy can be said that it will persist.

It manifest under enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture, stable party system, he also suffices to assert that this cannot be attained in Nigeria until stability is attained. This therefore shows that though under democratic regime, Nigeria is striving for consolidation (Okonkwo, 2015). Unequivocally, there exists plethora of literature on the concept of democratic consolidation; as a result, it is in exhaustive but the major onus of this study is to interrogate the nexus between democratic consolidation and voting behavior in the 21st century Nigeria. Therefore we should leap to the next concept which is voting behaviour.

2. II. Voting Behaviour

This segment of the study has it as the primary responsibility to streamline the intellectual obfuscations surrounding the concept of voting behaviour. In the simplest sense, it implies the factors and attitudes that govern electorates' selection of their prospective representatives. For the purpose of brevity and precision, we shall split the phrase into 'voting' and 'behaviour'. To start with, voting denotes the means whereby a number of persons are enabled to indicate their agreement or disagreement with propositions, or their preferences between two or more proposals or between two or more candidates for some offices. It is therefore, a means of aggregating individual preferences into collective decisions (Bromehead, 1964:751). In clarifying behaviour on the other hand, Ugwu (1997:3) opined thus: '… by behaviour, we mean any response made by organism to environmental stimulations. Broadly speaking, behaviour covers all those activities that people and animals do ranging from their actions, emotions and ways of communicating.

Having demystified the mystery surrounding the individual terms that made up the 'voting behaviour' our emphasis shall be directed to the phrase under review. Meanwhile, voting behaviour simply implies those propelling forces that are responsible as well as the determinant of individual preference or choice of candidacy in electoral processes. As a corollary, Lipset (1950) averred that national elections are the expression of the class struggle, and competition between political parties is the institutionalisation of class struggle. To clarify further, he argued that more than anything else, the party struggle is a conflict among classes and the most impressive thing about party support is that in virtually every economically developed country, the lower income groups vote mainly for parties of the right.

In a broader perspective, Dudley (1982:221) identified and expatiated three theories that explain why people vote the way they do. These theories are: 1) social group theory, 2) cue theory, and 3) rational choice theory. By a way of elucidation, social group theory holds that individuals are predisposed to vote in a particular way because of the social group the belong. Cue theory on the other hand emphasises that party programmes and electioneering platforms, party ideological position are really cues which serve to prompt or cue the voters in a particular way. Also, the rational choice theory sees the voters simply as a consumer with resources to expand, the resources in this case being his vote. Like any consumer, the voters have objective functions which he seeks to maximise, and he expanded his resources voting for that party he believes would best maximise this objective function. The objective could be power, status position or some special interests or the other. Having done justice to the concept of voting behaviour by collation of authorities' views over the meanings of the term, the paper shall shift emphasis to the theoretical framework.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of voting behaviour invariably focuses on the determinants of why people vote as they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make. Voting behaviour is usually explained from three competing and overlapping paradigms such as: Sociological theory or the Columbia School (Lazarsfield et al., 1944; Lipset 1960); Psychosocial or the Michigan School (Campbell et al. 1960); and the Rational Choice perspectives (Downs 1957; Fiorina, 1981). The sociological approaches concentrate on the relationship between individual and social structure; it places the voters in a social context and examine the effects on voting of such variables as social class, language, nationalism, religion, and rural-urban contrasts. The sociological approach to voting behaviour started with the influential studies undertaken by the Columbia school which carried out the first systematic surveys of the American electorates in four landmark studies of the presidential elections of 1940, 1948, 1952, and 1956. These studies mark the establishment of scholarly survey-based research on voting behaviour (Olayode, 2015:10).

The sociological school propounded by Lazarsfeld, Berelson & McPhee (1954); Zuckerman (1982); Rose & Urwin (1969); and Lijphart (1980) emphasised the group basis of voting. It indicates the fact that although particular individuals deal with politics, it refers much more to group and general purposes and interests. The citizens who select the candidates who appear in the elections, although they make personal (individual) decision, cannot be entirely isolated from the adherence to certain collective characteristics, such as social status, friends and the remaining interactions that are contact point with politics. Lazarsfeld, Berelson & McPhee (1954) particularly emphasize the role of the family and the political socialisation at the expense of the remaining social impacts, which were considered dominant in a certain time period. The assumption here is that majority of people vote according to their original political predisposition. The problem with this theory, however, is that if vote choice was determined solely by the stable sociological factors, election results will remain unchanged for a very long time.

