

## **Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria Democratic System (1999-2015).**

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### **Abstract**

The return to democratic governance in 1999 has been fraught with several issues that withheld Nigeria from fully enjoying the dividends of democracy. One very significant aspect of Nigeria's democracy is her experimentation with different forms of governance aiming to ensure true federalism and representativeness because of her multi-diversity in social, cultural, political and religious make up. As the world's fifth largest federation, it is not surprising that Nigeria has struggled with refining representative and federal powers in the form of governance or democratic system it has adopted. As the diverse constituent groups raise their voices for equity and representativeness for more federal presence, employment in public services and offices and the call for the creation of more states and municipalities became part of the demand for true federalism. More so, there is a clamor for the regional restructuring of the country, local municipality autonomy and State Police to address the dearth of manpower in the present federally centralized Police which can only be deployed on the orders of the Presidents and not the State governors. The demands for a change in the system of governance is to bring the country back to what was obtainable in the Parliamentary system at the country's independence as well as the quest for an effective political system.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria, or as officially known, The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country in West Africa with a population of more than 190 million. It is the largest black nation in Africa and the world. It is also the seventh most populous country in the world. It covers an area of more than 356,000 square miles on the coast of West Africa. The country is made up of six geopolitical regions namely the North East, North Central, North West, South East, South West and South South with thirty-six states, one Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and seven hundred and seventy-four local governments or municipalities (CIA World Factbook, 2017). Nigeria also has the highest form of political participation in Africa with ninety-one (91) political parties registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2018).

Nigeria is a socio-culturally, ethnically, politically and physically diverse country which is a great asset. The country is in fact inhabited by over 500 tribal and ethnic groups (Ethnologue, 2017). The predominant socio-cultural groups in the country are the Hausa-Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba, whose main language of communication is English. In religious terms, Nigeria is divided roughly between Christians, who live mostly in the southern part of the country, and Muslims in the northern part. By 2014, Nigeria became the leading economy in Africa and by 2015, the 20<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world accounting for more than \$500 billion and \$1 trillion in terms of nominal GDP and purchasing power parity-PPP respectively (Aljazeera, 2014; BBC, 2014a). The people of Nigeria have such a rich cultural heritage and history that it is important to tell its history in relation to its present economic and political struggles.

Democratic system is a system of governance which a country subscribes to or adopts in order to govern itself and achieve the aspirations of its people. It enables the country to be clearly and uniquely identified in the comity of nations. It also enhances the country's internal relations with the component units making up the federation and international relations with other democratic societies in the world. The democratic system is based on a political ideology which the political parties anchor their philosophies and manifestoes. Good examples of democratic system are the Parliamentary and Presidential systems which are practiced in countries like the United Kingdom and the United State of America.

Nigerian political and democratic system emerged out of empires, kingdoms and traditional institutions that had complex political systems of government. The political systems before colonialism include semi-democratic system in the Kingdoms of Ife and Benin, the Yoruba Empire of Oyo, authoritarianism practiced in

Kanem-Borno, and Othoman Fulani Empire, which for a hundred years before its conquest by Britain had ruled most of the savannah of Northern Nigeria. Other parts of the country like the Ibo peoples of Eastern region and small ethnic groups of the Plateau are politically decentralized but culturally homogenous republican democratic system of governance. Each of these empires and kingdoms practiced some form of governance that became the cornerstone for British colonial rule before the country's amalgamation in 1914 and subsequent independence in 1960 (Lawal & Olukayode, 2012; Gberevbie, 2014; and Majekodunmi, 2015).

With independence, Nigeria adopted a parliamentary democratic system, under which Alhaji Tafawa Balewa became the Prime Minister and head of government, and President Azikiwe, first known as the Governor General, became the Ceremonial Head. After independence, the country struggled to establish a democratic climate through the adoption of several constitutions and establishment of several governments that would ensure good governance and meet the aspirations of its founders and statesmen from across the regions, such as Sir Herbert Macaulay, AlvanIkoku, Ahmadu Bello, Milford Okilo, Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Okpara and Dennis ChukudebeOsadebey (Lawal & Olukayode, 2012; and Majekodunmi, 2015).

### **The Constitutional Development on Nigeria**

The First Nigerian constitution describing the nature or system of government was the 1914 constitution, which amalgamated the Southern and Northern Protectorates into one entity. As a result of the amalgamation, Lord Frederick Lugard formed the Nigerian Council. It included 36 members, most of which were foreigners (especially British) and 6 Nigerians who were made non-official members. The council acted as an advisory body and its resolutions had no legal authority. However, the establishment of the council was a landmark in the constitutional history of Nigeria as it was the first step towards representative democracy in that it availed Nigerians from different parts of the country coming together to discuss the affairs of the nation (Gupta, 2015).

