

Journal of African Elections

Special Issue
Nigeria's 2011 Elections

GUEST EDITOR
Emmanuel Remi Aiyede

ARTICLES BY
Emmanuel Remi Aiyede
Dauda Abubakar
J Shola Omotola
Gbenga Aiyedogbon
Antonia Taiye Ookoosi-Simbine
A Irene Pogson
Osioma B C Nwolise
Omo Aregbeyen
Olubukola Adesina

Volume 11 Number 1 June 2012

Published by EISA
14 Park Road, Richmond
Johannesburg
South Africa

P O Box 740
Auckland Park
2006
South Africa
Tel: +27(0) 11 381 6000
Fax: +27(0) 11 482 6163
e-mail: publications@eisa.org.za

©EISA 2012

ISSN: 1609-4700

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Copy editor: Pat Tucker
Printed by: Global Print, Johannesburg

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Editorial correspondence, including manuscripts for submission and books for review, should be sent to:

The Managing Editor, Journal of African Elections

EISA: P O Box 740

Auckland Park 2006, South Africa

Tel: +27(0)11 381 6000 | Fax: +27(0)11 482 6163 | e-mail: jackie@eisa.org.za

Business correspondence, including orders and remittances, subscription queries, advertisements, back numbers and offprints, should be addressed to the publisher:

The Publications Department, Journal of African Elections

EISA: P O Box 740

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HOUSEKEEPING NOTES

Dr Jackie Kalley, managing editor of the *Journal of African Elections*, has retired from the staff of EISA.

Pietermaritzburg-born Kalley began her professional life as a schoolteacher in the city of her birth, but soon changed to librarianship. In 1974 she was appointed as librarian at the South African Institute of International Affairs, Jan Smuts House: a career which would last for a quarter century. During this time she (and her colleagues) produced a slew of bibliographies on a range of topics which touched on apartheid South Africa and especially its international relations. She also completed an MA, under the supervision of the celebrated academic John Dugard, which she received *cum laude*. Her work focused on South Africa's international treaties.

Her PhD, which examined the effect of apartheid on libraries in the then Transvaal, was awarded by the University of Natal. She would go on to publish this thesis and many other books.

Dr Kalley has retired to Pietermaritzburg, where she will concentrate on her publishing company, Otterley Press. Those who have been associated with the *JAE* wish her well and look forward to calling on her vast knowledge in the future.

Pat Tucker, who has long been associated with the *JAE* as its copy editor, has taken over as managing editor. I am thrilled to be working with Pat, whose journalism, as I said in these pages several months ago, has inspired me since I was a student, and who is a professional of the highest calibre. The *JAE* is fortunate to have her on its team

Peter Vale
Editor

OPEN FORUM

Kole Omotoso is a citizen of the world but is, especially, a citizen both of Nigeria and of South Africa. A university professor, dramatist, novelist, movie star – but chiefly, intellectual – Omotoso is passionately interested in politics and public life in both countries. In late April, Peter Vale, Editor of the Journal of African Elections, sat down with Omotoso and asked him about his views on Nigerian elections and politics. This is an excerpt from their exchange.

Does the novelist Ben Okri's belief that Nigeria's elections are always 'fore won' still hold?

Maybe not any more. But in a more subtle manner elections are still manipulated to produce the result that those doing the managing want. Generally, there are no primary elections to choose candidates for elections. It becomes the privilege of the party leader and his cronies to choose the person they want. In doing this, a political party gets those interested in the positions to concede to the selected candidate before the voting takes place. This means that the rivals of the particular candidate concede his victory before the voting takes place. All this is going on on live television and everybody can see that pressure is being put on those others wanting to contest the position to withdraw their candidacy.

What is the single biggest obstacle to the acceptability of Nigerian elections: the law or politics?

The biggest obstacle to the acceptability of Nigerian elections is the culture of unpunished corruption rampant in the country. There are electoral laws. Rigging elections is breaking electoral laws. There are courts set up to deal with these types of crimes. But invariably those who are rigged out of their mandates sometimes think it is not worth going to court because they believe, rightly or wrongly, that the judiciary can be bribed to give a biased judgement. In recent times, more and more candidates done in by rigging have gone to court and won. As a result, it is noticed that while there were far more contested results in the elections of 2007, there were fewer candidates in the elections of 2011.

What forms of electoral fraud take place in Nigeria? Are there remedies for these?

There are three forms of electoral fraud: those committed before the voting, such as gerrymandering and tampering with the voters' list; those committed during the process and period of voting, such as ballot-box stuffing or ballot-box hijacking; and those committed after the voting, such as declaring results contrary to the voting outcome. There are no remedies for any of these frauds

except preaching against them before they happen, and prosecuting them when they take place.

Are you confident that elections can continue to contribute to the building of democracy in Nigeria?

Elections are crucial to the building of democracy in any society, more so in a place like Nigeria. We come from a background where the obas, the obis and the emirs cannot imagine that their vote is not more important than the vote of the talakawa, the mekunnu, the ordinary man and woman on the street. It is like saying that if the captain scores a goal it should count more than the goal of ordinary members of the team. So we need elections and we need people to understand that whatever their status in life when it comes to the time of voting they have the same power as the mighty as well as the mite.

You have an acute sensitivity to cultural issues, Kole. What role does culture – both national and local – play in the electoral process in Nigeria?

The word 'vote,' both as verb and noun, translates into various terms in the countries of the later democracies. In the Arab world it translates as 'voice' and the countries of Asia have found their own words for the concept. The Yoruba word that does duty for 'vote' and 'to vote' has to do with handing over one's secret decision to someone who will keep it and cherish it. There is a stubborn sense of freedom to cast one's vote as one thinks fit. There are even people ready to be bribed to vote for someone and will then confess that they took the money but did not vote for the person who bribed them. Since voting is secret and individual there is no reason for anyone to see what one is doing.

Do you think that academics who publish in this or other journals have a sound understanding and explanation of elections in Nigeria?

Usually academics tend to use a generalised template against which they write about elections. While they would not bother to explain why Queen Elizabeth II of the UK and the British royals would not be caught voting, no attempt is made to understand the particular culture against which democracy is being nurtured in Nigeria. Of what use are political parties with ideological differences, for instance, where the need is for basic infrastructure, an issue that has nothing to do with ideologies. What this means is that there needs to be some infrastructural basics on the ground before democracy can begin to play a role in political choices. Of course, you could have a choice between modernising and remaining traditional, between industrialising and remaining subsistence, between Western education and Islamic traditional education. This is what happened in the northern part of Nigeria and the North is reaping the negative consequences today in uneducated

(in a Western educational system), unemployable youth and disillusioned, educated sons and daughters of the traditional rulers, who refused to go for mass Western education. Without any well-grounded ideological tenets it is easy for politicians to move (to decamp) from one political party to another. How this situation could affect what is written about elections in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is impossible for me to say. All one can say is that it should make a difference.

EDITORIAL

THE POLITICS OF ELECTORAL REFORM IN NIGERIA, 2007-2011

Emmanuel Remi Aiyede

Dr Aiyede is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science and
Coordinator of the Leadership and Governance Programme at the Centre for
Sustainable Development of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria
email: eaiyede@yahoo.com

The 2011 general elections in Nigeria were very interesting. According to the reports of election observers and monitors they were an improvement on any held since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. The outcome, however, was attended by some drama.

The elections were postponed for logistical reasons after they had been running for a few hours on 9 April, raising fears that the process might be frustrated.

Violence broke out in certain states in the northern part of the country after the presidential election on 23 April when it was obvious that Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who hails from the North, had lost to the incumbent, President Goodluck Jonathan. This forced the electoral commission to postpone the date of the subsequent gubernatorial elections in Kaduna and Bauchi states for two days, until security could be guaranteed.

Several cases were instituted in the courts to challenge the outcome of some of the elections, including the presidential election. The courts disposed of many of these within the 180-day time limit demanded by the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). Few of the court decisions were groundbreaking and none of the gubernatorial elections was overturned. The Supreme Court decided in favour of President Jonathan on 28 December.

The elections were preceded by important developments in the country since the discredited elections of 2007. On assuming office President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, who was to die in office, admitted that the 2007 elections had been flawed, thereby confirming the conclusions reached earlier by both local and foreign monitors and observers that they were the worst in the electoral history of the country. In an unprecedented move the courts set aside several election results and, in some cases, determined the winners.

On 26 November 2010 the Appeal Court removed the governor of Osun State, Olagunsoye Oyinlola, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and declared his opponent, Rauf Aregbesola of the Action Congress (AC), the winner. This was the sixth gubernatorial election determined by the courts in which the governor was replaced (the others were Rivers, Anambra, Edo, Ekiti, and Ondo states). In several other cases (Kogi, Cross Rivers, Bayelsa, Sokoto and Adamawa) the elections were annulled and fresh elections called.

Further, judicial decisions extended the terms of five governors in these states who had participated in and won the various gubernatorial elections that had to be rerun. (The governors whose tenure was extended remained in power until the Supreme Court rejected the decision of the lower court on 26 December 2011.) These decisions had some effect on the logistical challenges and on electoral malpractice and other misdemeanours that usually accompany elections in Nigeria. They effectively limited the gubernatorial elections of 2011 to 25 of the 36 states. New governors will not be elected in Ekit and Anambra states until 2014, while Edo and Ondo states will hold elections in 2012.

President Yar'Adua set up an electoral reform committee headed by Justice Mohammed Uwais on 28 August 2007 to investigate the 2007 elections and to propose reform measures to improve the electoral process in the country. After receiving memoranda from several individuals and groups, conducting public hearings around the country and commissioning studies that informed its final recommendations, the committee submitted its report on 11 December 2008.

It found that the factors responsible for electoral irregularities, malpractice, disruptions and violence 'include, among others, the character of the Nigerian state as the arena of electoral contests, the existence of weak democratic institutions and processes, negative political culture, weak legal/institutional framework, and lack of independence and capacity of electoral management bodies'.

To make the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) truly independent, the committee recommended the removal of the power of the president to appoint its chairperson and members and suggested that the National Judicial Council be empowered to do so. INEC was to be reorganised and to be funded directly by the country's Consolidated Revenue Fund and the independent electoral commissions of the states were to be incorporated into the structure of INEC.

The committee also recommended a mixed electoral system comprising elements of proportional representation, including the idea that parties that win 2.5% of the seats in the National Assembly be considered for Cabinet-level appointments, to reduce the intensity of electoral competition. Several ways of making the political process more inclusive through the electoral process, including gender balance, were also proposed. The committee recommended

the establishment of a Centre for Democratic Studies for civic and political education.

The Uwais committee called for an Electoral Offences Commission to be set up to prosecute electoral offenders and recommended that at least five judges should sit when the Court of Appeal hears appeals relating to election petitions. It also recommended that election disputes be concluded before candidates are sworn in and that the process of adjudicating election disputes be concluded within six months. It further recommended that the burden of proof in the case of election petitions should shift from the petitioner to INEC; when challenged INEC must prove that the elections were free and fair.

These recommendations involve constitutional, statutory, administrative and institutional changes. To fast track the process of implementation the committee recommended that the constitutional amendments involved in the proposed electoral reforms should not be submerged in the larger effort to review the 1999 Constitution but should be considered separately. The committee prepared three draft Bills: amendments to the 1999 Constitution, amendments to the Electoral Act 2006 and an amendment relating to the establishment of the Electoral Offences Commission. The committee was apparently convinced that the president and his party were committed to carrying out fundamental electoral reforms.

The recommendations were reviewed by both the Federal Executive Council and the National Council of States and a white paper was released by the government rejecting important aspects, among them the removal of the power of the president to appoint the chair and members of INEC and the incorporation of the state independent electoral commissions into the structures of INEC. In the white paper the government argued that the appointment of the INEC chair was an executive function, not one for the judiciary.

President Yar'Adua sent seven Bills to the National Assembly to further underscore his commitment to electoral reform. The Bills did not, however, enjoy the support of the Assembly. The Senate threw out a Bill increasing the membership and extending the tenure of members of INEC because it involved constitutional amendments. The Bill relating to the establishment of the Political Parties Registration Commission was also thrown out because, it was argued, it involves an unnecessary duplication of the functions of INEC.

As the drama over the electoral reform Bills unfolded the president became ill and politicking over his ill health took centre stage when he left for Saudi Arabia for medical attention without transferring responsibility to the vice-president by means of a written notification to the National Assembly, as prescribed by the Constitution. His absence became a major issue of concern and debate as the country drifted without presidential leadership and on 2 February

2010 the National Assembly declared the vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan, acting president, by resorting to what it called the 'doctrine of necessity'.

After about 80 days abroad Yar'adua was secretly returned to the country in March 2010 under cover of night, without Jonathan's knowledge. On 5 May he died and his burial opened the space for meaningful engagement with the electoral process.

Thus it was that Jonathan took over responsibility for the electoral reforms Yar'adua had initiated. Jonathan, who was a candidate for the presidency in the 2011 elections, promised to deliver free and fair elections. To buttress his commitment, on 8 June 2010 he appointed Attahiru Jega, former president of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, a member of the electoral reform committee and a political scientist, to chair the electoral commission and oversee the elections.

One of the key areas of electoral reform relates to party primaries. Indeed, a major reform initiative focused on internal party democracy. This was also a key area of parliamentary activism because of the high turnover in the national Parliament, which many parliamentarians attributed to the excessive powers of governors in selecting party delegates during primaries.

Many legislators laboured to ensure that the powers of the governors were watered down by amendments to the Electoral Act. The zoning arrangement of the dominant party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which involved the allocation and rotation of party nominees for various political offices among the geopolitical zones and states in the country, was upset, first by Jonathan's ascent to the office of president following the death of Yar'Adua and then by the fact that he stood in the party's presidential primaries and emerged as the PDP's flag bearer and winner of the 2011 presidential elections.

The delay in appointing the new INEC chair and commissioners created fresh challenges with regard to the time frame for the elections. The Constitution and the Electoral Act of 2010 were amended to accommodate the limited time available in order to avoid an extension of the handover date beyond 29 May 2011. Other important changes made to the Constitution and the Act related to the funding of and qualification for membership of INEC, the announcement of election results at polling units, the 180-day deadline set for decisions by a tribunal on an electoral petition, a demand for party primaries to determine party nominees and provision for the continuous registration of voters.

The build-up to the elections was remarkable for its uncertainty about the outcome. This was because the PDP's dominance had been reduced by the courts' reversal of several of the 2007 results. The electorate and opposition parties were more confident about the capacity of the courts to adjudicate election cases independently, despite the protracted process relating to the 2007 elections.

The president had consistently maintained that these elections would be different from their predecessors and that every vote would count. The fact that these were the fourth general elections in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999 and the extent to which the events that followed the 2007 elections and the institutional changes that were made, affected the outcome and the general character of the 2011 elections. It is these factors that constitute the focus of this issue.

In the first article Abubakar examines the legal and constitutional framework of the elections from the perspective of governmentality, as an element of the techniques of power and the exercise of social and political domination. He argues that the political class in Nigeria has exercised governmental power to the detriment of the citizenry. The spectre of centralisation of power through neo-patrimonial networks entrenches elite pillage, which undermines the ethos of participatory democracy and constitutionalism. Thus, he calls for a reconstitution of the institutional logic of the Nigerian state in such a manner that it will enhance the empowerment of the citizenry. He also calls for the enthronement of a transparent, inclusive, developmentalist and responsive system of governance. Specifically, he believes that a mixed electoral system will deepen inclusion in decision-making and enhance the empowerment of citizens.

Aiyede takes up the debate over power sharing in the build-up to the 2011 elections provoked by the entrance of Goodluck Jonathan (a southerner) into the presidential race, made possible by the death of President Umar Musa Yar'Adua (a northerner), which upset the power-sharing arrangement of the PDP in the context of Nigeria's federal system. He provides a rich empirical picture of the politicking over the allocation of public office by Nigerian politicians and how these played out in the PDP's presidential primaries and the presidential election. He argues that while the 'zoning with rotation' principle remains useful for stability and representation in Nigeria it depends increasingly on the moderate behaviour and creativity of the power elites as they negotiate and manage the power disequilibrium that results from perceived access or lack of access of segments of Nigerian society to top political office. However, he rejects the 'zoning with rotation' principle as a long-term solution on the grounds that it constrains the notion of free political competition and the uncertain outcomes that are central to democracy.

Omotola & Aiyedogbon engage political participation as measured by voter turnout in the 2011 general elections, presenting a tapestry of discernible variations across geopolitical zones. Overall, turnout for the presidential election was 53.7%. They argue that this could be improved upon by the use of social media, electoral reform, active engagement of civil society, a reduction in violence and the provision of incentives to voters, political education and mobilisation and other ideas contained in the Uwais report.

Nothing demonstrates the relative disadvantage of women in Nigerian politics better than the outcome of the PDP primary, with a female presidential candidate who received only one vote. Pogeson reexamines the influence of patriarchal disposition on women's participation as equal stakeholders in democratic politics and party decision-making organs since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic rule. She shows that the marginalisation of women defies legal and constitutional guarantees and must be tackled simultaneously with patriarchy through continuous dialogue between women and male leaders, endorsing and entrenching a quota system/mechanism in national and political party constitutions; the review of electoral systems and adoption of those most conducive to women's participation (for example, proportional representation) and the provision by political parties of funding to enable women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices in court.

The issue of gender is deepened by Okosi-Simbine's close look at the results of the elections. She observes a slight drop in the number of women in elected positions relative to men and compared to the numbers after the 2007 elections. Attributing this to structural issues of religion and culture, women's lack of access to funds, 'godfatherism' in the political parties and the undemocratic disposition of party leaders, political and electoral violence, and vote buying, she declares that the poor participation of women in politics casts doubt on Nigeria's democratic credentials.

Nwolise reviews the security arrangements for the various phases of the elections, which underpinned the relative peace and order experienced during that period. He argues that security guarantees ensured that peace, thereby contributing to the credibility of the elections. He argues further that the neutrality of the security agencies reflects the commitment of the president to ensuring free and fair elections and therefore an uncompromised use of security agencies.

Aiyede & Aregbeyen examine the cost of the elections, estimating the financial cost to have been about N566.2-billion, representing about 2% of the country's gross domestic product. They identify non-monetary costs as including the loss of life and property in the violence that followed the elections, arguing that the cost of the 2011 elections was too high for the sustenance of democracy. Hopeful that the cost of future elections would be lower, they identify the poor state of the infrastructure, the use of imported technology for the biometric registration exercise, the postponement of some of the elections and the staggering of the elections over several days as responsible for the huge financial outlay. They show the difficulties involved in estimating the cost of an election, among them the poor record keeping of political parties, their weak public disclosure practices and the failure to enforce laws that regulate party and campaign finance.

The final article deals with the monitoring and observation of the elections. Here, Adesina maintains that the resounding approval by monitors and observers

of the elections as an improvement on previous ones must be qualified, given the level of irregularities and violence that characterised the elections. She argues, further, that in declaring the elections credible monitors and observers must not lose sight of their inadequacies if Nigeria is to reap the benefits of monitoring and observation.

It is hoped that this review of the experiences of the 2011 elections and their aftermath will provide ideas for electoral reforms for future elections in Nigeria and in divided societies in general.

THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE 2011 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Dauda Abubakar

Dr Abubakar is Assistant Professor in the Department of African Studies &
Political Science, University of Michigan-Flint
email: dauda@umflint.edu

ABSTRACT

The electoral topography of the Nigerian postcolonial state reveals that contests for the control of power degenerate more often than not into elite-driven violence that undermines the nation-building and democratic projects. In interrogating the legal and constitutional context and the outcome of the 2011 election in Nigeria this paper draws on Foucault's notion of governmentality, along with the concept of garrison politics, to unpack the central role that techniques, practices and strategies of governmental power play in the domination of the social, economic and political space, to the detriment of the citizenry. I argue that although the 2011 election was regarded as relatively 'free and fair' its aftermath, nevertheless, reveals the way centralisation of power is recurrently deployed through neo-patrimonial networks to entrench elite pillage, which undermines the ethos of participatory democracy and constitutionalism. I contend that in order to avert corrosive decline and civic disengagement it is imperative to rethink and urgently reconstitute the institutional logic of the Nigerian state in such a manner that it will enhance the empowerment of the citizenry and the enthronement of a transparent, inclusive, developmentalist and responsive system of governance.

INTRODUCTION

Since Nigeria's inception as an independent political entity in 1960 elections in the country have, more often than not, been characterised by thuggery, rigging, violence, intimidation of opponents and the destruction of human lives and property. At national, regional and local levels elections have been dominated by the winner-takes-all syndrome, making politicians take all necessary measures to ensure that they do not lose out.

A closely related factor, which exacerbates political violence in Nigeria's electoral process, is the nature, logic and character of the post-colonial state. Unlike the situation in advanced democratic polities, where institutions of accountability and the rule of law are relatively entrenched in the political culture, in post-colonial states like Nigeria institutions of accountability and state apparatuses of power are flagrantly appropriated by the dominant elite to serve neo-patrimonial and clientelist interests rather than the broader public good.

Furthermore, since the state itself remains the primary source of wealth generation and rent seeking, the struggle to monopolise is usually contentious and violent, with destructive consequences for communal harmony, cohesion and nation building. Thus, instead of creating a situation in which the citizenry is mobilised and empowered to participate effectively and take ownership of the process of constitution making, Nigeria's neo-patrimonial elites – military and civilian – arrogate to themselves the responsibility to organise constituent assemblies and commissions that draft constitutions.

As a living document that defines power relations, rights and obligations within a sovereign state, a constitution also serves

... as a basis for controlling state power and involving the people in the political process, and should clearly articulate the aspirations of all communities and individuals in society. It must directly go to the heart of engaging not only those contentious issues that shape politics and power, but also those that shape the larger society, and breed distrust, tolerance and violence.

Ihonvbere 2000

An examination of the legal and constitutional framework of Nigeria's elections must, therefore, necessarily include a critical analysis of the nature of the Nigerian post-colonial state, the ways in which the dominant elite appropriates power and the erosion of the rule of law, which subverts the enthronement of a stable democracy in the postcolony (Mbembe 2001).

In examining the challenges of multiparty democracy and constitutionalism in Nigeria several pertinent questions arise: firstly, what are the structural and institutional impediments to the conduct of free, fair and legitimate elections in the country? Secondly, how does the authoritarian and neo-patrimonial configuration of state power in post-colonial Nigeria affect the process of constitution making? Thirdly, in what ways do elite predation and the criminalisation of federal power undermine the democratisation process? Fourthly, what are the implications of

the above for national coherence, political stability and nation building in the country?

In discussing these questions the article draws empirical examples from Nigeria's 2011 elections and related socio-political developments in the postcolony since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Reference will be made to the regime of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) as a historical backdrop, as well as to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) regime that conducted the 2011 elections, with a view to unravelling what links state power, the governmental appropriation of power resources, elections and the travails of constitutionalism.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first sketches a theoretical framework by drawing on the literature on Foucault's notion of governmentality and the practices of state power as deployed in Nigeria's political landscape of elections and battles for office. Foucault's admonition that 'he who governs must only govern to the extent that he thinks and acts ... in the service of those who are governed' (cited in Curtis 2002) underlines the essence of democracy and the practice of power. Section two examines critically the notion of garrison politics through a discussion of the Obasanjo regime and the ruling PDP and its effects on electoral process and state legitimacy.

I argue that the PDP coalition, which consists of elites drawn from all six geopolitical zones in the country, appropriates the resources of the state to ensure its stranglehold on the citizenry. Its pattern of governance through neo-patrimonialism and distribution of federal largesse to clients at national, state and local levels further deepens corruption and the intensification of political violence at the local level (Kendhammer 2010).

The third section returns to the subject of the 2011 elections, the legal and constitutional framework of the electoral process, the outcome of the election and the subsequent outbreak of violence, especially in the northern parts of the country. I argue in this section that the ethno-regional antecedents of Nigeria's political parties and the emergence of presidential flagbearers, Buhari, from the North, and Jonathan, from the South, deepened the zero-sum contestation for presidential power along an explosive fault line of religious faith. Furthermore, although the 2011 election was considered to have been relatively free and fair, the sudden outbreak of violence is a reminder that the dominant neo-patrimonial elites and their acolytes are yet to imbibe the crucial democratic ethos of accepting the outcome of an election.

Section four concludes with proposals for entrenching participatory democracy through credible and legitimate elections in Nigeria as a mechanism for averting ethno-religious violence and state decline.

STATE POWER, GOVERNMENTALITY AND CONSTITUTIONALISM: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In his seminal work analysing the technology of power and its utilisation by dominant elites to ensure hegemony in the field of political practice, Foucault draws our attention to the important concept of governmentality as a complex ensemble of procedures, practices, institutions, strategies and tactics through which authorities not only seek to define, guide and shape the conduct of the population but also set the agenda and decision-making processes within the polity to accomplish specific objectives (Lemke 2007; Jessop 2007).

For Foucault, an understanding of state power and its manifestations through government cannot be reduced to the juridico-political instance, rather, power must be conceptualised within the framework of '... government as strategic codification of power relations ...' (Jessop 2007). According to Foucault (2004b), power must be understood in the first instance:

... as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and that constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or, on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions that isolate them from each other; and, lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in various social hegemonies.

This perspective on the notion of state power draws our attention to the relevance of interrogating government policies such as elections and election administration, election observation, constitution drafting, inauguration, and so on, as techniques of power and the exercise of social and political domination. Another pertinent aspect of Foucault's conceptualisation of power is the notion of governmentality, which refers to

the ensemble constituted by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that permit the exercise of this quite specific, albeit very complex form of power, which has as its target, population; as its main form of knowledge, political economy; and, as its essential technical means, apparatus of security.

Foucault 2004a

The relevance of Foucault's analysis of power and governmentality to an understanding of the challenges of democratisation through elections and constitutional engineering in postcolonial contexts such as that of Nigeria is that it enables us to begin to understand why, for instance, the state deploys not only its police but also the army as apparatuses of power in the name of 'free and fair' elections.

It also enables us to begin to analyse aspects of the 1999 Constitution, which asserts, for example, in the preamble that 'We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation ...' This claim contradicts the historical reality of the origins of the Constitution, which was not a document into which a broad spectrum of Nigeria's populace had an input. Rather, it was primarily a document that was elite driven and crafted by the military as it exited power.

When and where did the more than 500 nationalities of Nigeria make the solemn declaration? Thus, Foucault's notion of power and governmentality enables one to decipher the strategies deployed by the elites to ensure domination within the new dispensation of civilian rule.

Election rigging in Nigeria takes place not just on election days, it starts with the statistical compilation of the voters' register. From a Foucauldian perspective the technique of counting, compiling, registering and organising the citizenry in a government-driven project reveals the way in which hegemonic power is deployed. The absence of a people-driven constitution certainly not only undermines the legitimacy of the democratic process but exacerbates cynicism, a lack of participation and disengagement from the nation-building project (Baker 1997).

Several scholars contend that between the 1980s and the 1990s, when the transition from one-party and military authoritarian regimes to multiparty democracy in Africa began, the failure of several countries to engage a broad spectrum of the citizenry in the process of crafting constitutions created disillusionment and, in some instances, violent conflict (Ihonvbere 2000; Ake 2003; Adejumobi 2000; Suberu 2007; Lewis 1994; Branch & Cheeseman 2008; Shivji 1991; Olukoshi & Agbu 1996).

This line of theorisation about Africa's democratisation insists that the process of constitution making is fundamental to the enthronement of participatory democracy and accountability in the exercise of state power in postcolonial Africa. Constitutions, as Ihonvbere (2000) contends, not only define the power, rights and obligations of the citizenry they also assert the sovereignty of the state and articulate the aspirations of all the communities and individuals in society. Drawing on the works of Shivji, Ihonvbere (2000) defines constitutionalism as:

a process for developing, presenting, adopting and utilizing a political compact that defines not only the power relations between political communities and constituencies, but also the rights, duties, and obligations of citizens ... Two elements are critical in the notion of Constitutionalism: first, the *process* dimension which includes constitution making and the extent to which it is popular, inclusive, participatory or process-led, and democratic; and second, the available openings, institutions and processes of making the constitution a *living* document by taking it to the people so that they are in a position not just to have access to it, but also to understand it, claim ownership and use it in the defense of the democratic enterprise.

The concept of constitutionalism, therefore, enables us to begin to interrogate Nigeria's democratic project along the following lines of inquiry: to what extent did the 1999 Constitution provide an inclusive platform for the participation and civic engagement of the citizenry? Why is there thuggery, violence and a rampant breakdown of law and order, especially during elections? To what extent does the Constitution strengthen the legitimacy of the state and entrench the rule of law? In what ways did the elite appropriate the process of constitution making in Nigeria and entrench its interests in the structures and institutions of state power? How does this undermine the democracy project?

In the next section, I turn to these questions by examining Nigeria's Fourth Republic, particularly focusing on the Obasanjo era (1999-2007) and the conduct of the 2011 elections that brought President Goodluck Jonathan to power. I argue that Obasanjo's military antecedents not only entrenched garrison strategies and mentalities in the conduct of electoral process (Omotola 2009; Figueroa 1994; 2002; Stone 1980; Suberu 2007) but also deepened neo-patrimonial practices in the distribution of federal largesse, thereby engendering the stability of the polity.

It is important to underline from the outset that my use of the notion of 'garrison' relies more on its initial conceptualisation by Laswell (1941), to describe a state 'which has undergone militarization, resulting in a society which is dominated by technocrats from the [civil and] military establishment, and which privileges militaristic culture and policy imperatives over others' (cited in Bernazzolli & Flint 2010).

The outbreak of violence after the 2011 elections reveals a deeply fractured Nigerian polity in which the majority of citizens live in penury, abject neglect and illiteracy while the dominant military and technocratic elite appropriates and siphons national wealth through primitive accumulation and launders it in Western financial institutions for its private gain.

It is in this context that Foucault's analytical framework of government and

its connections with the concept of state power, institutions, practices and garrison mentalities in the postcolony provides us with the conceptual tool for unpacking the dilemmas of Nigeria's democratisation and nation-building project. It is also within this framework that we can fruitfully interrogate the legal and constitutional parameters of elections in Nigeria since the return to civilian rule in 1999.

THE GARRISON MENTALITY AND THE TRAVAILS OF CONSTITUTIONALISM IN NIGERIA

Elections are an essential ingredient of democracy because they provide citizens with a means of participating not only in choosing their representatives but also in holding leaders accountable in the exercise of state power and practices. As Lindberg (2009) rightly contends, '...the inception of multiparty elections ... initiates liberalization, and repeated electoral activities create incentives for political actors, fostering the expansion and deepening of democratic values'. For Lindberg, as well as other scholars such as Bratton & Van de Walle (1997; 2007), Diamond (1999), Joseph (1997), Gyimah-Boadi (2004) and Adejumobi (2000), the return to democratic rule that swept across the African continent in the 1980-90s was marked by competitive multiparty elections that inaugurated the transition process.

While some of these elections indeed entrenched relatively stable democratic systems of governance in countries such as Ghana and South Africa, in Nigeria the return to civil rule has been characterised by a rising tide of ethno-religious violence, insecurity, intimidation of opposition parties, declaration of states of emergency by the federal government and the resurgence of terror-related violence, especially in Northern Nigeria.

The inauguration of the Obasanjo regime in May 1999 marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic. It was the 1999 Constitution, decreed by the departing military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, that provided the legal foundation of the Fourth Republic. Chapter 1 sub-sections 1-3 of the Constitution not only emphasise the supremacy of the Constitution but state that 'The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution.'

It goes further to assert that in cases of inconsistency with 'any other law' the provisions of 'this constitution shall prevail, and other law shall to the extent of the inconsistency be void' (Constitution 2011). Although these provisions clearly insist on the supremacy of the Constitution as the legal foundation of the rule of law in Nigeria's Fourth Republic there have been instances when its efficacy has been challenged by competing ethnic and religious groups.

For example, from late 1999 through 2000, 12 of the 19 northern states introduced Shari'a law, which raised communal tensions culminating in violence between Christians and Muslims, especially in Kaduna, Kano and Jos. Instead of asserting the supremacy of the Constitution, President Obasanjo and the attorney-general of the federation preferred to take a conciliatory tone, claiming that Shari'a was only a political agenda deployed by the northern elite to extract concessions from the centre.

While it may be true that the 12 northern governors who wished to implement Shari'a in their states had political agendas, especially in terms of gaining religious legitimacy with the predominantly Muslim constituencies, Obasanjo's failure to ensure the supremacy of the Constitution as stated in Chapter 1(3) only provided a means for the extremist groups that emerged from mid-2005 to challenge the secularity of the state.

The continuing violence unleashed by the Yussifiyya Movement (also known as Boko Haram) from 2009 to date represents a major challenge for constitutionalism and the rule of law in the country. At both federal and state levels the response of the regime to this challenge has been within the context of what can be described as a garrison mentality whereby troops are deployed to contain the violence but the outcome is more anarchy, insecurity, communal distrust and the destruction of human lives and property, especially in the north-eastern states of Borno and Yobe.

A nuanced interrogation of the complex dimensions of this crisis and its legal and constitutional implications for the stability and coherence of the Nigerian federation is beyond the confines of this paper. Suffice it to say that the Shari'a controversy, the post -2011 election violence and the Boko Haram challenge not only reveal the contradictions of constitutionalism in Nigeria's multicultural society but, even more importantly, indicate that the problem requires urgent attention.

In the absence of communal peace, security and civic trust, participatory democracy through open, transparent and accountable institutions for the conduct of elections cannot take root in a society. Instead, garrison mentalities and practices in the form of the militarisation of society (through the deployment of soldiers on election days or to maintain 'law and order'), thuggery, election rigging, sectarianism and the manipulation of ethno-religious identities for personal gain become entrenched in the state structures and society.

Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution focuses on the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. In s 14(2) the framers of Constitution state that:

- a) ... sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives its powers and

authority; (b) the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government; (c) the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provision of this Constitution.

These cogent directive principles and aspirations are, indeed, critical elements in the democratic process. In addition to entrusting sovereignty to the people the Constitution clearly articulates the primary responsibility of the government, which is the security and welfare of the citizenry and ensuring that the people participate in the affairs of governance.

One of the core elements of such participation is obviously through elections. The process of elections not only ensures that government derives its legitimacy from the people but, even more importantly, it underlines the norm of accountability, namely that in the exercise of its functions and powers the government, at all levels, must be accountable to the people.

Although Nigeria has had a plethora of constitutions – ten between 1922 and 1999 (1922, 1946, 1951, 1954, 1960, 1963, 1979, 1989, 1995 and 1999) – the struggle to ensure free and fair elections as well as the accountability of elected representatives to their constituents remains a major challenge. As Agbaje (2004) correctly observes, ‘much attention has gone into the making of constitutions, but little success has been achieved in ensuring that governments govern according to the constitution and that the rule of law is enforced in place of capricious governance’. The challenge, therefore, remains that ‘while Nigeria has produced many constitutions, it has yet to entrench constitutionalism’ (Agbaje 2004).

As a creature of the colonial project, and appropriated by the postcolonial elite for predatory pillage, the Nigerian state and its apparatuses remain ensconced on the one hand as instruments of violence against the citizenry and, on the other, a repressive structure for the extraction and plunder of the national wealth and resources.

In terms of aspirations for national integration and citizenship, s 15 (subss 2-3) of the 1999 Constitution states that ‘...national integration shall be actively encouraged, while discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited ...’ and that ‘it shall be the duty of the state to: (a) provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services through out the Federation; and (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation.’

Although these are genuine aspirations aimed at enhancing the integration of Nigeria’s diverse ethno-religious and linguistic groups into a coherent nation, the daunting challenges of ‘indigenes’ v ‘settlers’ has remained a major source of violent conflict in the federation.