Furthermore, another influential work under the sociological paradigm is that of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) who argued that not only do group identities influence voting behaviour, but that cleavage structures determine the number of political parties in a given polity. In other words, political parties evolve in response to the interests of social cleavages. In this manner politics is a matter of group interests. Since social groups are not political actors, they are represented by political organizations and their guidance (political elites). While many scholars have employed variety of analytical models to examine voting behaviour empirically, this paper adopts

the social cleavage theory within the broader structural model. Specifically, social cleavage theory claims that social identities determine voting choices for any given individual or social group. Ethnic ties based on kinship and family, language and dialect, tribal customs and local communities, as well as shared religious faiths, have long been regarded as playing a critical role in party politics and electoral democracies in sub-Saharan Africa (Horowitz, 1985).

Arguably, one of the most influential perspectives concerning the relationship between ethnicity, party systems, and voting behavior in developing societies was provided by Horowitz (1985, 1993). He argues that the bond of ethnicity has a strong direct impact on electoral behaviour in ethnically-segmented societies, generating a long-term psychological sense of party loyalty anchoring citizens to parties, where casting a vote becomes an expression of group identity (Norris & Mattes, 2003). In many African societies, ethnic mobilisation, whether for political party formation, electoral campaigns or patronage, is widespread and, when combined with economic disparity and inequitable access to political power, has actually become a source of long-drawn-out conflicts, with far reaching destabilization effects. While ethnicity has long been understood as playing a crucial role in structuring party politics in Africa; some recent studies have suggested that the impact of ethnic identities is extremely complex and varied (Olayode, 2015:12).

For instance, Erdmann (2007) in a study of Zambia reports that ethnicity matters for voter's alignment and even more so for party affiliation. The survey results indicate that ethnicity or ethno-political identity matters but certainly not the only factor that accounts for election outcomes. Similarly, in a study of Uganda, Conroy-Krutz (2013) shows that goods distribution and ethnicity become less important as constituents gain more political information. Although Norris & Mattes (2003) find that ethnicity does play key role in determining support for ruling parties, it was equally discovered that ethnicity is not always the primary cleavage in African politics. Furthermore, in Ghana, Lindberg & Morrison (2007: 34) conclude that 'clientelistic and ethnic predisposed voting are minor features of the electorate. Also, albeit more cautious, Bratton and his colleagues raise doubts –again based on individual survey data of the Afro barometer from several countries–as to whether political parties are formed 'primarily along ethnic lines'. They 'suspect' that party formation is 'more pluralistic' than 'concerns about ethnic fragmentation would have one believe' (Bratton et al 2005: 257).

At the same time, they refrain from suggesting other variables for explaining voting behaviour in Africa. However, Fridy (2007: 302), from his empirical analysis of the Ghanaian elections concludes that ethnicity seems to be an 'extremely significant although not deciding factor in Ghanaian elections. In addition, results from the analysis of individual survey data collected in Zambia suggested that though ethnicity is significant for voter alignment and for party affiliation, but ethno-political identity is certainly one of the factors that accounts for election outcomes in Zambia' (Erdmann 2007: 28). Erdmann (2007) also noted that the relevance of ethnicity for the formation of party systems and voter alignment is not a uniform pattern across Africa. In the light of recent findings in many African countries, Camp (2010) suggests that ethnicity should not be abandoned as a determinant of the vote choice but the way it is analyzed must obviously be refined. Be that as it may, this study is designed to revolve around social cleavage as the theoretical framework.

By a way of application, voting is axiomatically paramount in the election of our leaders in the modern democratic enclave. This is possible because large population has made a jest of direct democracy which was practiced in the ancient Greek Empire. This was a situation whereby every citizen gathered together to make decision on issues that concern them. However, with this development voting becomes a way of political participation in decision making by the citizens. Meanwhile, the individual voters have to make choices which would be influenced by some factors such as material consideration, party affiliation, ideology, ethnicity, value etc. Nevertheless, the political arena is imbued with systemic mechanism which enhanced its response to input-output loop and/or projection. Therefore, the electorates through an exercise of their political franchise elevate their preferred candidate to the elective position as a way of input to the political system. In response to the political moves made by the electorates, which is basically guided by ethnic consideration, the acclaimed leaders dish out policies and programmes to the people as the outputs, which will be invariably propelled by ethnic sentiments.