The Second constitution, the 1922 Clifford Constitution, was put together by Sir Hugh Clifford. The Constitution established a Legislative Council consisting of 46 members to make laws for the territories, most especially Colony of Lagos and the southern provinces. The Legislative Council consisted of 27 members namely the Governor, the Lieutenant-Governors, other elected and three nominated members representing Lagos as the administrative and commercial capital and one representing Calabar as a big commercial centre. The 1922 Constitution introduced the elective principle thereby granting Lagos and Calabar the chance to elect their representatives into the Legislative Council (Lawal & Olukayode, 2012).

The Third constitution was the Arthur Richard Constitution in 1946, which divided Nigeria into three predominant regions namely the Northern, Western and Eastern regions. The enactment of this constitution was due to the demands of Nigerians who participated in the Second World War on behalf of the British. After the war, they came back with a better understanding of the concept of nationalism, freedom and national sovereignty. More so, the establishment of the League of Nations, now United Nations also made a stronger case for the freedom of people under colonization seeking independence (Gupta, 2015).

This and other chain of events led to the formation of the foremost political party known as National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons, which was later renamed the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) after Southern Cameroon decided to be part of the present-day Cameroon. The formation of the political party was geared at transforming the democratic landscape of the country just to make the indigenous peoples of Nigeria become active in the process of governance and eventual leadership of the country. The Richard Constitution allows all sections of Nigeria to be represented in the Legislative Council. This made indigenous Nigerians become the majority members in both the House of Assembly and in the legislative council.

The Fourth constitution to determine the democratic form of government was the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 by Sir John Macpherson. The Macpherson Constitution was a product of wider consultation with the peoples of Nigeria. The consultation took the form of meetings at village, district, divisional, and provincial and regional levels. Consequently, the resolutions from the meetings were taken to the regional conferences held at Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. The overall outcome of the conferences was a general consensus in favour of a federal system of government but with the retention of a central government. The outstanding quality of the Macpherson constitution is that it set the tone for the practice of federalism as a democratic system of government for a country as diverse as Nigeria. However, the centralization of authorities became one of the weaknesses of the constitution thereby requiring another one to address the gap.

The fifth constitution adopted for the democratic governance in Nigeria was the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution by Sir Oliver Lyttleton. The 1954 Constitution made regional governments independent from the central government. Furthermore, it established a unicameral legislature for the federal government and a House of Assembly as well as public civil services for each three regional governments. The constitution made Lagos

the Federal Capital Territory. Ministers were also given unambiguous offices and roles. Thus, it could be said that Lyttleton Constitution was the constitution that prepared the country for her eventual independence in 1960.

The Sixth constitution was the Independence Constitution of 1960. The constitution granted the country political independence as a sovereign state and made provision for a parliamentary system of government with three regions namely Northern, Eastern and Western Regions, a bicameral legislature that is Senate and House of Representatives at the Federal level and at regional levels provisions were made for the House of Assembly and House of Chiefs. The constitution granted these legislative bodies legislative powers delineated into three lists, namely exclusive, concurrent and residual. The parliamentary system recognized the British monarch as the Head of State with powers to appoint a resident agent –the Governor General– to exercise executive powers on its behalf while a Prime Minister elected by the federal parliament acted as the Head of the Federal Executive Council.

The weakness of the constitution was in the fact that it designated the Governor-General as a representative and agent of the British Queen or Monarch and not the representative of People of the Sovereign State of Nigeria; this greatly undermined the status of independence granted to the country on October 1, 1960. Another weakness was the inability of constitution to grant final judicial decision to the Nigeria Supreme Court and its judges, rather, the final court of law for the country was still the Privy Council established by the British Government.

The seventh constitution aimed at streamlining Nigeria's democratic system was the Republican Constitution of 1963. The 1963 Constitution introduced a true form of parliamentary system of government. First, it replaced the Governor-General who served as a representative of the British monarch with a President elected directly by members of the Nigerian federal legislature. Secondly, the highest judicial decision body became the Federal Supreme Court, a decision that hitherto resided with the Privy Council thereby strengthening the independence of the Nigerian judiciary.

An attempt to further deepen the Nigerian democratic system of governance was the 1966 Constitution. This however never saw the light as a violent military coup d'état in 1966 truncated what we now know as the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic. The military's first involvement in Nigeria's system of governance lasted for about 13 years from 1966 to 1979 when General Olusegun Obasanjo's military administration handed over power to the democratically elected government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari in, which gave way to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic.

The eighth constitution to define Nigeria's democratic system of government was the 1979 Constitution. This was a constitution drafted by the military and handed over to the civilian government in 1979. The constitution changed Nigeria's democratic system of governance from Parliamentary to Presidential system having a federal government with 19 state governments, one federal capital territory, three organs of government namely Executive, Legislature and Judiciary and three levels of government namely the Federal, State and Local governments.