Jos Plateau, in particular, has, for the past two decades, been a region of incessant identity driven conflicts between predominantly Christian indigenous groups such as Anaguta, Angas, Mwagavul and Birom and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani people who migrated to the region during the colonial epoch. The creation of the Jos-North Local Government Area Council under the Babangida regime raised the stakes significantly in the battle over the ownership of Jos township and, by implication, access to related economic resources such as land and state sponsored scholarships to universities as well as to traditional power.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, elections for the Jos-North local government have generated violent conflict between the indigenous groups and the Hausa-Fulani settlers. More often than not such conflict spreads to other parts of the state and takes on religious dimensions along Christian-Muslim fault lines, with devastating consequences for all the communities. For example, in 2004 a generalised violence arising from local government elections engulfed not only the Jos metropolitan area but also the southern part of the state around the Yelwa-Shendam axis, prompting President Obasanjo to declare a state of emergency after removing Governor Joshua Dariye.

Although Dariye was reinstated after the army restored some measure of peace in the Jos Plateau, the state continues to experience recurrent outbreaks of communal violence. While the 1999 Constitution clearly prohibits discrimination based on place of origin, religion or ethnic affiliation, the issue of citizenship, which is central to the democratic ethos of free participation in elections, is undermined by the failure of the federal government to articulate effectively a policy on residency and citizenship in Nigeria.

Consequently, elections in several parts of the country where there are migrant communities become the fulcrum for violent outbursts of communal conflict between indigenous groups and settlers, while political parties exploit these communal ethno-religious identities to secure electoral votes. Human Rights Watch estimated in 2007 that more than 11 000 people had died as a result of ethno-religious and political violence in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999.

These battles, in turn, further complicate communal relations and entrench violent conflict. Simply put, identity-driven conflicts over issues of citizenship and belonging further reveal how the dominant elite in Nigeria has appropriated identity differences as strategies for access to state power and resources.

Under the Obasanjo regime the 2003 and 2007 elections were characterised by open vote rigging, ballot box stuffing and snatching as well as the phenomenon of 'godfatherism', through which wealthy and influential oligarchs from specific ethnic or regional 'geo-political zones' in the country ensured that their preferred 'candidate' won the elections either at local, state or national level to enable them to gain access to power and largesse through patronage.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which is constitutionally mandated to conduct elections, is, unfortunately, beholden to the executive. The chairperson and the commissioners are appointed by the president and until recently the commission's budgetary allocation came from the presidency.

During the 2003 election, for example, the president did not release the necessary funds to INEC until '... just forty-eight hours before polling day' (Kew 2004). The attempt by President Obasanjo and the PDP leadership to tamper with the electoral law in 2001-2002 in favour of the incumbent government was thwarted by a Supreme Court ruling. This action and the legal wrangling over the electoral laws not only increased INEC's logistical constraints in conducting voter registration, more importantly, it made it virtually impossible to conduct the constitutionally mandatory triennial local government area (LGA) council election.

The president, along with the PDP leadership at the national level, '... arranged for the governors to appoint caretaker committees to run all local governments, [thereby] delaying LGA elections until 2004. In the interim, the governors packed the LGA Councils with their loyalists to ensure that they will get support when elections are held' (Kew 2004).

It is clear from the above that the presidency and the ruling PDP were more concerned with entrenching themselves in power than with the public good. By ensuring that local government councils are filled with their appointed loyalists at the state level, the ruling PDP, as well as the presidency, deployed public resources in the pursuit of private ends. Thus, under the Obasanjo presidency political power and institutions of the state were appropriated to ensure the hegemony of the dominant PDP not only at local but also at national level. The garrison mentalities of President Obasanjo's regime and the PDP leadership subverted the constitutional foundations of the Fourth Republic, thereby opening the floodgate for corruption, electoral malfeasance, political assassinations, ethno-religious violence and, subsequently, degeneration into brigandage and sectarianism.

Neo-patrimonial networks within traditional, ethnic, religious, regional and party structures became the mechanisms for the politics of 'cash-and-carry', in which the rule of law had no place. Furthermore, decades of military autocracy not only reinforced patronage and clientelism but, most importantly, exacerbated the looting of state resources at all levels of governance. In the words of Kew (2004):

... as the generals spread [the] largesse to their civilian allies, the civilians, too, extended or built extensive client networks across ethnic lines, diluting the ethnic element in the prebendal networks

and giving increasingly less of their plunder back to their home communities. These rich and powerful civilian allies of the military, and some of the military leaders themselves upon retirement, became [the] Big Men [or godfathers] – the driving force in Nigerian politics. They often maneuver within traditional ethnic and regional patterns, but increasingly they do so across the universal logic of financial realpolitik.

In the absence of free and fair elections based on the rule of law and constitutionalism, democracy in Nigeria runs the risk of being bastardised by a competitive oligarchy dominated by 'Big Men' with networks that cut across ethnic, regional, religious and gender lines. It is within this context that we can decipher the 2011 election and its violent aftermath. Although the post-election violence was primarily in Northern Nigeria, understanding its ramifications and implications for the polity requires a nuanced analysis that takes on board the broader national patterns of party alliances, affiliations and contestations for the plum office of president, which bestows enormous power and access to state resources.

THE 2011 ELECTIONS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

It is within the broader context of the 1999 Constitution; the decades of debate and wrangling over issues of Shari'a and its place in Nigeria's legal system; contestations and violent sectarian conflicts, especially in the Jos Plateau, over issues of citizenship, religious identities and belonging; INEC's financial dependence on the presidency; President Obasanjo's failed attempt to tamper with the Constitution and obtain a third term and the ascendance of PDP stalwarts – wealthy 'Big Men' and godfathers – that we can effectively understand the short-lived reign of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and the subsequent emergence of Goodluck Jonathan.

I argue that it is through a nuanced Foucauldian analytical framework of governmentality and Carl Stone's notion of garrison mentalities (Stone 1980), strategies, calculations, contestations and practices of power within and between different factions, fractions, and group alliances that we can decipher the calamities that followed the 2011 presidential election.

In his analysis of Jamaica's violent political ethos in the 1970s and 1980s Stone (1980) uses the concept of 'garrison politics' to describe the links among the urban landscape of government housing ('garrison phenomena'), homogeneous voting, electoral manipulation and violence against members of opposition parties. As Figueroa & Sives (2002) put it, the concept of a garrison represents '... a veritable fortress where the dominant party and/or its local agents/supporters are able

to exercise control over all significant political, economic and community related social activities’.

Garrison communities, which emerged around large government-sponsored housing schemes that were distributed along patronage networks in Jamaica, became lucrative platforms for mobilising votes and manipulating the outcome of elections. Opposition to the dominant party by an individual or group within a garrison community may lead to physical danger ‘... thus making continued residence in the area extremely difficult, if not impossible’ (Figueroa & Sives 2002). Thus, the garrison political and social space is not only characterised by patronage networks, electoral manipulation and distribution of largesse from the state, more importantly, it is also an autocratic and militaristic space where subjection of its members is paramount. Garrison mentalities revolve around issues of power, strategies of control and the extension of patronage networks for the purpose of exclusion by inclusion as well as turf politics in which competing parties seek to control their territory or extend it to other areas as part of the electoral strategy.

In Nigeria since the First Republic (1960-66) ethno-regional parties have dominated the political scene and entrenched their influence within their respective territories or garrisons. Regional governments in the north were dominated by the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), in the west by the Action Group (AG) and in the east by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). Each political party not only guarded its regional turf it ensured that opposition to the regional government or encroachment would not be tolerated.

Military rule, which lasted through most of the 1980s and 1990s, further reinforced patronage, corruption and the pillage of the national treasury. The oil boom of the 1970s provided the federal centre with enormous resources. The politics of state and local government became platforms for the redistribution of the oil largesse from the centre. Thus, following the return to civilian rule in 1999, the dominant parties that emerged, namely the PDP, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) were, to some extent, replicas of the regionally based parties of the first, second and third republics, with retired military generals and civilian technocrats who had enormous wealth to use to control the outcome of elections.

Regional, ethnic and religious identities remained entrenched as channels of communal social existence as well as mechanisms for patronage networks and prebendalism (Joseph 1987). As Obasanjo’s third-term agenda was thwarted he strongly supported the candidacy of Yar’Adua (the younger brother of General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua who was General Obasanjo’s chief of staff during the military era from 1976 to 1979). As Suberu (2007) put it,

Obasanjo’s endorsement of the ... frail Yar’Adua for PDP’s

nomination sidelined other aspirants, including several prominent governors. Thus, the PDP's December 2006 presidential primary not unlike the undemocratic primaries held by several of the country's forty nine parties, became a coronation for Yar'Adua rather than a democratic contestation.

Obasanjo set the tone for the 2007 presidential election campaign by describing it as a 'do-or-die' affair (Suberu 2007). The north thought power had returned to it through the discredited 2007 elections but President Yar'Adua died in office in May 2010 after a protracted illness, paving the way for the accession of the South-South minority's Goodluck Jonathan to the presidency.

It should be noted that during the Obasanjo era (1999-2007) some individuals who opposed the president's third-term agenda were subjected to a witch-hunt by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission while others were disqualified by INEC from standing for election. Opposition parties and candidates from the AC and ANPP were intimidated by the police or detained and their offices and campaign headquarters were ransacked.

Obasanjo's vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, who defected from the PDP to stand for the AC, was one of the casualties of this brazen and authoritarian garrison mentality. The 2011 election was, therefore, conducted in the shadow of the discredited 2007 election which had brought the image of Nigeria into disrepute in the international community.

During his inauguration Yar'Adua observed that the 2007 election had fallen short of even the minimum standards of democratic process and the rule of law. Thus, in 2008, he appointed a 22-member Electoral Review Committee (ERC) presided over by Justice Mohammadu Uwais. The primary mandate of this committee was to 'examine the entire electoral process with a view to ensuring that we raise the quality and standard of our general elections and thereby deepen our democracy' (EU 2011). In its report, delivered in December 2008, the Uwais committee observed that the quality and credibility of elections in Nigeria was affected by factors such as the weakness of the constitutional and legal framework, the lack of financial and institutional autonomy of INEC, the absence of intra-party democracy and the prevalence of impunity during and after elections.

According to the committee there was a fundamental link between the conduct of free, fair, credible and acceptable elections and the consolidation of democracy and the role of the citizenry in this process constitutes one of the core defining elements of democracy. As they put it, in a democracy,

... the role of the people is to produce a government and elections are the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions

in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people's votes. Elections are thus often perceived as a procedure for regulatory competition for political power through competition for votes. Within this conception, elections are fundamental building blocks for democracy. Failure to conduct credible and acceptable elections in a polity often generates outcomes that stunt the growth of democracy, on the one hand, and the development of the nation, on the other.

Electoral Reform Committee 2008

Among the committee's recommendations for improving the quality of the electoral process were that INEC be more autonomous and that an electoral offences commission, a political parties registration and regulatory commission and a constituency delimitation commission be established.

The legal instruments for the conduct of elections in Nigeria include the 1999 Constitution, the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended), the Criminal and Penal Code, the Police Act and the Guidelines for the Conduct of Police Officers on Electoral Duty. The Electoral Act of 2010 not only sets out the functions of INEC, it identifies the procedures for elections, the conduct of political rallies, electoral offences and procedures for the determination of electoral offences. For example, ss 117 and 118 describe an electoral offence as one including actions by an individual who '... without authority, destroys, mutilates, defaces or removes or makes any alteration in any notice or document required for the purpose of registration ...'; or a person who 'prints a ballot paper or what purports to be or is capable of being used as a ballot paper or result form at an election'. It also prescribes the penalties for such electoral offences. These include sentences of a maximum fine of N50-million or a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years, or both (Electoral Act 2010).

To ensure the probity of election officials s 123(5) of the Act stipulates that '[a]ny Returning Officer or Collation Officer who delivers or causes to be delivered a false certificate of return knowing same to be false, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum imprisonment for three years without an option of fine.'

But while the Act provided the enabling legal framework for the conduct of elections it made no provision for voters to file complaints about breaches of the law during polling, counting or the collation of election results. Furthermore, it did not specify deadlines or clear mechanisms for the publication of results, nor did it provide sufficient guarantees of and sanctions for the exclusion or inclusion of suspicious results during collation.

Nigeria's electoral management model, whereby INEC and related agencies at state and local levels are extensions of the executive branch of government,

certainly compromises their neutrality during elections. The shortcomings of the Electoral Act were some of the issue areas around which violence erupted in some parts of the country following the announcement of the 2011 presidential election results that brought Jonathan to power.

The elections, scheduled for April, included the presidential election as well as balloting for 26 governorship positions, 109 senatorial positions, 360 members of the House of Representatives and 990 legislators for 36 state houses of assembly (EU 2011). The major political parties that contested the elections include the PDP, whose presidential candidate was Goodluck Jonathan; the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), with Nuhu Ribadu as its flag bearer; the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who fielded Mohammadu Buhari, and the ANPP, with Ibrahim Shekarau as its candidate.

While all the candidates campaigned vigorously, the PDP, which had the advantage of incumbency, used state resources, especially the media, to boost its access to the electorate. The opposition parties, especially the CPC, criticised the PDP vigorously for its flagrant misuse of state power and resources to capture votes. In the end, the contest was essentially between Jonathan, a Southern Christian from a minority group, and the CPC's candidate, retired General Muhammadu Buhari, who is a Northern Muslim of Hausa-Fulani extraction.

The implication of this is that it literally coincided with Nigeria's ethno-religious and regional fault lines, which had, hitherto, been a source of acrimony and identity driven conflict in the country. The predominantly Islamic Northern State, which had earlier adopted Shari'a law as part of its legal system, saw the CPC and its candidate as representing their values, while the Christian South, along with minority groups in the Middle Belt, favoured the PDP and its candidate.

The statement by the Sultan of Sokoto on the eve of the elections, describing Jonathan as the 'son of the Sultanate' reveals the complexities of Nigeria's politics as well as the neo-patrimonial dimensions of power relations in the federation. Suffice to say that for the average northern Muslim who supported the CPC, the Sultan's statement may have been seen as a sacrilege; thus, the palace of the Sultan – though the highest source of Muslim authority in Nigeria – was attacked when the results of the election were announced. On 8 April a bomb exploded in the INEC office in Suleja, Niger State, killing 11 people and injuring another 30. The EU Report describes the ensuing violence thus:

After the Presidential elections on 18 April, violence erupted in the North and in the Middle Belt of the country including Kano, Kaduna, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa and Taraba States, probably triggered by the perception of the presidential results. Protesters burned places of religious worship, public buildings and the houses of politicians

from the ruling PDP, targeted INEC buildings and its personnel, including the National Youth Service Corps members serving as INEC ad hoc staff and in Bauchi State ten of them were killed in a gruesome manner ... Protesters clashed with the security forces. In total some hundreds of persons were murdered and tens of thousands were displaced. The authorities imposed a curfew in the affected States until heavy military presence restored order in the following days. In the afternoon of 21 April, INEC Chairman [Attahiru] Jega announced that due to the security situation, the gubernatorial elections in Bauchi and Kaduna States were postponed from 26 to 28 April.

EU 2011

The PDP candidate won 58.87% of the vote, his closest rival, from the CPC, won barely 31.97%, while ANPP and ACN candidates won 2.40% and 5.44% respectively. The latter two accepted the outcome of the election, but Buhari insisted the PDP had rigged the election, especially in the southern parts of the country, and decided to go to the courts for legal redress. Table 1 shows the results of the 2011 presidential election, while Tables 2 and 3 show those of the Senate and House of Representatives elections respectively. According to these data, of the 109 senatorial seats the PDP won the largest number – 71, the ACN 18, the ANPP 7 and the Labour Party 4, while minority parties such as the APGA and the DPP won 1 each. Similarly, in the House of Representative contests, the four dominant parties, namely the PDP, ACN, CPC and ANPP won 199, 69, 37 and 27 seats respectively.

Table 1
Presidential Election Results 2011

	ANC	ANPP	CPC	PDP	OTHER
North Central	6%	1%	31%	61%	1%
North East	2%	5%	58%	35%	2%
North West	10%	4%	53%	32%	1%
South East	1%	1%	–	98%	–
South-South	2%	–	1%	96%	1%
South West	30%	1%	5%	62%	2%
Total	5.44%	2.40%	31.97%	58.87%	1.32%

An important aspect of the presidential election result is the dominance of the PDP and CPC in their respective ethno-regional enclaves, from which their presidential candidates came. While the CPC had most of its electoral successes in the North, the PDP won most of its votes in the South. The post-election violence was primarily in the northern states because of the perception that the PDP had rigged the election in favour of Jonathan, who is from the South. The CPC and its supporters contended that the figures of 98% from the South-South zone and 96% from the South East were an indication of electoral fraud.

Table 2
Senatorial Election Results 2011

	ACN	NPP	APGA	CPC	DPP	LP	PDP	TOTAL
North Central	1	–	–	2	–	1	14	18
North East	–	4	–	–	–	–	14	18
North West	–	3	–	5	–	–	13	21
South East	1	–	1	–	–	–	13	15
South-South	2	–	–	–	1	–	16	19
South West	14	–	–	–	–	3	1	18
Total	18	7	1	7	1	4	71	109

Source: EU 2011

The data reveal that the PDP continued to exert its dominance in the Senate, winning 65.14% of the total seats, while its closest rival, the ACN, won only 16.51%, the CPC and ANPP 6.42% each, the LP 3.67% and the DPP and APGA 0.92% each. The PDP won several seats in the five geo-political zones but was defeated in the South West by the ACN, which won 14 senatorial seats. It is likely that the electorate in the South West was casting a protest vote against former President Obasanjo, who was critical of other Yoruba elder statesmen such as Bola Tinubu and the governor of Ondo state.

The House of Representative election results (see Table 3) show the PDP's dominance across the five geo-political zones, with the exception of South West, where the rival ACN clinched 53 seats in the lower house of the National Assembly. Another aspect of the results featured in Table 3 is that they show how smaller parties such as the ACN, APGA, ANPP and LP are primarily regional parties which may have consolidated their hold within the ethno-linguistic enclaves and thus avoided the dominance of the PDP or CPC.

Table 3
House of Representatives Election Results 2011

	ACCORD	ACN	ANPP	APGA	CPC	DPP	LP	PDP	PPN	Missing*
North Central	–	5	1	–	8	–	–	37	–	–
North East	–	2	12	–	7	–	–	27	–	–
North West	–	–	13	–	22	–	–	55	–	2
South East	–	1	1	6	–	–	–	31	–	3
South-South	1	8	–	–	–	2	–	43	–	1
South West	4	53	–	–	–	–	8	6	1	–
Total	5	69	27	6	37	2				6

Source: EU 2011

* Election results from constituencies were not presented at collation centres

According to Human Rights Watch (2011), by 2011 a total of 14 800 people had died as a result of inter-communal, political and sectarian violence in Nigeria in the 12 years since the return to democratic rule. Why should this be? Why have the governments at national, state and local levels failed in their primary responsibility to ensure the security of lives and property in the country?

Part of the explanation for the deterioration of peace and stability in postcolonial Nigeria may be located in the absence of transparent, effective, accountable and autonomous institutions of state that are able to ensure adherence to the rule of law and a democratic ethos. The appropriation and domination of the structures of the postcolonial state by the neo-patrimonial elite in Nigeria for the pillage of national wealth through predatory garrison politics undermines the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis society.

Thus, for the average Nigerian, the state and its apparatuses have failed in the primary task of social provisioning in areas such as employment, education, health services, infrastructure and, above all, enthrone a democratic space for the exercise of individual freedom and liberty through the electoral process. Thus, ethnic and religious identities have increasingly become the platforms

for political mobilisation, thereby exacerbating violent zero-sum battles during national elections.

CONCLUSION

In order to ensure peace, security, stability and socio-economic development within the framework of a democratic order, Nigerians and their leaders must rethink the imbalance in the federal structure, particularly in the allocation of resources. The Constitution should be amended to ensure a balanced distribution of national wealth.

Another important reform should relate to the electoral process. The current first-past-the-post system, with its winner-takes-all premise, exacerbates a zero-sum approach to political contests in which losing becomes a dreaded outcome that none of the actors wishes to accept. It is, therefore, imperative to incorporate a proportional representation system, particularly for elections to the House of Representatives, state houses of assembly and local government councils (Electoral Reform Report 2008). A mixed electoral system in a multicultural and multi-religious country such as Nigeria will not only deepen the inclusion of diverse groups in the decision-making centres of power, most importantly it will enhance the empowerment of society.

The current political framework, in which power is centralised and appropriated by the elites through corrupt elections and a garrison mentality and practices, undermines the enormous potential of citizens, leading to the type of communal and sectarian violence exemplified by the Jos Plateau crises and the Boko Haram carnage in the North. It is, therefore, imperative to devolve more power and resources to the local levels through democratic, inclusive, and transparent elections, so that citizens will become active participants and stakeholders in the nation-building project.

This necessarily implies that the open, accessible and inclusive institution of the rule of law and democratic participation are urgently required in Nigeria's search for political stability and communal harmony. The subversive elite-driven politics of brigandage through coercive deployment of apparatuses of state power in the service of personal gains must be abandoned in favour of a democratic system anchored in the ethos of constitutionalism and the empowerment of the citizenry and civil society.

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FEDERALISM, POWER SHARING AND THE 2011 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

Emmanuel Remi Aiyede

ABSTRACT

Power sharing has become a prominent feature of post-election conflict management practice in Africa in recent times. A study of the Nigerian experience provides useful lessons about the theory and practice of power sharing in a divided society with a federal system. Nigeria instituted the 'zoning with rotation' principle to shore up the affirmative action/federal character principle earlier devised to manage the inter-ethnic tensions that followed the crisis thrown up by the annulment of the presidential elections of 12 June 1993. This article examines the challenges and debates over power sharing in the build-up to the 2011 elections as a result of the entrance of Goodluck Jonathan (a southerner) into the presidential race, made possible by the death of President Umar Musa Yar'Adua (a northerner) in a clear upset of the power-sharing arrangement. It argues that while the 'zoning with rotation' principle remains useful for stability and representation in Nigeria its sustenance depends on its flexible application and the creativity of the elites as they negotiate and manage the power disequilibrium that results from perceived access or lack of access of segments of Nigerian society to top political office. The Nigerian case shows that the 'zoning with rotation' principle is problematic as a long-term solution because it constrains the notion of free political competition and the uncertain outcomes that are central to democracy.

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of the search for a solution to what Ayoade (1998, p 106) describes as 'representational equity' in Nigeria is the preference of the political elite for power sharing. Although this preference has underlined the series of federal innovations in Nigeria since independence, it has often been couched in the language of federalism. It is the crisis that followed the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election that eventually removed the veil from this preference.

The introduction of the notions of 'power shift' and 'zoning with rotation' became important organising principles of politics in the Fourth Republic. While a lot has been written about federal character as a form of affirmative action in

Nigeria, and its role in the electoral process has been recognised (Horowitz 1985), the notion of zoning, with an inherent principle of rotating public office, has not received serious intellectual attention. This is partly because the six geopolitical zones of North West, North East, North Central, South West, South-South and South East, which function as the framework for the allocation of the highest office in the land are not entrenched in the Constitution. Neither is the principle of rotation. Yet the use of federal character to provide the incentive for cross-ethnic mobilisation of votes and the resultant reward of moderate behaviour explicit in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions has been successful, largely due to the accompanying zoning and rotation principle.

The practice of 'zoning with rotation' came into its own in the democratic process in the Fourth Republic. Its salience was, however, challenged in the build-up to the 2011 general elections following the death of President Umar Musa Yar'Adua.

This article revisits the relationships among federalism, power-sharing and electoral systems as complementary frameworks of democratic governance. It examines the context, meaning and use of the 'zoning with rotation principle' as an important element of the democratic process in Nigeria and explores how it has functioned since the return to democratic rule in 1999, paying attention to the challenges it encountered as a result of the death of President Yar'Adua, a northerner, and his replacement by Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner.

It teases out the implications of the way in which the conflict over zoning was resolved for electoral competition and democracy in Nigeria and argues that zoning as an informal institution of power sharing effectively de-escalated the conflict that attended the annulled presidential election in 1993 and provided an effective framework for electoral competition afterwards. The zoning with rotation principle has, however, become problematic as a long-term principle of politics because it constrains the notions of free political competition and uncertain outcomes that are central to democracy.

The article suggests that the Nigerian case shows the important uses and limits of federalism with power sharing as a framework for political competition in a divided society. While zoning remains useful for stability and representation in Nigeria, its flexible application and the creativity of the elites is essential to success in dealing with the power disequilibrium that results from the perceived access or lack of access by segments of Nigerian society to top political office.

Given that power sharing has become a prominent feature of post-election conflict situations in Africa (especially in Liberia, Zimbabwe and Kenya) and elsewhere, a study of the Nigerian case provides useful lessons. In addition, it constitutes a valuable contribution to studies of power sharing that have been rekindled in post-conflict situations worldwide.

FEDERALISM, POWER SHARING AND ELECTORAL COMPETITION IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES

The discourse on federalism focuses on the constitutional structure of the exercise of political authority and distribution of power among two or more layers of government. According to King (1982, p 77), 'federalism is an institutional arrangement, taking the form of a sovereign state and distinguished from other forms of state solely by the fact that its central government incorporates regional units in its decision procedure on some constitutionally entrenched basis'. Thus federalism deals with the problem of inclusion and representation in two ways in divided societies.

Firstly, the existence of at least two layers of government enables various sub-groups or territories to share power with the centre. Each sub-government has constitutionally guaranteed powers, responsibilities and sets of institutions. It is a form of limited government in which the various levels of government operate within a framework of checks and balances.

Secondly, sub-national units are incorporated into the process of decision-making at the centre. This is done not just by intergovernmental interaction or negotiations but also by ensuring that federal institutions are filled with representatives drawn from the various sub-units by means either of appointment or elections. Thus, federalism can provide a framework for power sharing and may have a direct effect on assembly size and district magnitude and, indeed, on electoral competition. However, when elections are viewed as a means of forming and changing democratic governments peacefully the focus is usually on electoral rules and the accompanying electoral systems.

There has been less than adequate theorising about federalism's role in the management of electoral competition. This is partly because federalism and electoral rules are viewed as two distinct mechanisms for restricting simple majority rule in managing societal conflicts.

However, federalism and electoral rules are sometimes linked by institutions of power sharing. For instance, consociationalism, as espoused by Lijphart (1977, 2002), provides a way of promoting power sharing or limiting the power of majorities in divided societies by means of four structural features. These are grand coalition government between parties from different segments of society; segmental autonomy, which is often distinguished from federalism; proportionality in the voting system and in public sector employment and minority veto.

Lijphart (1977) acknowledges that some particular environments are particularly appropriate for consociational democracy. These conditions include a balance of power among the segments, a multiparty system with segmental

parties, some crosscutting cleavages, overarching loyalties, a representative party system, isolation of the segments from each other, and traditions of elite accommodation. Many of these conditions may be absent in many divided societies. Besides, a grand coalition does not apply effectively to a presidential system of government, where power is concentrated in a single office and segmental representation can only be achieved through rotation of the office.

To be sure, some scholars have suggested other forms of power-sharing arrangements that incorporate electoral systems with elements of power sharing in a federal and/or presidential system. Horowitz (1985), for instance, argues that democracy is possible in multi-ethnic states when government institutions are structured to encourage moderation and cooperation among different ethnic groups. This framework of centripetalism or integrative democracy provides institutions in which elected representatives have to work together before elections.

Such a network of institutions may include a presidential system and a semi-majoritarian electoral system which removes ethnic groups as organising principles of democracy and replaces them with a non-communal federal structure. Building on the work of Horowitz, Reilly (2001, p 11) emphasises three distinct element of centripetalism:

- the provision of electoral incentives for campaigning politicians to reach out to and attract votes from a range of ethnic groups other than their own;
- a bargaining arena, where political actors from different groups have an incentive to come together to negotiate and bargain in the search for cross-partisan and cross- ethnic vote-pooling deals;
- centrist, aggregative political parties or coalitions that seek multi-ethnic support.

The preoccupation with power sharing in relation to electoral systems is often focused on the conversion of votes to seats in Parliament and the way the various electoral systems affect electoral outcomes in terms of representation and inclusiveness. While parliamentary representation is important and provides a broader and more continuous access to power, for many ethnic or sub-national groupings in Africa, as elsewhere, the access to public office offered by permanent representation in Parliament does not seem to guarantee the group a sense of justice and security. The reason is that the arms of government are not perceived to provide an equal sense of belonging.

The difference in prestige between Parliament and the president, the presidency being the only single office that is elected directly by the whole

country, further enhances the prestige of that office.¹ Although there is a 'dual democratic legitimacy' of the two popularly elected independent organs there is a difference in prestige.

This is also the case to some extent in a parliamentary system where the prime minister is 'primus inter pares'. The visibility of the president or prime minister as the symbol of the nation makes access to that office symbolic of access to 'real power'. Indeed, the prominence of the executive arm as government in action and direct producer of public good, with the responsibility for actual disbursement of funds for these purposes and for patronage renders the executive offices more coveted and therefore election to those offices intensely competitive. That is why the outcome of presidential elections has been the basis for most post-election crises in Africa. In many of these post-election conflicts, power sharing, in which the incumbent retains dominance, has been the only way to avoid continued violence in the short term (Jarstad 2009).

While the intensity of electoral competition is often epitomised in elections to the office of president, in parliamentary systems the way the electoral system determines who becomes prime minister affects political mobilisation and inter-party relations. In divided societies the ethnic origin of the president takes on special significance because access to that office is the most important assurance of inclusiveness.

Federalisation of national office by means of constituency delineation enables virtually every significant segment of society to have representation in Parliament. However, guaranteeing access by every segment of society to the office of president where demographic and other advantages favour a particular segment of society perpetually, or unduly exercising a monopoly over that office remains a challenge.

How each ethnic group or section of the country will access that office is therefore an important aspect of the debate about the role of electoral system design in promoting inclusivity and representation in a divided society and this has been a major issue in Nigeria. While recent discussions of power sharing in Africa have focused on government performance and accountability, the maintenance of post-election peace and the implications for electoral competitiveness (Levan 2011; Jarstad 2009; Doorenspleet 2005), this article makes an empirical contribution to the debate about the nature of the links among federalism, power-sharing and electoral systems in a bid to ensure inclusive representation and channel inter-ethnic conflict into peaceful democratic competition in divided societies.

1 While this difference between the president and Parliament has been discussed in terms of political stability, there are no theories about its effect on the electoral system.

FEDERALISM AND POWER SHARING IN NIGERIA: THE ROAD TO ZONING WITH ROTATION

In the build-up to independence the Willink Commission was set up to look into the question of domination of minorities by majority ethnic groups in the various regions, and a Bill of Rights was subsequently entrenched in the independence Constitution. However, two years later the guarantee of human rights proved to be insufficient to protect minorities and the structure of the federation was adjusted with the creation of the Mid-Western region in 1963.

As it turned out, several states would later be created for the same purpose and to defuse the intense struggle for power that, between 1967 and 1970, deteriorated into civil war. In other words, apart from the problem of minority protection caused by the fear of majority domination in the regions there was a fear that one section of the country would dominate the rest because each of the three regions at independence was the homeland of one of the three dominant ethnic groups: Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo.

The Hausa/Fulani dominated the Northern Region, the Igbo the Eastern Region and the Yoruba the Western Region and the three groups were engaged in a fierce struggle for dominance of the country. Two elements of this struggle for dominance defined national politics in the First Republic and were reflected in the election crisis that created the environment for military intervention on 15 January 1966 and, ultimately, the descent into civil war.

The first element was that each of the three major political parties in the First Republic had strong base in one of the three regions and was thus ethnically based, a factor that led to fragile coalition governments. The second was that because the northern region was larger than the other two regions combined it was guaranteed the upper hand in democratic politics. It was always the major partner in any coalition and therefore became the dominant region and the most favoured in power-sharing arrangements, much to the distress of the other ethnic regions (Post & Vickers 1973; Dudley 1973; Osaghae 1998).

The Northern People's Congress (NPC), in search of partners from the other regions, did not hesitate to deploy the enormous resources under its control as the party in government to enhance its electoral fortunes in those regions and tended to precipitate crises, especially during the general elections of December 1964 and the western regional elections of October 1965.

The structural imbalances cited above not only affected the stability of the federation, they were deepened by the killings that attended the coup d'état of 15 January 1966, largely led by Igbo officers. Tafawa Balewa, the prime minister, a northerner; Ahmadu Bello, the premier of the Northern Region, and Ladoke Akintola, premier of the Western Region, were among the major casualties. In the

Eastern Region the coup plotters failed to carry out similar killings of political leaders, thereby raising the 'suspicion that the military were less "the trustees of the nation" than the instrument of the Igbo seeking to establish hegemony over peoples of Nigeria' (Panter-Brick 1970, p 26).

Although the coup was abortive, General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo officer, became head of state and failed to bring the coup plotters to trial. There was a counter-coup by northern troops on 29 July 1966, during which General Ironsi and about 200 Igbo officers were killed. A stalemate attended the counter-coup when the military governor of the Eastern Region refused to recognise the new central government. The counter-coup was followed by a pogrom against Igbo residents in the Northern Region and the country descended into civil war, with declaration of the state of Biafra (Panter-Brick 1970; Post & Vickers 1973; Dudley 1973; Osaghae 1998).

As part of the effort to prosecute the civil war and ensure Nigeria's territorial integrity the country was divided into 12 states, several of them created for minorities and splitting the major dominant ethnic groups into several units. Further measures were taken after the war to promote and extend power-sharing arrangements, especially when the country returned to civil rule in 1979. These measures included the further splitting of the country into 19 states and the stipulation in the 1979 Constitution of the observance of the federal character in appointments and election to public office, in the composition of the leadership of political parties and in the electoral formula. Indeed, the Constitution required a candidate to win not only the majority of YES votes over NO votes, he or she must record 'not less than one-quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two-thirds of all states in the federation and the Federal Capital Territory'. According to s 134, where no clear winner emerges a run-off election must be held between the two highest-performing candidates. These provisions did not, however, eliminate ethnically based parties in the Second Republic (1979-1983). This was largely due to the presence of two leading politicians from the First Republic, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, who led two major parties and continued to draw followers largely from their ethnic bases. The persistence of ethnically based parties ensured that there was no decisive dominance of any party under the presidential system adopted in 1979. The second general elections, in 1983, were riddled with malpractice and misuse of the federal control of the police and ultimately provoked the coup of 31 December 1983.

Prolonged military rule further deepened the fear that one section of the country, the north, would become dominant. The reason was that the military governments were dominated by men and officers of northern extraction. All post-war military heads of government, with the exception of General Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979), were officers from the north. Although the establishment by

General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) of a two-party system served to promote more national parties, the annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential election, won by chief Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a Yoruba from the South, reversed the gains achieved by that process. The revolt that attended the annulment was the deepest crisis to have faced the country since the civil war. At the National Constitutional Conference of 1994/1995 power sharing became a major issue of debate as a way out of the impasse.

Inaugurating the conference, General Sani Abacha urged it 'to devise for our people a system of government, guaranteeing equal opportunity; the right to aspire to any public office, irrespective of state of origin, ethnicity or creed, and thus engender a sense of belonging in all our citizens' (Federal Republic of Nigeria – FRN –1995, p 3). The conference committee on power-sharing declared that 'the problem of power-sharing had been responsible for much of the tensions, emotions, conflicts, stresses and strains in most countries ...' and emphasised the need to evolve a 'power-sharing formula' based on Nigeria's historical experience (FRN 1995, p 143).

Several ideas, among them a rotational presidency, multiple vice-presidents and the creation of six geopolitical zones to facilitate the process of rotation of the limited number of public offices, were canvassed at the conference. Some of these ideas were accepted, others were not. The issue of a rotational presidency, the most controversial of the options (the South insisted on it while northern delegates opposed it), was only resolved by a consensus committee. The consensus committee brokered a broad concept of power sharing that included the rotation of the presidency, rotation of executive heads of government at state and local government level, zoning of public posts and proportional representation at all levels of government, and the establishment of the federal character commission to 'monitor and enforce federal character application and proportional representation in all aspects of our national life' (FRN 1995, pp144.145).

The committee on the executive observed that 'the election of the Nation's Number One Citizen has been a major source of political crises and upheaval' and agreed that the presidency should rotate between the North and the South. In the same spirit, the office of governor would rotate among the three senatorial districts of a state while chairmanship of a local government would rotate among the three sections into which each local government would be divided by the state electoral commission (see also Agbaje 1998).