By implication, in Nigeria where ethnicity appears to be the major propelling force for voting, the governing and ruling elites from different ethnic origin are always in endless struggle for status quo change and maintenance. This manifests when the ruling elites whose ethnic group is not the governing elite, will mobilise the militants in the ethnic group of non-governing elite just to make the polity ungovernable for the governing class. In this debilitating political parlance, democracy is severed because of the structural enmity engendered by ethnic cleavage. By extension, the more the voting behavior is propelled by ethnic concern, the more the government become for a segment of the society, the less the consolidation of the fledgling democracy in Nigeria.

IV. PARTY POLITICS, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

Under this caption, the paper shall lure us to the expositions of the general principles of democracy as well as the current trend in Nigerian political context. To begin with, Nnoli, (1994:5) opines that democracy involves:...a political system which grants to all its citizens the regular constitutional possibility of replacing the government by peaceful means, if they decide to do so by a sufficient majority, it enables them to avail themselves of non-violent freely established parties and association of their choice, with none debarred, with a view to playing their role and as citizen, and which allows them in practice to enjoy fully all the common accepted civic rights, safeguarded by legal guaranteed written unto a body of law that has higher authority than the government and is submitted in the event of complaints to the judicial organ independent of the government. From this perspective, democracy cannot exist if a public sphere or political society is not recognised.

The above depositions by Nnoli couched the fundamental principles of democracy which revolve around participation on the part of the electorate and accountability on the part of the leaders. In a broader perspective, Guaba, (2003:425) differentiated the principles and mechanisms of democracy. According to him, the principles include: government by consent, public accountability, majority rule, recognition of minority right and constitutional government. Also, among the mechanisms are: more than one political party freely competing for political power, political offices not confined to any privilege class, periodic elections based on universal franchise, protection of civil liberty and independence of the judiciary.

Having demonstrated the fundamental principles of democracy as enunciated by renowned scholars, we shall delve into the prevailing practices of same in Nigeria. Probably because of the long and tortuous sojourn through decades of military regimes wherein most of the fundamental rights of her citizens were suspended, majority of Nigerians seem to have internalised military socialisation (Onyeonoru, 2002). With the re-introduction of democracy in 1999, they became eager to enjoy such rights like many democratic nations of the world. This is evident in the form of democracy adopted by the nation. For instance, in the Nigerian version of democracy, so much emphasis is placed on freedom and rights that democracy advocates than the necessary obligations that accompany such rights. The enjoyment of rights and freedom not matched by the corresponding duties and obligations, no doubt exposes Nigerian model of democracy to lots of ambiguities that have made many to doubt if democratisation has actually started in Nigeria (Odoma, 2016:4).

As a result of the wrong notion and practice of democracy in Nigeria, impunity (commonly identified with military rule) got enthroned in public lives of the polity. Under several guises, public office holders defraud the citizenry with impunity. Corroborating this position, the deputy Senate President in the 7th and 8th Nigerian Senate, Ike Ekweremadu asserts that: "The collapse of the previous republics was attributed to impunity in high places, misuse of power of incumbency and flagrant abuse and manipulation of the electoral process". The Nigerian political system is highly skewed in favour of incumbent executives in particular, most of whom are ever willing to exploit it to the fullest, often to the detriment of democracy (Mutum, 2015).

Similarly, the same perception is no doubt extended to the six geo-political zones, where having been defrauded by political elites, citizens decided to take laws into their hands (Olorunfemi, 2007), thereby becoming laws in themselves in virtually all the zones. It is this mentality that has made the formation of ethnic militias lucrative in several parts of the country. In Nigeria, the practice of democracy has empowered every category of citizens to belong to any form of association, with the aim of using same to hold the larger or main stream society to ransom, for instance, Association of the Cripple, Market women, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). Ethnic and religious groups have used the exercise of their freedom of association to unleash threat and terror on other members of the society (Odoma, 2016:3).