The entrenchment of the 1979 Constitution, which had the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari and Vice President Alex Ekwueme was again truncated by another military coup d'état on December 31, 1983, followed by the military dictatorship of Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon. Another counter coup d'état led by General Ibrahim Babangida toppled General Muhammadu Buhari and lasted from 1985 to 1993 when he hastily constituted an Interim National Government led by Mr. Ernest Shonekan. Mr. Shonekan-led interim civilian government came into being after the botched transition period which saw the annulment of the June 12, 1992 presidential election. The 1992 Presidential election led to the election of Alhaji Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party-SDP in what is termed as the botched 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic. Another palace coup followed by General Sani Abacha military dictatorship (1993-1998) and General Abdulsalami Abubakar military administration which successfully ushered in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic on May 27, 1999 with the introduction of the 1999 Constitution (Gupta, 2015).

The diverse attempts made at entrenching a democratic system that provides the people a better choice of leadership and good governance has been one of the main demands of the country from before independence to date. A better system of governance does not only ensure true representativeness of the diverse sections and interests of the country but allows for equitable development, accountability and respect for the rule of law. In the 57 years of Nigeria's political independence from Britain, the two models of democratic system of governance experienced, that is the Parliamentary system and the Presidential system, have been unable to internalize the truest form of representative democratic culture and good governance and this consequently has been that critical challenge militating against the enthronement of an effective system of democracy and good governance in Nigeria (USAID, 2006)

### **Understanding Political and Democratic System**

Yio (2012) defines the concept of democracy as a form of government that is based on getting the consent of the people in a state to legitimately govern them. It is a form of government that places emphasis on the rule of law as an institution. It is also a form of government that gives people the freedom to choose who

should rule them and make elected officials accountable to the electorate. This implies that sovereignty is with the people thereby necessitating the need for periodic elections. Huntington (1996) contended that a political system should be considered as democratic when it allows the people to participate in the political process to elect individuals into positions in a government. In this process, the positions of office are contested through credible, free and fair elections by political candidates. These candidates could be seeking for political offices under a political party. The process allows them to get engaged in electioneering campaigns such that they go around their constituencies to canvas and compete for the people's votes.

The political system provides the public with the chance to be involved in the affairs of governance by voting and being voted for through legitimate and lawful assemblies. These assemblies engender the freedom of the people to gather, debate politically, and publish their policies and ideologies. Democracy also gives members of political parties the chance to conduct electoral campaigns as a way of letting the public know about their capability to lead effectively. This forms the bedrock of political communication using all mediums, including from the print, broadcast and social media. This is done with the aim to communicate political messages and programmes to the public in order to get their vote during elections.

According to Pateman (1970), democracy is a system which allows majority of the people in a community to participate in the act of government either directly or indirectly on issues that affect their community or society. This implies that definitive authority belongs to the people. Here, every member of the society is given an equal chance to participate and be involved in the process that controls the political and socio-economic affairs of their polity. It is important to note that the political system which a society adopts has the tendency to define that society. When a society is led by a King or Queen, it is said to be a monarchy as is the case of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East and Swaziland in Southern Africa. Also, a society that is led by a President for a fixed term in office is said to be operating a presidential system of democracy. Those led by the Military as is the case with Myanmar, is said to be dictatorial while a society with the Prime Minister as the Head of Government is said to operate the Parliamentary system of government.

### **The Presidential and Parliamentary Systems of Governance**

According to Szilágyi (2009), the presidential system is a democratic system of governance which has a president who is elected by public vote. The elected president is both the Head of the State and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The presidential system also makes room for the election of an independent legislature. This is done within the Montesquieuan principle of separation of powers (Gwyn, 1965). Similarly, the president is vested with the power to veto legislations and decisions, which can be overridden by two-third majority vote in the legislature. The legislature in a presidential system debates a bill in various stages before it is passed to the President for assent by appending his signature in order for it to become law.

The legislature in a presidential system can also remove or impeach the president when it found out that the president has violated his oath of office or found culpable of constitutional misconduct or misconducts (Szilágyi, 2009). The president is elected for a specified term or number of years. For instance, it is four (4) years in Nigeria and USA, which is the leading example of presidential system of government in the world. A presidential system of government may either have two parties as is the case with USA or multiparty as is the case with Nigeria (Ajayi & Ojo, 2014).

Parliamentary systems of governance, on the other hand, separate the office of the head of government and the head of state. In this system, the head of government is the prime minister while the head of state is often a ceremonial figure of the government. The multiparty system is common in the parliamentary system of government. A party, which has an overwhelming majority in the parliament, picks the prime minister and it has the opportunity to go into coalition with other parties when it lacks such majority. When a ruling party goes into coalition with other parties, proportional or consensus representation within the government is achieved. A good example of countries practicing this type of government is the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and Switzerland. Nigeria had an experiment with this form of government between 1960 and 1966.