Although this rotation principle was written into the 1995 Constitution it failed to find its way into the 1999 Constitution. Nonetheless, the principle was accepted by all three parties registered to participate in the transition to civil rule programme of the Abdulsalam Abubakar military government (1998-1999). Each of the political parties nominated a southerner of Yoruba extraction as its

presidential candidate to underline the broad acceptance of 'power shift'. By 2002 the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) had reached a consensus that the presidency would go to the North after the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo. That agreement was to reassure Atiku Abubakar, then vice-president, and encourage him not to contest the PDP primaries against Obasanjo, who was making a bid for a second term.

The rotation and zoning principle was written into the party's constitution in 2009 (Akinbajo 2010). Article 7(2c) of the PDP constitution states that: 'In pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness, the party shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and public elective offices, and it shall be enforced by the appropriate executive committee at all levels.' Thus, since 1999, the broad acceptance of the rotation of vital public offices between the North and the South and among the six geopolitical zones and the allocation of appointed and elected offices in the same manner in the political parties and Parliament became the formula for realising the federal character principle stated in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions.

THE OPERATION OF THE ZONING WITH ROTATION PRINCIPLE UNDER THE OBASANJO AND YAR'ADUA GOVERNMENTS

During the first two terms of the Obasanjo government there was a fairly even distribution of the eight key national offices, to the extent that once the geopolitical zone of the president was determined the geopolitical origin of occupants of the other offices in the PDP and the government became, to an extent, predictable in terms of the available options. Table 1 contains a list of top national government and party offices, showing how they were distributed under the Obasanjo administration according to the six geopolitical zones.²

The president was from the south (South West), a concession granted after the 12 June crisis. The office of vice-president went to the North East, the office of Senate president to the South East and the offices of deputy speaker and secretary to the government of the federation to the South-South. The office of speaker of the House of Representative went to the North West, while those of deputy senate president and party chairman went to the North Central zone.

There was a slight change during the second term, when the office of deputy speaker moved from the South-South to the North East. Chibudom Nwuche and Ghali Umar N'Abba were not re-elected for the 2003-2007 National Assembly session. In all, the North and South each had four slots.

2 The offices included in the list are the eight top political offices often listed for distribution by the party and discussed in the media.

The slight change in 2003-2007 led to a 3:5 ratio. The change was accounted for by the movement of the position of deputy speaker. The salience of the allocation system is in the fact that although several senate presidents were impeached during that period they were never replaced by their deputies. Instead, replacements were drawn from the South East, to which that office has been allocated. The same applied in the case of the speaker of the House and party chairman.

Table 1
Zoning of key offices under President Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999-2007

Office	Name	Geopolitical zone	Remark
President	Olusegun Obasanjo	South West	1999-2007
Vice-president	Abubakar Atiku	North East	1999-2007
President of Senate	Evan Ewerem Chiba Okadigbo Ayim Pius Ayim Adolphus Wabara Ken Nnamani	South East	The first three were in office consecutively from 1999-2003. The remaining two were in office consecutively from 2003 to 2007
Speaker of the House	Salisu Buari Ghali Umar N'abba Ahmed Bello Masari	North West	The first two were in office between 1999 and 2003. Masari occupied the office from 2003 to 2007
Deputy president of Senate	Ibrahim Mantu	North Central	1999-2007
Deputy speaker	Chibudom Nwuche Babangida Nguoroje	South-South North East	1999-2003 2003-2007
Secretary to the government of the federation	Ufot Ekaette	South-South	2003-2007
Party chairman	Solomon Lar Barnabas Gemade Audu Ogbe Ahmadu Ali	North Central	1998-1999 1999-2001 2001-2005 2005-2008

During the tenure of President Yar'Adua (see Table 2) the presidency went to the north (North West). The office of vice-president was allocated to the South-South. The North Central got the office of senate president, while that of the Speaker of the House went to the South West. The office of Deputy Senate President and Party Chairman went to the South East. Similarly, when the speaker was impeached, the replacement was taken from the South West. The ratio of distribution between the north and south was even.

Table 2
Zoning of key offices under President Umar Musa Yar'Adua

Office	Name	Geopolitical zone	
President	Umar Musa Yar'Adua	North West	2007-2010
Vice-president	Goodluck Jonathan	South-South	2007-2010
President of Senate	David Mark	North Central	2007-2011
Speaker of the House of Representatives	Patricia Ette Dimeji Bankole	South West South West	June -2007 2007-2011
Deputy president of Senate	Ike Ekwerenmadu	South East	2007-2011
Deputy speaker of the House of Representatives	Usman Bayero Nafawa	North East	2007-2011
Secretary to the government of the federation	Baba Gana Kingibe Yayale Ahmed	North East North East	2007-2009 2009-2010
Party chairman	Vincent Ogbulafor OkwesiliezeNwodo	South East	2008-2010 June 17 2010

Thus, the PDP's zoning with rotation power-sharing principle appeared settled and augmented the federal character principle that had been in place since 1999, which covers a broader field of distribution. However, when Yar'Adua's illness became severe and it was clear that he was not going to complete his four-year term, there was palpable fear that this balance would be upset. This was because, unlike in the case of impeachment by the National Assembly, where it is easy to

replace the officers with people from the allocated zone, the Constitution provides that the vice-president should act as president where the president is unable to perform his functions. In this case, the president not only went to Saudi Arabia without formally handing over to the vice-president, certain members of the his 'kitchen Cabinet', with the support of his wife, kept his ill health secret.

President Yar'Adua was away for more than 80 days without giving due notice to the National Assembly and, unknown to the vice-president, was subsequently ferried into the country under cover of night and taken, with military support, from the airport to the presidential villa. This created a major stir in the polity until the National Assembly, submitting to pressure from civil society and with the support of the Governors' Forum, empowered the vice-president to act as president, drawing on what it called the 'doctrine of necessity'.

This was only achieved after three major decisions were reached to address the fear of the North that if Goodluck Jonathan became the substantive president he would not relinquish the position in 2011 to enable the North to complete the eight-year term to which it was entitled under the party's rotational presidency arrangement. The three decisions were:

- that the PDP's presidential candidate for 2011 would come from the North;
- that Goodluck Jonathan should become acting president;
- that preparations for the 2011 party primaries should begin immediately.

Agbo 2010, p 27

In time President Yar'Adua died and Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as president in terms of the Constitution, putting the entire rotational arrangement in disarray and resulting in the fate of the power-sharing principle becoming the major issue in the build-up to the 2011 general elections.

ZONING DEBACLE

The controversy over Yar'Adua's successor in 2011 took on a sinister dimension when former President Olusegun Obasanjo, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the PDP, denied, in an interview with the Voice of America, that there was any zoning arrangement. Although Jonathan had not formally declared his intention to stand for president in 2011 when Obasanjo made the statement it was interpreted as an encouragement to him to do so.

Obasanjo's statement was contradicted by Vincent Ogbulafor (South East), then party chairman of the PDP, who stated that power must remain in the North

until 2015, and former Senate president Ken Nnamani told *Newswatch* that s 7(2)(c) of the party's constitution recognised zoning and rotation.

As the controversy raged, Acting President Jonathan expressed no commitment to run. However, in an interview with CNN he maintained that he was not barred by any law from standing and said he was committed to ensuring a free and credible election in 2011. Subsequent efforts to effect changes in the leadership of the PDP were interpreted as a sign that Jonathan was working to take control of the party in order to clear the way for his emergence as a strong candidate in the PDP primaries.

Ogbulafor was accused of corruption, arrested and taken to court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and 19 members of the PDP Reform Forum, led by former senate president Ken Nnamani (South East), who claimed to be working to promote democracy within the party, were suspended. Ogbulafor was eventually removed and replaced as party chairman by Ekwesilieze Nwodo, who immediately declared that zoning had only been used as a clear and firm principle in the party in 1999.

During that period Abubakar Rimi (North West), who had opposed the principle and applied to contest the presidential primary of the party, was prevented from doing so. Apart from this incident, said Nwodo, the party had not prevented or excluded any member from vying for any position, regardless of the person's zone of origin. The 1999 primaries had been contested by Obasanjo (South West) and former vice-president Alex Ekwueme (South East), who came from different zones in the South, even though the office was said to have been zoned for the South West. In 2003 Obasanjo had stood in the presidential primary against aspirants from the North West and North Central. The primaries in 2007 involved a contest among several aspirants from various zones (Onabanjo 2010, pp 21-22).

As these changes in the party continued, supporters of Goodluck Jonathan's candidacy in 2011 continued to mobilise public support by making statements and placing advertorials in national dailies. They made a concerted effort to reach out to northern politicians (especially the minorities of the North Central and the North East zones) to support their campaign. In the event, a variety of interpretations of s7 (2)(c) of the PDP's constitution emerged. There were arguments and negotiations that led to the peaceful conduct of the PDP primaries.

The arguments and their proponents

The Northern Summit Group (NSG), led by Solomon Lar, one of the founding fathers of the PDP and its first national chairman, was the major supporter of Jonathan's candidacy. This group accepted zoning as the party's power-sharing

formula but maintained that the zoning policy was not a permanent arrangement, merely a formula used to stabilise the country in 1999.

According to Lar:

It was agreed that zoning should be adopted and the presidency conceded to the South, the South-West in particular, considering the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the feelings of the people of that part of the country at the time ... it was not a permanent issue ... the PDP is to determine whether to continue with it or not.

Okocha & Shiklam 2010

Similarly, Barnabas Gemade (North Central), former national chairman of the PDP, argued that:

zoning was meant to serve the necessities of a particular time ... the basis for zoning no longer exists, since access to the office of president can no longer be viewed as a preserve of a particular region as it was viewed following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections.

Okocha & Shiklam 2010

To Samuel Ortom (North Central), former PDP national auditor, the zoning policy was not a rigid arrangement and the provision did not prevent Jonathan from contesting the election. The NSG therefore urged the leadership of the PDP 'to allow the supremacy of the Nigerian constitution to guide the conduct and the guidelines and regulations for the presidential primaries to elect our presidential candidate' (Okocha & Shiklam 2010).

Atiku Abubakar (North East), former vice-president, a major advocate of the zoning arrangement, argued that the arrangement was settled and that if Jonathan decided to seek re-election it might lead to political instability in the country. His position was strengthened by the Northern Political Leaders Forum (NPLF) led by Adamu Chiroma, a former minister of finance, who insisted that a northerner must replace Jonathan in 2011 to complete the North's term in 2015. The NPLF issued a communiqué declaring that the North had contrived the zoning arrangement to facilitate southern access to the presidency and that the North was not pleased by the strident calls on Jonathan to contest the presidential election.

The group began a process of producing a northern consensus candidate who would defeat Jonathan in the PDP primaries. It shortlisted three northern presidential aspirants: Ibrahim Babangida, former military president; Atiku Abubakar, former vice-president and Aliyu Gusau, former chief security adviser

to the president, and eventually declared Abubakar to be the North's consensus candidates for the primaries on 23 November 2010 (Adisa, Ibrahim & Usigbe 2010, p 1). The group declared that the retention of the PDP zoning arrangement would guarantee the stability of the country and provide the assurance that all ethnic groups, including minorities, would have a fair share of power. The NPLF argued further that no section of the national Constitution outlawed zoning and rotation (Okocha & Shiklam 2010, p 1).

As a result of disagreements over a common position for the North on the issue a vote was taken by the Northern Governors' Forum at its meeting in Kaduna on 27 July 2010, even though some of the governors represented the opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP). Seven of the 17 governors in attendance at the meeting voted against zoning.

On 26 July 2010, at a Stakeholders' Forum, leaders of the South-South declared that Jonathan should contest the 2011 presidential poll. They emphasised

the incontrovertible position of the Nigerian Constitution that gives full rights to President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, above all other considerations, to aspire to the position of president at the 2011 elections, more so as the zone, in spite of its enormous contributions to Nigeria's GDP, is yet to produce a President or Head of State in the 50 years of Nigeria's existence as a sovereign nation.

The News, 10 May 2010

The SSF therefore called on 'all other geopolitical zones, organisations, communities and constituencies to support this quest to deepen, widen and consolidate democracy by supporting Goodluck Jonathan for President' (*The News*, 10 May 2010).

Other arguments against zoning included the view that it is an undemocratic formula that promotes mediocre performance by elected persons, entrenches ethnic consciousness, and creates a situation that makes it impossible for public office to be occupied by the best, regardless of his or her geo-ethnic origin. Opponents believed the provision in the PDP constitution for zoning must be subordinated to the 1999 Constitution, which affirms the right of all citizens to stand as candidates for public office.

In an editorial on the subject *Tell* magazine (2010), which had earlier advised Jonathan not to stand, argued that

a beneficiary has the tendency to give allegiance to his zone, instead of looking at the country as his constituency. As a matter of fact most

proponents of zoning lead the campaign because they expect that it will attract undeserved advantages and privileges to their area ... since the zoning system had not served the nation well why stick to it?

In a decision, made on 12 August 2010, the National Executive Committee of the PDP declared that President Jonathan had the constitutional right to run for president. The chairman of the party, Okwesilieze Nwodo, however, insisted that the party had not abandoned the zoning principle.

The misconception, accusations that PDP has abandoned zoning, is very far from the truth. When our president emerged, he chose a northern Muslim as his vice president; when the chairman resigned, he was replaced by another chairman from the South Eastern zone. Our Senate president, speaker, deputy senate president and deputy speaker are from different zones of the country.

Leadership, 13 August 2010, p 1

At a ceremony in Abuja on 18 September 2010 President Jonathan declared his intention to run and was immediately endorsed by 28 state governors of the PDP, including 15 of the 19 governors from the North (Oyebode 2010, p 8; Adisa, Muogbo, Samuel, Usigbe & Alao 2010, p 4). The PDP's presidential primary was eventually held on 13 January 2011 at the Eagle Square, with three candidates standing: the northern consensus candidate, Atiku Abubakar; a female aspirant, Sarah Jubril, and Goodluck Jonathan. Jonathan won in the six geopolitical zones and the Federal Capital Territory. He also defeated Atiku Abubakar in 32 states, including Atiku's home state of Adamawa (see Table 3).

The poll proved to a large extent that there were no northern consensus candidates and that the PDP was strong enough to withstand the challenges that followed the disruption of the zoning principle by the demise of President Yar'Adua. Goodluck Jonathan proceeded with his campaign and eventually contested and won the presidential election.

The election, which was described by observers as an improvement on previous elections, was contested by 17 candidates. Of these, three were considered frontrunners. They were Mohammadu Buhari (Congress for Progressive Change – CPC), North West; Nuhu Rhibadu (Action Congress of Nigeria – ACN), North East, and Goodluck Jonathan (PDP), South-South. Jonathan won in five of the six states in the South West, all five states in the South East, all six states in the South-South, none of the six states in the North West, two of the six states in the North East and five of the six states in the North Central – a total of 23 states. He also won in the Federal Capital Territory.

Table 3
Results of the PDP Presidential Primary 2010

Zone	Jonathan	Atiku	Jibril	Total
SW	483	24	0	507
SE	423	23	0	446
S-S	615	9	0	624
NW	422	365	0	787
NE	301	155	0	456
NC	356	172	1	529
FCT	24	3	0	27
Total state delegates	2624	751	1	3376
Number of states won	32	5	0	36
Announced	2736	805	1	3542
Needed to win	1802			

Source: *Nigerian Tribune*, 14 January 2011, p 1

The total vote for Jonathan was 22 495 187 (58.89%), while Buhari won 12 214 853 (31.98%) and Ribadu 2 079 151 (5.41%). Jonathan won the majority vote and 25% of the votes in at least 31 states of the federation, complying with s 134 of the 1999 Constitution, which requires the president to win the majority vote and 25% of the votes in at least 24 states (see table 4).

Table 4
Jonathan's Performance in the 2011 Presidential Election

States	Majority vote	25%	Zone	No of registered voters
Lagos	Yes	Yes	South West	14 296 163
Ogun	Yes	Yes		
Oyo	Yes	Yes		
Osun	No	Yes		
Ondo	Yes	Yes		
Ekiti	Yes	Yes		

States	Majority vote	25%	Zone	No of registered voters
Kaduna	Yes	Yes	North West	19 803 689
Katsina	No	No		
Kano	No	No		
Kebbi	No	Yes		
Sokoto	No	Yes		
Jigawa	No	Yes		
Zamfara	No	No		
Cross River	Yes	Yes	South-South	9 474 427
Delta	Yes	Yes		
Rivers	Yes	Yes		
Bayelsa	Yes	Yes		
Akwa Ibom	Yes	Yes		
Edo	Yes	Yes		
Abia	Yes	Yes	South East	7 577 212
Enugu	Yes	Yes		
Anambra	Yes	Yes		
Imo	Yes	Yes		
Ebonyi	Yes	Yes		
Adamawa	Yes	Yes	North East	10 749 059
Bauchi	No	No		
Borno	No	No		
Gombe	No	Yes		
Taraba	Yes	Yes		
Yobe	No	No		
Kwara	Yes	Yes	North Central	10 684 017
Kogi	Yes	Yes		
Nasarawa	Yes	Yes		
Benue	Yes	Yes		
Plateau	Yes	Yes		
Niger	No	No		
Abuja	Yes	Yes	FCT	

Source: Table created by author, with figures provided by INEC

The announcement of the outcome of the election was greeted with violence in Kano, Kaduna, Borno, Yobe, Gombe and Niger states, in which Jonathan had not won the majority vote. The violence led to the postponement of gubernatorial elections in those states by two weeks.

With the election of the president and the imminence of the inauguration of the National Assembly, the PDP decided to review the zoning formula. According to the new formula adopted by the party's enlarged National Caucus on 2 May 2011, the Senate presidency was zoned for the North Central, signalling the re-emergence of Senator David Mark as senate president, the speaker of the House was given to the South West – Muraina Ajibola (PDP, Oyo) was endorsed by the party. The position of party chairman was allocated to the North East zone, while the office of secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) was zoned for the South East. The South East also got the position of deputy senate president, while North East got the office of deputy speaker. The office of president has gone to the South-South zone, while the North West has the position of vice-president.

However, the new allocations were opposed by individuals and groups within the party. Those dissenting emphasised the need to observe several criteria beyond the need for geographical balance. These included the need to recognise the place of seniority in the National Assembly, a criterion on which the election of the leadership of Parliament is based. Another is the need to promote free choice by Parliament in place of party imposition of individuals, as there were diverse preferences regarding the selection of candidates.

Thirdly, there was the question of regional contribution to the party's performance in the polls. The South East felt that, in view of its contribution to the party's success in the polls, it should be rewarded with the position of speaker of the House of Representatives rather than the office of secretary to the Government of the Federation, which one member of the party described as 'a mere tea server in the federal Cabinet'. Lastly, there were those, especially from the northern zones, who completely discounted the zoning arrangement, arguing for the superiority of merit or for the zoning arrangements to be ignored in the case of the presidential primary (Ifoh 2011).

The dissention proved to be significant when, contrary to the zoning formula provided by the party, members of the House of Representatives elected Ibrahim Aminu Tambuwal (North West) and Emeka Nkem Ihedioha (South East) as speaker and deputy speaker respectively. The party leadership initially issued a statement rejecting Tambuwal as speaker, but it had to approach its members in the National Assembly to redress the imbalance with the allocation of other positions in a manner that would ameliorate the imbalance arising from disregarding the zoning principle. Consequently, the South-South was allocated the majority leader's positions in the Senate and House of Representatives, the North East

got the Senate chief whip position and the South West the House's chief whip position. Similar allocations were made in respect of the chairmen of the standing committees of the National Assembly (Olatunji, Segun, Adisa & Ajayi 2011).

The zoning arrangement for the eight top positions in government is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Zoning under Goodluck Jonathan's Presidency

Office	Name	Geopolitical zone	
President	Goodluck Jonathan	South-South	2011 to date
Vice-president	Namadi Sambo	North West	2011 to date
President of the Senate	David Mark	North Central	2011 to date
Speaker of the House of Representatives	Ibrahim Aminu Tambuwal	North West	2011 to date
Deputy president of the Senate	Ike Ekweremadu	South East	2011 to date
Deputy speaker of the House of Representatives	Emeka Nkem Ihedioha	South East	2011 to date
Secretary to the Government of the Federation	Ayim Pius Ayim	South East	2011 to date
Party chairman	Mohammed Bello Abubakar Baraje	North West North West	2010-2011 28 July 2011-24 March 2012
	Bamangar Tukur	North East	24 March 2012-date

Thus, the current situation does not favour the South West and the North East zones. This is partly because of the disregard for the zoning formula and partly because of the poor performance of the PDP in the South West zone in the 2011 election. Before the election the South West was interested in the office of Senate president but most of the senate seats were won by the ACN and the Labour Party. Similarly, the North East was affected by the rule of seniority, which made it unacceptable for Mohammed Danjuma Goje, put forward by the zone, for the office of Senate president. These imbalances were corrected when Bamanga Tukur, from the North East, became party chairman and Olagunsoye Oyinlola,

from the South West, became national secretary of the PDP on 24 March 2012 at the party's national convention.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has adopted a complex power-sharing arrangement in which elements of power sharing straddle federalism and electoral systems in order to guarantee broad representation, cross regional collaboration in the appeal for votes and, particularly, to ensure that all segments of society feel they have guaranteed access to the number one position in government.

This framework could be defined as federal character and zoning with rotation. While power-sharing principles have evolved since the 1960s, the federal character principle was introduced in 1979 and the zoning with rotation principle emerged out of the post-12 June 1993 presidential election annulment negotiations. The power-sharing arrangement was essentially responsible for stability in Nigeria in spite of the poor conduct of electoral administration between 1999 and 2007.

It was, however, upset by the death of President Yar'Adua and the interest of Goodluck Jonathan, his vice-president, in standing for the presidency before a president from the North had completed two four-year terms, as set out by the power-sharing principle. The fact that the PDP presidential primary and the presidential election did not end in grave political polarisation shows that the power-sharing arrangement is flexible enough to blunt the sharp North-South divide, reflecting the capacity of the Nigerian system to manage electoral competition. This has been made possible partly by the creativity of politicians, the long experience of cross ethnic and cross regional interaction promoted by the federal framework, as reflected in party organisation and the electoral formula and the zoning with rotation principle that has liberalised access to the office of president by means of 'power shift'.

Previous state reorganisation, as Suberu (2010) has observed, has transformed the arenas that groups and parties can dominate as springboards to power, thereby promoting greater proportionality in the relationship between ethnic group size and electoral strength. The national spread required by the electoral formula has also promoted the inter-ethnic alignments and coalitions that facilitated moderate behaviour in the conflict over the entrance of Goodluck Jonathan to the presidential race. This was shown in the constant effort to adjust the zoning arrangements and in the voting pattern revealed by the results of the 2011 presidential election. However, the debates and controversies that dogged the choice of candidate and the violence that greeted his victory show that the power-sharing zoning with rotation principle remains a problematic formula in the effort to transform democracy into a system of limited or provisional victories.

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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND VOTER TURNOUT IN NIGERIA'S 2011 ELECTIONS

J Shola Omotola & Gbenga Aiyedogbon

J Shola Omotola is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Public
Administration, Redeemer's University, Ogun State, Nigeria

email: sholaomotola@yahoo.com

Gbenga Aiyedogbon is Programme Officer, Governance Renaissance
Movement (GRM), Kwara State, Nigeria

email: gbemihigh@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This article explores political participation as one of the most important indicators of the democratic quality of elections and a prime criterion for defining democratic citizenship. It places specific emphasis on voter turnout as the most important form of political participation, but also as an important indicator of the state of health of any democracy, old or new, consolidated or in transition, where high voter turnout is usually associated with a healthy democracy. More specifically, the article explores voter turnout in Nigeria's 2011 general elections and the factors underlying the turnout. Following brief theoretical postulations on political participation and the history of voter turnout in Nigeria, the article analyses the turnout in 2011, reflecting on its underlying forces and spatial dimensions. It also covers generally discernible trends and notable variations across geopolitical zones. Overall, the growing deployment and influence of the social media, the electoral reform process, which boosted public trust in electoral institutions and processes, President Jonathan's oft-repeated assurances to the local and international community that he would not interfere in the electoral process, the active engagement of civil society, violence before and during elections, the north-south divide over the rotational presidency and zoning all had an impact on turnout. The findings have important policy implications for improving turnout in future elections.

INTRODUCTION

Elections have generally been acknowledged as a cardinal pillar of a democratic political system (Bratton 1998; Schedler 2002; Diamond 2008; Lindberg 2009a,

2009b, 2009c; Omotola 2010a). This is particularly the case where elections satisfy acceptable democratic standards, or, better still, what Lindberg (2004, 2006) calls the 'democratic qualities of elections', namely competition, participation and legitimacy. Elections that fall short of these standards can only serve to undermine the consolidation of democracy.

This article focuses on political participation as one of the important indicators of the democratic quality of elections. In addition, political participation is considered a prime criterion for defining democratic citizenship and the role of citizens in the political process (Dalton 2006). However, given that political participation is, in itself, multifaceted, including, among other things, membership of a political party, involvement in political campaigns, contributions to political debates, funding political activities, contesting elections, this article places specific emphasis on voter turnout.

Apart from its qualification as the most important form of political participation, voter turnout has also been seen as an important indicator of the state of health of any democracy, old or new, consolidated or in transition, where a high turnout is usually associated with a healthy democracy and a low one with an unhealthy one (Kuenzi & Lambright 2007; Freitag 2010). More specifically, the article explores voter turnout in Nigeria's 2011 general elections and the factors underlying it.

Without any doubt, this is a daunting challenge. How do we, for example, measure the level and quality of participation, using voter turnout as the core indicator? Moreover, in a country characterised by a high degree of pluralism, where ethno-regional-cum-ethnic and religious identities often take centre stage in matters of national significance, including presidential elections, in what ways, if any, do such forces of identity influence the spatial distribution of voter turnout?

This is a question that relates to the *autonomy* of citizens 'in being sufficiently informed about government to exercise a participatory role' (Dalton 2006, p 2) without undue external influence. While the comparative literature suggests some measures, critical questions abound, especially in elections characterised by fraud and violence, where results are frequently contested by opposition parties and, in a few cases, altered or annulled altogether by the election tribunal/court.

The situation is worse in cases where voter registers, upon which voting and the computation of voter turnout are predicated, are far from accurate. Such incidents were a recurring characteristic of Nigeria's elections between 1999 and 2007 (Omotola 2010a). It is important that we engage with this largely neglected aspect of Nigeria's elections to ascertain the form and character of participation. This is the main focus of this article.

The first section theorises about political participation as a cardinal pillar of

democracy, focusing on voter turnout as its most crucial indicator. The second historicises the turnout in Nigeria's elections before 2011. This is followed by the analytical fulcrum of the article – voter turnout in the 2011 election. This section also reflects on the spatial dimensions of turnout, accounting for discernible trends generally and notable variations across geopolitical zones. The last substantive section synthesises the findings and reflects on the policy implications for improved political participation in the country.

PARTICIPATION AS A CARDINAL PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

Political participation, which has attracted considerable academic interests (Pateman 1970; Nelson 1979, 1976; Booth & Seligson 1978; Verba & Nie 1972; Huntington & Nelson 1976; Conge 1988) is one of the oldest concepts in the comparative study of politics. Yet it remains an essentially contested concept, with a variety of definitions on parade, each of which is either *too general* or *too narrow*. Conge (1988) made a comprehensive study of some of these definitions to underscore this limitation, as well as the typology of arguments over the meaning of the concept.

A few examples of such definitions will suffice. Verba & Nie (1972, pp 2-3) define political participation as behaviour designed to affect the choice of governmental personnel and/or policies. For Kaase & Marsh (1972, p 42), political participation entails 'all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system'. In a more expanded version, Nelson (1979, p 8) defines political participation as an 'action of private citizens intended to influence the actions or the composition of national or local government'.

In yet another attempt to expand the definition, Booth & Seligson (1978, p 6) define political participation as 'behaviour influencing or attempting to influence the distribution of public goods', including security of lives and property and infrastructural and social amenities such as roads, schools, health centres and other services provided by the government.

From these definitions Conge (1988) moved on to identify the broad categories of debate about the meaning of political participation. These were:

- Active versus passive form: should political participation be defined only in terms of action – voting, campaigning for a political party – or should it include passive forms – a feeling of patriotism, an awareness of political issues?
- Aggressive versus non-aggressive behaviour: should a definition of political participation embrace civil disobedience and political violence or should it be limited to more 'conventional' activities?

- Structural versus non-structural objects: should efforts to change or maintain the form of government be included in a definition of political participation or should the definition be limited to changing or maintaining government authorities and/or their decisions?
- Governmental versus non-governmental aims: should political participation be limited to behaviour directed towards government authorities, policies and/or institutions or should it include phenomena outside the realm of government?
- Mobilised versus voluntary action: should behaviour sponsored and guided by the government to enhance its welfare be called political participation or should the term be confined to behaviour initiated by citizens in pursuit of their interests?
- Intended versus unintended outcomes: should behaviour that has an unintended consequence for a government be defined as political participation?

These are salient but contentious issues that cannot easily be disregarded when discussing political participation. Consequently, and guided by the dual requirements of *generality and precision*, Conge (1988, p 147) offers what he considers to be a more nuanced definition of political participation that is neither too general nor too narrow: 'individual or collective action at the national or local level that supports or opposes state structures, authorities, and/or decisions regarding allocation of public goods ... the action can be verbal or written ... violent or non-violent ... can be of any intensity'.

Although a useful definition, this does not lay to rest the debate about the constitutive elements of political participation. For example, should such actions be mobilised or voluntary, violent or not, and so on? While the debate will probably remain with us for years to come (and we will not pursue it in this article), some salient points should be noted for their relevance and application to this study.

The first and most basic is the fact that political participation essentially embraces mechanisms through which the public can express their preferences in relation to public affairs. The second, although it is applicable to a broad category of activities, is that elections seem the most basic and salient activity through which allocation of public goods can be influenced. It is in this connection that voting in elections is considered to be the most important form of political participation.

Voter turnout has been identified in the extant literature as one of the core ways of measuring the level of participation in any election (Blais & Dobrzynska 1998). Voter turnout is usually measured as a percentage of registered voters who vote. The assumption is that the higher the level of voter turnout, the higher the level of participation and, by extension, the greater the democratic quality

of the election (see Lindberg 2004, 2006; Altman & Perez-Linan 2002, Lijphart 1997). As Bratton (1999, p 570) bluntly puts it, 'voter registration was revealed as the single most important determinant not only of a citizen's behavior but also of overall participation, outweighing any other institutional, cultural, or social consideration'.

Other major studies support the claim that declining voter turnout is a reflection of the poverty of democracy (Berg-Schlosser & Kersting 2003; Cornwall 2002; Young 2000). What factors, then, explain the voting behaviour of the electorate, including turnout? Again, the extant literature has shown that voting behaviour is largely a function of institutional, cultural and socio-economic factors (see Budge & Farlie 1977). For some, the social group theorists, the forces of identity such as class, religion, and urban-rural residency, among others, go a long way to influencing voting behaviour (Driskell, Embry & Lyon 2008). For instance, individuals with higher levels of education and income (socio-economic status) are more likely to participate than those with lower levels.

For others, party identification is the crucial element. The main assumptions of this theory include the existence of a truly democratic order, where most voters feel a lifetime attachment to a party due to family socialisation, and the more a voter is attached to a party, the more likely he or she is to turn out to vote. The reference to family socialisation simply underscores the argument that early political experiences shape political behaviour (Franklin 2004). As stated elsewhere, 'voting behavior is, in part, a gradually acquired habit' (Plutzer 2002, p 42; Meredith 2009, p 188).

There is also the rational choice theory, which emphasises the effort to maximise political gains. According to this theory, if voters feel their vote may not produce the desired outcome, they may opt not to vote. Here, the core determinants are the issues or party programmes which come closest to the democratic aspirations of the voter. Making an informed decision in such a situation requires that voters have access to adequate and appropriate information.

With reference to voter turnout, theoretical explanations with practical applications have been advanced, which also draw on an institutional paradigm. Some have emphasised the salience of electoral systems, with the proposition that proportional representation results in a higher voter turnout than electoral systems like the simple plurality model (Ladner & Milner 1999; Milner & Ladner 2006; Freitag 2010). This assumption has been tested and largely validated. For instance, Milner & Ladner (2006), in their comprehensive study of turnout in Swiss municipal elections, found a positive relationship between proportional representation elections and voter turnout.

In another fascinating study, on voter turnout in Africa, Kuenzi and Lambright (2007) found that the electoral formula has a significant effect. But

this is not always the case, as Freitag (2010) found that cultural factors were more important than institutional factors in Swiss sub-national parliamentary elections, which he himself admitted might not be the case at national and international levels.

Another institutional factor that has been identified as a possible influence on voter turnout is the nature of electoral reform. The argument here is that electoral reform that promotes voter confidence in electoral institutions, processes and outcomes can engender a high level of turnout, and vice versa (Omotola 2011a; Schaffer 2002). The turnout will be higher if political parties and candidates are able to take advantage of electoral reforms for effective mobilisation. If not, the reforms may have only a marginal effect on turnout (Stein, Owens and Leighley 2002). There is also a geographical/spatial dimension to the debate. Here, the concern is with distance and accessibility (Gimpel & Schuknecht 2003; Squire, Wolfinger & Glass 1987). If voting centres are close and easily accessible there is the likelihood of higher voter turnout, and vice versa.

However, these enabling factors are seldom present, which is why there is increasing talk of declining voter turnout in both developed and developing democracies (see Gray & Caul 2000). This is not unconnected with a number of factors, notably declining levels of public trust in electoral institutions, which casts doubt on the usefulness of a vote in terms of its power to determine an electoral outcome. The relative weakness and fragmentation that tend to characterise opposition parties, as well as troubling issues of electoral violence and corruption, have also been identified as contributing to declining levels of voter turnout (Lindberg 2009b; Omotola 2011a). Where is Nigeria located within these theoretical expositions?

AN OVERVIEW OF VOTER TURNOUT IN NIGERIA

The year 1959 represented an important landmark in Nigeria's electoral history. That was the year the first general election was held – on 12 December – preparatory to the attainment of political independence in October 1960. A total of 9 043 404 voters was registered, of whom 7 189 797 (79.5%) voted (Kurfi 1983, p 174, quoted in Olaniyi 2008, p 105). This turnout, which can be regarded as impressive, has been explained as a result of 'social and political pressures as well as administrative action by the regional governments and local authorities which exhorted the voters to go to the polls' (Post 1963, quoted in Olaniyi 2008, p 105).

Although the regions took administrative action to promote voter turnout, their efforts yielded different level of success. For instance, while Lagos, then Federal Capital Territory, recorded a 76.2 % turnout, the northern, eastern and

western regions recorded 89.4%, 75.3% and 71.2 %, respectively (Ojiako 1981, p 76).

Table 1
Voter Turnout in Nigeria, 1959-2007

Elections	Registered voters	Turnout	Percentage
1959 General election	9 043 404	7 189 797	79.50
1979 Presidential election	48 633 782	16 846 633	34.00
1979 Senate election	48 633 782	12 532 195	25.80
1979 Representatives election	48 633 782	14 941 782	30.70
1983 Presidential election	65 304 818	25 430 096	38.00
1983 Senate election	65 300 000	Na	Na
1983 Representatives election	65 300 000	Na	Na
1992 Senate election	36 923 571	14 716 074	39.00
1992 Representatives election	36 923 571	15 329 670	41.00
1993 Presidential election	37 826 460	14 321 963	37.00
1999 Presidential election	57 838 945	30 280 052	52.30
1999 Senate election	57 938 945	24 386 427	42.11
1999 Representatives election	57 938 945	23 573 407	40.70
2003 Presidential election	60 823 022	42 018 735	69.10
2003 Senate election	60 823 022	29 995 171	49.30
2003 Representatives election	60 823 022	30 386 270	50.00
2007 Presidential election	61 567 036	35 397 517 valid votes	About 58.00

Source: Compiled by the author from various sources, including: 'Elections in Nigeria', African Elections Database, available at: africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html; 'Presidential Elections, 1999-2011 in Figures', *Vanguard*, 23 April 2011, available at: www.vanguardngr.com/2011/04/presidential-elections-1999-2011-in-figures/; Olaniyi 2008, p 110; Nwosu 2008, pp 296-298, 326

However, as is evident from Table 1, since the 1959 general election voter turnout has been less impressive for a number of reasons. For example, all stages of the 1979 elections were characterised by low voter turnout, with 34% of voters voting in the presidential election, 28.8% in the Senate and 30.7% in the House of Representative s elections. This was the lowest turnout in Nigeria's elections to date. This development may not be unconnected to the fact that the 1964 general

election, which was the last before the first military interregnum between 1966 and 1979, was characterised by massive thuggery, violence and boycotts. Indeed, the result was largely inconclusive and contributed to the military coup of 1966 (see Ojiako 1981; Osaghae 1998).