This practice that has gradually become a norm has made illegality, impunity and terror to thrive in the name of militia groups that could force vulnerable Nigerians to compliance. It will certainly not be out of place to state that the form of democracy practiced by Nigeria at the moment is an adulterated version, since it substantially negates the representative form and grossly inconsistent with the conventional democratic norms across the globe. This explains why democratisation process in Nigeria and several African states have been chaotic over the years (Odoma, 2016:3). This scenario inevitably has connection with the prevalent voting behaviour of the electorate because the reasons for forming all the micro groups in the political system is to attract favour from the government in power which may have been enthroned through the instrumentality of the same groups. Empirically, the paper shall demonstrate how this lopsided pattern of vote was bequeathed to Nigerian political system from the party formation to party's electoral candidates.

Table 1: Political Parties and their Ethno-regional Bases (1951-1966)

S/N	POLITICAL PARTY	POLITICAL LEADERS	REGIONAL BASE	ETHNIC SUPPORT
1	Northern People's Congress	Sir Ahmadu Bello	North	Hausa/Fulani

	(NPC)			
2	Action Group (AG)	Chief Obafemi Awolowo	West	Yoruba
3	National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)	Dr Nnamdi Azikwe	East	Igbo, Edo and Yoruba
4	Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)	Alhaji Aminu Kano	North	Hausa/Fulani
5	United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC)	Joseph Tarka	Middle Belt	Tiv, Biron
6	Dynamic Party(DP)	Dr Chike Obi	East	Igbo
7	Nigeria National Democratic Party(NNDP)	Chief Samuel Akintola	West	Yoruba

Source: Adapted from Nnabuihe, Aghemalo and Okebukwu (2014)

Extrapolation from the table is that the issue of ethnic cleavage in Nigerian political milieu emanated from the party formation during the colonial regime. The major and minor political parties that emerged during the colonial era such as NPC, AG, NCNC, NEPU, UMBC, DP, and NNDP have their ethnic character and colouration. This lopsided stance of the political parties spread its ugly tentacles to the leaders as well as the flag bearers. With this development, the seed of ethnic cleavage voting was sown into Nigerian political field.

V.   PARTY STRUCTURE, ETHNIC VOTING PATTERN AND THE PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

Nigeria is a plural society which is made up of over 250 ethnic groups with many sub-groups. Three major ethnic groups -Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo - dominate the political landscape while other ethnic groups are regarded as minorities. This appears to have ignited and rejuvenated the ember of ethnicity in the political terrain of the country. Similarly, Ekeh etal (1973) has argued that ethnicity has flourished because the Nigerian elite who inherited the colonial state have conceptualised development as transferring resources from the civil public to the primordial pubic. Nigerian electoral choice is largely based on ethnic considerations as successive elections from the colonial era through the post-independence period to the current Fourth Republican election have been seriously undermined by ethno-regional cleavages.

Essentially, it should be pointed out that political party formation had a different dimension in the aborted third republic which was midwived by President Ibrahim Babangida. Two political parties were formed and funded by the government. These were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Even though these parties were established by government, ethno-religious cleavages were visible in the membership and composition of the two parties. While the SDP favoured the southerners, NRC was a party for the Hausa Fulani North as could be observed from their operation. In the political dispensation of the Fourth Republic ethnic coloration has also reared its ugly head, with the ANPP considered as a party predominantly populated by the Hausa/Fulani and AD as direct successor to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action group and Unity Party of Nigeria. The AD dominated the six Yoruba speaking states of Lagos, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo Osun and Oyo until 2003 when it lost all the states except Lagos. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was perceived to have deviated a bit from the usual ethno-religious dominated party politics of the past with their membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria (Olayode, 2004).

However, in the 2011 general elections; ethnic and regional politics was also played itself out. With the demise of Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'adua, some people in the North felt power should not shift to the South and they started kicking against the presidency of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. The new parties on contest like APGA was seen as Igbo party; ACN as a re-incarnation of A.G. or UPN which was Yoruba based, CPC and ANPP were seen as the party of Hausa/Fulani affiliations. While the PDP, to some extent seemed to have national outlook but the insistence of the Northerner to produce the 2011 presidency had shown that ethno-regional cleavages have continued to plague the politics and unity of Nigeria as a sovereign state. Sequel to this sentimental position of the political gladiators and party stalwarts the polity was seemingly made ungovernable by the ethnic groups who felt that they were out of power.