### **Historical Perspective of Nigeria's Democratic System**

One could trace the history of democratic governance in Nigeria to nationalists like Herbert Macaulay and AlvanIkoku. Others like Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, KitoyeAjasa and Anthony Enahoro claimed Nigeria's independence from colonial Britain. In order to achieve their demands, the nationalists created political parties to run for elective positions as permitted by the 1922 Clifford Constitution. 1922 Constitution was named after the Governor General Sir Hugh Clifford because he was the one who authorized the constituent assembly to draft the constitution. These positions were for one legislative seat in Calabar and three legislative seats in Lagos. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which was formed by Herbert Macaulay in 1923, was the main political party, which contested the election in this period. The formation and participation of the party in the 1923 election marked the involvement of political parties in elections culminating to the adoption of a parliamentary democratic system at independence in 1960 (Brown, 2013).

Democratic system of government in Nigeria started fully in October 1, 1960 when the country gained independence from Britain. Within this period, the country adopted the federal and parliamentary system. This period lasted for six years between 1960 and 1966. Another form of democratic system of government was practiced between 1976 and 1983 when the country operated a presidential system. The Federal Constitution of 1979 was the first constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that established the presidential system of government. The first President of the Federation was Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Peoples of Nigeria. Nigeria's first experience at the presidential system of government lasted for only five years that is, from 1979 to 1983 when it was truncated by a military coup leading to a unitary system of government that was undemocratic (Okechukwu, 2014).

Between 1976 and 1983, Alhaji Shehu Shagari from the North West became the President of Nigeria while Chief Alex Ekwueme from the South East was the Vice President. This period also heralded the presidential system of government in Nigeria. The present democratic system of government, which is the presidential system, started in 1999 and still continues.

The parliamentary system of government in Nigeria produced Tafawa Belewa of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) as the Head of Government and Prime Minister after the pre-independence election of 1959. The Head of State and Governor General of Nigeria was Nnamdi Azikiwe of National Council of Nigerian Citizen. As Prime Minister, he remained in government as long as he enjoys vote of confidence of the majority members of parliament. He was not voted out until the ill-fated coup of January 15, 1966 which led to his assassination (Okechukwu, 2014). The parliamentary system of government gave the national or the central or federal government the power to legislate for the country and the regions. Within this period, the Independence Constitution of 1960 and the Republican Constitution of 1963 were the country's supreme law.

The presidential system is a form of democratic government where the elected president serves as the Head of State and Head of Government. In this system, the president combines both roles rather than the parliamentary system where it is splits. Within the system, the president is also the Commander-in-Chief of the country's Armed Forces. In contemporary Nigeria, like the USA, the President appoints his cabinet as well as officers for federal agencies and departments (Szilágyi, 2009). The stipulation here is that, both political and public officers to be appointed by the president must be screened and approved by the Nigerian National Assembly, in this case, the House of Senate.

Notwithstanding the recourse to seek approval from the legislature before appointing political and public officers, the president can remove them from office. Under the Nigerian presidential system of government, both the political and public officials are not members of the legislature as is the case with the parliamentary system of government. If an elected member of the National Assembly is appointed as a minister, commissioner or special adviser, he/she must resign from being an elected member of the National Assembly (Tom & Attai, 2014).

The military or dictatorial system of government was undemocratic in nature since it lacked representativeness and good governance. Autocratic and repressive governance by the leaders led to suppression and abuses of human rights. The abuses earned the country a pariah status within the comity of nations and international relations. At the height of these abuses and suppressions of legitimate demands for true federalism, another attempt at presidential system of government was made in 1999 (Anazor, 2011).

The return to presidential system in 1999 produced Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party-PDP as the president and commander-in-chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. After the end of 8 years that is two terms of 4 years each, Obasanjo handed over to the late President Musa Yar'Adua on May 29, 2007. At the end of the term of President Yar'Adua, President Goodluck Jonathan took over the helm of affairs on May 29, 2011. Both President Yar'Adua and Goodluck were elected on the political platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (Egbe, 2014). At the end of President Goodluck Jonathan's term of office, he handed over to President Muhammadu Buhari of the All People's Congress-APC on May 29, 2015.

As mentioned earlier, the Nigerian presidential system of government has three different branches. These are the executive, legislature and the judiciary, adhering to the Montesquieu's concept of separation of powers in order to achieve checks and balances (Efebeh, 2015). The National Assembly is Nigeria's highest legislative body. It is a bicameral body which is made up of both the House of Senate and House of Representatives. The House of Senate has 109 members, 3 each from 36 States and 1 from Federal Capital. The House of Representatives is made up of 360 members. All the three branches of government in Nigeria are located at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Abuja. One important feature of the Nigerian presidential system is that it allows for three forms of government namely Federal, Central and Local governments. Nigeria has 36 States and 774 local governments with Mayoral statuses.

### **Democratic System Theory**

The democratic theories of government explored in this study were that of Pateman (1970), Dahl (1975), and Held (2006). Held's (2006: 6) liberal democratic theory stipulates that the democratic government

and the relations between the socio-cultural structure and economy should be balanced to the extent that they support the government. This indicates that a democratic system has two elements, namely the notion or form of the government and the structure of its relations. In terms of economic structure, Nigerian economy is largely dependent on earnings from crude oil sales. On the socio-cultural level, although the country has over 500 socio-cultural groups, three of them are predominant, namely Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba. All these socio-cultural groups demand representation in government (Ethnologue, 2017).