This bad experience may have raised doubts in the minds of many voters about the democratic and developmental qualities of elections generally and their votes in particular. Moreover, the 13 years of military rule also meant that Nigerians had been out of tune with electoral politics over the period, thereby being denied the requisite experience that could have come with regular and periodic elections. In a related argument, Dudley (1982, p 200) underscores the salience of experience in shaping voting behaviour and how the lack of it, given that 1979 was the first time the voting age was lowered to 18, accounted for the low voter turnout.

Although there was a marginal increase in the 1983 elections the turnout was still very low. In the presidential elections, for example, only 25 430 096 of the 65 304 818 registered voters cast their votes, which amounts to 38%. On the one hand one may be tempted to attribute the marginal increase in turnout to the experience acquired in the 1979 election, in line with the logic of the argument that experience influences voting behaviour. On the other, it is possible to place critical question marks against the reliability of the data, given that the election was characterised by massive corruption and unprecedented violence, especially in the South Western states of Ondo and Oyo, which played a major role in the eventual collapse of the Second Republic (see Osaghae 1998; Babarinsa 2002; Joseph 1987).

The second coming of the military, on 31 December 1983, lasted longer than expected – until May 1999. The 1992/93 and 1999 elections, held during the transition period, occupy important positions in the annals of Nigeria's electoral history. While the former was considered, arguably though, the freest and fairest ever held in the country (Omoruyi 1993; Nwosu 2008), the latter eventually placed Nigeria on the path of democracy after 16 years of uninterrupted military rule.

The turnout for the Senate elections of 1992 was 39% and for the House of Representatives 41%. For the presidential election of 1993 it was 37%. The low turnout can be explained by the high level of inconsistency and apparently endless transition programme under the Babangida regime (Diamond, Kirk-Green & Oyediran 1997; Omotola 2008), which tended to reduce the level of public trust in the transition.

In the 1999 elections, however, there was some improvement in turnout, though it was still generally poor – 52.3% for the presidential election, 42.11% for the Senate and 40.7% for the House of Representatives elections. The increase in turnout was partly due to the desperation of Nigerians to get the military out of

power after years of its misadventures in governance (Omotola 2004). However, the generally low level of turnout can be explained by the perception of the military as an institution incapable of instituting genuine democracy, given, especially, the betrayal of the past in the light of the 12 June 1993 experience. Some have also blamed the alliance between the then Action for Democracy (AD) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in the presidential election. The argument was that many supporters of these parties who did not subscribe to the idea of the alliance decided to abstain (Olaniyi 2008).

In 2003 the turnout for the presidential election was 69.1%, for the Senate election 49.3% and for the House of Representatives election 50%. These figures seem high when assessed against the background of the undue militarisation of the electoral process, which scared many potential voters away (Ajayi 2006; Omotola 2004). A probable explanation of the high turnout for the presidential election was the fact that it was contested by 20 of the 30 registered political parties. One reason given for the comparatively high turnout is that the electorate had confidence in the electoral body that conducted the election and that many voters wanted to associate with the ruling party (Olaniyi 2008, p 109). Another plausible explanation may be that this was a second election, which many consider central to the process of consolidation (see, eg, Bratton 1998). Yet, the election was administered by a civil regime, unlike the 1999 transitional election, which was held under a military regime.

The 2007 election has generally been considered to be the worst in Nigeria's electoral history (Omotola 2009; 2010a; 2007; Adebayo & Omotola 2007; Suberu 2007; JAE 2007; Odion-Akhaine 2009). A total of 35 397 517 valid votes was cast and the turnout was put at about 58% of the 61 567 036 registered voters. Nigerians had reasons to participate enthusiastically in the voting process – above all else, the 2007 elections were watershed elections – it was the first time a democratically elected civilian administration would successfully complete the constitutionally prescribed two terms in office, conduct elections and hand over to another civilian administration.

In a related vein, since this was the third election in the series, many more Nigerians should have been acquainted with the electoral process. However, the 'do-or-die' nature of the elections and the fact that the results were controversial and contested, coupled with the discrepancies and distortions associated with the voters' register and the undue militarisation of the process, are sufficient reason to doubt the validity of the ascribed turnout.

From the data above it is evident that voter turnout in Nigerian elections has generally been poor. While there is a specific explanation for the level of turnout recorded in each election, as shown in the preceding analyses, a common thread can be found in the nature of the democratisation process, including the inherent

weaknesses of its institutional foundation, especially the electoral law (Aiyede 2007), the election management body, namely the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Agbaje & Adejumobi 2006; Omotola 2010a), political parties and associated problems such as electoral corruption and violence, as well as poor levels of political education and mobilisation (Omotola 2010b).

VOTER TURNOUT IN THE 2011 ELECTIONS

April 2011 was a critical month for Nigeria's democratisation process. During that month Nigerians went to the polls for both executive and parliamentary elections at both federal and state levels. There is now an emerging body of knowledge about the elections, most of which tends to eulogise them as the best administered of those held under the Fourth Republic (Egwu 2011; Gberie 2011; Akhaine 2011).

Egwu (2011) was particularly celebratory, declaring that the election signified 'a farewell to electoral authoritarianism' in Nigeria. While the focus here is not to debate the validity or otherwise of such claims, and granted that the elections had the trappings of a marked improvement on previous ones, especially if one relies for one's information on the reports of local and international monitors, it is important to note that they were far from meeting accepted democratic standards.¹ One of the main reasons for this is the low level of voter turnout, especially its spatial dimension. Available data, as shown in Table 2, reveal that the turnout hovers around 50%.

Specifically, of the 73 528 040 registered voters, 39 469 484 (53.7%) voted in the presidential election on 16 April.²

Table 2
Turnout for the 2011 Elections

Elections	Registered voters	Turnout	Percentage
Presidential	73 528 040	39 469 484	53.70
Senate	73 528 040	Na	About 50
House of Representatives	73 528 040	Na	About 50

1 One of these authors, J Shola Omotola, holds a dissenting view and is currently putting his thoughts together in a piece tentatively titled 'Nigeria's 2011 Elections: A Dissenting View', being prepared for *African Affairs*.

2 Turnout data for the Senate and House of Representative elections are not easy to compute for a number of reasons, most notably the manner in which INEC released the results on a senatorial and constituency basis without showing the overall total of votes cast.

As noted above, turnout is the most important indicator of popular participation in an election and, by extension, of the legitimacy of government. While an average level of participation of 53.7% may not necessarily be poor, especially in the light of a global recession in voter turnout or, rather, an increase in voter apathy, one would have expected a higher turnout in the 2011 election for a number of reasons.

Firstly, following the discredited elections of 2007 a process of electoral reform was initiated with the setting up of an electoral reform committee headed by retired Justice Muhammed Uwais, which climaxed with the appointment as INEC chairman of Professor Attahiru Jega, a widely acclaimed political scientist with a reputation for great integrity. There were other independence-enhancing outcomes, notably the granting of financial autonomy to INEC and the amendment of the electoral law and relevant constitutional provisions to give effect to the reform measures (see Omotola 2011a). These measures, among others, were expected to restore public confidence in electoral institutions and processes. Consequently, popular enthusiasm and participation in the process should have surged.

Secondly, the 2011 elections were heavily influenced by social media, particularly mobile phones, Facebook and Twitter. Virtually all the main presidential aspirants exploited these new media for political marketing and mobilisation. Even legislative candidates at the federal and state levels created and serviced online avenues to market their programmes and mobilise potential voters.

In addition, the dominant political parties, among them the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) waged elaborate and well-funded political campaigns. Goodluck Jonathan's presidential campaign was notable for its 'Neighbour-to-Neighbour' (N2N) strategy, through which he reached out to most, if not all, registered voters. To sum up, the level of mobilisation was unprecedented.

This, coupled with the efforts of civil society organisations through voter education and mobilisation, should have resulted in a higher turnout. But, for various reasons, this was not to be. One is that prior to the elections the political atmosphere was tense because of President Yar'Adua's health crisis, the undue politicisation of his absence from duty and the prolonged refusal to make Goodluck Jonathan acting president, as is constitutionally required.

The eventual swearing in of Jonathan, following the death of Yar'Adua, and Jonathan's decision to contest the presidential election, set the tone of that election (Omotola 2011b). Essentially, it animated, more than ever before, the debate about zoning and about rotating the presidency between the North and the South, which had become of prime importance within the PDP since 1999 (Kendhammer 2010).

The inability of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, former vice-president under Obasanjo, and the ACN's presidential candidate in the 2007 election, to clinch the PDP nomination for the North was interpreted by the North as a kind of betrayal and only served to complicate matters. The attendant deep polarisation along ethno-regional lines, apart from generating its own tensions, including low voter turnout, also underlined the spatial pattern of voting. Worse still, the elections were characterised by excessive violence before, during and after, a development that does not augur well for voter turnout. As Amnesty International (2011) reported, hundreds of people were killed in 'politically motivated, communal and sectarian violence across Nigeria ahead of presidential and parliamentary polls'.

But the turnout was not uniformly low – an unprecedentedly high number of people voted in the South East and the South-South. The two leading opposition parties, the ACN and the CPC, for example, complained bitterly about what they called magic numbers. According to the ACN:³

... An analysis of the results put out by INEC itself has shown a troubling pattern of clear manipulation. Everywhere the PDP perceived it was strong, it came out with incredibly high numbers of voters in its favour. Conversely, anywhere the opposition was perceived to be strong, the opposition's margin of victory was unreasonably low.

Osun Defender, 21 April 2011; *Daily Trust* 2011

In trying to substantiate the allegation, the ACN gave the following examples:⁴

In the South-South and South-East, where President Jonathan is believed to have strong support, the average turnout was 67% each of registered voters, compared to 32% for the South-West where he is believed to have a strong opposition. In the North-West and North-East, which is considered a bastion of opposition in the north, the average turnout of registered voters was 54%.

And whereas high voter turnout was recorded in states perceived to be sympathetic to President Jonathan in the different geopolitical zones (Bayelsa in South-South 85%, Imo in South-East 84%, and Plateau in North-Central 62%), the opposite was the case for areas where the opposition, was believed to be strong. Even in

3 These allegations constitute the bases of petitions by the CPC against Jonathan's presidential victory, which are yet to be finalised by the electoral tribunal.

4 The same source and data have been used in a previous work (see Omotola 2011a). See also Gberie 2011.

Katsina, Buhari's hometown, the turnout was a paltry 52%! Ditto for Kano (53%); Sokoto (40%) and Zamfara (51%).

It is also instructive that even though Edo state is in the South-South, the turnout was only 37%, apparently because the state was not believed – by the figure cooks – to be sympathetic to President Jonathan, being controlled by the ACN. The turnout figures for the South-West are also revealing: Lagos (31.8%); Ogun (28%); Osun (39%) and Oyo (33%).

Also, while the margin of victory for the PDP in the South-South is 98% and for the South-East 98.9%, the highest margin of victory for the CPC in the North-West, where Buhari comes from, is 55.8%.

This pattern of voting speaks volumes, not only about the probable inflation of voter turnout, but also its geographical lopsidedness. If the candidacy of Jonathan, an Ijaw man from the oil-rich Niger Delta, could be taken as a plausible reason for the massive turnout in the South-South it can be argued that the presence of three presidential candidates from the North, namely General Muhammadu Buhari of the CPC, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu of the ACN and Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau of the ANPP, should have produced a similar level of turnout in the region. This did not happen.

The high turnout in the South East, which has none of the most viable presidential aspirants, measured largely by the strength of their political platforms, appears much more difficult to explain. It is, however, possible to argue about the positive impact Jonathan's bold claim to an Igbo name – Azikiwe – may have had on the psyche of the average Igbo voter. As appealing as these factors may sound, coupled with the fact that geopolitical considerations have been known to influence voting behaviour in Nigeria (Olaniyi 2004), they are not an adequate explanation of the disproportionate spatial pattern of turnout.

Be that as it may, it is useful to underscore two important points that could have contributed to the skewed geopolitical pattern of turnout. The first was the crisis that rocked the presidency in the wake of the Yar'Adua health crisis. The way Jonathan was treated by the 'cabal', especially the refusal to make him acting president, thereby creating a presidential vacuum for some time, generated a reasonable level of public sympathy and support for him.

Secondly, and closely related to this, is the fact that as an Ijaw man from Nigeria's oil enclave, the Niger Delta, a region that has hitherto been on the margins of politics in the country, it is only natural that he would receive support from the entire region.

It is not clear how the politics of issues, that is, considerations based on salient issues raised by aspirants/parties, for example, relating to the economy, affected voter turnout generally and geopolitically. While Jonathan predicated his campaign on 'transformation' and the experiences of his deprived childhood

and upbringing, his message was national and not restricted to the South-South and South East. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the two regions were more open than others to the transformational message because of the developmental challenges confronting them and therefore they would benefit most from the transformation agenda. If so, the expectation of an assured future for the deprived should have resonated better in the North, where the level of child deprivation would appear to be higher. This was not the case.

Despite notable reservations expressed in election petitions and suits, the sanctity of the 2011 elections results has finally been established with the determination of the presidential election cases by the Supreme Court. The import of this is that the election results, including the spatial distribution, were, after all, correct. Yet it is instructive to note that in most cases the outcome of election petitions was largely determined by technicalities rather than available evidence. This was the case with the contested presidential election.⁵

CONCLUSION

This article has engaged with the important issue of turnout in Nigerian elections as a cardinal pillar of political participation. The analysis reveals that voter turnout since 1999 has generally been low, hovering around 50% or slightly below. The reasons for this tend to vary from one election to another. However, there are common factors that cut across the various elections. These include ethno-regional considerations, the level of trust in electoral institutions and processes at any point in time, the disposition of the government (ruling party) towards free and fair elections, campaign issues, the level of political education and mobilisation, voting experience, and so on.

With specific reference to the 2011 elections, however, while these factors generally apply, several other important elements played crucial roles. Among these were the growing deployment and influence of the social media; the electoral reform process, which boosted public trust in electoral institutions and processes, and President Jonathan's oft-repeated assurances to the local and international community that he would not interfere in the electoral process. The turnout would have been higher but for the level of violence that preceded the elections, as well as that on election days.

There were also unprecedented, significant spatial variations in the level of turnout in the 2011 presidential election, which were not replicated in other elections. As shown in the analysis, turnouts were higher in the South-South

5 For the Supreme Court judgement, see Ndujihe, Nnochiri & Akinrefon 2011 and for reactions, see *Leadership*, 28 December 2011. Available at: allafrica.com/stories/201112290166.html

and the South East than in other geopolitical zones of the country, leading to unsubstantiated allegations that the results were deliberately falsified in favour of the incumbent, President Jonathan. The spatial variations in voter turnout have been explained in terms of various factors, including the politics of succession in the wake of Yar'Adua's health crisis and eventual death, the phenomenon of *Jonathanism* which grew out of popular sympathy over the shoddy treatment meted out to him while the crisis lasted, and Jonathan's background as an Ijaw man from the Niger delta, which had never had the opportunity to taste the presidency, despite being the region that lays the golden egg for Nigeria.

The 2011 elections showed that there is room for improvement in voter turnout. To attain this, certain steps are desirable.

Firstly, there is a need to build on the gains of the electoral reform process, thereby improving the level of public trust in electoral institutions and processes. This requires revisiting the Uwais report to restore salient recommendations that have thus far been jettisoned. A most notable aspect here is the unbundling of INEC to create specialised agencies for specialised activities, such as special election courts to try election offences.

Secondly, it is possible to make voting a condition for accessing some benefits. After all, rights are, ordinarily, corollaries of duties. Some state governments in the South West experimented during the 2011 elections, making voting a condition for remuneration, and it worked.

Thirdly, the importance of political education and mobilisation cannot be overemphasised. Political parties and civil society organisations should take advantage of the electoral reform process at all stages to facilitate a voter-friendly environment. These bodies, together with the election management body, should embark on a sustainable process of political education and mobilisation of the populace. Finally, given the effect of the social/new media on the 2011 elections, it is important to consolidate the gains by promoting an enabling environment for the expansion of their applicability. Making information and communication technology part of the academic curriculum at all levels of education could be the starting point. Then the question of affordability is also crucial, which boils down to good governance of the economy at all levels to enhance the standard of living for Nigeria's people.

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GENDER POLITICS AND THE 2011 ELECTIONS

Antonia Taiye Okoosi-Simbine

Dr Okoosi-Simbine is Research Professor at the Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research, (NISER), Ibadan
email: tsombe98@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of the results of the 2011 elections by gender and offers an explanation for the trends noted. It observes that since the 2011 elections there has been a slight fall in the number of women in elected positions. Nigeria is still a long way from meeting the international standard of 35% representation for women. Factors accounting for the situation include structural issues of religion and culture, women's lack of access to funds, godfatherism in the political parties and the undemocratic disposition of party leaders, political and electoral violence and vote buying. Arguing that increased participation of women will improve the quality of decision-making by enriching the harvest of ideas to inform policy, it maintains that the poor participation of women in politics casts doubts on Nigeria's democratic credentials. Democracy relies on the principles of liberty, equality and full participation of all citizens in government activities. The 2011 election results show that the needs and interests of women will remain peripheral and that the presence of a critical mass of women in decision-making processes and leadership positions will be achieved only in the long run.

INTRODUCTION

On the surface Nigeria appears to be a very progressive nation when one looks at its elaborate gender policy and management framework as well as the high profile of certain female political actors, professionals and other prominent women entrepreneurs. Nigeria has ratified all major international legal instruments on women including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)(1985) and its Optional Protocol on Women (2004) and the AU Protocol on Women (2004). But, as Pittin (1991) demonstrates, beneath the surface the reality for most Nigerian women is stark gender disparities in formal education, political representation, income, labour force participation, access to capital and agricultural inputs and so on.

These disparities represent a kind of superstructure on top of an underlying structure of socio-cultural gender prejudice and discriminatory practices. Accordingly, the gender profile of Nigeria shows severe disparities. Female political representation currently stands at 6.85%.¹ The *Poverty Profile for Nigeria* (National Bureau of Statistics 2008) provides statistical evidence of the feminisation of poverty as a national phenomenon in both rural and urban areas. Gender disparity is evident in virtually all variables. More specifically, Nigeria has a Gender Equity Index² of 44 out of 100 – lower than most sub-Saharan countries, including Ghana (58) and Rwanda (84) (*Social Watch* 2009).

Greater interest in having more women represented in politics and decision-making flows from widespread civic and political mobilisation, commitment to international treaties such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR – acceded to by many African countries that are members of the UN), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the groups of rights under the UDHR and ICCPR guaranteed by Chapter IV of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution and the group of rights under ICESCR included in Chapter II of the Constitution; the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Women and the Convention on the Consent of Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and the Registration of Marriage.

Recurrent in most of these is the issue of gender equality. There is also CEDAW, which brings together a number of prior conventions concerning women's human rights and is considered the most comprehensive of all the conventions on women and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, adopted in 1981 by the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ratified by 49 of the organisation's 52 member states.

A number of women's groups have also emerged to challenge certain unfavourable cultural practices which do not favour women. They have raised awareness of women's reproductive and other rights and contributed to the foundation of a civil and democratic society while constitutional reforms have further helped to reverse gender discrimination. In the lead-up to the 2011 elections, in particular, more recent advocacy activities for women's increased participation in politics can be traced to the National Women's Summit held in June 2010 and intended to mobilise all stakeholders to open the political space to increase the quantity and quality of women's involvement in politics and the elections.

1 Compare this with Mozambique, whose national Parliament in 2003 comprised 250 men and 102 women, and Rwanda, whose Chamber of Deputies had increased to 48.8% women's representation by 2007. These levels were reached through the use of affirmative action.

2 The GEI uses three indicators: economic activity, education, and empowerment.

It must be recognised that in spite of some gains it is still not easy for women to make it into political office and prestigious leadership positions. Often, the issues on the political agenda of women do not feature, nor are they deemed a priority. The fact that men predominate in the public and political sphere means that public organisations and structures are heavily influenced by male values, attitudes and priorities, to which women are very often expected to conform and not to attempt to transform. They are characterised by deeply entrenched norms of male privilege and power. Whether these are actively antagonistic to women or simply organised in ways that do not favour or suit them, it is difficult for relative newcomers to pose any serious challenge and those who attempt to do so face a very quick and brutal backlash (Asimwe-Mwesige 2006, p 56). The fact that women need greater participation in the political, policy and governance arena is now globally accepted and the need to accelerate gender equality and, especially, the empowerment of women is not only a national necessity but a globally accepted ideal. This led the United Nations General Assembly in July 2010 to create UN Women,³ the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as part of the world body's reform agenda.

Using data from various sources⁴ this article attempts to analyse the results of the 2011 elections held in Africa's largest democracy and compare them with those of previous elections in order to show the impact as well as the gains and losses; identify the possible causes of and explanations for the trends observed and seek solutions which will enable women to participate more effectively in future elections in Nigeria. With this in mind, the next section is a conceptual analysis of the key words of this article: gender, politics and elections. The third section analyses the results of the 2011 elections by gender and the fourth identifies possible factors accounting for the trends observed. The last section contains suggestions for ultimately achieving gender balance and achieving gender representation in the short term.

POLITICS, ELECTIONS AND GENDER: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Conceptualising politics and the practice of politics in Nigeria

The word politics was first used by Aristotle to refer to the general state of affairs in the Greek city states. Aristotle asserted that humans are, by nature, political animals who have a natural affinity for living in some sort of ordered society, a

3 UN Women merges and builds on the important work of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (see UN WOMEN 2011).

4 Due to a lack of access or inadequacy, at times figures from data sources do not tally. However, they give a general picture of the situation.

political community, under a system of government. The term is thus often used in the operation of government, which is established to maintain order in society by regulating and directing the behaviour of its members.

The core of politics is human beings making important decisions for themselves and for others (Almond, Powell, Strom & Dalton 2000, p 3). The word refers to the activities associated with the control of public decisions among a given people and in a given territory, where the control may be enforced by authoritarian and coercive means. Politics has to do with choices (though not all choices or decisions are political). It also relates directly to public rather than private decisions. The support or consent of the governed community is often sought through the organisation of elections and voting by all members of the community, men and women alike.

However, it has been observed that the character of the Nigerian state inherently inhibits the effective participation in the political process of one gender compared to the other. Osaghae (1994) has argued that there is a link between amoral politics and state pitfalls in Africa and Englebert (2000) and Joseph (1987) make similar comments, using tags such as neopatrimonialism and prebendalism to explain the nature of politics. According to them political power is perverted as a tool used to appropriate wealth, a situation that has translated political competition into desperation and fierce do-or-die battles. Thus, elections in Nigeria and the contest for political power are still seen as zero-sum activities.

Elections

As an essential procedure that allows members of an organisation or community to choose representatives who will run government, elections are crucial and should be free and fair. Mackenzie (1967) identified four conditions for the conduct of a free and fair election. These are: an independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws; an independent, competent, non-partisan electoral management body (EMB) to manage the elections; a developed system of political parties and a general acceptance by the political community of the rules of the game. Igbuzor & Edigheji (2003, p 2) have identified three key requirements for the delivery of free and fair elections in Africa: an independent judiciary, an independent, competent, non-partisan EMB and a developed system of political parties.

There is no doubt that elections play a vital role in a representative democracy. They are the primary mechanism for the implementation of the principle of popular sovereignty. Ultimate authority rests with the people and the people delegate this authority to their elected representatives through the electoral process. Unfortunately, in most of Africa elections are not usually free and fair. The problems facing the electoral process include rigging, distortion or doctoring

of results, manipulation of the electoral process and flagrant abuse of electoral laws. If well conducted, elections not only legitimate ruling authorities and articulate the will of the voters they also establish a stable majority, which leads to political stability.

While improvements can be observed, due to the high stakes elections continue to suffer from serious credibility and legitimacy problems. In most cases the problems relate to the neutrality of the EMBs, whose members are appointed by incumbent executives, and their inability to administer the process impartially. The zero-sum, winner-takes-all nature of political competition, which is engendered by the exclusionary character of state power, and the abject poverty and illiteracy in civic and formal educational terms of the vast majority of the people, men and women alike, leave ample room for electoral processes to be manipulated through pay-offs and bribes (Osaghae 2003). Nevertheless, good elections are generally considered to be those in which there is effective participation of all, women and men alike, as organisers, voters and candidates.

Gender

Gender refers simply to the social and cultural definition of being female or male. It is based on, but also reinforces, what women and men are expected to do. This definition influences society's values, expectations and the opportunities and resources available to both women and men. To a large extent it also influences the expectations of boys and girls and the way they are brought up.

Unfortunately, the practice, perception and expectations of boys and girls are socially determined; they are learned behaviours. Gender roles are learned and cultural and can change, whereas sex roles are based on the biological differences and attributes of females and males and cannot change. The social disaggregation of roles between males and females is referred to as gender division of labour. Opportunities for education, employment and participation in decision-making as well as entitlement to assets are often dependent on gender, with consequent disadvantage to women and to the economy.

The right and entitlement of men and women to opportunities, resources and decision-making are affected by or based on socio-cultural norms rather than on human rights or on their respective development capabilities and are perpetuated at the individual as well as the societal level. Since it is women who are more generally excluded or disadvantaged in relation to social and economic resources and decision-making, efforts to identify and redress imbalances have focused on women's situation and women's views. This article tends, therefore, to follow this trend.

Gender equality, an integral element of fundamental human rights, can be

understood from two perspectives: equality of rights, opportunities, access and choices between men and women and the absence of discrimination on the basis of sex or gender roles. It calls for the empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equity is often used interchangeably with gender equality, being aimed at the same outcomes – development, fairness and social justice. What gender equity achieves is optimal equality of opportunity, capability and environmental conditions for both men and women in whatever they do as political or economic agents. Gender equity is thus the ultimate object of the various gender equality goals such as those contained in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the New Partnership for African Development Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and so on (NPC undated, pp 9-13).

African feminism focuses on socio-cultural existence or relations between men and women. Of particular interest is the fact that feminist reformers and leaders are at pains to sensitise women to win greater equality with men, thus ending the oppression of women. In a male-dominated culture such as ours, while it may no longer still be deemed inconceivable for a woman to be in politics (Azuike 2005, p 134), probably because 'politics would unsex and degrade women, destroy harmony and lead to a decline in birth rate' (Iglitzin 1976, p 9 quoted in Azuike 2005, p 134), politics is still a choice made with caution, and often not without (family) consultation and, where applicable, spousal agreement.⁵

One of the fundamental obstacles to women's equality is the discrimination and inequality in the status of women and men derived from larger social, economic, political and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences. Although there is no physiological basis for regarding politics and the political sphere as exclusively male or for regarding the household and the family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic and child care and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality.

By virtue of their gender, women in politics or who are interested in politics experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structures that control society and determine development issues, including peace initiatives. In Nigeria, additional differences, such as ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status may compound this and have even more serious implications when used to justify compound discrimination (*Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies*, p 46). Fundamental resistance creates obstacles with wide-ranging implications for gender equality. It promotes the uneconomic use of women's talents and wastes

⁵ It is generally still considered better for women who engage in politics to be married. Single women frequently find politics more difficult to engage in than do single men.

the valuable human resources necessary for development and, ultimately, society is the loser in this under-utilisation of women.

There is also gender insensitivity or bias with regard to the election of women. In the view of Azuike (2005), 'male domination and gender bias have led to the distancing of women from elective political positions in Nigeria. Their participation continues to be marginal and very insignificant.' As a result, the needs and interests of women will remain peripheral, while society generally will not gain from contribution until there is a critical mass of them in decision-making processes and leadership positions. Gender equality in politics is thus of the utmost importance to women's well being and to their development, conscientisation and the transformation of society. There is a need to focus not only on including women but also on the relationships of power that generate women's inequality and the role of men, thereby making gender relations the prime target of investigation and transformation (Gouws 2005, p 25). This means taking into consideration women's agency – their capacity to free people to act (Giddens 2001).

The language of politics is masculine

Politics, like most professions, has a language and, unfortunately, the language of politics in Nigeria is essentially masculine. To speak to a community in which politics is considered to be the exclusive preserve of men and there is little appreciation of women in public life, it would be foolhardy to present a female candidate for office without prior sensitisation. Thus, the place of women and the community's perception of them determines the extent to which they can make inroads into that community.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE 2011 ELECTIONS BY GENDER

Nigeria's federal system consists of three levels of government – federal, state and local. This analysis is limited to the federal and state elections because local elections take place at different times all over the federation and it is rare for the entire country to be covered at any one time.

The number of women in state houses of assembly is 69, spread through all but 11 of the 36 states⁶ of the federation (See Table 1).

6 These are Bornu, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Nassarawa, Osun, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara states.

All but one of the states with no female representatives are in the North. The exception is Osun State.

This largely confirms the influence of tradition, culture, religion and education on gender parity in elections. In these states women were either not given the opportunity to stand or did not receive sufficient votes to win.

Table 1
Number of Women in Parliament by Political Party (2011-2015)
STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY (SHA)

Party	No of female members
Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	15
All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	6
Labour Party (LP)	2
People's Democratic Party (PDP)	46
TOTAL	69

Source: Culled from data from the Gender and Affirmative Action Issue Based Project

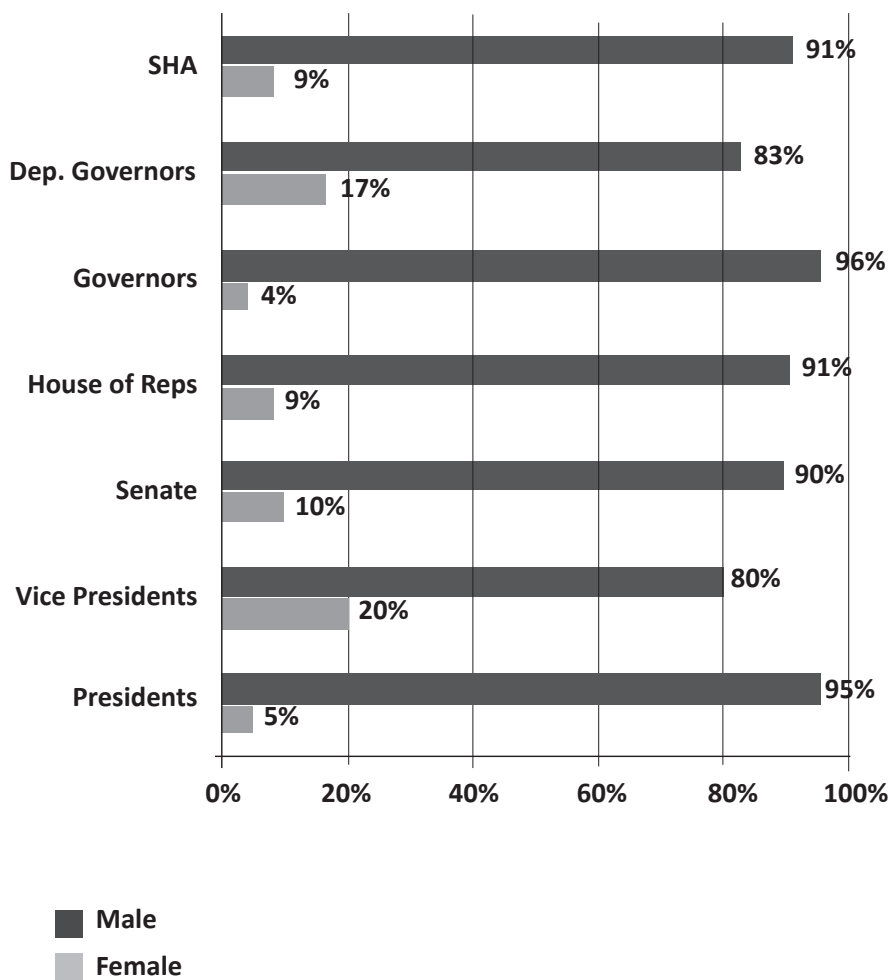
An increased number of women aspirants contested party primaries for the 2011 elections.

Table 2 shows the number of female candidates in five major political parties and compares the numbers with the situation in 2007. Overall, there were 211 more women candidates, a 31.3% increase. While more women stood for the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), the APGA and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), fewer stood for the ACN and the PDP.

Though many of the women lost, a significant number compared to previous elections won party primaries and stood for elected positions in the various political parties. Women constituted 9.1% of candidates for the National Assembly. Figure 1 shows the breakdown by position.

Clearly, despite the increased number of female aspirants only a few emerged as candidates and even fewer as winners (see Table 3).

Figure 1
Gender Representation



Source: National Gender Data Bank (NGDB) – National Centre for Women’s Development (NCWD)
 2011

Table 2
Female Candidates for the Five Major Political Parties 2007 and 2011

Party	2007	2011
ACN	83	62
ANPP	73	77
APGA	25	70
CPC	0	66
PDP	126	83
TOTAL for all parties*	674	885

*Average growth in 2011 = 31.3% Source: National Gender Data Bank

Table 3
Number of Female Contestants/Winners in the 2011 elections

Type of election	No of female candidates	No of female winners
State House of Assembly	414	55
House of Representatives	170	18
Senate	86	7
Deputy Governor	57	1
Governorship	13	0
Vice President	2	0
President	1	0
TOTAL	643	81

Source: INEC, March 2012

Table 4
Number of Seats Won in General Elections from 1999-2011 by Gender

Year	Total number of seats available	Number won by men		Number won by women	
		Number	%	Number	%
1999	1533	1 504	98.23	27	1.76
2003	1533	1 464	95.62	67	4.38
2007	1533	1 435	93.73	96	6.27
2011	1533	1 452	94.8	81	5.2

Sources: National Gender Data Bank (NGDB) – National Centre for Women’s Development (NCWD) 2011; INEC; Gender and Affirmative Action Issue Based Project www.nassnig.org

As Table 4 and Figures 2-5 show, while there had been progress since the return to civil rule and multiparty contestation the slice of the women's elective cake decreased by about 1% in 2011. Men won 98.2% of the 1 533 available positions in 1999, 95.6% in 2003, 93.7% in 2007 and 94.8% in 2011.