The 2015 general elections were seen as a golden opportunity for the Northerner to wrestle back power, which they felt had been unjustly, denied them after the untimely demise of late President Yar'Ardua. The South-south minority groups also rallied behind the then incumbent president to secure a second term of office for him. The Yoruba of the South-west who felt marginalized under the incumbent president were quick to rally behind the opposition party that adopted their own son as the vice-presidential candidate. Across the length and breadth of the country, ethno-religious sentiments flared up and the presidential candidates of the leading political parties were prevailed upon to sign an accord (Abuja Peace Accord), committing themselves to maintaining peace before, during and after the elections. The leading presidential aspirants periodically kept

returning to their ethno-regional bases for support and solidarity. The ember of ethnic sentiment was fanned out with dangerous misguided provocative statements.

A famous one was recorded in Lagos where the paramount traditional ruler (Oba of Lagos) summoned the Ndigbo leaders to his palace and directed to vote for his 'anointed candidate' in the gubernatorial election or 'perish in the Lagos Lagoon'! The general perception ahead of the 2015 general election was that the incumbent president was going into the electoral battle in a deficit and, therefore, disadvantaged position with regards to national security, corruption perception and indecisiveness. And the fact that the presidential election had to be postponed by one and half months to enable the government confront the Boko Haram menace that later, even with the success it achieved, only helped to cement the perception and charges of weakness on national security, which the success of the military campaign did little to change. The damage had been done and it takes an awful long time for political wounds to heal.

The 2015 general election was not just about opposition party strategising for election victory, which would be legitimate but something much deeper than that. This is about geo-political ethnic power grab at the expense of another or others that are otherwise entitled to it by virtue of extant power sharing tradition instituted by the PDP in the zoning of the Nigerian presidency rotationally amongst the six zones or alternately between North and South. By this arrangement, Jonathan or another Southerner would be entitled to another four years in office, adopted as a necessary adjunct to the nation's democratic tradition. However, this arrangement had already been compromised by the denial of the northerners' opportunity to complete the unfinished terms of late president Yar'Adua's presidency. Nigeria's political history would readily attest to the fact that the Yoruba ethnic group in the South/Western geo-political region or zone in Nigeria has always shunned the mainstream of Nigerian politics preferring instead to cling tenaciously to ethnic politicking and luxuriate in the comfort zone of its exclusive ethnic enclave in the Western region.

Their aversion toward participation in Nigeria's mainstream politics and therefore fixation on regionalism is indeed legendary, and to a large extent, definitive of the broader Nigerian political history. All efforts in both pre-and post-independence Nigeria to lure and even coax the Yorubas into the mainstream at the center was violently repelled by mainstream Yoruba political elites in each and every general elections right up to the 2007 presidential election. It's no secret that they have been fighting for regional autonomy rather than moving to the center The 2015 general election can therefore be analysed in geo-ethnic conspiracies and betrayals between the South/West and the core North executing a strategic alliance to disrupt and upend the nation's political calculus. And this was helped in no small way by the historical ethnic cleavages between the Igbos and the Yorubas, making it a whole lot easier for the Yorubas to turn their backs on the Igbos. The reported outbursts of the Oba of Lagos threatening Ibos in Lagos to vote APC or else jump in the Lagos lagoon and perish lends credibility to this conspiracy theory.

The analysis of results of the 2015 presidential election clearly reveals the dominance of ethno-regional cleavages in the voting patterns. However, it is evident that the president and vice president elect received almost 90 per cent of their votes on the basis of ethno-regional identity. Similarly, the incumbent president received en masse votes from his ethno-regional zones. Issues and Challenges of Ethno-Regional Cleavages and Voting for Democratisation and Nation Building Liberal democracy, as Horowitz (1993:18) aptly observes, is about 'inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion'. In societies, where political mobilisation takes the form of ethnic grouping, winning and losing elections is not a simple matter as 'the game theory' that underlines the liberal democratic perspective might suggest. It means the exclusion of the losing ethnic groups, may be the majority or the minority, in perpetuity, from power and distribution of resources for development. Concerning the issue of ethno-regional cleavages and the prospects for democratic consolidation, this paper argues that the expression of ethnicity itself is a measure of openness that liberal democratic environment accommodates. However, to the extent that ethno-nationalism is exclusive in intent and character, ethnicity could be dysfunctional for democracy, especially where majority insists on dominating power. One of the deductions from this paradox is that democracy may be difficult to consolidate in an atmosphere of 'unbridled ethnic claims and contestations' (Olayode, 2004:262). Evidence available to us suggests that most Nigerians do in some way think of themselves as Nigerians. However, their ethnic identification matters more as a source. Empirically, the table below demonstrates the votes cast to the two major political parties in the 2015 general election by the 36 states of the federation and the F. C.T.