Dahl argues that a system of government which promotes elections by providing a process of continuous political competition between political parties and individuals is one of distinguishing democracy from dictatorship. The institution of this process in a multi-lingual and socio-cultural country such as Nigeria would contribute significantly in promoting political equality and popular sovereignty by ensuring representation of the minorities alongside majorities by any leader.

The challenge of the contemporary Nigerian democratic system is the tension between the practice of democratic ideals of social equality and representativeness and that of the allocation of economic resources. The inability of the system in achieving this, has resulted in the continuing agitations for resource control and restructuring of the country in order to attain socio-cultural liberty and equality. Dahl's (1975) conceptualization of a democratic system can provide a proper framework to address these challenges. In this way, the appropriate process to make political decision and the opportunity could engender representativeness.

Various ethnic nationalities or state governments as in the case of Nigeria would have the chance to control economic resources and this would help reduce the vast inequality of the distribution of resources that is skewed in favour of the predominant ethnic groups. Dahl's proposal for resource control and demand for restructuring could be regarded as both constructive and democratic because, within the liberal democracy framework, there is the need for producers to own such resources. However, for the good of the country, the earnings from such resources could be contributed to the center by the periphery.

Pateman's (1970) theory of democratic participation is one which states that people should not only learn but participate democratically at all levels of government. Within the Nigerian democratic system, the platform that allows for the participation of the component units of the Nigerian nation in the democratic process is the national assembly. This is why the Nigerian democracy adopted not just the presidential system but also a bicameral legislature that allows for more representativeness of the component socio-cultural ethnic groups. However, there has been a cry of inequality in the representation of public officials and institutions. It is the result of the lack of full democratic participation and equality. This is one challenge faced by each successive government necessitating the call for the restructuring of the country and the perfect zoning of political and public offices (Majekodunmi, 2015).

### **The Development of Political Ideology in Nigeria**

Political parties in the First Republic, namely the Northern People's Congress (NPC), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and Action Group (AG) all have different political ideologies. The NPC ideology was modelled after conservatism while the NCNC's and AG's ideologies were based on progressivism and welfarism, which are largely drawn from the socialist ideology. Notwithstanding the differences in the ideological orientations of these parties, they are largely skewed towards promoting ethno-regional, socio-cultural and economic ideologies that have continued to date (Omotola, 2005).

Most of the political parties of the Second Republic were also dominated by political ideologies that were prominent during the First Republic, such as free healthcare and education (Ujo, 2000: 91-102). The Third Republic had two dominant political parties, namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC). These parties were modelled after political parties in the United States. They were formed to have two different political ideologies, as has been the case between the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States and the Conservative and Labour Parties in the United Kingdom. However, although one was a little inclined to the left and the other a little inclined to the right, nothing much differentiates the parties, at least not in ideological dispositions (Yaqub, 2002: 128).

Omoruyi (2002: 8) observed that the way in which political parties were formed in Nigeria does not fit into any established democratic theory known to literature. He further states that political parties in Nigeria are mostly unstable with little life span as well as having a high level of defection when compared to other political parties in the world. Also, their instability and incoherent political ideologies had contributed to the increasing number of political parties in Nigeria. Recently, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that the country has ninety-one (91) registered political parties which inarguably is the largest number anywhere in the world.

The return to civil rule in 1999 shows that the leading political parties, that is (PDP) and (APP) had capitalist and conservative ideologies while the Alliance for Democratic Party's (AD) ideology is based on progressive and radical beliefs (Iyare, 2004: 92). Although these parties are identified with different political ideologies, Simbine (2005: 23) observed that their manifestoes were identical in content and strategies to

achieve their goals. Iyare (2004: 94) stated that because of the lack of ideological direction in their manifestoes, the dominant political parties, namely the PDP, APP and AD were unable to take cogent ideological stance on national policies, and in the cases where they do, they throw up issues that bothered on federalism, restructuring, resource control, religion and ethnicity.

As explained earlier, ideology enables a political party to be easily identified and differentiated from others. Based on this, notwithstanding the ideological leaning of the political parties in Nigeria, the parties from their composition and party manifestoes, are almost the same. Political manifestoes of the political parties alone is not enough to determine the party's ideology. Their stance on public and political policies, issues and global debates and affairs that have direct and indirect consequence for the political, economic and socio-cultural development and growth of the country will make them uniquely different.

## **II. ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC**

This chapter provides the study with the assessment of governments in Nigeria since the return to democratic civil rule in 1999. The assessments include the structure of governments and military service chief appointments based on the geopolitical regions of the country. They also analyse the religious inclinations of the appointments since it is one of the factors in the allocation of offices alongside geopolitical regions and states to which political appointees belong to.