Figure 2
Number of Seats won in the 1999 General Election by Gender

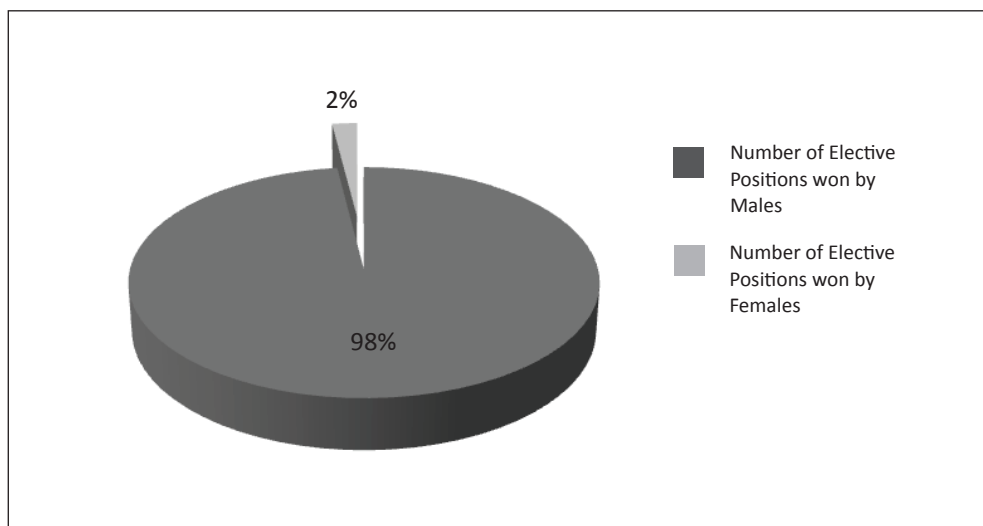


Figure 3
Number of Seats won in the 2003 General Election by Gender

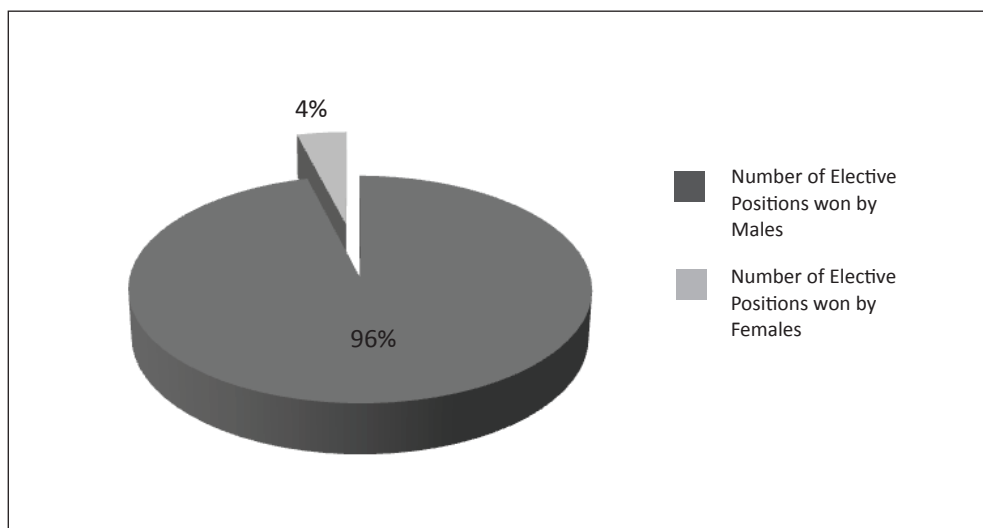


Figure 4
Number of Seats won in the 2007 General Election by Gender

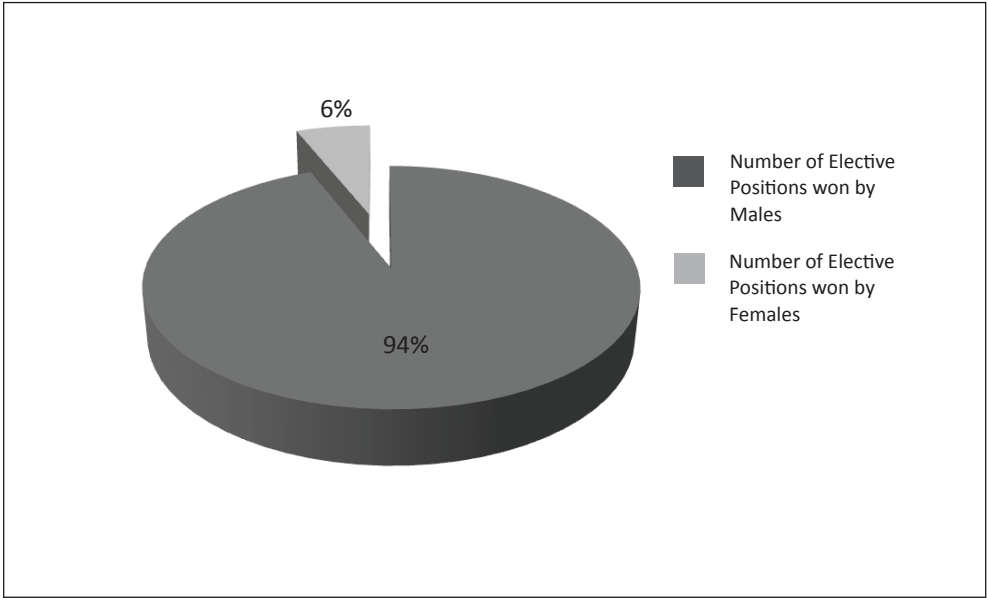
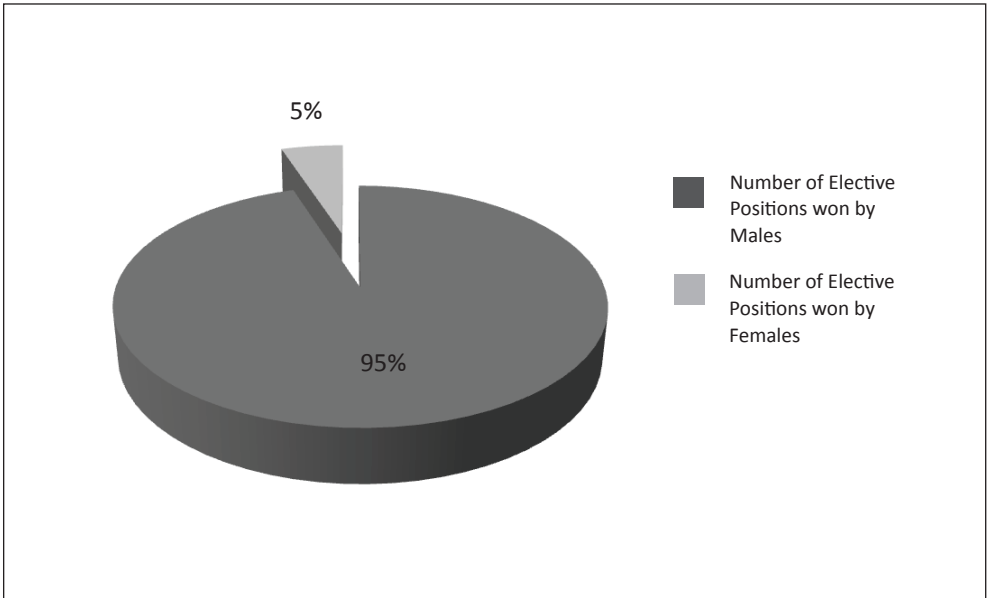


Figure 5
Number of Seats won in the 2011 General Election by Gender



Furthermore, although the number of female candidates increased in general, none of the main political parties fielded women in the presidential, vice-presidential or gubernatorial contests. The one female presidential candidate stood for the United Party for Development (UPD) – the ruling PDP's female presidential aspirant had lost in the party primaries. Four smaller parties – the African Renaissance Party (ARP), the Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), the Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH) and the National Transformation Party (NTP)⁷ – put up vice-presidential candidates.⁸

It should be noted that there was no election in 2011 in Anambra State because the governor, Peter Obi, of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), had only taken his oath of office in 2006 after the court of appeal declared him the winner of the election he had contested in 2003, hence his four-year term only ended in 2010 and he won a second term, starting in that year. In Edo, Ekiti and Osun states there were no elections in 2011 because the terms of the governors of those states had started late, having been decided by judicial rulings that quashed the elections of their predecessors. There was a similar situation in Kogi, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Sokoto and Bayelsa states.

In those states where elections did take place, of 348 gubernatorial candidates only 13 (3.7%) were women, who stood and lost in Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kano, Kebbi, Kwara, Oyo and Plateau states. The women were fielded by 11 political parties: the African Democratic Congress (ADC), which had three candidates; the APN, with two and the APGA, Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), African Liberation Party (ALP), BNPP, FRESH, Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Mega Peoples Progressive Party (MPPP) and Labour Party (LP), with one each (Irabor, 2011, p6).

Some parties put up women for the position of deputy governor – 57 (17%) of candidates were women – but only one, the ACN candidate in Lagos State, won. A paltry number of women (10%) won their party primaries and stood for the National House of Assembly and the various state houses of assembly (9%). It is only by comparison with the past, not by comparison with men that one can hesitantly say that women have made fair progress over the years and some but not very encouraging progress in the 2011 elections. According to the ANPP's National Woman Leader, who was speaking about the North, there is increased political awareness among women, even though many are still unwilling to participate actively as candidates. It is instructive that Adamawa State in the North had the highest number (23)⁹ of women candidates.

7 Senator Grace Bent in *The Vanguard*, 17 May 2008, p 16.

8 Of the 63 political parties registered for the 2011 general elections, only 13 fielded female governorship aspirants.

9 Similarly, 42 women emerged as candidates on the ANPP's platform. Of these, 11 stood for the Senate, 16 for the House of Representatives and 15 for state houses of assembly.

Unfortunately, only three of them won, while in Lagos all the ACN's female candidates were elected to the National House of Assembly and the state House of Assembly. It is possible that the reason for this is that the party has a policy of pre-selecting female candidates and imposing them on the electorate. Women occupy 17.5% (7) of the 40 seats in the Lagos State House of Assembly.

In the national Parliament, which consists of two chambers – the Senate and the House of Representatives – there was a decrease in the number of female senators from nine in 2007 to seven in 2011. The women were fielded by the PDP (4), APGA (2) and ACN (1). Similarly, in the House of Representatives there was significant drop in the number of successful candidates – from 27 (7.5%) in 2007 to 19 (5.27%) in 2011. In total, therefore, women comprise only 6.3% of Nigeria's 469-member national Parliament, a far cry from the millennium development goal of 30% by 2015.

Table 4
Number of Women in the Senate by Political Party
2011-2015

Party	Number of women
ACN	1
APGA	1
PDP	5
TOTAL	7

Source: Culled from data from Gender and Affirmative Action Issue Based Project

Table 5
Number of Women in the House of Representatives by Political Party
2011 – 2015

Party	Number of women
ACCORD	1
ACN	4
ANPP	1
APGA	1
PDP	16
TOTAL	23

Source: Culled from data from Gender and Affirmative Action Issue Based Project

Obviously, much more still needs to be done for women, who, according to the 1991 census, constitute close to 50% of the nation's total population but whose degree of participation and representation, especially in politics, is, according to Azuike (2005, p 135), miniscule. The Registration and Election Review Committee (RERC)¹⁰ set up by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) after the 2011 elections noted that:

women featured in the election as polling staff, election observers, among other functions that they performed. For example, in the Presidential elections, about 40 percent of the election staff and 36 percent of the presiding officers were female, with their proportion lower for collation officers. The number of women who contested the 2011 general elections and those who were elected was insignificant, compared to the number of male candidates who contested and won.¹¹

Women, therefore, continue to be under-represented in elected public political offices, relative to their size in the country's population. For example, only 9% of candidates in the National Assembly elections and 8.7% in the state houses of assembly elections were women and only 3.7% per cent of candidates for governor and 17% for deputy governor were women despite the fact that INEC's Gender Unit and the activities of various stakeholders targeted women's political education, political participation and voter education (INEC 2012).

Alarmingly, the committee noted that there is a clear possibility that women's performance in the 2011 general elections may be repeated in 2015. To avoid this, the RERC suggested that there is a need to revisit the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee and identify areas that might put gender on the agenda.

FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER BIAS IN THE 2011 ELECTIONS

The factors accounting for marginalisation of women in the 2011 election are no different from those that have obtained in the past and it is important that they be kept on the table so society can continue to work on them.

¹⁰ This author was a member of the RERC.

¹¹ This confirms that although Nigerian women participate actively in politics their 'activism has not always been rewarded with commensurate share of political power' (Sani 2001, p 136) or even appointments.

Marginalisation

Marginalisation within parties, one of the important factors, is the consequence of the chauvinistic politics that prevail in the country as it does in many other African countries. It is the parties who recruit candidates, seeking people who, because of their personal qualities, background and overall ability, stand a good chance of being elected. The problem at party level in Nigeria stems from the fact that women are not involved at the executive level or are not nominated or supported for strong positions in the parties (Okoosi-Simbine 2003a) – positions which would give them valuable political experience.

Unfortunately, there are few women in important institutions of electoral governance. They are not prominent in party primaries and play a minor role in party caucuses and strategic meetings. Although the majority of voters in elections are women and women have a substantial presence at campaign meetings and rallies as supporters and entertainers, they are rarely card-carrying or registered members of parties and this lack of active party membership marginalises them in both elected and appointed posts.

Methods of nomination

A cursory look at two common methods of nominating candidates for positions within parties shows that the most democratic, normal and constitutional process is to organise party primaries at conventions. This involves inviting specific and equal numbers of representatives from each constituency to vote for the candidates of their choice to carry the banner of the party. It is, however, an expensive procedure, both from the point of view of the party that organises the convention and that of the candidates who must conduct their own campaigns.

Finances

Money is thus a major factor in party primaries and is used both to induce officials and encourage voters to support particular candidates. Since in general male aspirants have more money than female aspirants, many women are eliminated because they simply cannot match their male opponents Naira for Naira (Ibrahim & Salihu 2004, p 10). Women will therefore find it formidably difficult to attain leadership positions in a party.

Influence of party elders

A second system involves party elders simply selecting, endorsing and presenting a consensus candidate, supposedly to ease tension among contestants. They then

try to pacify losers by giving them options such as selection to other (often lower) positions, appointments, contracts or even direct finance to offset their campaign expenses up to that point. This is usually done in the name of the whole process being a 'family affair' whose 'dirty linen should not be washed in public' and that should not be allowed to 'tear the party apart'. Certainly less democratic, here too, hegemonic, gerontocratic and patriarchic party leadership, without any rules or sanctions to compel the representation of women candidates, further marginalises women (Okoosi-Simbine 2003).

Deliberate obstruction

The few women who do attempt to engage the political process are faced with difficulties, especially arbitrary behaviour by party officials. They may declare candidates without an election; change the election rules or voting system suddenly without proper notice to candidates, and often dilly-dally about publishing the names of those eligible to vote in the primaries. Furthermore, officials may change the venue for the primaries, hold unscheduled meetings in unannounced venues where critical decisions are made or overturned, rig elections and cause violence and use 'zoning' and other criteria selectively to eliminate unwanted (often female) aspirants, thereby making the playing field uneven.¹²

Clearly it is within the parties themselves that constraints to women remain a major hurdle. Unfortunately, their involvement in party affairs determines their level of political awareness and commitment to active political participation in elections. An analysis of card-carrying members of political parties by gender will reveal a wide gap.

Godfathers

Irabor (2011, p 9) believes the role of many godfathers was reduced in 2011 because 'their candidates performed woefully at the elections'.¹³ While this may be true to an extent, it is also the case that new godfathers emerged.

An example is Kwara State, where an outgoing governor challenged his biological father, who was godfather of the state's politics. Governor Busola Saraki opposed his sister's gubernatorial aspirations and his preferred candidate won the election despite the fact that his father supported his sister. In defeating his father

12 This gives party leaders, elders and officials a tight grip on the party and requires members and aspirants to play what is referred to as the politics of *entryism*.

13 Among the notable casualties were a former Nigerian ambassador to Ireland and Federal Minister of Aviation, Kema Chikwe, the daughter of former President Obasanjo, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello and Senator Daisy Danjuma, wife of the retired chief of army staff, Theophilus Danjuma.

and successfully installing his own candidate, the former governor emerged as the new godfather. Godfathers were critical to the outcome of elections in many states, where party machinery was used to select and impose candidates. This was the case within the ACN.

In relation to the impact of godfatherism, Irabor (2011, p 12) has observed that the current political climate in Nigeria is likely to be more favourable to female aspirants and women from privileged backgrounds because they are less likely to be victims of the sexual harassment or political violence many of their counterparts have had to endure as they can take advantage of the party machinery that their relatives control or can influence.

It is my view that women favoured by this type of practice are unlikely to work for the benefit of their fellow women and of society but will, as is the practice (Okoosi-Simbine 2005), be accountable to those who appoint or support them. The result will be a class of economically dependent women who will show no interest in exercising their right to influence government's decisions (Onsarigo, 2005, p 96). For these reasons the phenomenon of godfatherism must be discouraged.

Violence

Political and electoral violence has been a feature of the democratic process in Nigeria since the return to civil rule, multiparty politics and elections in 1999. In 2011 mayhem erupted in Bauchi State after the April presidential elections, resulting in the deaths of nine National Youth Service Corps members (*The Punch*, 1 May 2011, pp 40-41).¹⁴ While such violence has an impact on freedom of assembly and on electoral outcomes which affects all citizens, it probably has more of an impact on the already hesitant women.

Onsarigo (2005, p 94) has found in relation to Kenya that parties and individuals who are able to use violence do better in elections. As a consequence, the electorate has been conditioned to view violence as inevitable during electioneering. Politicians, especially members of the ruling party, exploit the instruments of state to dampen participation, an attitude which discourages opposition parties and individuals, particularly women, from participating in the electoral process. This results in apathy and predictable outcomes where elections do not necessarily reflect the wishes of the electorate.

14 Examples of other reported violent incidents include the assassination of a gubernatorial candidate for the ANPP and six others in Maiduguri by unknown gunmen on 28 January 2011 and the murder of the ANPP chairman of the Tafawa Balewa Local Government Council Area, Alhaji Isiaka Mohammed, along with his three children (*The Guardian*, 31 January 2011). *ThisDay*, 18 April 2011, reported that the presidential election of 16 April had sparked violence leading to loss of life and destruction of property worth millions of naira in Adamawa and parts of Bauchi and Taraba states.

Individually or collectively, elements such as patriarchy,¹⁵ religion, vote buying, ethical and cultural issues, weak constituency networks and footholds, violence and the use of invective played important roles in the absence of gender equity in the elections of 2011. A combination of some of these factors affected the ACPN candidate in Kwara State, a predominantly Muslim Fulani state. Patriarchy in particular creates systematic gender inequalities by condoning the male supremacy and dominance over women that operate in the political process (Ndambuki 2006, p 17). The priority of such patriarchal states is to sustain and defend their power.

While the public sphere is opening up to women, the private (family and household dynamics) sphere remains intact and women are constantly reminded that their real place is at home and under their husbands.

The barriers women face in entering public and political life do not exist in a vacuum – they are closely related to their socio-economic and cultural status. For many political leaders the fact that the issue of women's underrepresentation in politics and elections is part of a wider problem becomes a convenient excuse not to address the barriers created by the structures, cultures and practices within politics itself. Therefore, strategies that merely focus on encouraging greater involvement by women in politics and on improving the capacity of those who come forward may not achieve much if they fail to address the structural and cultural resistance to women from within these powerful groups (Asiimwe-Mwesige 2006, p 57) as Nigerian women prepare for future elections.

While modernisation, globalisation and increased advocacy have resulted in an improvement in the situation many of the factors militating against women's involvement in politics remain unchanged. For instance, their lack of access to formal and functional education has reduced their involvement in the development process (Sani 2001, p 163; Okoosi 2000, pp 25-44). According to the 2010 MDG Report, although the situation is improving, the proportion of girls enrolled at all levels of education is still lower than that of boys. There has been a gradual increase in the ratio of girls to boys in primary education since 2000 and in 2008 the number of girls per 100 boys was 85.4. However, assuming the trend of the last five years continues, the level expected to be reached by 2015 will still fall short of the target. More effort is needed to introduce measures to encourage girls to attend school. The situation is even worse with secondary education where, in 2000, the ratio was 81:100 while in 2008 it was 79.9. At tertiary level, too, the ratio shows signs of decline.

There is a strong association between women's education and their participation in politics. Women's innate capacity for leadership would be

15 The practice institutionalised in many societies is to see women as being inferior to men.

enhanced by increased access to and opportunities for education. Moreover, their courage and confidence in themselves would improve, enabling them to aspire to elective positions. In short, with education, women will be better equipped for leadership positions (Okoosi-Simbine 2000, pp 25-44). The most important obstacle to women's participation in politics remains ignorance arising from a lack of or discrimination in education. In general, and in much of the extant literature, literacy is regarded as essential to most forms of political participation and political achievement is largely dependent on good education. However, the numbers of women who cannot read or write, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, outnumber those of their male counterparts (Okoosi-Simbine 2000, pp 25-44).

In almost all cases, women profiled in Jibrin Ibrahim and Amina Salihu's 2004 publication titled *Women, Marginalisation & Politics in Nigeria* are educated. The minimum level of education among them was a primary school certificate (but with wide experience with working with the people) and some of the women have master's degrees, MBAs and law degrees. This demonstrates the importance of education and the need for women to reduce the levels to which they can be marginalised by ensuring that they have a reasonable level of education to help them understand the issues with which they have to deal.

Girls with education acquire the skills to participate in equal decision-making in the home and in the community. Indeed, all the women who stood for election in 2011 were (formally) educated.

Various efforts have been made to ensure the active attendance of girls at educational institutions at all levels. Among these are scholarships and laws forbidding early marriage (Agbu 2006, p 53). A National Gender Policy has been developed and is currently in use. In 2008 the Strategic Implementation Framework and Plan was drafted. It sets out the specific objectives, targets and monitoring framework needed to implement the gender policy and guide activities towards eliminating discrimination and improving the participation of women in national life (Nigeria MDG Report 2010, p 24).

Educated women who are in the public eye can be role models for younger girls and are an important source of inspiration. Unfortunately, the fewer there are, the less impact they have. Mwangola (2006, p 6) has observed correctly that since the 1985 UN Women's Decade, popularly referred to as Forum '85,

[what] has not changed much is the dearth of informed discourse on female African role models, whose greatest legacy is a gift of inspiration and unshakeable determination in the face of the greatest of odds. From this perspective, every political experience and story is valuable; even the failures, the missed opportunities, the wrong

decisions; the weaknesses become lessons for the present, to be applied to the many battles of the twenty-first century.

Lack of education and the inequality it breeds has been linked to increasing poverty (*Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies*). In the view of Gouws (2006, p 5) the biggest obstacles for women are related to the neo-liberal macroeconomic policies which became prominent in the 1980s and have become increasingly problematic because of increasing privatisation, profit-driven markets and the roll-back of the state. The resulting widening income inequalities are responsible for a lack of or inadequate safety nets for poorer households. Women do not have productive resources such as land and the economic resources available to them are limited and are, as in the case of inheritance, subject to the whims of men. Their impoverished socio-economic status means that women cannot engage in politics in the same way as men do.

Nowhere is this handicap more obvious than in the excessive monetisation of politics such as that in Nigeria. This has the effect of discouraging the best but poorest from participating in politics and making a meaningful contribution to quality governance. This, in turn, makes it difficult to deliver sustainable democracy, makes the governance process warped and expensive and makes it difficult for the electorate to demand accountability from politicians as their consciences are sold (Okoosi-Simbine 2006).

According to the then minister of women affairs, Josephine Anenih, quoted in *The Guardian* (19 April 2011, p 12), the number of women who stood for office in political parties far outweighed the number who won positions in party primaries. Moreover, most of those who stood did so on the backs of men, as wives, daughters, sisters or other close relatives, and relied on the men's strong economic bases, thus confirming that money not only plays a critical role in politics in Nigeria but that it is less available to women than to men, which is a factor in their marginalisation in the world of politics.

Reasons for women's disadvantaged financial position range from cultural issues (such as inheritance) to societal (such as discrimination in lending) (Okoosi-Simbine 2006). In short, an important factor inhibiting political participation is the cost of contesting elections. The social and economic inequalities that exist between men and women must be addressed.

PROGNOSIS

In many countries greater involvement of women, whether as a result of a quota system or affirmative action or sheer individual effort, has led to enabling conditions for gender equality. In such contexts, more women-friendly legislation

such as gender analysis of budgets (see, eg, Okanya, Osoy, Akanji & Simbine 2007) and budget initiatives and national machinery to monitor gender equality has been put in place.

A contributing factor to the institutionalisation of gender, according to True (2003, p 374), is the prevalence of gender mainstreaming discourse that attempts to integrate gender concerns into everyday work and government procedures. The language of women's rights and gender equality, the proliferation of women's networks and transnational links and a growing number of gender sensitive women and men in global governance leadership positions have also been helpful.

The poor performance of women in the 2011 elections is likely to be repeated in the next general elections, in 2015, if nothing is done in the interim. In order to reach the target of 35% outlined in the National Gender Policy, 536 of 1 535 positions would have to be occupied by women, while to meet the international target of 30% the figure would have to be 460. What can be done to bring real change to gender representation in the short term and, ultimately, to gender equality?

From a rights-based perspective, it is critical that such equality be achieved. The rights of women are neither recognised nor respected, especially in rural areas. Various degrees of sex discrimination still prevail and women's voices are faint, rarely heard, and poorly represented on public issues. Avenues for complaint and redress must be put in place and followed up by women's groups.

Since many of the (older) political parties claim in their manifestoes that they will uplift the lot of women, it can thus be argued that many women base their decisions on which party to vote for on the planks relating to women's upliftment or empowerment. There needs to be commitment to gender equity concerns and not mere lip service and parties must implement affirmative action. In addition, women's groups need to take parties to task and demand their rights.

Parties should also make a deliberate effort to enlighten the public about programmes that support women's empowerment and general acceptance in the public sphere. A census of card-carrying members of political parties by gender needs to be carried out to determine the levels of gender imbalance and devise appropriate measures to deal with them. Parties should also mobilise more women and equip them with the necessary political skills, knowledge, financial support and sponsorship.

According to the Nigeria MDG Report (2010, p 24), another step towards achieving gender justice in Nigeria would be to teach political parties about gender, women's political participation and women's impact on democracy and good governance. In addition, aggressive social engineering is needed to create internal party mechanisms and structures that are responsive to women

and indicate commitment to increasing gender equity and women's political participation. Furthermore, there is a need to continue to identify those social, economic, traditional, cultural and religious factors that militate against gender equality and develop appropriate programmes to address them.

President Jonathan has promised that at least 35% of appointed positions will go to women; reserving political and appointed positions based on merit might be a good way to promote women as role models for public political office. Appointing women to certain positions may lead to interest in or exposure to the possibilities of their standing for election and appointing more women to party leadership is likely encourage more to participate in (elective) politics. Monitoring elections with a view to addressing violence throughout the period is crucial.

Finally, as Nigeria prepares for future elections, some of the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee are relevant. They include:

- gender balance in the leadership of the reconstituted INEC;
- at least one-third of INEC's 774 local government electoral officers should be women;
- the adoption of alternative forms of electoral system such as modified proportional representation for legislative elections at federal, state and local government levels to promote and enhance women's representation by ensuring that 30% of party lists are reserved for women, without prejudicing their right also to compete for representation under the first-past-the-post system;
- Civil Society Organisations and the United Development Fund for Women, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the National Commission for Human Rights, should continue with their efforts to enhance the participation of women in the country's public life, notably in the area of sustained nationwide campaigns and political education targeting the participation of women as voters and as candidates; and
- special consideration should be given women in the appointment of ministers at federal level and commissioners at state level.

CONCLUSION

Gender balance in politics and elections is essential for the achievement of developmental goals. Unfortunately, there has been a slight drop in the number of women in elected positions following the 2011 elections and Nigeria is a long way from meeting the international target of 35% and is lagging behind less well-endowed African countries.

Factors that account for this situation include structural issues of religion and culture, women's lack of access to funds, godfatherism in the political parties and the undemocratic disposition of party leaders, political and electoral violence, and vote buying.

Since democracy relies on the principles of liberty, equality and full participation of all citizens in government activities, the under representation of women in politics casts doubt on Nigeria's democratic credentials.

The needs and interests of women will remain peripheral until they constitute a critical mass in decision-making processes and leadership positions. Such a shift will involve voicing women's interests, experiences and perspectives and, in doing so, improving the political, governance and developmental process.

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GENDER, POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE REPRODUCTION OF PATRIARCHY IN NIGERIA

A Reflection on the Democratisation Process, 1999-2011

A Irene Pogoson

Dr A Irene Pogoson is a lecturer in the Department of Political Science,
University of Ibadan
e-mail: irenepogoson@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article examines issues of women's involvement in party politics in Nigeria against the background of the 2011 general elections. It explores the influence of patriarchal disposition on women's participation as well as the extent (or otherwise) to which women are respected and accepted as equal stakeholders in democratic politics and party decision-making organs. It shows that the marginalisation of women defies legal and constitutional guarantees and must be tackled simultaneously with patriarchy by the following means: establishing continuous dialogue between women and men leaders, increasing women's participation in local elections, endorsing and entrenching a quota system/mechanism in national and political party constitutions, reviewing electoral systems and adopting those most conducive to women's participation (for example, proportional representation). Political parties should establish legal funds to enable women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices in court.

INTRODUCTION

Not only do women make up about half the voting population of Nigeria, as they do in most African countries, but most Nigerian women, like those in most of Africa, have had the right to vote since independence. The question is not whether women have the right to vote, but whether their positions, organisations or attempts to influence the quality of their lives by political means are seen to be part of the process of democratic politics or democratisation.

'Including "women" as actors in a narrative of democracy and democratization is, on the most basic level, a question of equity and what "democracy" stands for' (Van Allen 2001, pp 40-41). To include women in the narrative at this level

means asking whether any, some, many women are able to act as 'citizens', who have some stake in, understanding of, and effect on political decision making, or whether they are only 'subjects', whose relationship to the government is one of loyalty and dependence in exchange for paternalistic care for their welfare.

Mamdani (1996) suggests that 'women' as a class might be considered 'subjects' rather than 'citizens' in Africa and uses gender as a category in examining particular movements, laws, policies, and so on and the exclusion of women from political rights as a negative criterion in evaluating political systems. Similarly, feminists have argued that women are kept out of politics by a series of powerful conventions that distinguish sharply between public and private; a separation that greatly curtails 'the range and content of public affairs and has consigned to the private all the supposedly petty concerns of ordinary life' (Phillips 1991, p 4).

Be that as it may, what is the basic minimum below which no political system must fall if it is to describe itself as democratic? How far can we ignore this minimum and still retain the democratic ideal? The minimum that most people would identify with is that governments should be freely and fairly elected and all adults should have an equal right to vote. This minimum is, itself, a recent achievement, even in older democracies like Britain, where it was not until 1928 that women over 21 gained the right to vote on the same basis as men. It is more recent still in Nigeria. Although universal franchise was granted to Southern women in the mid-1950s, it was not until 1976 that women were allowed to vote in Northern Nigeria. An important factor inhibiting women's participation in Northern Nigeria is the *purdah* system (house seclusion of women).

Participatory democracy challenges the distinction between public and private realms, arguing that 'if democracy matters in the state, it matters just as much, if not more, elsewhere' Phillips (1991, p 16). Having lowered its sights to reasonable representation and occasional popular control liberal democracy has proved to be resistant to substantial representation of women and, in most democracies, the number of women elected remains abysmally low. As Phillips (1991, p 19) notes, in a small minority of countries the past three decades have brought major changes in the representation of women; in others there has merely been a bit more (or even less). The growing gap between the Nordic countries and the rest of Europe and the United States is striking, as it is between African countries like Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa and the rest of Africa.

The inability of the Nigerian state to conduct credible elections has been attributed to the long period of military rule, weak democratic institutions and processes and a host of other historical factors, which have led to the emergence of a political culture characterised by election violence, monetised politics, low accountability, abuse of power, general apathy about elections and low participation of critical segments of the society, especially women (Irabor 2011).

Women constitute at least half of Nigeria's population. They make important and largely unacknowledged contributions to economic life and play crucial roles in all spheres of society. Despite this they are discriminated against in the political process and their marginalisation is most pronounced in the democratisation processes. Women in Nigeria hold less than 8% of important decision-making positions. The present National Assembly has an inexcusably low number of women in both houses. Despite Nigeria's long history of political parties, very few Nigerian women have been either elected or appointed to party office. The passive participation of women in the nation's political parties and policymaking bodies suggests that Nigerian society, like most other societies, is strongly patriarchal.

Patriarchy affects gender relations, as is evidenced in almost all spheres of activity, notably with regard to decision making, access to education, health status and access to and control of resources. As is the case in most African countries, men in Nigeria are generally responsible for decision making and women's rights are limited. This affects women's power to influence the nation's public policies.

The essential questions, therefore, are: how gender sensitive is the nature of democracy in Nigeria and why have Nigerian women not been able to break into the machinery of political parties? Central to this discussion is the question of the level of participation women can exercise in party politics, particularly if participation is framed in terms of standing for political office.

A typical Nigerian woman is socialised in a culture of female subordination. She is not only subordinate to her husband and to the men in her own family but also to all members of her husband's family (male and female). Historically, the kinship structures have placed men in a position of advantage. Patriarchy in Nigeria subordinates women and makes them vulnerable. Various institutions of society such as family, religion, the law, politics, education, economics, media, socio-cultural practices and state policies and agency have further perpetrated the subjugation and disempowerment of women.

With the conclusion of the 2011 general elections it is therefore imperative that we review and redefine the framework for the enlargement of the political space for women. Against this setting, this article examines issues of women's involvement in politics in Nigeria. It explores the extent to which Nigerian women participate in party politics, the impact of patriarchy on women's participation as well as the extent (or otherwise) to which women are respected and accepted as equal stakeholders in the democratisation project.

PARTRIACHY, GENDER, POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the man, as the main authority person, is fundamental to social groups and associations. It is a social construct

passed down from generation to generation and most pronounced in societies with traditional cultures and less economic development (Sanderson 2001; Macionis 2000). Patriarchy is best defined as control by men of a disproportionately large share of power. In a patriarchal system fathers hold authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege and is dependent on female subordination. Patriarchy explains how societies control women, who must constantly fight for their rights and sometimes struggle just to survive without being threatened by the power and domination of men. As Carole Pateman (1988) notes, 'The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection.'

According to Hartman (1997), patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enables them to dominate women. Hartman goes on to explain that the material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power, a control maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and reducing their sexuality.

In feminist theory, the concept of patriarchy often includes all the social mechanisms that reproduce and exert male domination over women. Most forms of feminism characterise patriarchy as an unjust social system that is oppressive to women (Tickner 2001). Radical feminists emphasise the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women and think that society is an oppressive patriarchy that primarily oppresses women. Put differently, they emphasise the social domination of women by men.

Radical feminists perceive patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power to the disadvantage of women. Thus they view it as the root cause of most serious social problems and are sceptical of political action within the prevalent social system. For a radical feminist, '[m]ales and males only are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy' (Daly 1978).

Patriarchal theory observes that not only are women controlled by dominant men using aggressive hierarchical social power, they are also controlled by non-dominant men. Moreover, according to this theory, while the man is more often than not the dominant party, the exploited party is generally the woman. This contention is validated in Nigeria, where the marginalisation of women has become standard practice in the political system. Indeed, '[t]he evolution of women's participation in party politics presents a pattern, where women are often pushed to certain positions that are in reality practically and strategically redundant' (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003, p 44).

According to historical records, despite the fact that pre-colonial Nigeria was patriarchal, women were not entirely left out of the political system (Awe 1989).

Generally, women's political power varied from one place to another; while in some societies women shared responsibilities with men; in others, their roles were complementary or subordinate. Successful women had access to political power on merit and, in several communities, women emerged as leaders or rulers. This political set-up changed significantly during the colonial era. Women were ignored by the colonial authorities in the eventual redistribution of positions and power and the marginalisation of women became standard practice.

In spite of being constrained by the repressive colonial state, women activists in Southern Nigeria engaged in vigorous struggles against the violation of their interests and those of their communities. Before independence in 1960 Nigerian women, through movements led by great women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and others, questioned the colonialists' arbitrary manner of governance and their socioeconomic policies. The response of women activists to the colonial programme 'was tailored to the demands of the political systems that were imposed on them, hence the confrontations between local despots and women who resisted marginalization' (Okome 2001).

The marginalisation of women during the colonial era was behind the earliest mass protest movement in Eastern Nigeria, the 1925 Nwaobiala movement, which culminated in the famous Aba women's riots (or war). Women in Western Nigeria, under the aegis of the Abeokuta Women's Union led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, protested against the political and economic programme of the colonial authorities.

Interestingly, a major feature in the political development of women during the colonial era was the formation of a Women's Party in 1944. The party was not organised along the lines of an active political party as 'it did not have a political program as such, but its leaders shared certain definite political views' that led them at a later stage 'to support another political party, the Action Group' (Mba 1982, p 68). Thus, even given the constraints of a colonially imposed political order, the political arrangement during this period allowed for women's participation, albeit in a limited way – women's access to political power was removed and they were deprived of opportunities to exercise power.