Table 2: 2015 General election results for the two major political parties (APC and PDP)

S/N	State	APC	PDP
1	Abia	13,394	368,303
2	Adamawa	374,701	251,664
3	Akwa-Ibom	58,411	953, 304
4	Anambra	17,926	660,762
5	Bauchi	931,598	86,085

6	Bayelsa	5,194	361,209
7	Benue	373,961	303,737
8	Bornu	473,543	25,640
9	Cross-River	28,358	414,863
10	Delta	48,910	1,211,405
11	Ebonyi	19,518	373,653
12	Edo	208,469	286,869
13	Ekiti	120,331	176,466
14	Enugu	14,157	553,003
15	Gombe	361,245	96,873
16	Imo	133,253	559,185
17	Jigawa	885,998	142,904
18	Kaduna	1,127,760	484,085
19	Kano	1,903,999	215,779
20	Katsina	1,345,441	98,937
21	Kebbi	567,883	100,972
22	Kogi	264,451	149,987
23	Kwara	302,145	132,502
24	Lagos	792,460	632,327
25	Nasarawa	236,838	273,460
26	Niger	657,678	273,460
27	Ogun	308,290	149,222
28	Ondo	298,889	207,950
29	Osun	383,603	251,368
30	Oyo	528,620	249,929
31	Plateau	429,140	303,376
32	Rivers	69,238	1,487,075
33	Sokoto	671,926	152,199
34	Taraba	261,326	310,800
35	Yobe	446,265	25,526
36	Zamfara	612,202	144,833
37	FCT	146,399	157,195

Source: INEC Website

Decipherable from the table is that the two major political parties in the 2015 general election have the Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan for PDP and APC respectively. Therefore, the number of votes they gathered was based on the ethnic origin of their flag bearers. In the Northern states, Buhari gathered majority of the votes because they saw him as their brother. In the South West also he got more votes because of his running mate, (Osibanjo) who came from the South West. In the South South and South East however, Jonathan secured more votes because the Niger Delta and some Igbo people supported him.

VI. CONCLUSION

Democracy and its concomitant elections appear to be the best political arrangement in the modern world. Essentially election comes into play because of population surge, which made it impossible for all the citizens of a particular state to gather at a particular place to make decisions. In this scenario, election becomes imperative. Nonetheless, this paper identified the lopsided stance of the electoral process in Nigeria and interrogated the ethnic pattern of voting and the effect on consolidation of the fledgling democracy in the country. This study traced other theories but specifically anchored on the social cleavage theory which among other things maintained that in a pluralist society where there are different ethnic groups they tend to cling together when social issues like voting is being conducted. Drawing, from this analogy, politics in Nigeria starting from party formation to voting proper ethnicity play decisive roles. Therefore, this ugly trend has been an impediment to the consolidation of admirable democracy. Having stated this, the paper shall proffer lasting solution to the anomaly under the prognoses.

VII. PROGNOSES

Axiomatically, the essence of research of this kind is to provide durable solutions to the identified problem. Meanwhile, if this paper ends abruptly without proffering solution, the endeavour shall be tantamount to digging a bottomless pit. Therefore, to arrest this anomaly, the paper suggested the following:

1. The federal government should revisit the constitution to encourage the formation of political parties that will have national outlook. This implies that political parties should not be ethnic based and origin. The political parties can have national outlook when the member cut across the whole federation unlike the present trend where we have Housa parties, Igbo parties, and Yoruba parties.
2. Elections of political party flag bearers should be democratic so as to discourage ethnic cleavage and sentiments. This as a matter of necessity shall among other things help to accommodate the opinions of all the members of the political party thereby according the citizens the appropriate sense of belonging in a place they call their homes.
3. The government should inform the citizens the implication of ethnic voting which goes a long way in enthroning unqualified and incapable people into the position of authority. This implies focusing on party ideology, manifestation and personality of the candidate instead of sheepishly adhering to ethnic connotation. Finally, the suggestions when followed judiciously will go a long way in discouraging the ethnic voting pattern which serves as a stumbling block towards consolidation of democracy in the 21st century Nigeria.

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