### **Assessment of Olusegun Obasanjo's government (1999 – 2007)**

The achievements and failures of the Obasanjo's administration from 1999 to 2007 could be discussed in the following ways:

#### **Achievements**

**The establishment of NDDC:** The establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission by the NDDC Act of 2000 was one of the major achievements of Obasanjo's government. The NDDC was set up to spearhead the infrastructural development of the oil-producing states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom, Edo, Abia, Imo, Anambra and Delta state (Aghalino, 2009).

**The 13% Derivation:** This is another effort aimed at resolving the issue of resource control by the oil-producing states of Nigeria. It aimed to provide states in the region with more funds in addition to monthly allocations from the Federation accounts to address issues of infrastructural development, youth unemployment, education and health.

**Fight against corruption:** In order to adequately address the issue of corruption of public office holders, the Obasanjo government established two agencies: The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economics and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). The reason for the establishment of these agencies was the stupendous extent to which corruption and related offences pervaded the Nigerian society across economic, political, social and even religious institutions.

**Writing off debt to Paris Club:** One very significant achievement of the Obasanjo government was the writing off of 18 billion dollars out of 30 billion owed to the Paris Club<sup>1</sup> of lenders. This write off debt relief helped Nigeria in fighting poverty, addressing the issue of infrastructural decay and improving the education and health facilities (Dijkstra, 2013).

#### **Failures**

**Over-interference of government to the Nigerian National Assembly:** This over-interference led to the impeachment of Evan Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo, and Adolphus Wabara between 1999 and 2005. This seriously affected the executive- legislative relationship as well as undermining the independence of the second arm of government in Nigeria (Muheeb, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup>The Paris Club is an informal group of official creditors whose role is to find coordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by debtor countries. As debtor countries undertake reforms to stabilize and restore their macroeconomic and financial situation, Paris Club creditors provide an appropriate debt treatment. Paris Club creditors provide debt treatments to debtor countries in the form of rescheduling, which is debt relief by postponement or, in the case of concessional rescheduling, reduction in debt service obligations during a defined period (flow treatment) or as of a set date (stock treatment). (<http://www.clubdeparis.org/>)

**Extra-judicial killings:** They were seen as a failure on the part of the government to safeguard public lives and properties as enshrined in section 33 of the 1999 constitution. Notable ones among the killings were those of Odi in River state and ZakiBiam in Benue state. Also, the killings of Harry Marshall, Bola Ige, and Funsho William were believed to be politically motivated (Durotoye, 2014).

**Bakassi Peninsula:** The ceding of Bakassi Peninsula, which hitherto had been a territory within Nigeria, by the government without recourse to the National Assembly is one significant demerit of the Obasanjo administration. The Greentree Agreements came after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) gave its judgment in favour of Cameroon.

**Imbalance of Power within the State:** The composition of Obasanjo's military chiefs from 1999 to 2007 presents an unbalanced distribution among different states in the federal structure. Within this period, 80% of the service chiefs were from Southern Nigeria while only 20% were from Northern Nigeria. This further escalated the dispute over federalism in the country.

#### **Assessment of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's Government (2007 – 2010)**

##### **Achievements**

**The Formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU):** One of the laudable moves by President Yar'Adua was to call for a Government of National Unity in his attempt to form an all-inclusive government that would serve the country's interests rather than just the ruling party's (Abati, 2007; Edi, 2007).

**Amnesty Programme:** The amnesty programme was established not only to reduce violent agitation but also to build skills and capacity of the youth of the region by providing them the type of education and training required by the oil industry. The amnesty programme resulted in the spike in oil production and an increase in the earnings from oil sale which makes up the bulk of the revenue needed for Nigeria's development in all ramifications. It was declared that over 39,880 weapons were surrendered and 30,000 youths enlisted into the amnesty programme (Ushie, 2013; Ukiwo, 2015).

**The 7-Points Agenda:** This is also one of the laudable achievements of the administration. The 7 points agenda spelt out the core areas of intervention by the government. It covers areas such as food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security, qualitative and functional education (Dode, 2010; Gadzama, 2013).

##### **Failures**

**Secrecy on President's Health Situation:** President Musa Yar'Adua was known to have health complications even before he was elected as the President. According to Chimdubem and Okewudiri (2015), starting with unspecified trips to Germany and Saudi Arabia for medical attention, the illness of President Yar'Adua resulted in the country losing several bilateral opportunities and a constitutional problem. Eventually, on November 23, 2009, he was again rushed to Saudi Arabia for treatment without handing over power to the Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to act as the president while he was away.

This singular oversight led to a constitutional problem until February 9, 2010, when the Nigerian Senate declared that presidential power is handed over to the Vice President in what was termed as the "Doctrine of Necessity" (The Nation, 2010). President Yar'Adua was not to recover from the illness and eventually died on May 5, 2010. The constitutional problem created a fear in the North to lose political power once again to the South. Although it seems like a constitutional matter, in reality, it is still a serious problem that threatens true federalism because of the fear of dominance by one part of the country over another.