As Okome (2001) observes, the emerging political organisations of the colonial era were led by men, who 'welcomed and encouraged the involvement of women only to the extent that they would be foot-soldiers in the struggle to de-racialize power'. To the extent that women's organisations were willing to join nationalist organisations as members of their women's wings, 'there were grounds for the cooperative struggle against colonialism and for nation building'. When women refused to be subsumed under male-controlled party rule they were marginalised in a manner similar to that of the colonial state.

In Nigeria's political history, including the earlier efforts at democratic

rule, women were severely sidelined in terms of representation in government. Independence from colonial rule did not necessarily lead to the reorganisation of political power and the political systems were remarkably similar to those of the colonial era.

The nature of women's involvement in the political process has remained constant over time. For instance, a cursory look at clauses in party constitutions relating to boards of trustees, party caucuses and congresses, which are powerful organs in the party, show that few women are represented and quotas apportioned to women amount to mere tokenism.

Article 12.76(1) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) constitution, relating to the composition of the board of trustees, states that:

There shall be a Board of Trustees of the party which shall consist of: ... (d) All founding fathers and founding mothers of the party; (e) Two women selected from each of the six geo-political zones; (f) Three members at least one of whom shall be a woman from each of the six geo-political zones; ... Former Deputy Presidents of the Senate and Deputy Speakers of the House of Representative, who are still members of the Party.

These sections highlight some of the areas where the PDP has deliberately affirmed quotas for women and, while the sections are commendable, they are still not adequate to support gender parity in the party system. A closer review of some of the provisions will show that some of the major positions cited in reality go to men, not to women. For example, the composition of the Board of Trustees puts women at a disadvantage. How many women have been past presidents, past governors or senators, as stipulated?

The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) constitution provides for woman leaders in all party organs as well as state congresses. For instance, in the case of state congresses the constitution spells out in Article 7.12 that there should be: '(xiii) 5 delegates from each Ward of the State elected for that purpose at least one of who must be a woman; (xiv) The local government Youth Leader and Woman Leader if [she is] from the local government.'¹

Article 4.12 states that: '(ii) The Board of Trustees shall consist of 3 members from each State of the federation at least one who shall be a woman and one

1 Most political parties in Nigeria have a position of 'woman leader', who leads the women's wing of the party at local government, state and national levels. Men understand that by creating a women's wing, they effectively define what women can aspire to. It is a way of saying politics is a man's game, but women may be adjunct or auxiliary, members of the party. Naturally this move excludes women from decision-making processes.

member from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A chairman shall be appointed by them from their number.'

It could be reasoned from the above that the provisions for women are indirect and not specific. Consequently, the position of women members is uncertain.

In general, women have never held positions in the parties beyond those of one of many vice-chairpersons. The negligible presence of women in institutionalised politics is equally apparent in their low participation as party executives, elected officers and political appointees. Under the superimposed attempts at postcolonial democracy women were granted a token presence in systems that remained largely patriarchal. Their political presence in decision-making remained highly circumscribed. The marginalisation of women continued into the Fourth Republic.

LEGAL / CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES AND WOMEN'S PRESENCE IN GOVERNMENT

Nigerian women, like their counterparts around the world, face discrimination that limits their opportunities to develop their full potential on a basis of equality with men. According to the Declaration of the Summit of All Women Politicians in Nigeria held in Abuja on 28 June 2002 and organised by Global Rights in collaboration with the Centre for Population and Development Activities and Gender and Development Action, the 'women of Nigeria have noticed with utter dismay the almost complete deterioration of our political and social values, born out of more than three decades of continued male-dominated and -oriented misrule'.

Societal obstacles like religion, tradition and other beliefs must not be allowed to stand in the way of women's progress, women should not be domesticated, they should enjoy the same rights to work and the same associated benefits as men. They, along with men, must have access to free and functional education and health care and the electoral process must not be a preserve of the rich.

Certainly, 'if the definition of democracy allows for diversity of opinion and the participation of different groups, then it cannot thrive by excluding women, which effectively constitute half of the world's population and half of each and every single national population' (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003). The fact that the Constitution is supposed to promote the evolution of the democratic process is not in doubt. Indeed, the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all Nigerian citizens by law.

Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution states that:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate

with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42 states further that:

1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

These sections of the Constitution confirm that any Nigerian, irrespective of gender, may go to court to seek redress if his or her franchise is violated. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and there is nothing in it that excludes women from participating in politics. What seems to be debatable is whether the democratic process can flourish in the current dispensation where constitutional guarantees for women's participation in politics are limited.

Another point of interest is the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC), inaugurated by the late president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The ERC, which was mandated to review and ensure the quality and standard of general elections, addressed some of the pertinent issues of the country's electoral democracy. The committee, headed by a retired chief justice, Justice Muhammed Uwais, acknowledged the voices of women and their proposals for gender democracy and made some gender-sensitive recommendations worthy of note (Akiyode-Afolabi 2010).

For example, the ERC recommended that the chair and deputy chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should not both be of the same gender and that of six geographical representatives two must be women. In addition, there should be a representative from the women's organisation. The ERC also recommended that two of six geopolitical zonal representatives on the parties' registration and regulatory commissions must be women and that 20% of the members of the governing bodies of political associations should be women, while political parties should nominate more women and youths as candidates and ensure that women have equal access to leadership opportunities within party organisations.

The committee recommended that for the purposes of proportional representation political parties nominate at least 30% female candidates and 2% physically challenged candidates for legislative elections.

The only possibly gender friendly proposal by the National Assembly for the 2010 Electoral Act was a new clause allowing candidates to stand as independents and this was later thrown out by the state houses of assembly. As Akiyode-Afolabi (2010) notes, this development is an illustration of 'the failure of the Nigerian state ... to put a legal framework in place to support a gender friendly electoral system'. The experiences of women during the last four general elections, particularly that in 2011, are a manifestation of the fact that political parties have refused to integrate women's needs and concerns into the business of democracy.

Attempts by political parties to present a gender agenda through public pronouncements at campaign rallies and references in their manifestoes to women's political development are just gimmicks to woo women voters. In fact, there is a disregard for women's political contributions and their gender concerns. There are only a few women on the national executives of political parties in Nigeria and where women do manage to get to this level they occupy mediocre positions like welfare and the organisation of social events or they are ex-officio, which, more often than not, means politically redundant. As is evident from the manifestoes and constitutions of a number of parties, almost all the political parties in Nigeria at best pay lip service to women's political development since they are still considered 'outsiders' in the game of politics.²

While democratic transition in Nigeria in 1999 created openings that politicise gender identity and women's representation in public office received a boost between 2003 and 2007 there remains both a dearth of political opportunities for women and severe self-reinforcing constraints on gender participation. Although the numbers of women in politics are increasing, they remain grossly under-represented. An analysis of Nigeria's electoral system shows that there was an unprecedented increase in the number of female candidates in the 2003 and 2007 elections and women generally were encouraged to participate and to stand for political office, yet only a handful of women made it to the end.

There was a marginal increase in the numbers of women in governance after the general elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007 but fewer women were successful in the polls in 2011 than in 2007. As at 2011 only about 8% of those in political office were women.

An overview of the four elections shows that 2.8% of representatives in the Senate in 1999 were women, 3.7% in 2003, 8.3% in 2007 and 6.4% in 2011. In the House of Representatives the percentages were 3.3%, 6.1%, 7.2% and 6.7%. The percentage of women elected as deputy governors was 2.8% in 1999, 5.6% in 2003

2 For reported cases of women politicians being cheated out of nomination as party candidates see Mangwat, Okechukwu & Mahdi 2009; Ibrahim, Jibrin & Salihu 2004; Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003; Akiyode-Afolabi & Odemwingie 2008.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Women Elected in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011

Position	Number of seats available	1999		2003		2007		2011	
		Number of women	% of total	Number of women	% of total	Number of women	% of total	Number of women	% of total
Presidency	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	3	2.75	4	3.7	9	8.3	7	6.4
House of Reps	360	12	3.3	21	6.1	26	7.2	24	6.7
Governors	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deputy governors	36	1	2.8	2	5.6	6	16.7	2	5.6
State houses of assembly	990	12	1.21	38	3.48	52	5.25	69	7.0
Total	1 531	27		67		94		102	

Source: Adapted from INEC 1999, 2003, 2007 & 2011 results

and 16.7% in 2007. The percentage dropped to 5.6% in 2011. In the state houses of assembly the percentages were 1.2%, 3.5%, 5.25% and, significantly, 7.0%.

These results fall below the mandate of the United Nations and of civil society groups, which advocate 30% representation (Pogeson 2005). Moreover, the marginal increase was due to the growing political consciousness of women and the activities of women's and civil society organisations. It was not in any way the result of any deliberate government policy geared to enhancing women's participation in electoral politics (Iloh & Ikenna 2009).

Nigerian women have not progressed beyond the level they occupied under the military, remaining underrepresented in the current democratic governance and holding less than 8% of elected positions at all levels of governance. This is the case despite the government's commitments at international, regional and national levels. For instance, Nigeria endorsed both the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), which provides for an affirmative action policy, and Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment. It also instituted a National Gender Policy.

The BPFA specifically enjoined political parties to:

- (a) Consider examining party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women;
- (b) Consider developing initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral processes;
- (c) Consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm

Conscious of the need for change, many gender activists and civil society organisations in Nigeria have organised advocacy, training and research programmes on affirmative action for women leaders in political parties. They have succeeded in encouraging a significant number of women to compete for political office in an effort to ensure that women, in line with Nigeria's National Policy on Women, occupy at least 35% of all appointed and elected posts.

These efforts at sensitisation and advocacy notwithstanding, the targets of women's representation continue to elude the country. Statistics provided by UN Women (2011) on the current number of women holding political office in the country show that to achieve the 35% outlined in the National Gender Policy and the international target of 30%, 536 and 460 positions respectively of 1 533

(excluding the posts of president and vice-president) would have to be occupied by women. Political parties must provide an enabling environment if these targets are to be attained.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE REPRODUCTION OF PATRIARCHY

Political parties are an essential component of democracy and are central to our understanding of how politics works. In a democracy they are the crucial link between the citizens and the government. They are specifically designed to allow groups to be heard that might otherwise be left out of the system. By competing in elections and mobilising citizens behind particular visions of society, as well as through their performance in the legislature, parties offer citizens important choices in governance, avenues for political participation and opportunities to shape their country's future. They provide a way for citizens to hold elected party officials accountable for their actions in government.

Members of various political parties reflect the diversity of the cultures from which the parties emerge. Some are small and built around a set of political beliefs. Others are organised around economic interests or shared history. Still others are loose alliances of different citizens who may only come together at election time. When public confidence in political parties is compromised the entire democratic process suffers. In all sustainable democracies the party system must be deeply and durably entrenched in the fabric of society.

Political parties are, therefore, central to the advancement of women's participation in politics. They play a central role in recruiting and endorsing candidates for election and in supporting specific items on parliamentary agendas. That is to say, they are the pathway for women's entry into the political arena. Sections 221-229 of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution make detailed provision for the registration, functioning, conduct and finances of political parties, setting out the conditions for their registration.

Only three parties were registered to contest the 1999 elections but the Electoral Act was later amended and the procedure for registering parties was liberalised and 63 parties registered for the 2011 elections. Of these, the United National Party for Development (UNPD) was the only female-led party in the country. Its national chairperson, Chief Ebiti Ndok, was the party's presidential candidate.

Nonetheless, Nigeria retains a very illiberal regulatory regime for the registration and functioning of political parties. Consequently, women are left out, not only as contenders but also as card-carrying members of existing political parties (Ibrahim, Okoye & Adambara 2006). The question then is: 'why have Nigerian women not been able to break through and into the political party

machinery?'. One of the reasons is possibly the fact that the parties are 'consciously male-biased, formed and run/operated based on male fraternal connections and relationships ... run as "old boy" networks, which leave little room for women to come in'. That is to say, '[t]he agenda setting (in all political parties) is male even the meeting hours reflect men's timetable rather than women's' (Mangvwat, Okechukwu & Mahdi 2009, p 86). This pattern of gender insensitivity cuts across party lines. Other barriers that have directly or indirectly militated against women's participation in politics include a lack of internal democracy, the monetisation of politics, godfatherism and an unfavourable terrain characterised by thuggery.

More often than not, party membership is largely dominated by men and this tends to affect women when it comes to selecting or electing candidates for elections. 'The effect of these conditions is that parties that emerge must be very big, very rich and have the capacity to bring together money-wielding forces from different parts of the country' (see Mangvwat, Okechukwu & Mahdi 2009; Ibrahim & Salihu 2004; Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003; Akiyode-Afolabi & Odemwingie 2008).

Consequently, the major factor in the establishment of political parties is not the aggregation of people with similar ideologies or interests but the establishment of ethnic coalitions led by regional barons with strong financial backing.

Increasingly, women are incorporated into the political system as subordinate, ineffectual adjuncts to men and the nature of their incorporation reveals the persistence of male dominance and gender bias over time (Okome 2001). More often than not men constitute a larger percentage of the party membership and this tends to affect women when it comes to selecting or electing candidates for public office.

One of the reasons why women have not been able to break into the political party machinery is the fact that the parties and their constitutions and manifestoes are consciously male-biased, formed and operated and based on fraternal connections and relationships. That is to say, men dominate the setting of agendas in all political parties; even the meeting hours reflect men's timetables rather than women's. Since men usually form the majority in a party's structures they tend to dominate the party hierarchy and are therefore in a position to influence the party's internal politics.

As Okoosi-Simbine (2003) observes, the marginalisation of women within parties is a major hurdle for women to contend with. 'The structures and caucuses of the political parties are mostly male dominated. They are therefore inevitably tilted to the promotion of the interest of men.' Women usually constitute a smaller percentage of political party membership because of the social, cultural and religious attitudes of different sections of Nigerian society, which often relegate women to the background.

Parties have formal procedures for the election of their leaders but these procedures are often disregarded. An important aspect of the parties' internal functioning is that the regulatory framework outlined above tends to give rise to a situation in which political 'godfathers' play a major role in internal party politics, so, where parties do adhere to the formal procedures the godfathers have ways of determining the outcome.

At party congresses leaders are elected and candidates are nominated for elective positions. The elections, however, are usually pre-determined and party bosses or godfathers tend to have the final say in the selection of leaders. The fact that they are unwilling to allow internal party democracy frequently leads to conflict and constrains the development of parties as popular organisations. Indeed, over the years these party chiefs have developed comprehensive techniques for eliminating popular aspirants from party posts and for preventing them from being nominated for elective positions (Ibrahim, Okoye & Adambara 2006).

In studies conducted by Ako-Nai (2005), Bruce (2005) and Mohammed & Okeosi-Simbine (2006), the inability of women to attain party executive positions was identified as a major cause of their marginalisation, especially with regard to gaining their party's nomination. Women's experiences during party primaries have not improved at all in successive elections. Evidence abounds of deliberate manoeuvring by party loyalists and inclinations of preferences for male aspirants over their female counterparts (Mangvwat, Okechukwu & Mahdi 2009; Ibrahim & Salihu 2004; Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003).

Scholars and activists believe that alongside these undemocratic procedures parties have also instituted techniques for the elimination of popular and female aspirants from party primaries. These techniques include the misuse of power by powerful 'party owners', party barons, state governors, godfathers and so on; zoning and other forms of administrative fiat; violence by thugs or security personnel; bribing officials and voters to support particular candidates and disregard for the results for the vote, declaring the loser to be the winner (Akiyode-Afolabi & Odemwingie 2008; Ibrahim, Okoye & Adambara 2006). All these ploys discourage women from standing.

Party funding is another avenue for the marginalisation of women, youths and other vulnerable groups and individuals. Parties need funding in order to survive, compete and perform their democratic functions, both during election campaigns and in the intervals between elections. Yet political money and those who donate it are widely seen as problematic – at times even as threats to democracy. In a country where there is still extreme poverty politics is tied to cash and elections go to the highest bidder.

Lack of adequate finance is a crucial hindrance to effective female participation

in politics in Nigeria. Most women do not have the financial resources of their male counterparts. Although political parties are partly funded by the state, most of their funds come through party financiers and the details of these sums are rarely recorded (Ibrahim, Okoye & Adambara 2006). Indeed, the role of money in contemporary Nigerian politics is so overwhelming that it tends to supersede other considerations. This has implications for the representation of women, both formal and informal, and for their voice in the formulation of policies affecting their society.

While women are poorly represented in the lower levels of government they are rarer still in the upper echelons of decision-makers. The absence of women from structures of governance inevitably means that national, regional and local priorities – that is, the way resources are allocated – are typically defined without meaningful input from women, whose life experience gives them a different awareness of the community's needs, concerns and interests from that of men.

Though women participate in campaign rallies and voter registration exercises they seem to be left out when it is time for elections or appointments. Following the political party primaries in the 2011 elections it became evident that the elimination of women through a well-orchestrated process of manipulating the outcome of most primaries was virtually party policy across the board. Most of the women who sought to compete in the primaries were eliminated, although the parties had promised that many female aspirants would be encouraged and supported in their search for nomination.

In general, party officials refused to take the candidacies of female aspirants seriously. Ironically, one of their main reasons was the affirmative action policy adopted by some parties, which waived nomination fees for female aspirants. In most constituencies party executives set out to portray women as having insufficient commitment to the party. Local party barons argued repeatedly that by convincing the national executives to waive nomination fees women had demonstrated a lack of commitment to party development. It was said that male candidates were more committed because they made their financial contributions willingly.

According to Hon Habiba Sabo Gabarin (2004), the PDP's policy of waiving fees for women was being thwarted by power-brokers within the party who 'hid nominations forms from women and so eventually women aspirants had to pay the full cost to get the forms, or at least paid by way of "donations" to the party'.

Another strategy used to exclude women is 'cultural deviancy'. The argument is that Nigerian culture does not accept assertive, or public, or leadership roles for women. Concerted campaigns portraying female aspirants as acting in contravention of their culture are designed to marginalise them. Closely associated with negative labelling is the use of abusive language to demoralise and

delegitimise female aspirants. Many of them were subjected to smear campaigns centred on their alleged loose moral standing and some were insulted directly. In a newspaper interview Senator Grace Bent, a member of the Senate from 2007 to 2011, cited blackmail, mudslinging, maligning and character assassination as vices that go with politics in Nigeria (*Saturday Vanguard* 2008, p 16; Ibrahim, Okoye & Adambara 2006).

The provisions of a number of the parties' manifestoes acknowledge the importance of women in society and the need to support their participation in politics. A close analysis of the constitutions and manifestoes indicates that there is insufficient provision for women. A review by the author prior to the 2011 general elections shows that the mission statements, goals, mottos and objectives of most political party constitutions and manifestoes are gender neutral. While they speak of gender equality in theory, for example, the motto of the ACN shows a commitment to justice and peace; without gender equality there cannot be justice.

Another example is the motto of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which emphasises equal opportunity. The same applies to the Movement for the Restoration and Defence of Democracy (MRDD), the PDP and the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), to mention a few. A detailed analysis of subsequent provisions, particularly relating to internal structure, however, belies these aspirations. Another issue of interest is the laudable membership clauses in party constitutions. All the constitutions reviewed open their membership to all without discrimination; however there is a need to make the membership of equal benefit to all in reality. It is doubtful whether there is a clear understanding of the implications of gender as a category.

While political parties have embraced the principle of a quota system, the review revealed that there appears to be no uniform quota. For example, the Change Advocacy Party (CAP) advocates 50% representation but the Labour Party aims only for 30%. Moreover, only a few women were elected as chairpersons and councillors. Indeed, no woman holds a substantive position except in the relatively new parties, where a few are to be found in the national executive council. A look at clauses relating to boards of trustees, party caucuses and congresses, which are powerful organs in the party, shows that there are no significant numbers of women members and the quotas apportioned to women amount to mere tokenism.

THE 2011 ELECTION SITUATION

Before the 2011 political party primaries the president's wife, Dame Patience Jonathan, initiated the Women for Change Initiative (WCI) as her pet project. The

first lady called on Nigerian women to stand for election in 2011 and urged men to support those who had already made their intentions known. Interestingly, she assured the men that the women would remain loyal and committed and would continue to take care of their homes. She also advised women to shun discriminatory practices against their fellows and to unite in their quest for equitable political representation (Taiwo 2011).

In a bid to help women achieve their dreams in politics, prior to the 2011 elections the Ministry of Women Affairs assured all successful female political candidates of financial support. This would come through a women's political trust fund designed to increase the number of women elected and appointed to political positions at all levels of governance. The fund aims to provide aspiring women politicians with some financial support for their campaigns, irrespective of the party to which they belong.

The fund, which was also intended to provide logistical support for female candidates in the 2011 elections and beyond, was supported by the United Nations. According to the Minister of Women Affairs, the federal government would make available N100-million of seed money and this, together with expected funds from UN Women and other development partners, was to be disbursed by the Women's Political Trust Fund under its donor-basket support programme (Ashefon 2011; Taiwo 2011).

The dismal showing of women politicians in the 2011 party primaries indicates that, such initiatives notwithstanding, women still have a long way to go to be accepted and voted into office. This was particularly evident in the PDP's presidential primary election, held on 13 January 2011. The only female candidate, Sarah Jibril, who stood against President Goodluck Jonathan and the former vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, received only one vote to Jonathan's 2 736 and Abubakar's 805. It appears that Sarah Jibril voted for herself.³

Evidently, primaries remain largely a charade. The governorship primaries were no better, with women either losing or being advised to step down. Many sitting female legislators lost the primaries. An assessment of the performances of women during the party primaries reveals that the number nominated as candidates across the board fell 'below the expectation of the Ministry [Women Affairs] and other concerned stakeholders like the United Nations ...' (United Nations 2011).

Although the largest number of women ever stood in the 2011 primary elections the number of female candidates who won their state's primary elections was disappointing. As indicated in the UN Women's preliminary report (UN 2011),

3 Sarah Jibril's presidential ambitions emerged in 1992 when she was an aspirant in the defunct Social Democratic Party. Six years later she contested on the platform of the PDP but lost to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo.

the 'party primaries indicate that neither the national 35% nor the international 30% targets would be met after the 2011 general elections'. As a former senatorial aspirant in Lagos State, Chief Onikepo Oshodi, observed, female participation is commendable, 'but it is more of men's affair'.

'Women came out in large numbers for the primaries [more than 10 000 stood] but they were badly treated by the party machinery,' she said. She noted that 'women face hostilities from political bigwigs, pressures on them to step down despite their popularity in their various constituencies and those delegates were wooed with cash which these women could not afford' (Ashefon 2011).

Although there were more female candidates for most of the elected positions than there had been in the three previous elections, Ebiti Ndok was the only female presidential candidate. There were four female vice-presidential candidates, namely, Rose Yakubu of the African Renaissance Party (ARP), Kadijat B Abubakar of the Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Binutu Fela Akinola of the Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH) and Bilikisu Ismo Magogo of the National Transformation Party (NTP).

As Table 2 shows, 10 037 people stood for the seven levels of executive office. Of these only 909 (9.1%) were female. The table also shows that the position of deputy governor attracted more female candidates (16.7%) than any other executive office. This was closely followed by the percentage of contestants for the office of vice-president (15%). The lowest percentages were in the gubernatorial (3.7%) and presidential (5%) contests. The implication of this is that very few women made it onto the parties' candidates' lists.

Table 2
Gender Distribution of Candidates by Office

Office	GENDER		Total
	Female number [%]	Male number [%]	
Deputy governor	58 [16.7]	289[83.3]	347[100]
Governor	13 [3.7]	340[96.3]	353[100]
House-of-Representatives	220 [9.1]	2 188[90.9]	2408[100]
President	1 [5.0]	19[95.0]	20[100]
Senate	90 [10.1]	800[89.9]	890[100]
State assemblies	524[8.7]	5 475[91.3]	5 999[100]
Vice president	3 [15.0]	17[85.0]	20[100]
Total	909[9.1]	9128[90.9]	10 037[100]

Source: Author's computations based on data from the INEC database

It is instructive to note that not all states held gubernatorial elections because some governors began their terms later than others because the 2007 election results in their states had been contested.⁴ Among these were the governors of Edo, Ekiti, Osun and Anambra states (www.inecnigeria.org/about/).

A total of 353 candidates contested gubernatorial seats. Thirteen (3.7%) were women, who stood in ten states, namely, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kano, Kebbi, Kwara, Oyo and Plateau. None was successful, which means that to date the closest women have come to playing a role at the most crucial level of governance in the states has been election as deputy governor. Nigeria is yet to produce a female executive governor of a state apart from the brief period that Dame Virginia Etiaba, deputy to Governor Peter Obi, acted as governor of Anambra State when he was 'illegally' impeached by the state house of assembly (Irabor 2011).

Virginia Etiaba governed from November 2006 to February 2007, when an appeal court nullified the impeachment. In 2010, following a court of appeal judgement declaring Dr Kayode Fayemi the lawful winner of the gubernatorial election in Ekiti, the seventh female deputy governor, Olufunmilayo Olayinka, assumed office.

The 2011 general elections produced only one female deputy governor – the ACN's Adejoke Orelope Adefulire of Lagos State. Adefulire had served as the Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs before the party adopted her as its candidate for deputy governor. She replaced Adebisi Sarah Sosan, the outgoing deputy governor to incumbent governor Babtunde Fashola, who was re-elected.

There was a general increase in the number of male gubernatorial candidates with women as their deputies. At least four parties in Lagos State selected women to stand for this position.

Female candidates constituted 9.1% of the 3 306 candidates from all parties who stood for the National Assembly elections. Despite the number of female aspirants only a few emerged as candidates and fewer of these won – fewer than had done so in 2007. Of the 109 victorious senators in 2011 only 7 (6.4%) were women. The successful candidates were Nkechi J Nwaogu, Helen U Esuene, Nenadi Usman and Aisha Jummai of the PDP, Christiana N O Anyanwu and Joy Emordi both of the APGA and Chief Oluremi Tinubu of the ACN.

There was also a significant drop in the number of successful female candidates for the House of Representatives, with women winning only 19 of the 360 available seats (5.27%). This is an abysmal figure in the light of the successes

4 The Electoral Act provides for contestants to challenge the outcome of elections before election tribunals and the Court of Appeal is the apex court in respect of election matters.

recorded in 2007, 2003 and 1999, when the figures were respectively 27(7.5%), 21(5.8%) and 12(3.3%) (Irabor 2011). The decrease in the percentage of female candidates who won is particularly disturbing in the light of the increase in the number of women who contested the 2011 elections.

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

It is evident from the above that very few Nigerian women have successfully contested political positions in spite of the pioneering efforts of women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo in the 1950s. This is largely due to their limited presence in the political parties that are the gatekeepers.

Within the parties, tokenism in appointments as well as blocked channels of access to circles of leadership have been a major element in gender relations (Mba 1982; Okome 2001; Mama 1997). 'Men are the major determinants of political actions and inactions generally concerned with the perpetuation of power of the state ... when women compete with men for access to political power, they do so on the terms already established by men for competition among themselves' (Chapman 1993, p 11, cited by Agablaobi 2010).

Women are further challenged by family and religious values and educational and economic disadvantages that perpetuate their subjugation and disempowerment. Thus, an examination of the status of Nigerian women in political parties cannot be divorced from the consideration of the entire political situation in the country. The lower status of women, due to gender imbalances that arise out of unequal opportunities and access to control over productive resources and benefits, greatly impaired their chances in the 2011 elections.

As indicated above, the internal selection processes of political parties are fundamental in the determination of the gender situation within them. Most parties proclaim gender equality in their constitutions and manifestoes but the reality is that the internal party leadership still favours men. There is, therefore, a need to continue to press for the appointment of more women to internal party structures and for the system to be amended to include more women through affirmative action, quotas and other measures, so that women who seek office survive the selection process at party level. It is also important for selection procedures within parties to be inclusive, transparent and democratic.

Women need to join political parties in large numbers and to be key decision-makers within them in order to change the existing institutional and structural discriminatory practices (Van Allen 2001).

Despite the existence of constitutional provisions and progressive laws, policy frameworks, conventions and protocols to protect or promote gender equality, religious and cultural practices and customary law or administrative

practices that lack a gender perspective marginalise women. Patriarchy must be addressed in the following ways: establishing continuous dialogue between female and male leaders, increasing women's participation in local elections, endorsing and entrenching a quota system/mechanism in national and political party constitutions, reviewing electoral systems and adopting those most conducive to women's participation (for example, proportional representation). Political parties should establish legal funds to enable women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices in court.

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SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 2011 ELECTIONS

Osioma B C Nwolise

Dr Nwolise is Senior Lecturer and Acting Head, Department of Political Science,
University of Ibadan

e-mail: osynwolise@yahoo.com; politicsibadan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the security arrangements that undergirded the relative peace and order that characterised the 2011 general elections. It explores the security guarantees for the various phases of the election and argues that the elaborate security arrangements not only ensured relative peace but contributed to the credibility of the elections. It argues, further, that the neutrality of the security agencies reflects the commitment of the president to ensuring free and fair elections and therefore the uncompromised use of security agencies. The agencies were therefore able to cooperate with each other and with the electoral management body to support the electoral process. The article also suggests possible improvements in the security arrangements for future elections.

INTRODUCTION

Survival is not just an important value in the contemporary world, it is the most important value, whether for an individual, a group, or a nation. Hence the popular assertion that self-preservation is the first law of nature. Anxiety about the security of a nation has been a long-standing 'diet' of political leaders and is as old as the nation-state itself (Brown 1982) and the fundamental issue has always remained the survival of the nation (Brennan 1962).

The issue of security has become even more important recently, with domestic forces easily able to align with external enemies to cause outrageous national calamities, as is the case with the Boko Haram in Nigeria, or where external elements use domestic platforms to achieve the type of destructive goals they did in America on 11 September 2001. Thus, though terrorism (national or international) has raised current anxiety levels over national security to unprecedented levels, security has always been an issue of great concern. Adam

Smith (quoted in Whynes 1979, p 1) as far back as the 18th century argued that the provision of national defence from the taxpayers' money is the 'first duty of the sovereign'. Fischer & Green (2004, p 21) remind us what security implies and of its original goals of protecting citizens and kings as well as its contemporary tasks in the face of computer crimes and world terrorism. In their words:

Security implies a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and without fear of disturbance or injury ... Thus, in medieval England there were programmes to clear bush and other concealment on either side of the King's roads as a precaution against robbers, and to protect citizens from night thieves there were night watchmen ... The introduction of high-tech systems and computers has changed the nature of the job of the 21st-century security professional. Security today must be directed toward modern problems including computer crime and world terrorism.

The United Kingdom, in preparing for the London Olympics, has budgeted millions of pounds for security. In addition, the navy, police and airforce carry out daily exercises designed to keep the nation secure before, during, and after the games. The USA has, since 11 September 2001, reorganised its security machinery, creating a new Department of Homeland Security, which is the largest department in the country today, consuming billions of dollars annually. These examples show the lengths to which nations go to ensure national security, especially in these days of terrorism, kidnapping, piracy, and suicide bombings.

As Nigeria prepared for the 2011 general elections there were visible signs of security threats, as highlighted in detail below. Among these were Boko Haram bombings in Borno, godfathers and their thugs, the assassination of political opponents and the creation by several politicians of private 'armies'. In a situation where high profile politicians each had between five and ten personal guards (excluding the several thugs who could be mobilised at will), 600 000 politicians spread over 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory meant 6 000 000 thugs, a number that far outweighs the number of defence and security personnel in the country.

Thus, there was a need to provide security for citizens, politicians, electoral campaigners and contestants, officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), electoral materials, voters, votes cast, polling units, as well as collation centres. This article examines the security arrangement for the 2011 elections. The essence is to evaluate the arrangement and highlight necessary improvements for better performance in the future.

The discourse benefits from the social contract theory expounded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see Cress 1987) and the frustration-aggression theory of Sigmund Freud (1939) and Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears (1939). National governments have obligations to citizens, the most outstanding of which is security. In return, citizens surrender some of their rights to the state.

One right they do not surrender is the right to participate in the democratic governance of the state, especially to elect its leaders, and the frustration of this right may engender violence and insecurity. Unscrupulous politicians, especially the mercantile godfathers in pursuit of their undemocratic political plans and ambitions, may unleash mayhem on the people. The incumbent government may deploy the defence and security apparatus against the people in an attempt to ensure that its favoured candidates win elections. Where such a move is suspected the people themselves may organise to protect their vote and to checkmate the state.

Akzin (1960, pp 706-8) asserts that elections have both technical and social relevance. The technical relevance lies in the process by which an office is assigned to a person or contestant through an act of volition involving the simultaneous expression of many people's choice. The social relevance lies in participation in the electoral process and the achievement of governance by consent. This consent, as Mayo (1960, p 73) puts it, imbues an elected government with legitimacy, as the main 'purpose of the whole electoral process is to produce a government invested with legitimacy'.

There was more to the 2011 elections in Nigeria than merely assigning candidates to positions, getting the consent of the people, and imbuing the emergent government with legitimacy. The elections provided a platform for testing President Goodluck Jonathan's avowed commitment to preside over free, fair and credible elections and also INEC's claim to have the will and capacity to organise credible elections.

PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE AS IMPETUS FOR THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ELECTIONS

President Olusegun Obasanjo's declaration that the 2007 election was a 'do-or-die affair' for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) set the tone for the violence and fraud that characterised that election. Thus Nigerians welcomed President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's admission during his inauguration speech that the elections had been tainted by fraud and his efforts to reform the electoral process.

However, the reform of the electoral process was retarded by his protracted ill health, long absence from the country and eventual death. On assuming office as president, Yar'Adua's successor, Goodluck Jonathan, assured the country of

his desire to carry out electoral reforms. He reassured Nigerians that their votes would count and that he would ensure free and fair elections in 2011.

With the re-delimitation of constituencies and wards effected even before Professor Attahiru Jega was appointed chairman of INEC, the processes of the 2011 election began with the registration of voters from 15 January 2011, in line with the Electoral Act of 2010. To ensure that the exercise was made easy for prospective voters the government closed schools and used them as venues for the exercise.

Although there was initial apathy, and logistical challenges, including the late arrival of materials, the registration exercise was successful and ended with the display of the voters' register. However, during the exercise there were serious security challenges in some parts of the country where incidents of violence intensified with the commencement of campaign rallies. Clashes between the supporters of different parties led to the death of several people and the destruction of property.

For example, there were bomb blasts in Jos on the first day of the voter registration process, although it is not clear whether the incidents were linked to an attempt to disrupt the registration exercise (*Sunday Tribune*, 16 January 2011, p 11). In a major violent incident in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, 10 people were killed and more than 5 000 vehicles (worth N2-billion) belonging to the Akwa Ibom State government were burnt as supporters of the PDP and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) clashed (*Nigerian Compass*, 24 March 2011, pp 1, 50, 51). Violence that broke out in Ekiti State on 23 March led to the killing of two PDP members in Omuo-Ekiti, and in Ondo State more than 11 people were injured in Akure when PDP and Labour Party (LP) supporters clashed in various areas of the town.

At President Jonathan's campaign rally in Port-Harcourt on Saturday 12 February 2011, a stampede resulted in 10 people being trampled to death (Awuzie 2011, 21). The police picked up eight ammunition shells at the venue of the rally (Chukwura 2011, p 7). In Anambra State the campaign trains of Senator Annie Okonkwo of the Accord Party, and Dr Chris Ngige of the ACN were ambushed by thugs sponsored by another party and in Oyo State hoodlums believed to be members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers abducted Julius Olaoye, a leader of the Accord Party.