#### **Assessment of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Government (2010 – 2015)**

##### **Achievements**

**Transformation agenda:** Like his predecessor, President Jonathan also designed a blueprint that would articulate and guide his governments' development plan. Unlike the 7-points agenda, the transformation agenda focused mainly on employment creation, poverty alleviation, value re-orientation and non-inflationary economic growth.

**Rebased Economy:** As mentioned earlier the implementation of the transformation agenda by the economic management team made Nigeria the largest economy in Africa in over a decade after South Africa and Egypt respectively. The rebased economy resulted in the country's GDP to rise to more than 503 billion dollars in 2013 in just two years of Jonathan's administration as well as becoming the third fastest growing economy in the world by 2015 at a growth rate of 7 per cent (BBC News, 2014a).



**Establishment New Federal Universities:** Twelve new universities were established for states in the federation that are yet to have a federal university in addition to the other specialized science and transportation universities by the administration of Goodluck Jonathan. This move was seen as a singular attempt at addressing not only education gaps but also the issue of federalism as those states had clamoured for the representation or federal government presence (Vanguard, 2015).

**Executive/Legislative Relationship:** This is also one area in which the Jonathan administration scored high. Throughout the administration, there was no friction between the National Assembly and the executive. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives were allowed their independence.

**Constitutional Dialogue Conference:** The greatest achievement of the administration was the Constitutional Dialogue Conference which was convened to discuss the issue of federalism, devolution of powers, resource control and regionalization (Bashir et. al., 2013). The conference gave every segment of the Nigerian society, socio-cultural groups, regional bodies the chance to air their grievances as well as proffering ways to provide continual unity and existence of the entity called Nigeria.

### **Failures**

**Boko Haram:** The Jonathan administration was unable to adequately stem the terrorist activities of Boko Haram by being firm and proactive as well as decisive in using the military power. The sect's killing and bombing of government buildings, churches, mosques, schools, international organizations such as the United Nations Building in Abuja, and infamous kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, marred the economic achievement of the administration (Oyeniyi, 2010; Adagba, Ugwu&Eme, 2012; Mark, 2014).

**Brazen corruption by the public officials:** The inability of the administration to tackle acts of corruption by public and military officials was another failure on the part of Jonathan government. The government was unable to arrest and prosecute publicly known corruption cases like the one committed by the Minister of Aviation, Miss Stella Oduah. The case was about the 200 million nairas used to purchase exotic cars for the Minister's use by an agency in the Ministry, that is, Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) (Ekoot, 2013).

**Split in Political Leadership:** The split in the ruling political party PDP, which hitherto had produced the Presidents for the country since 1999, was traced to the inability of President Jonathan as a Southerner, to keep an undisclosed promise to reform democratic power to northern Nigeria. With the split, which led to the emergence of a group known as New People's Democratic Party (nPDP), five (5) northern governors on the platform defected to the oppositional party APC with their followers from states like Kano, Sokoto, Kwara, Adamawa and Rivers (Tukur, 2015). These developments resurfaced the deep-rooted fear of a section of the country dominating another one, and eventually cost the president his office as he was defeated by the new opposition at the presidential election in January 2015.

## **III. DISCUSSION**

The adoption of zoning of political offices by political parties is one significant characteristic of the Nigerian democratic system. It is done by means of sharing and rotating political offices among the six (6) geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The adoption of the zoning principles was aimed at promoting representativeness, equity, political stability and unity of the country. Although this has greatly helped in cementing the national unity and integration since independence, it also increased ethnic tension in the country. It also denied and deprived Nigeria the opportunity of having credible leaders who would drive the country's development.

A good example of this was the recent defeat of President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP from the South by President Muhammadu Buhari from the North. Thus, representation and the sharing of political offices especially into the executive, legislature, civil service, military and para-military and the judiciary office is done bearing in mind the six (6) geo-political zones as contained in the Federal Character Act. This has been significantly shown in the structure of governments of the three Presidents assessed in this study.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba man from Ogun State which is in South Western Nigeria was elected as Nigeria's President under the platform of the PDP. He had as his Vice President Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from Adamawa in the North Eastern region of the country. In order to balance the power between the Northern and Southern part of the country, the offices of the Senate President and Speaker of Federal House of Assembly was zoned to the South East and North West respectively. Similarly, the offices of the Deputy Senate President and that of Deputy Speaker was also zoned to the North Central and South South respectively.

This zoning principle was also observed in federal appointments especially those concerning the office of the Secretary to the Federal Government and Head of Service of the Federation. The zoning principle was adopted to address the issue of marginalization which has been the bane of Nigeria's unity and to establish true

federalism. The zoning principle tries to accommodate all socio-cultural groups and ethnic nationalities that make up the country thereby promoting the nature of federalism of the Nigerian state. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the President of Nigeria for eight years, that is, from 1999 to 2007 and handed over to President Musa Yar'Adua from Katsina State, North West Nigeria. Being from the North, Yar'Adua picked his Vice President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan from Bayelsa State, South South Nigeria in 2007.