In Ekiti and Ondo states, according to press reports, two people were killed, while irate party supporters burnt down the PDP and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) secretariats in Hadejia, Jigawa State. In Benue State party thugs beat to death the driver of Lawrence Onoja, who was the ACN's senatorial candidate and who had, earlier in the month, been wounded in an assassination attempt. In Kebbi State, thugs attacked Alhaji Adamu Aliero, former governor of the state, and Alhaji Abubakar Malam, who was the CPC's candidate for governor. In these attacks one person died and eight vehicles and two houses were set alight (*The*

Guardian, 27 March 2011, p 16). Willy Eya (2011, p 65) attributed the violence to the persistent high level of intolerance and the high stakes of politics and predicted that things would get worse. In his words:

Characteristic of elections in Nigeria, stories from the states are already unsettling with reports of varying degrees of harassment, intimidation, thuggery and violence being the order of the day. Already, several lives have been reportedly lost in violence linked to political party primaries and election campaigns since November last year. Analysts argue that based on precedent, the level of violence is expected to increase in the days leading up to and during the elections. As it appears the bloodletting that has been a major characteristic of electioneering across the land is not likely to end soon.

The pre-election political situation left little hope that the elections would be peaceful. Many felt that the security agencies were not up to the task and that the elections were not likely to be credible. This point was made in an editorial in *The Guardian* (27 March 2011, p 16):

The renewed violence of the past weeks, ostensibly during political campaigns, raises again, questions as to the level of the nation's preparedness for the elections. The major posers include whether any election can indeed be conducted under the current atmosphere of fear; and whether confidence can be reposed in the police and other law enforcement agencies to prevent or handle violent crises.

On 23 March, after a Federal Executive Council meeting, President Jonathan called for an immediate halt to the violence (*Sunday Sun*, 27 March 2011, p 6). On 31 March, two weeks before the first in the series of elections, the then inspector general of police, Hadiz Ringim, reorganised and redeployed commissioners of police in the states for the period of the elections. He ordered senior police officers to ensure that the elections were free, fair, peaceful and credible by arresting all troublemakers (Agbambu 2011, p 4). On the same day, the Edo State Police command announced the arrest of two people suspected of having shot and killed Senator Ehigie Uzamere's police orderly in an attack on the senator on 19 March (*Nigerian Tribune*, 1 April 2011, p 3).

Also on 31 March the chief of army staff, Lt General Azubuike Ihejirika, toured army divisions and warned political thugs against any attempts to disrupt voting, warning that 'the military will be armed and ready to contribute its best towards supporting the civil authority' (Olisah 2011, p 2). This show

of commitment to putting a stop to the violence was critical to the security arrangements that undergirded the elections. The high level of violence, tension, anxiety and fear that existed in the country between June 2010 and March 2011 made it necessary for extra security measures to be put in place if the elections were to be free, fair, credible, and non-violent. Without such measures, the 2011 elections would be no better than those of 2007, which were marred by violence and rigging (Suberu 2007).

SECURITY MEASURES

As noted above, the period before the voting days was characterised by violence. Thugs, assassins and arsonists had almost free rein. There were no special arrangements for security during the campaign period. However, special security measures were put in place to ensure free, fair, orderly, secure and credible elections throughout the voting period, which began with the National Assembly elections of 9 April and ended with the gubernatorial elections on 26 April.

Security was concentrated on matters concerning the ballot and voting. This article focuses on eight key areas.

Security of the voters' register

The voters' register is one of the most critical ingredients of any election. Without it, voting cannot take place even if all other elements are available in abundance. The register can also be a source of rancour and litigation that can mar an election, as it is possible for a candidate to be cheated out of a position by the systematic elimination of the names of his supporters from the list and their replacement with fake names or the names of those who will favour the opponent.

Thus, the security of the voters' register is crucial. INEC made solid arrangements for the compilation of the 2011 register, using digital data capturing machines instead of manual registration. These captured not only the names of voters but also their pictures (passport) and finger prints. This eliminated the possibility of individuals registering more than once.

Public education programmes warned against multiple registration and about registration by underage children (younger than 18) and foreigners. Law enforcement personnel were instructed to assist INEC staff to stop such illegal registrations.

Once the registration exercise ended the names were displayed for correction and public complaint and reports of irregularities, to ensure that those who were registered were qualified to hold and use the franchise, especially in terms of age and citizenship.

Security of electoral materials

Sensitive electoral materials such as ballot papers and result collation sheets were printed outside Nigeria and INEC engaged the Nigerian Air Force to distribute them to safe points in states, while the navy transported them on rivers and creeks to difficult terrains (*The Guardian*, 27 March 2011, p 70).

Where necessary, electoral materials were guarded by army and police personnel from the date of transportation through storage, to the day they were used, hence it was not possible, as it had been in the past, for people to break into stores and steal them or to hijack ballot papers in transit for rigging purposes.

Security of INEC offices, officials and staff

INEC offices, officials, staff and equipment were well protected by military and police forces throughout the voting period. Given the incidents of bombing, assassination and kidnapping in the country the 'officers and men of the Anti-terrorism Squad (ATS) of the Nigerian Police Force took over the national headquarters of INEC in Abuja as part of security measures' (Olatunji & Usigbe 2011, p 1). INEC's state headquarters were also well protected, with its personnel, especially the members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), safeguarded by security agents deployed at polling booths and collation centres.

Security of the national borders

Nigeria had had the experience of illegal immigrants participating in riots in the country. The Maitatsine insurgents of the 1980s came into Nigeria through the porous borders with Cameroon. During the registration period some foreigners were found to have slipped into the country to register.

Thus, to prevent aliens from trooping into the country to vote, especially in the North, from Chad, Niger and Cameroon, there was extra vigilance and security at the country's national borders. The Nigerian Immigration Service was involved and the borders were closed on significant days, one of these being 15 April, the day before the presidential election (Nigerian Television Authority Network news, 15 April 2011).

Security of the voters

Prior to the first voting day (9 April), government, INEC and the security forces reassured Nigerian voters of their security. The real threats to voters since 1959 had been political thugs used by unscrupulous politicians, mercantile godfathers and power-hungry party chiefs to intimidate political opponents and chase away

voters, giving the thugs and their paymasters the opportunity to rig elections by snatching ballot papers and ballot boxes, stuffing ballot boxes with thumb-printed ballot papers or exchanging empty ballot boxes at polling booths with boxes that had already been filled.

Among the measures put in place was a restriction on vehicular movement during voting hours, with those who violated the restriction order being arrested. For the presidential election the restrictions were in place from 10pm on Friday 15 April until 6pm on Saturday 16 April.

Also, in some states, such as Oyo State, the police command summoned suspected thugs for 'discussions' about peaceful elections a few days before the beginning of voting for the National Assembly (NASS) elections (Waheed 2011, p 12). In Ondo State the police went further, compelling suspected thugs in the 18 local government areas to sign an undertaking to maintain the peace during the voting period (Waheed 2011, p 12).

Arrangements made to secure the roads and streets also enhanced the security at the polling booths and collation centres.

Security of the streets

Security in the streets was tight on all voting days, especially on the days of the presidential election. The prohibition of movement ensured peaceful roads, making it easy to deal with isolated cases of threats to peace, law, order and security. This author remembers being at the Nigerian Television Authority studios with a top police officer during the National Assembly elections when the officer received a phone call informing him that thugs were creating problems at a spot in Ibadan town. He ordered the movement of lorry loads of mobile police to the spot and, within minutes, the place was quiet.

Military personnel were stationed at strategic junctions, carrying out stop and search operations. In some areas personnel from the Nigerian Police, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Prisons Service, Federal Road Safety Corps, and Civil Defence Corps manned roadblocks with the soldiers. In addition, police personnel patrolled the roads and streets giving confidence to voters, while frightening away the thugs and the godfathers.

More than 370 000 police officers were deployed by police headquarters in Abuja for the elections (*Sunday Sun*, 27 March 2011). Soldiers and security personnel enforced restriction orders on movement, while air force and police helicopters conducted aerial surveillance. There was active cooperation among the defence and security agencies and their personnel throughout the voting period – the first time in Nigeria's history that there had been such a massive turnout and cooperation among all the defence and security forces in the country.

These arrangements caged the thugs and their paymasters (godfathers, party stalwarts and incumbent political leaders) and all brands of election riggers and anti-democratic forces.

Security of the ballot

The vote is the most critical element of an election. It is what links the electorate, the candidate and the post itself. It is the tool with which the voter expresses his or her consent to be governed by whoever is elected into office. It confers democracy and it is with the vote that the people make or unmake (enthroned or dethrone) leaders. Thus, the security of the vote is of the utmost importance.

To ensure this security in the 2011 elections INEC and some political parties used radio and television to urge voters not to sell their franchise (registration cards). They were told that the election was their opportunity to vote in good leaders and vote out bad ones. Thus they were told to use their ballot wisely.

While the INEC chair, Professor Attahiru Jega, and some political parties urged voters not to go home after voting but instead to remain at the polling booth to protect their vote until after the count and declaration of results, the then inspector general of police emphasised the need to avoid crowding polling stations and instructed people to vote and go home.

Professor Jega advised voters to vote and stay at a safe distance from the polling station, 'provided they are calm and peaceful', warning that 'anybody who tries to be rowdy or cause confusion can be picked from the voting area by the law enforcement agencies' (Abubakar & Aliu 2011, p 7). Jega also stated that voters could take with them to the polling stations cameras and mobile phones with camera facilities which could capture instances of rigging or scenes of violence.

These security arrangements gave people hope and confidence that the 2011 elections would be different from previous elections and encouraged them to go out and vote.

Security of the people's verdict and the integrity of the elections

The people's verdict constitutes their democratic choice. It is the golden trophy in the struggle between politicians and the electorate. What happens to the collective verdict of the people determines the integrity of an election. Since 1959 there has been a suspicion that the people's choice in Nigerian elections has always been discarded, while politicians determined who was declared the winner. It is such undemocratic action that, after the 1965 elections, precipitated the revolt in the western region which led to the first military coup, on 15 January 1966.

To ensure the security of the people's verdict INEC recruited a patriotic

segment of the citizenry – the NYSC members – as its ad hoc field staff to man the polling booths, instead of the civil servants who had previously been used for the purpose. INEC also engaged the services as returning officers of serving and retired university lecturers, especially professors and vice-chancellors, who were perceived as men and women of integrity who have, over the decades, built reputations they must protect. The fact that Professor Jega was a former chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, and former vice-chancellor of Bayero University, Kano, facilitated the recruitment of the academics.

An innovation introduced by INEC was a 'Situation Room', in which officials were able to receive text messages, telephone calls and e-mails and check Facebook and Twitter for reports of emergencies and irregularities. With information from these sources INEC was able to control situations in the field, sending electoral materials to where they were needed and correcting field officials whose actions might jeopardise the credibility of the elections.

INEC administered an 'oath of neutrality' to all ad hoc staff and warned that any member of staff caught misbehaving would face the full wrath of the law. Jega emphasised that the commission would cancel on the spot any election in which the number of ballots was greater than the number of accredited voters because 'such outcomes would have been under serious questions or such would have been fraud' (Quoted in Abubakar & Aliu 2011, pp 1, 7).

In the end, INEC ensured that the results were, without doubt, the people's verdict.

EVALUATION OF THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

The security arrangements put in place by government, INEC and the defence and security agencies focused specifically on election days, which probably accounts for the fact that there was a significant amount of violence during the period leading up to the elections. The pre-election period was characterised by the activities of thugs, godfathers, assassins, arsonists and even terrorists. This should not have been so. Tight security should have been provided once the nation entered the electoral season, from the registration process through the campaign period to the announcement of the results. This is a lesson for the future. Campaigning is a crucial aspect of elections – the time when political parties educate, enlighten and mobilise the electorate for the vote. Once violence mars the campaign period voting will be adversely affected.

Because security for the 2011 elections was concentrated on the voting period the post-election violence that greeted the announcement of the presidential election results seems to have caught government and security agencies unawares.

There is no doubt that the security arrangements for the election days were well planned and enforced, but there is room for improvement. Even during the voting period there were cases of security breaches. For example, despite the heavy security in major streets and roads, bomb blasts rocked a polling unit in the Unguwa Doki area of Maidguri, injuring 10 people on 9 April (*Sunday Champion*, 10 April 2011, p 3). On the same day eight people died and 56 were injured when thugs stormed a police station in the headquarters of the Shani Local Government Authority in Borno State (*Leadership on Sunday*, 10 April 2011, p 1).

In Bono, Kebbi, Delta, Osun, and Ogun states violence was experienced on the first day of voting. The INEC office at Abeokuta was set alight, while several people were arrested in Kwara State with false voters' cards. In Imo State, ballot boxes were snatched on 9 April, while 20 NYSC members died in bomb explosions in Suleja on the same day (*Leadership on Sunday*, 10 April 2011, p 11).

Bomb blasts in the INEC office and collation centre at Galadima Junction in Maiduguri between 7 and 8 pm on 15 April were regarded as an attempt to discourage voters from going to the polls the following day.

On 26 April soldiers arrested 60 political thugs in six buses in Isukwuato, Abia State. (*ThisDay*, 17 April 27, p 9), while 133 more were arrested in Kebbi State on the same day; six ballot boxes were snatched in Kano State and in Osun State soldiers arrested a PDP chief and his thugs (*ThisDay*, 27 April 2011, p 11). In Ughelli (Delta State), six thugs were shot dead in a fight with police while trying to snatch ballot boxes (*Sunday Champion*, 10 April 2011, p 3). Thus, despite the heavy security arrangements, there were pockets of security breaches even during the voting period. They were, however, not enough to stop voting, or to prevent the nation from achieving a successful free, fair and credible election.

As the leader of the European Union Monitoring Group in Nigeria, Peterie Alojz, noted, generally the election was carried out in a peaceful and orderly manner and there was large turnout of voters. He was also pleased with the security arrangements (monitored on NTA Nation-wide Report, 'Nigeria Decides', 16 April).

CONCLUSION

The security arrangements for the 2011 elections were the best in Nigeria's history. Thugs and godfathers were caged; throughout the country pregnant women, disabled persons, some of who came in wheelchairs, and aged people were able to vote confidently, peacefully and securely and local and foreign observers were impressed with the security arrangement. The synergy of the defence and security agencies – military, police, customs, immigration, prisons, civil defence, and road safety worked very well and encouraged voters to turn out.

One factor in this positive record was President Goodluck Jonathan's commitment to ensuring a credible election and his choice for chair of INEC reflected this commitment. Professor Jega managed INEC and the election personnel (permanent and ad hoc) in a manner that transformed public perceptions of the possibilities of the institution. At important points during the electoral process he employed the skills of NYSC members and academics in ways that strengthened the credibility of the elections. The disposition of the president, who appoints the leadership of INEC, is critical in this matter.

The cooperation of all defence and security agencies in working for the common good was also an innovation – in the past security agencies were used to cover up election rigging. The synergy among them shows that Nigeria's security personnel will always work as strong bastions of democracy once the political leadership is democratic and the security agents are equipped and funded to perform. Security agents mirror the political leadership. If a soldier or police officer serves a democrat he or she will be a democrat, but if the political leader is a dictator, the soldier or police officer will be an oppressor of the people.

The 2011 elections prove that the problem with elections in Nigeria since 1959 has been non-democratic political leaders who rigged the process. We are inclined to suggest that INEC should begin now to prepare for the 2015 elections, starting with demanding the necessary changes to the Constitution and electoral laws.

Nigerian politicians must build upon the gains of the 2011 elections and resolve never to allow a return to the days of 'do-or-die' elections. The task now is to consolidate and sustain democracy. For 2015, political parties should begin to draw on ideology and focus their campaigns on issues not on personalities. Candidates must also have the humility and patriotism to participate in public debates during campaigns. This will reduce the intensity of electoral competition that often transforms it into warfare.

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THE COST OF THE 2011 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Emmanuel Remi Aiyede & Omo Aregbeyen

Omo Aregbeyen is a lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of Ibadan
email:omoareg@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This article examines the cost of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria in real and financial terms. It reviews the regulatory framework for financing the elections and attempts to estimate the costs, drawing on figures and reports published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and reports relating to the financial activities of political parties, candidates and other politicians. It estimates the cost to have been about N566.2-billion,¹ representing about 2% of the gross domestic product. This figure does not include party and campaign financing. The article explores other, non-monetary, costs, including the loss of life and property in the violence that followed the elections, and concludes that the cost of the elections was too high for the sustenance of democracy. Hopeful that future elections will cost less, it offers suggestions about ways of reducing costs without impinging on the integrity of elections.

INTRODUCTION

Academic preoccupation with the cost of elections has focused largely on political finance. This focus has been driven by the scandals relating to the sources of campaign funds as well as to the sordid use of money to affect electoral outcomes.

According to Pinto-Duschinsky (2004), political finance includes party and campaign funding, the cost of political lobbying, expenses associated with newspapers and media and the cost of litigation. These studies deal with such issues as corruption and regulation and subsidies. While there is a multiplicity of rules and regulations, enforcement has, in most cases, been problematic.

There have been few studies of the political financing of developing democracies and in many cases in these developing countries it is difficult to

¹ This is approximately US\$363-million at N156 to the US dollar.

access data showing the cost of election campaigns and other related activities. In Nigeria this is an acute problem (Adetula 2008, p xxxiii). In recent times, especially with the onset of the global economic recession, the engagement with political finance has been extended to include the general cost of administering elections. This is underscored by the need to support poor countries in promoting effective electoral governance in order to achieve free and fair elections.

Among the studies are those of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), which have focused on the cost of administering election processes such as voter registration, boundary delimitation and the public financing of political parties and campaigns. They also focus on the sources of revenue for funding the administration of election processes. Such sources included contributions from international and bilateral donors to election costs and to civil society, for the training or education of electoral management bodies (EMBs) and the costs of management.

This article examines the cost of the 2011 general elections in real and financial terms. Given the relative ineffectiveness of financial disclosure laws in Nigeria and the remarkable paucity of data on election management and campaign finance, it is an exploratory study. It reviews the regulatory framework for financing the elections and attempts to estimate the financial cost, drawing on figures and reports published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and reports relating to the financial activities of political parties, candidates and other politicians.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ELECTORAL FINANCE

The Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) provide the regulatory framework for the use of money by parties and candidates canvassing for votes in any election. Section 221 of the Constitution provides as follows:

No association, other than a political party, shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at an election.

Sections 225, 226 and 227 deal with party financing and accountability. They require parties to submit to INEC detailed annual statements and analyses of sources of funds and other assets and statements of expenditure. INEC, in turn, is expected to submit a report to the National Assembly on the accounts and balance sheets of every political party. Section 89(2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as

amended) specifies the period to be covered as 1 January to 31 December each year.

Section 89 (3) and (4) of the Act also empowers INEC to authorise any of its officers to gain access to the records and audited accounts kept by a party and to publish such examination or audit in three national newspapers.

Section 229 of the Constitution interprets 'association' to mean any body of persons 'who agree to act together for any common purpose'. This includes associations formed for any ethnic, social, cultural, occupational or religious purpose. Section 228 enables the National Assembly to make laws providing for punishment of any person involved in the management or control of any political party who is found to have contravened sections 221, 225(3) and 227 of the Constitution.

The Electoral Act extends the provisions of the Constitution and of the Electoral Act 2006. Like previous electoral laws it provides for penalties for offences relating to the financing of political parties. Related to these provisions is the Companies and Allied Matters Act 1990 (the CAMA), s 38(2) of which precludes companies from making a donation or gift of any of their property or funds to a political party or association for political purposes. Officers of a company who contravene this provision or any person in the company who votes to contravene the provision must refund the amount or the gift to the company and is liable for a fine.

Unlike previous laws, the Electoral Act 2010 did not provide for grants to be made to political parties. Section 90 of the Electoral Act 2006 empowered the National Assembly to approve a grant to political parties contesting elections. Subsection 2(a) stated that 10% of the grant (30% in Electoral Act 2002) was to be shared equally among all registered parties and subsection 2(b) stated that the remaining 90% was to be shared among the registered parties in proportion to the number of seats won by each party in the national Parliament.

The 2010 Act, like its predecessors, makes detailed provision for campaign contributions. Sections 91, 92, and 93 deal with contributions and election expenses. Each party must keep a record of all contributions and the amount contributed (s 93(2)). Section 91 puts a ceiling on the expenditure to be incurred by candidates according to the offices they are vying for. The provisions of s 91 of the 2010 Act represent an increase in the ceiling of 100% over that provided for s 93 of the 2006 Act (see Table 1).

The increase in the maximum amount for campaign expenses shows that the legislators acknowledge that the provisions of the 2006 Act were unrealistic or that there has been a significant increase in the costs of political finance as a result of inflation. Given that inflation rates in Nigeria have never exceeded 15%, it is more likely to be the former.

Table 1
Ceiling on Campaign Expenditure

Candidates	Maximum expenses 2006 Act N	Maximum expenses 2010 Act N
Presidential candidates	500 000 000	1000 000 000
Gubernatorial candidates	100 000 000	200 000 000
Senatorial candidates	20 000 000	40 000 000
Candidates for the House of Representatives	10 000 000	20 000 000
Candidates for state houses of assembly	5 000 000	10 000 000
Candidates for chairman of local government	5 000 000	10 000 000
Councillorship candidates	500 000	1 000 000

Source: Compiled by the authors

As far back as 1999 TY Danjuma, minister of defence in the Obasanjo government, said he had given Obasanjo's election campaign \$7-million (N1 120 000 000), emphasising that 'not once did he [Obasanjo] find out from me where this money came from. Was it from me, from my business associates, whether I stole it or whatever. He didn't ask me' (Adetula 2008, pp xxxviii-xxix).

During the gubernatorial campaign in Anambra State, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) raised N2-billion at a single fund-raising dinner for its candidate, Chukwuma Soludo. At that event governors of the 28 PDP states donated N1.5-billion; Chief Arthur Eze donated N250-million; Chief Emeka Ofor and Chief Ifeanyi Okoye contributed N100-million and N10-million, respectively. Goodluck Jonathan, who was then vice-president, was chairman of the campaign committee (Ikuomola 2010).

The amount raised was far above the ceiling of N200 000 000 for gubernatorial candidates stipulated by the Electoral Act 2006 which was then in operation. By contrast, Goodluck Jonathan displayed an unusual regard for the electoral law when, during his campaign fund-raising dinner on 29 October 2010 in Abuja, he reminded those in attendance to comply with the fund-raising provision of the Electoral Act, stating that no individual donor should contribute more than N1-million to his presidential campaign. In the end, the exact amount raised at that event was never made public (Ajafu 2010).

Like the 2006 Act the 2010 Act contained elaborate provisions to ensure transparency and full disclosure of campaign and candidate financing. Section 92(3) demands that the election expenses of a political party be submitted to INEC in separate audited returns within six months after an election. Such returns must be signed by the chairman of the party and supported by an affidavit from the signatories swearing to the correctness of its contents.

Section 93(2) requires a political party to keep an account and asset book documenting:

- (a) All monetary and other forms of contribution received by the party;
and
- (b) The name and address of any person or entity that contributes any money or assets which exceed N1 000 000.

Subsection 3 states further that no political party may accept any monetary or other contribution exceeding N100 000 unless it discloses its source to INEC. Subsection 4 requires political parties sponsoring a candidate to file a report with INEC within three months after the announcement of the election results detailing the contributions made by individuals and entities.

There are penalties for failure to make these disclosures or to submit the appropriate reports. Any contravention is subject to a minimum fine of N500 000. Section 91(12) states specifically that any accountant who 'falsifies or conspires or aids a candidate to forge or falsify a document relating to his expenditure at an election or receipt or donation for the election commits an offence that is liable to 10 years imprisonment'.

Section 15(d) of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) stipulates that INEC must 'arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of political parties, and publish a report on such examination and audit for public information'.

On 1 April 2012 INEC published the executive summary of the External Auditors' Report on the accounts of the 63 registered political parties, showing an increasing lack of financial discipline and growing recklessness in the administration of the parties. The report specifically shows that the PDP, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) failed to keep the required records.

The report noted further that 56 political parties spent in excess of N2.5-billion to pursue their political objectives in 2010. The PDP and six other parties were yet to submit their financial records for auditing in line with the Electoral Act. The CPC, the ACN and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), did not have 'prepared and audited internal financial statements for the year 2010', while the

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) failed or refused to keep the conventional books of accounts. The commission also faulted the parties' inability to keep up-to-date membership registers and their failure to manage their assets effectively for the purpose of easy auditing.

The ACN claimed that its income for the year was N84.9-million, while its entire expenditure was put at N11.2-million. INEC's specific comment on the ACN was that its 'conventional accounting books weren't properly maintained. Budget and budgetary control weren't in place and the party doesn't have a well-defined fixed assets register and the assets were not labelled.' The ACN had 'no solid financial plan on ground'. INEC therefore advised the ACN to 'introduce an asset register for its fixed assets all over the country and monitor the deployment of these assets'.

With regard to the CPC, the report stated that its 'budget and budgetary control weren't in place. The CPC put its income for the year at N331.2-million, while its expenditure is N268.6-million. The party does not maintain both its membership and fixed assets register.' The commission also recommended that the CPC 'should maintain a comprehensive membership register and install more effective internal control measures and comply with the political parties finance manual and handbook'. With regard to the ANPP the report notes that the party's conventional books of accounts were properly kept and maintained. However, it described the internal control procedures of the party as weak. The ANPP claimed to have generated N493.7-million and spent N370.5-million.

Parties that did not submit their financial records for scrutiny include the Peoples Mandate Party (PMP), the Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN) the Accord Party (AP), the Action Alliance (AA), the Peoples Salvation Party (PSP), Democratic Front for Peoples Federation (DFPF) and Freedom Party of Nigeria (FPN) (INEC 2012).

The PDP's national publicity secretary, Chief Olisa Metuh, challenged INEC's report, maintaining that his party had always made it a point of duty to submit its audited reports when they were due and in strict accordance with the regulations of the electoral commission. The CPC's spokesman, Rotimi Fashekun, asked whether INEC had explained how it had come to spend N89-billion on a biometric database, saying the 'entire record was useless to be tendered in a court of law'.

For its part, INEC was unable to prosecute any of the parties. The chief press secretary to the chairman of the commission, Kayode Idowu, stated that INEC was not constitutionally empowered to sanction erring political parties (Itua 2012, Oladipo, Itua & Muazu 2012).

ESTIMATING THE COST OF THE 2011 ELECTIONS

One of the tenets of economic analysis is that every activity, action and inaction has a cost. Cost describes the sacrifice of resources (funds, time, etc) that must be given up in order to execute a particular activity and /or achieve a specific goal/objective. Costs are classified in production activity as fixed or variable, explicit or implicit, and, in general, as direct or indirect.

Direct costs are those closely associated with an activity or expressly incurred while carry on an activity. Indirect costs, or opportunity costs, are those that are incidental to an activity, or, put more succinctly, represent the costs of alternative uses of resources vis-à-vis the activity.

The whole essence of an activity, action or inaction is to achieve specific goals/objectives. However, the principle of efficiency – a basic principle of economic management – stipulates that the costs of executing an activity or action should be less than the value of the achieved goals/objectives. If they are not, the use of resources on an activity is described as inefficient and wasteful.

The election process is fundamental to a democratic system of government. According to Mudambi & Navarra (2000), the principle of democracy is implemented through elections and is dependent on the act of voting. Thus, without the electoral process, the democratic framework ceases to exist.

According to the current standard theory and practice of elections, the main expenses, or direct costs of an election are incurred for the following activities: voter registration, boundary delimitation, the voting operation, counting and transmission of results, dispute adjudication, voter education and information, campaigning by political parties and candidates and vigilance or oversight by party representatives and domestic or international observers (Goodwin-Gill 1994, 2006; López-Pintor 2000; López-Pintor & Fischer 2005; OSCE 2001; EU 2002; IDEA 2002). Consequently, electoral costs include all the costs incurred in undertaking such activities, regardless of the kind of agency involved, whether national or local, public or private.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-IFES-sponsored Cost of Registration and Elections (CORE) Project divides electoral costs into three categories:

- core (or direct) costs – those costs that are routinely associated with implementing an electoral process in a stable electoral environment;
- diffuse (or indirect) costs – those costs for election-related services that cannot be disentangled from the general budgets of agencies that assist with the implementation of an electoral process;

- integrity costs – those costs, over and above the core costs, that are necessary to provide safety, integrity, political neutrality, and a level playing field for an electoral process.

In addition, there are indirect or opportunity costs associated with elections. These are the number of worker-hours lost when work-free holidays are declared because an election is taking place. There are also non-monetary costs in intensely competitive elections or elections in volatile situations such as post-election conflict, which may include pockets of violence that involve the destruction of property and loss of human life. The magnitude of election costs (both direct and indirect, core or diffuse, etc) is influenced by a number of factors. These include the size and nature of a democracy; whether elections for different positions are held simultaneously or on different dates; and the extent and sophistication of technology deployed.

Popular opinion is that the bigger a democracy the higher the cost of elections. The CORE Project highlighted the importance of the type of democratic environment, stable, transitional and post-conflict democracies, to determining both the kind and amount of electoral costs. It was shown (see Table 2) that election costs are generally lower in stable democracies than in transitional and post-conflict democracies.

Election costs are also significantly lower when elections are consolidated rather than held on separate dates. The number and time sequence of elections are variables which make comparisons of costs difficult between different countries, since it is not always easy to split the budget and assign figures to different elections.

The extent and sophistication of technology deployed in elections has been shown to contribute to high costs, particularly, when technological innovations are adopted from another country.

A distinction is also made between *personnel* and *operational* costs. Over time, there are *fixed costs*, covering the ordinary functioning of an electoral administration, which will be incurred independently of the occurrence of elections in a given year. On the other hand, *variable costs* are those related to the actual conduct of the election. Almost the entire budget for a specific election consists of variable costs.

There are three types of funding sources:

- Separate election budgets which form part of the consolidated budget of the nation.
- Election-tied funds which form part of the budget of different public agencies, where their main responsibility / activity is something other than elections (eg, civil registries, police, post office).

Table 2
Election Costs in Stable, Transitional and Post-Conflict Democracies

	Stable		Transitional		Post-conflict	
	Core costs*	Integrity costs	Core costs*	Integrity costs	Core costs*	Integrity costs
Voter registration	High	Not relevant	High	Relevant	High	Relevant
Boundary delimitation	Relevant	Not relevant	Relevant	Not relevant	Relevant	Relevant
Voting operation materials, logistics, training	Very high	High	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Counting and transmission of results	High	Not relevant	Relevant	High	Very high	Very high
Dispute adjudication	Relevant	Not relevant	High	Not relevant	High	High
Voter education & information	High	Not relevant	Very high	High	High	Very high
Campaigning by political parties	Very high	Not relevant	High	Very high	Very high	Very high
Vigilance: party agents, domestic monitors, international observers	High	Not relevant	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high

* Cost categories include direct and diffuse costs.

Source: UNDP

- The international dimension. This is often significant in the case of post-conflict elections and even second-generation elections in emerging democracies where donors play an active role in training, monitoring and funding elections.

Costs covered in an electoral budget can readily be identified in the budget document but other costs may be so diffuse that even if they are properly identified they may prove difficult or impossible to assess accurately. There are also degrees of diffuseness. There are costs for activities, which can be clearly identified but still cannot be disentangled from the general budget. An example would be the contribution of civil registries which provide the EMB with information for the production of voter lists or the production of voter lists within the national agency in charge of censuses and statistics.

In addition, there are hidden costs within the ordinary operations of agencies such as the police force, the school system, local governments and government-owned media, which support the electoral process in various ways. While these are real costs, they are not included in the electoral budget and, in many cases, are not easy to assess (Lopez-Pinto & Fischer 2005).

The precise costs of the 2011 elections are difficult to assess because no figures have been officially released. Nevertheless, the costs have been estimated to be about N566.2-billion, representing about 2% of the country's gross domestic product. This figure includes both direct and indirect expenses. The direct costs include voter registration (including the purchase of 132 000 direct data capture – DDC – machines), voting operations (materials, logistics and training), the counting and transmission of results and voter education and information, which amounted to about N195.3-billion (provided by a combination of budgetary and extra-budgetary provisions between 2010 and 2011).

These figures exclude the costs of campaigns and the activities of the various political parties. In INEC's 2010 budget the sum of N50-billion was appropriated for the specific purpose of preparing for the 2011 elections. INEC's chairman initially presented a budget of N74 for the voter registration exercise and the purchase of 132 000 DDC machines. He later revised the figure and presented a budget of N87.7-billion to the National Assembly, which was approved. He later requested an additional N12-billion and, in the 2011 federal government budget, N45.39-billion was provided for INEC (Anaro 2011).

In a statement made during a visit to Ghana, INEC chair, Attahiru Mohammed Jega, said that for the registration process alone 400 000 ad hoc or temporary staff had been deployed in addition to the 12 000 permanent INEC staff, and that about N75-billion had been needed to procure the equipment, train the ad hoc staff, place announcements, move equipment and so on (Smith-Asante 2012).

The cost of elections in Nigeria has generally been very high and the cost of those in 2011 were higher than ever in both absolute and relative terms. For instance, INEC received N87.7-billion (\$576.9-million) for the registration of about 70-million voters over a period of three weeks using biometric devices, while Bangladesh, a developing country like Nigeria and one of the most populous countries in the world, spent about \$65-million, approximately N9.7-billion on a biometric voter registration exercise conducted over a period of 11 months in 2008.

Interestingly, Transparency International rates Bangladesh as more corrupt than Nigeria. However, while Bangladesh's voter registration exercise recorded 80-million eligible voters, Nigeria's, which cost about 600% more, recorded fewer than 70-million.

Even the Afghanistan voter registration exercise, which, in 2009, was labelled the single most expensive component of the electoral process because it cost a whopping \$74-million, approximately N11.248-billion, turned out to be cheaper or more cost effective than that of Nigeria.

Similarly, it cost Canada approximately Canadian \$19.2-million (about N2.8-billion) to register a total of 23-million voters in 2010. Multiplying Canada's cost and the number of registered voters by three will give a figure of about 69-million voters registered at a cost of N8.6-billion – registering the same number in Nigeria cost N87.7-billion (Soyinka 2011).

While there are no systematic data on campaign and party finances, given the poor record keeping of the parties and the inability of INEC get them to obey the law, we can get a sense of the cost of such activities by looking media report.

In the case of the election campaign of Goodluck Jonathan, Abbah, Abdulhamid, Jaafar, Agbese & Sunday (2011) noted that the average cost of hiring the helicopter he used was \$10 000 (about N1.5-million) an hour. The president's campaign team rented the helicopter for trips costing an average of N20-million for each day Jonathan used it for his campaign.

Different groups placed massive advertisements on television, radio and in newspapers. For instance, advertisements monitored on Wednesday, 16 March, the day the president visited both Jigawa and Kano states, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) gave the event in Jigawa more than three hours of live coverage and that in Kano three hours. A three-hour live broadcast on NTA costs N10-million. A single full-page colour insert in a national daily costs between N450 000 and N500 000, while the wrap-around colour advertisements used by the president cost between N1-million and N45-million, depending on the medium, relationship with the medium operators and price negotiations. For instance, *The Guardian* newspaper put the cost of a wrap-around advert at N25-million.

There were intermittent advertisements on Ray Power Radio and Africa

Independent Television (AIT) from early morning to late evening on that day and 14 full-page colour advertisements in newspapers, of these some covering four or more pages. A rough calculation of the cost of these is about N55-million. And these costs only constitute about 5% of the expenses for that one day of campaigning in view of the fact that all the party's officials and top campaign chieftains were paid allowances for accompanying the president on the trip. The figure increases when the cost of food, accommodation and an 'honorarium', given to party chieftains, traditional rulers and other very important persons who could influence the decision of the electorate, are included.

Abbah, Abdulhamid, Jaafar, Agbese & Sunday argue that if these figures are computed and multiplied by the number of days (approximately every day for three weeks) on which the president travelled from one part of the country to another, the president's campaign expenditure would exceed the N1-billion ceiling provided for in the 2010 Electoral Act.

In the same vein, the writers quote one of the presidential aspirants, Pat Utomi, of the Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP), as complaining that President Jonathan's campaign might have cost about N100-million a day, and questioning the source of the funds.