Similarly, the Senate President was zoned to the North Central while the Speaker of the National Assembly was zoned to the South West. At his death in 2010, the zoning principle that was expected to give every heterogeneous member of the country a part in the executive arm of the Nigerian government was scuttled. The Swearing in of President Goodluck Jonathan in May 2010 shifted the political power for the North to South thereby reigniting the feeling of suspicion of a section dominating the other among the various geopolitical zones, religious and ethnic nationalities in the country.

Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan from Bayelsa state, South South Nigeria was elected President in 2011. He had as his Vice President Alhaji Namadi Sambo from Kaduna State, North West, Nigeria. During this period the Senate President was zoned to the North Central zone and the Speaker of the National assembly was zoned to the North West (Kamal & Bello, 2014). The struggle to restore Presidential power to the Northern part of country was the major reason behind the support for the new political party (APC) to take power back from the PDP and the South. Eventually, President Muhammadu Buhari from Katsina State, North West Nigeria defeated President Goodluck Jonathan from Bayelsa State, South South Nigeria.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Democratic developments all over the world aim to serve the people. Serving the people means striving to provide people with the opportunity to elect their representatives who would provide good governance in all ramifications. The quest to achieve good governance has produced different types of political systems and ideologies. Systems like parliamentary and presidential democratic styles of governance tend to stand out over other systems like communism and monarchy. The reason for the success of these two systems of governance over others is largely tied to their representative nature, where every segment within a socio-political and socio-cultural make-up of the society has a chance of represented.

In the case of Nigeria, democracy was experimented with both the parliamentary and presidential system. The country adopted parliamentary system in 1960 after independence until democracy was truncated in 1966. The presidential system was adopted from 1976 to 1983 until it was again truncated by the military. However, with the return to democratic rule in 1999, the presidential system has become the main democratic system in the country. The adoption of the parliamentary system like the presidential system aimed to address the problem of true representation and federalism.

Although lacking in political ideologies, Nigerian political parties evolved the principle of zoning to further address the issue of marginalization and the fear of domination by a particular section of the country. This also guided the implementation of state policies and the provision of infrastructural development to every part of the country. This strategy within the Nigerian democratic system ensures that no ethno-religious segment of the country controls and dominates the political offices and the resources to the detriment of any of the geopolitical zones and ethnic nationalities even if they are in the minority.

The Federal Character principle is enshrined in (Section 14 (3) of the Nigeria Constitution. In this section, the Constitution stipulated that the composition of governments and any public agencies must be done in such a way that reflect and respect the Nigeria federal character principle. Where this is done, it would further promote national unity and integration. And discourages the domination by a section of country or ethnic over the other. The best democratic system adopted by any country should suit its peculiar needs, aspirations and development. Thus, the adoption of parliamentary democratic system after independence and presidential system after military interventions as well as the zoning principles were meant to bring about representativeness to every part of the 774 local council areas, 36 federating units and 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Furthermore, these systems were meant to accommodate each and every ethnic nationality in over 300 ethnic nationalities speaking more than 500 languages.

Being a country that is so diverse in socio-cultural, political and religious affiliation, governance in Nigeria since independence especially with the return to democratic rule in 1999 has been herculean because of the inability of the leaders in practicing true federalism. Having carefully analysed the governments of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, this research concludes that the presidential system of governance is best suited for the country's governance no matter the shortcomings being experienced either as an act of omission or commission on the parts of the country's leaders. This conclusion is premised on the fact that the presidential system of government provides Nigeria's ethnic nationalities the chance of being represented in government and public service especially when and where the federal character principles as enshrined in the 1999 Federal Constitution are adhered to.

Thus, the study concludes that:

1. The presidential system of democracy currently adopted by the country should be continued. However, there is the need for power rotation along the 6 geopolitical zones of the country so as to make the political power go round and alloy the fears of dominance by a section of the country over the others.
2. A constitutional review is needed to address the numerous demands for resource control, fiscal federalism and adequate representation of ethnic minorities in the act of governance. In order to do this, the reports of the resolutions from the National Dialogue Conference should be adopted, legislated and passed into law as a way of addressing the challenges of true federalism and representativeness.
3. Political leaders and parties in the country should re-orient their ideologies to understand the nature of the democratic system adopted by the country especially in terms of zoning of political offices and the federal character principle in appointments to public offices. This would address and ensure true federalism and representativeness in Nigeria's democratic system to some extent. If this is achieved, it would reduce the fear of dominance in the nation polity.
4. The ever-growing call for the restructuring of the democratic system is one way in which democracy in Nigeria could be strengthened. Where this is achieved it would lead to a more united and prosperous country. To do this, the National Dialogue Conference report document should serve as the template as well as plebiscite conducted by the government to enable the people to vote and make their decision on salient issues like resource control, power rotation, state police, and regionalization.

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