With regard to non-monetary costs, although the massive deployment of security personnel, including the military, meant the level and intensity of violence was not as high as had been feared, there were still substantial cases of violence that led to the loss of human lives and the destruction of property. According to International Crisis Group (2011, p 7):

The rescheduled National Assembly elections on 9 April were heralded by a massive bomb blast within INEC offices in Suleja, near Abuja, causing an unspecified number of deaths and significant damage. There was also a bomb scare in Kaduna the same day. Two bombs exploded in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state and in Bauchi just before the presidential election on 16 April, claiming at least two lives. A few days before the gubernatorial contests, three lives were lost when a bomb exploded in a private house in Kaduna close to the headquarters of the state's law-makers. On 24 April, three lives were lost when bombs exploded again in Maiduguri. Explosions also occurred a few hours before polling units opened on 26 April. The worst violence followed the announcement on 18 April of the results of the presidential election and caught the security and intelligence communities by surprise. It ravaged fourteen Northern states and was reportedly most serious in Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Bauchi and parts of Niger states. Businesses, churches and houses

were torched, looted or destroyed. Over 1,000 people were killed, including an unspecified number of NYSC members. Some female NYSC members were raped or otherwise molested and assaulted. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, about 74,000 people were displaced.

In addition, because of the possibility of violence, the elections involved the deployment of all security forces – the police, the civil defence, the state security service and the military – all costs that are not easily reflected in any estimate.

MAKING SENSE OF THE HIGH COST OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is, by any standards, a large democracy. Its population is estimated at about 170-million and it is the most populous black nation in the world. The land mass is equally massive, which has significant implications for the costs of conducting elections in the country. Nigeria is also a country in transition as well as a post-conflict society with low intensity conflict and flash points in many areas. Democracy is nascent, having emerged from more than three decades of military rule, which eroded many of the society's liberal values.

Due to the absence of a liberal culture and the intense competition for state power, election-related violence is commonplace, thereby increasing the cost of elections. Indeed, the inability to conduct free, fair and credible elections has been a major black spot in Nigeria's democratic experience. The attempt to get the election process right has necessitated starting the registration process afresh for each of the four elections held since the country's return to democracy. While Jega's insistence on a new registration exercise for the 2011 elections was costly, the intention was to lay a solid basis for democratic consolidation by means of comprehensive, accurate and reliable biometric coverage of all eligible voters in the country. The registration exercise significantly increased the cost of the election.

Another reason for the high cost is that the elections were staggered. There were many reasons for this. They include the high level of illiteracy among Nigerian voters which would make it difficult for them to distinguish one ballot paper from another if they were called upon to vote for several different offices at the same time; INEC's inability to cope with the logistics of conducting all the elections in one day; the poor state of infrastructure in the country and the need to checkmate attempts at rigging.

Owing to any one or a combination of these factors elections in the whole or in some parts of the country frequently have to be postponed. For example, the 2011 general elections were postponed because of INEC's logistical problems

and, more importantly, because of the need to prevent politicians from rigging the vote. This postponement is estimated by experts to have cost the nation about N76-billion.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the use of advanced technology for the election process, particularly, the voter registration process, accounted for a substantial proportion – about 40% – of the total direct costs of the elections.

CONCLUSION

Elections are always expensive and it is common during election periods for incumbents to embark on a spending spree as they try to impress voters with their commitment to their welfare. Available evidence suggests that voters respond to recent changes in economic conditions more than they do to changes in the past – and more than to absolute levels of economic well-being. This also suggests, though rather less clearly, that changes in disposable income matter more than changes in the GDP (which are presumably less tangible) and which, in turn, matter more than changes in unemployment (which produce relatively few direct losers) and inflation (which produces many losers but also a good many winners).

Literature on the political business cycle has shown how politicians renege on their macroeconomic commitments during election seasons. They tend to expand the economy during election campaigns in an attempt to woo myopic voters, although the long-term results are sub-optimal. Such actions might provoke inflation when they are financed by deficit budgeting (Krause 2005). This situation is further aggravated by the cost of elections.

In poor countries a lot of the spending during election seasons goes into the campaign process and usually involves the use by incumbents of public resources to gain an advantage over opponents in an intense competition for power. In Nigeria there has been a growing concern about the cost of governance and, more recently, about the cost of elections. While there has been serious concern about the remuneration of public officials, which underlines the intense competition for public office, the cost of elections has become an issue of concern, not only because of increasing amounts but also in terms of the real and other costs, such as violence and social instability.

In financial terms the 2011 elections were the costliest in Nigeria's history. While elections are an essential element of democratic rule, the price that is paid in both financial and other terms must be sustainable if democracy is to be sustained and consolidated. This means that Nigeria must make the most of the 2011 registration exercise. An effort must be made to secure the data and put them to proper use in future elections as well as for other purposes so that voter

registration will become an ongoing exercise that will not have to start afresh for each future general election.

Secondly, an effective and reliable voters' register will enable improvements in the integrity of future elections. To this end, we hope that by 2015 INEC will be able to conduct biometric verifications on voting day. To do this, the commission must link its offices in the 36 state capitals digitally to the central database at its headquarters. If there is no need for a fresh registration process the cost of elections should be reduced significantly. There is also a need to explore the possibility of reducing the number of voting days.

Thirdly, INEC must ensure that its process for procuring electoral materials is streamlined and made more transparent. Although electoral materials are sensitive, the late preparation for the election played a role in the logistical lapses that raised the cost of the elections, especially the postponement of the first set of elections a few hours after they began, a situation largely accounted for by the illness and eventual death of President Yar'adua and the attendant handover crisis. It is hoped that there will be no such costly postponements in the future.

Fourthly, Nigerian politicians must find a way of promoting a liberal culture with respect for human rights, especially the right of ordinary citizens to choose leaders through a free and unencumbered electoral process. They must give due regard to electoral rules and to the rule of law. The provisions of the electoral laws with regard to party and campaign finance must be respected.

As it is now, political parties do not observe these rules. They neither keep proper records of membership and income nor make public disclosure of their accounts. The Electoral Act must include provisions that make it feasible to enforce. The Uwais committee recommended the establishment of an electoral offences commission. While this may involve additional expenditure, its effectiveness and success in having electoral offenders punished will reduce electoral malpractice. In relation to party and campaign finance regulation, this may help reduce the role of money in perverting the electoral process and thereby the cost of elections.

Finally, a major non-monetary cost of elections is violence. The electoral process should be an avenue to promote public participation, political education and the exercise of free choice. When the process involves violence it will be characterised by voter apathy and fear that not only threaten democratic rule but the very foundations of the state. Efforts must be made to reduce incidents of violence during elections. This can be achieved by infusing the electoral process with incentives that discourage the resort to violence, which may involve rethinking the electoral system to ensure that it is not a zero-sum game.

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MONITORING AND OBSERVING NIGERIA'S 2011 ELECTIONS

Olubukola Adesina

Dr Olubukola Adesina is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Email: bukkystars@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Nigeria's 2011 elections marked a watershed in the country's democracy. Before then elections conducted there had been marred by controversy, with monitors and observers who assessed the quality of elections consistently questioning their integrity. The 2011 elections, however, received resounding approval as an improvement. This article examines the monitoring and observation by international and local groups of the 2011 elections. It underlines the qualified credibility of the elections considering the level of irregularities and violence noted by observers and monitors and argues that the declaration of the elections as credible must not detract from the need to be mindful of their inadequacies if Nigeria is to reap the benefit of election monitoring and observation in future elections.

INTRODUCTION

Elections provide an opportunity to test and strengthen a wide range of institutions and processes in a democracy. They offer a country's citizens a means of expressing their political will, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and every other major international human rights instrument recognise as the basis for the authority of government (Merloe 1999, p 1).

Neutral, independent and conscientious observation of the electoral process has become an important element of the democratic process. It contributes to the credibility and impartiality of elections by providing information about the electoral process. Election observation and monitoring build voter confidence in the integrity of the process as well as the integrity of the election management body. The presence of observers and monitors may discourage or expose violence or intimidation and cheating or manipulation of the vote or the results (Pastor 1998; Hyde 2007; McFaul 2007; Kelley 2010).

As it had done with previous elections recently conducted in Nigeria, the government invited several local and international observers to observe the 2011 general elections. The elections, which took place in the fiftieth year of Nigeria's independence, were described as a 'serious test of the strength of the country's commitment to elective government' (INEC 2011, p 1).

Among other reasons, the elections were considered crucial because the 2007 elections had been heavily criticised by both local and international observers. Although those elections resulted in the transfer of power from one civilian administration to another, serious irregularities and election-related violence undermined the credibility of the outcome, weakened the legitimacy of the leaders elected and led to increased public disillusionment with the democratic process. In fact, the late Umar Musa Yar'Adua, who became president as a result of the elections, acknowledged the anomalies that characterised them and appointed an Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) in August 2007, presided over by former Chief Justice Mohammed Uwais, to review the electoral process and the legal framework. In December 2008, the ERC published its report, known as the Uwais Report.

In a bid to ensure that 'every vote counted', Nigeria's electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) made elaborate preparations to ensure that the 2011 general elections were credible and met international standards. Among these arrangements was the body's invitation to both local and international observers to witness the process and outcome of the elections.

This article examines this monitoring and observation process. It reviews some of the reports of local and international observers and examines the extent to which they reflected the quality of the elections.

ELECTION OBSERVATION AND MONITORING

The monitoring and observation of an election is a process through which the election is scrutinised and evaluated for purposes of determining its impartiality in terms of organisation and administration. It involves the 'stationing of independent missions, officials or individuals representing international or local organizations for a specified time in a country which is in the process of organizing a national election with a mandate to closely observe and pronounce on the entire process and outcome' (Rindai 2002, p 2).

Although observation and monitoring are often used interchangeably, the two terms do not mean the same thing. IDEA (1999) defines election observation as:

The purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such

a process on the basis of the information collected by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the process, and whose involvement in mediation or technical assistance activities should not be such as to jeopardize their main observation responsibilities.

On the other hand, Rwelamira & Ailola (1994, p 50) point out that election monitoring is:

[A] little more involved than mere observing. It involves the careful scrutiny and assessment of an election for the purpose of determining its impartiality, in terms of organization and administration. It also includes an assessment of the process and actual formulation of the electoral law and the role of the security forces.

Also, according to the African Union (AU) *Election Observation and Monitoring Guidelines*, as a matter of principle, observers must not supervise or direct; rather, they are to ascertain whether or not the electoral process, in all its stages, is conducted in a climate of freedom and fairness.

Thus, the overriding responsibility of the observers is to verify whether all the competing political parties, individuals and groups enjoy complete freedom of organisation, movement, assembly and expression without hindrance or intimidation, violence or coercion or any other such acts capable of thwarting the will of the people. Therefore, an election observer is a person (local or foreign) who is participating in the electoral process of a given country, not as a voter but as an evaluator of the process, and is accredited to do so by the relevant authorities of that country.

Election monitors, on the other hand, exercise some level of lawful authority over the conduct of elections as well as over the officials involved with the elections. They may also issue instructions to the officials when necessary.

Electoral observation and monitoring are 'designed to boost confidence in the fairness of the electoral process, to help deter fraud in the balloting and counting procedures, and to report to the country's citizens and the international community on the overall integrity of the elections. In addition, observers can mediate disputes between competing political groups if requested and if appropriate, in an effort to reduce tensions before, during and after elections' (Bjornlund, Bratton & Gibson 1992, p 406).

Observation of elections by non-partisan groups has gained acceptance in many parts of the world. The reason for this is the recognition that observation safeguards the integrity of elections. It is also recognised that it helps to ensure that elections are free and fair. If elections are well conducted, this confers legitimacy

on the government to be established. If they are flawed, however, the government may be perceived as illegitimate (NDI 2007, p 21).

Essentially, the primary purpose of observation of elections is to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. It focuses on whether the elections are carried out substantially in accordance with the rules and regulations that are prescribed by law in the country in which they take place. However, election observation is not limited to this role, it also seeks to compare these national laws with international standards, to ensure that they conform to the basic thresholds of democratic elections accepted by the international community. Such observation will also take into account the performance of the election managers, the level of independence given to them by law and the attitude of the government in enforcing the election laws and maintaining law and order. All these will offer an observer a clear picture of the quality of the election process (INEC 2011, p 4).

There are commonly two types of election observers – long-term observers (LTOs) and short-term observers (STOs). LTOs cover basically all the phases of the process, including, but not limited to, voter registration, logistical support, nomination of candidates, campaigning, polling, counting, announcement of results and processing of complaints and disputes. STOs, on the other hand, mainly observe only on polling day. Ideally, election observation should focus on the whole electoral processes. However, such an approach has immense cost implications and most observers focus on the election day, seeing it as a reflection of the way the electoral process has evolved.

In Nigeria, according to INEC, only the commission and its duly authorised personnel are empowered by law to monitor elections in the country (INEC 2011, p 5). Thus, while election monitors are duly authorised personnel of INEC, election observers are independent and report only to their organisations. They observe all phases of the electoral process and report on the electoral laws and the level of compliance with them by electoral officials, government officials and voters. The observers compile complaints about the voters' register, electoral laws, voting, and the vote count and announcement of results and report on these to the appropriate authorities. Such reports are expected to contain their judgement of the conduct of the election as well as on its overall quality.

Basically, there are two categories of observers in Nigeria: local / domestic and international. Local observers are those sponsored by civil society organisations located, formed or based in Nigeria and whose activities are regulated by Nigerian law. International observers are observers deployed by or under the authority of intergovernmental agencies, international organisations and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) not domiciled in Nigeria (INEC 2011, p 7).

The history of election observation in Nigeria started with the establishment of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) on 10 August 1998 to observe

General Abdulsalam Abubakar's transition from military to civil rule and build the confidence of the populace in the electoral process. The main objective of the coalition was to monitor the elections to ensure a free space for political participation and an inclusive electoral process which would usher in a civilian regime (Erubami 2010).

The TMG was formed by NGOs which had been at the forefront of the struggle against military rule. They were joined by several civil society organisations (CSOs) which wanted to contribute to a successful end to military dictatorship. The TMG monitored the December 1998 local government elections, which were used to determine the basis for political party registration for the state and national elections held in 1999 and culminating in the military handing over power.

Subsequent elections, in 2003 and 2007, were observed by a large number of local and international observers, who were either invited by the Nigerian government or applied for accreditation.

For the 2011 elections INEC accredited 338 local and 29 international observer groups. These included the European Union Election Observer Mission (EU EOM) and groups from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commonwealth, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Human Rights Watch.

BACKGROUND TO THE 2011 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Arrangements

Preparations for the elections commenced long before April 2011. The provisions of the Electoral Act 2010 allow for the registration of voters and the updating and revision of the voters' register not less than 60 days before any election. So, on 15 January INEC started a fresh voter registration process, necessitated by the fact that the 2006 registration process was widely acknowledged to have been poorly executed for many reasons, including insufficient registration materials and machines.

The voter registration exercise ended in most states in February, but was extended in a few states for some days because of challenges faced by the commission. Using serving members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), INEC was able to register 73.5-million eligible voters. The contract for and supply and delivery of election materials, recruitment and training of various categories of electoral officials, distribution of materials, the mobilisation and deployment of security personnel

and political party agents, development of a code of conduct for politicians, delivery of materials and posting of personnel to the election frontline were not carried out as planned. INEC had to approach the National Assembly to amend the relevant provisions of the Electoral Act to extend the electoral timelines so that the elections could take place in April, thus, providing the commission with additional time to finalise the registration process and prepare for the elections.

The National Assembly elections were scheduled for 2 April, the presidential election for 9 April and those for governors and members of state houses of assembly for 16 April. The National Assembly comprises 109 senators (three per state and one from the FCT) and 360 Members of the House of Representatives, representing 360 constituencies delimited according to population. There are 990 members of the State House of Assembly, each of them representing a state constituency. Governorship positions were contested in 31 states.

On the eve of the elections the commission assured the country that they would be free, fair and credible. However, the dates had to be modified slightly because the National Assembly elections had to be postponed because some sensitive material arrived late. The new dates were 9 April (National Assembly), 16 April (presidential) and 26 April (gubernatorial and state houses of assembly).

On 21 April, as a result of the spate of violence in a number of states in the North and the middle belt of the country that followed the announcement of the results of the presidential election, INEC decided to postpone the gubernatorial and state houses of assembly elections in Bauchi and Kaduna from 26 April to 28 April. Moreover, a number of re-run elections were set for 5, 6 and 7 May in Bauchi, Delta, Anambra, Kogi and Imo states.

A total of 119 973 polling units were made operational and more than 240 000 ad hoc polling staff employed in addition to security agents, two per polling unit.

The observer teams

Both international observer missions and local groups observed the 2011 elections. There were two categories of international missions: those officially invited by the Nigerian government and those who applied for accreditation from INEC. The accreditation process conferred official recognition and gave observers access to the locations where voting, counting, collation and the announcement of results took place.

International observers were required to apply for accreditation at the INEC head office in Abuja not less than 30 days before the elections they wished to observe. Local observers were to apply either at the INEC head office or through INEC offices in their state not less than 21 days before the elections they wanted

to observe. Only applications received from organisations or institutions were considered; those from unaffiliated individuals were not processed.

In order to ensure effective observation, drawing on the AU *Principles* and the ECOWAS *Guidelines and the Declaration of Principles for International Observers*, INEC issued guidelines and a code of conduct for all observers, international and local, detailing what the commission expected from them. They were directed to 'respect the sovereignty of the Nigerian people to establish their own government and to respect the laws of Nigeria and the authority of INEC as the body charged with the administration of the electoral process'.

OBSERVER REPORTS

International and domestic observers generally noted significant improvements in the electoral process in the National Assembly and presidential polls, but stopped short of calling the elections 'free and fair'; most of them describing them as an important step forward and proffering recommendations as to how future elections in the country could be improved. What follows are summaries of international and local observer reports.

The EU Election Observer Mission

The EU EOM was present in the country from 1 March to 21 May 2011 at the invitation of INEC. The mission was led by chief observer Alojz Peterle, a member of the European Parliament. It comprised a core team of nine analysts based in Abuja, 52 long-term observers, 60 short-term observers and 15 locally-recruited short-term observers (LSTO) from the diplomatic missions in Nigeria of the EU member states, and of Norway and Switzerland.

For the National Assembly elections the EU EOM deployed 137 observers in all the states and the FCT. They visited a total of 698 polling units and 160 collation centres across the country. For the presidential election, the mission was joined by a four-member delegation from the European Parliament, led by Mariya Nedelcheva. The mission deployed 141 observers to all states and the FCT, observing 633 polling units. For the gubernatorial and state houses of assembly elections, it deployed 61 observers to 26 states and observed 290 polling units and 10 collation centres. In total, on the election days, EU observers made 1 684 visits to polling units in order to observe accreditation, voting and counting, and, in addition, they observed the collation of results at 309 centres at ward, local government area (LGA) and higher levels.

The EU mission noted that Nigeria had implemented several recommendations made in the 2007 EU EOM and the 2008 Electoral Reform Committee's

report. It further noted that the Constitution and relevant laws were amended to address some of the issues that had adversely affected the quality and credibility of the 2007 general elections. However, it regretted that the amendments failed to introduce some of the ERC's recommendations, such as the independent appointment of the INEC chair and the resident electoral commissioners, the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission, a Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission, and provisions for independent candidates to run for office.

According to the chief observer, 'overall the 2011 elections marked an important improvement compared to all polls observed previously by the European Union in Nigeria. However, shortcomings were noticed and elements identified which need to be enhanced' (EU EOM 2011, p i). The EU EOM noted the high number of underage registered voters, who were clearly visible on the election days, particularly in the northern areas of Nigeria, pointing out that in many instances NYSC members conducting the registration exercise had been put under pressure to allow the inclusion of underage registrants. The INEC chairman's repeated calls for traditional leaders to help curb this problem were to no avail. In addition:

In general, the EU EOM noted inconsistent application of regulations and procedures by INEC structures in the field, contrary to INEC instructions. Examples include the inadequate display of result sheets at all levels and simultaneous accreditation and voting in numerous polling units throughout the country on all election days. This confirmed a lack of control by INEC Headquarters in their efforts to implement electoral procedures consistently and could be improved by timely, adequate training and coherent effective communication by INEC Headquarters.

EU EOM 2011, p i

The mission also stated that during the National Assembly elections on 9 April disorder was reported in 18% of the ward collation centres. In more than 70% of these centres observers saw polling unit result forms containing arithmetical errors. However, the results from the polling units observed by the EU EOM were generally transferred correctly to the ward results sheets. The results were posted outside the collation centres only in 30% of cases, which is contrary to the procedures established by INEC in order to enhance the transparency of the election process. In spite of these shortcomings the collation process in more than 80% of the collation centres observed was rated positively.

According to the report during the presidential election on 16 April, while the shift from accreditation to voting was smooth and carried out in a timely

manner, shortcomings were noted during voting. In 17% of the sampled polling units attempts to influence voters were observed; in 26% there were instances of interference by party agents in the process and in 47% the secrecy of the vote was not respected. General lack of organisation was noticed in 19% of the units. These figures indicated a deterioration since the National Assembly elections. The proportion of underage voting remained unchanged, at 12%, while, in a few cases, serious malpractices, such as double voting and ballot snatching, were observed.

The EU EOM observed arithmetical errors in 70% of the ward collation centres it visited, in 87% of the LGA collation centres and in 70% of the state collation centres. This demonstrated insufficient training of the collation officers. The results were posted outside the ward collation centres in only 49% of cases. However, at the LGA level results were posted outside only 35% of centres and state results at only 40%. This clearly had a negative impact on the transparency of the election process. Nevertheless, in almost all collation centres the collation and tabulation processes were regarded positively.

Another problem noted in the report related to the adequacy and accessibility of the polling units.

INEC planned to allocate a maximum of 300 voters per unit, to allow for smooth processing of voters. This was to be achieved by subdividing large units into manageable voting points for accreditation and voting under the supervisory umbrella of the main polling unit. However, INEC lacked overall capacity to consistently implement this procedure throughout the country, either because of late description of instructions, poor mechanisms of information dissemination within INEC, negligence or lack of capacity of its lower level staff to implement specific guidelines. According to best electoral practices, the number of polling units should be in proportion to the size of the electorate ensuring that all voters can be processed efficiently.

EU EOM 2011, p 19

In addition, adequate, timely training and staffing of polling units was a considerable challenge.

In all, INEC planned to train approximately 325,000 polling workers, including replacement staff, mostly recruited from the NYSC and 1,497 Returning Officers. Cascade training was observed to be insufficient and poorly conducted, with overcrowded halls and lacking reading material, which greatly impacted on the staff's capacity to perform

election duties. About 90 percent of the Youth Corps were to work in their own state of duty and served primarily as presiding officers because of their educational qualifications. Their work was commendable and often performed under difficult circumstances. Especially in remote rural areas, Corps members were vulnerable to community pressure, instances of intimidation and victims of electoral violence.

EU EOM 2011, p 20

The report also pointed out that political parties and candidates had submitted to INEC several complaints about the conduct of the elections at state and federal level. These sought the cancellation of the results at polling units, entire wards or LGAs, for the verification of ballots and results, and for the prosecution of compromised INEC staff and electoral offenders. Complaints refer to instances of alleged collusion of INEC officials and security agents with political parties to change election results, lack of security on election days and overall poor conduct of the elections.

More specifically, complaints related to the disenfranchisement of voters due to omissions from the voters' register, to alleged snatching of ballots boxes, thumb printing of ballots, vote-buying, and fake results sheets. Intimidation, violence against voters, alleged threats to life and killings of party supporters were also mentioned. These complaints refer to the states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Benue, Delta, Jigawa, Kogi, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba and Zamfara, to mention a few. INEC stated that it intended to investigate these allegations (EU EOM 2011, p 22).

On the issue of gender representation the report noted the under representation of women despite the fact that they constitute about half the population and contribute to the economic development of the country. Despite the fact that the constitutions and manifestos of some political parties include gender-friendly provisions, these were not respected. In party primaries women were not able to compete on a level playing field with their male counterparts.

The EU EOM made 50 recommendations to further improve the country's legal framework, election administration, voter registration, political parties, voter education, media, human rights, participation of women in the electoral process, petitions and appeals processes, polling and collation, and follow-up and public support.

National Democratic Institute

The National Democratic Institute sent a 50-member delegation from 23 countries, jointly led by Joe Clark, former prime minister of Canada; Antonio Manuel

Mascarenhas Monteiro, former president of Cape Verde; Mahamane Ousmane, former president of Niger and former speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament; Jon S Corzine, former US senator and governor of New Jersey; Marietje Schaake, member of the European Parliament from The Netherlands; Natasha Stott Despoja, former senator and party leader from Australia and Kenneth Wollack, president of the NDI.

The delegation arrived in Nigeria on 4 April and remained in the country until 18 April, observing the National Assembly and presidential elections. It built on the findings of NDI's pre-election delegation, which had visited the country in October 2010, and the reports of 12 long-term NDI observers, who came in January and saw the pre-election preparations, including voter registration and the campaign. During the presidential election delegates observed more than 153 polling units in 61 local government areas in 11 states in all six geopolitical zones and in Abuja.

In their report, the NDI observers noted that overwhelming crowds pressurised some polling officials to relax procedures intended to safeguard the voting process. In many polling stations, instead of the 300 voters per polling unit directed by INEC there were more than 1 000. In one polling station observed in Nassarawa state there were 3 800 registered voters, in another there were 6 000. The delegation noted that the complicated and multi-tiered collation process was vulnerable both to human error and to malfeasance.

The NDI report also contained some recommendations about improvements for subsequent elections.

Commonwealth Observer Mission

Responding to an invitation from INEC, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, H E Kamallesh Sharma, constituted an observer group for the National Assembly and presidential elections. Initially, the secretary-general sent an assessment mission to the country from 4 to 11 February to assess the prevailing situation as well as the pre-electoral environment, prior to his final decision to constitute a Commonwealth Observer Group. The group, which was led by HE Festus Mogae, former President of Botswana, comprised 13 eminent persons and was supported by a staff team from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

According to the Commonwealth report, in the areas covered, teams reported a largely peaceful voting process, with few security-related problems at polling stations. There were, however, logistical problems. For instance, many polling stations lacked suitable tables at which people could vote or for the placement of ballot boxes. At others, the layout of the polling station meant that queues of waiting voters mingled with people casting their votes or stood next to ballot

boxes, which could both compromise the secrecy of the vote and threaten the security of the ballot boxes. It was reported that in many instances the crowds were not well managed, aggravating the problem.

There was also a general lack of consistency in the process, both in terms of differences between practices at individual polling stations and variances between the published procedures and the actual practices of many poll officials. This reflected a lack of adequate familiarity with the formal procedures.

There were other major problems observed by the teams during the National Assembly elections of 9 April.

- Names were missing from the voters' register, thus disenfranchising affected persons.
- There were several cases of underage voting, despite INECs chair explicitly warning against this in his press conference before the election. In the cases that were observed the suspected underage persons had voter cards. In some cases they were turned away, but in others they were allowed to vote because they had these cards.
- The secrecy of the vote was compromised in many cases and in a variety of ways. For instance, as noted above, the layout of the polling station often meant that persons queuing were virtually next to the persons voting. Furthermore, many voters did not fold their ballot papers so when they placed them in the transparent ballot box it was easy to see for which party they had cast their vote.
- In some areas it was already dark by the time the count was completed, which made the task of poll officials all the harder. In many instances no lighting was provided and some of the paperwork was done in the light provided by the torch function of mobile phones.
- The determination of invalid ballots was sometimes overly rigorous and a general concern. For instance, even in cases where the intention of the voter was clear a ballot would be rejected just because a small part of the fingerprint was outside of the box. Also, it was noted that in quite a few instances the inked fingerprint had smudged another part of the ballot when it was folded, thus creating a second mark and being deemed invalid. At many polling stations party agents were effectively being used to help determine the validity or otherwise of questionable ballots. The number of invalid ballots in some areas was quite high. Indeed, in one LGA in Kano State it was noted that of 37 382 votes cast 6 224 (16%) were rejected, which is extremely high (COG 2011, pp 38-39).
- In some instances the results were not posted publicly at the polling station.

The report, however, noted that the collation of the results at ward, LGA and state levels was generally transparent and inclusive, with party agents able to scrutinise the process and receive a copy of the results. Despite the difficult circumstances collation officers completed their tasks efficiently and with considerable dedication.

On the issue of gender representation the group noted the low percentage of women candidates and strongly urged political parties to mainstream gender policies and increase significantly the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions and to ensure a level playing field for female aspirants to political office.

Despite all the irregularities noted by the teams, the elections were considered credible. According to the report, 'in spite of persistent procedural inconsistencies and technical shortcomings, the elections for the National Assembly and the Presidency were both credible and creditable, and reflected the will of the Nigerian people' (COG 2011, p 40).

The report concluded with a list of recommendations to further improve the conduct of elections in the country.

Project 2011 Swift Count

As noted above, 338 local observer groups were accredited for the 2011 elections. One of these groups, called Project 2011 Swift Count, was made up of four prominent Nigerian civil society organisations, bringing together Christians and Muslims, as well as organisations with election observation skills and legal expertise. The four organisations were: the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Justice Development and Peace/Caritas (JDPC), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG).

The coalition introduced an innovation known as the swift response observation system – a process of collecting information or data from observers deployed to observe the election process and the way votes are counted and collated, recording such information and communicating the findings to a centrally located centre established by the observation team (Erubami 2010).

This method differs from normal domestic observation in its rapid counting and dissemination of results. The observation team collects information from a scientific random selection of polling stations to derive a reliable projection of result. This entails special coding of observers' identities and the polling stations, the questions on the observer checklist, arrival at polling station, setup at polling station, voting process, counting and transmission by means of GSM technology at a specially established 'observation' centre.

About a week before the election a pre-election simulation exercise was carried out to ensure that all participants were ready and able to communicate with the National Observation Centre by GSM from their allotted polling stations. In addition to the training of special observers for the rapid response system a reference manual was printed and handed to observers for reference purpose.

For the presidential election, Project 2011 Swift Count deployed more than 8 000 accredited observers to all 774 LGAs. Of these more than 7 000 were stationary observers at polling units and nearly 1 000 were mobile observers. Based on observer reports from a final representative random sample of 1 468 polling units in 767 of the 774 LGAs, the coalition concluded that citizens all around the country were generally provided with a meaningful opportunity to exercise their right to vote and noted improvements as the elections progressed. However, it also noted that there was lack of voter awareness, so much so that a substantial number of votes in all the elections were declared invalid.

In its report the coalition noted several isolated incidents of intimidation, violence and illegal voting. But, according to the group, these incidents did not undermine the overall credibility of the elections. It was extremely concerned, however, about accredited observers being denied access to polling units. In several states Project 2011 Swift Count observers were harassed and in some cases detained by security forces.

According to the report, 628 critical incident reports were received from the mobile observers deployed in all 36 states and the FCT. These incidents were relatively evenly distributed, but with a greater number and more serious incidents occurring in the South-South. Among these were: intimidation and harassment, improper accreditation of voters, campaigning or campaign materials in or around polling units, violence and vote buying.

Other observations of the coalition were that there were fewer incidents of late arrival of materials, suspension of voting and stealing of ballot boxes during the presidential election than during the National Assembly elections.

In Delta State observers were intimidated, harassed and banned from some local government areas, which made impossible a factual assessment of the credibility of the election (Project 2011 Swift Count 2011, p 4).

The report also included recommendations for the better conduct of future elections.

HOW CREDIBLE WERE THE 2011 ELECTIONS?

As noted above, the majority of international and local observers described the 2011 elections as credible. Among the phrases describing the event and the process were: 'the freest and fairest', 'credible and creditable'. However, it is necessary to

consider what constitutes a free and fair election, given that, as indicated above, most of the election observation groups' reports included a catalogue of electoral malpractices. For instance, in most of the reports it was noted that voter turnout was abysmally low in some of the elections, but there was a high turnout in the presidential election, with one individual awarded a number of votes indicating a turnout of more than 97 %.

Kelley (2009), analysing all international electoral missions between 1975 and 2004 established that international observers are more likely to endorse elections as free and fair when the level of irregularities is considered to be low.

Some eminent scholars and personalities in the country believe that the elections were deeply flawed.

On 12 May 2011, at the University of Lagos Faculty of Law Roundtable Series on the 2011 Election: Implications for Development and Citizens Participation, a constitutional lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Professor Itsey Sagay, dismissed conclusions that the elections had been credible, free and fair. Delivering a lecture titled '2011 Elections, Sovereign National Conference and Minority Rights', he rejected the reports of both local and foreign electoral observers, declaring that there had been no real elections in the South East and South-South geopolitical zones.

He asserted that the elections in these two zones were marred by multiple registration, gross irregularities and monumental fraud. He cited the huge disparities between the number of votes for the People's Democratic Party and other parties that had contested the elections, pointing out that in some states President Jonathan received millions of votes, while governors in the same states received only a few thousand.

In a lecture delivered at Chatham House, London, on 18 July 2011, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, leader of the Action Congress of Nigeria, while acknowledging that the 2011 elections were an improvement on those of 2007, pointed out that the quality was not as high as the government and international observers proclaimed. 'In a way, international observers have done Nigeria a disservice that will become apparent in the future,' he said. He noted that the observers did not see what took place before election day or what happened in rural Nigeria. Consequently, they had set the bar too low for the conduct of subsequent elections.

The elections were fraught with problems such as poor voter registration, undemocratic party primaries and post-election violence. Several of the results were challenged in the courts. In February 2012, the Supreme Court removed the governor of Kebbi state from office and called for fresh elections within 90 days.

The voter registration exercise was marred by delays in the delivery of registration kits to many centres; by the fact that the direct data capture (DDC)

machines used for the exercise had software problems and by the late arrival of officials. The delay in the execution of the registration exercise caused the National Assembly to amend the law to extend the period of registration by one week.

There were also reported cases of stolen DDC machines (for instance in Oyo, Bayelsa and Niger states). In many places, no registration took place at all in the first week of the exercise. One INEC official and three other persons were killed in Jos. In Oyo and Adamawa ad hoc INEC officials protested against the non-payment of their allowances. Problems of logistics, the late arrival of materials, attacks on INEC (NYSC) officials, palpable tension and fear, as well as violent protests by irate youths crippled the exercise in some states.

By the end of the registration period on 7 February INEC recorded provisional registration figures of 67 764 327 voters nationwide. The public display of the voters' register for submission of claims and objections was scheduled between 14 and 19 February – far too short a period to allow stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive review of the roll, contrary to electoral best practice (EU EOM 2011, p 23).

The conduct of the political party primaries was riddled with conflict and resulted in violence in many part of the country. Some candidates and their 'godfathers' employed illegal strategies such as bribery, appeal to ethnic sentiments, blackmail and threats to beef up their chances in the selection processes. There were also instances where the party leadership imposed 'consensus' candidates on the party, leading to factionalism as dissatisfied members left the party in protest. In some instances separate primaries were held by two factions within the same party. In Ogun State, for instance, the PDP produced two nominations for the position of governor. Similarly, in Zamfara State two separate primaries of the PDP produced two candidates (Gabriel 2011).

Some parties abandoned primaries altogether, 'anointing' particular candidates as their flag bearers in the general elections. In Oyo state, where there were nine aspiring governors, no primary was held and Senator Abiola Ajimobi (who eventually became governor) was imposed, while another aspirant, Chief Femi Lanlehin, was pacified with a senatorial ticket.

Women constituted 9.1% of the total number of candidates, a fact noted in all observer group reports but one that was not perceived to be a substantial default in the electoral process.

The post-election violence that erupted in some states of Northern Nigeria in response to the victory of the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, was another factor that undermined the credibility of the 2011 elections. More than 800 people, including serving NYSC members, were reportedly killed in the mayhem. The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) alleged that INEC had rigged the elections in favour of Jonathan and its supporters took to the streets in protest.

CONCLUSION

Although the 2011 elections were hailed by both local and international observers as the best in Nigeria's history, there is a need to examine critically their conduct and outcome. Mainly for logistical reasons most of the observer groups only focused on the conduct of the elections on the election days. This may not be sufficient to conclude with confidence that the positive record of 2011 can be sustained. The levels of irregularities, including intimidation of candidates, manipulation of the voters' register and so on, recorded well before election day but often not noted by monitors and observers in their reports, should not be ignored.

The monitors and observers of the 2011 elections (both local and international) made several recommendations for improvements. INEC needs to examine these properly and use them to conduct a credible election in 2015.

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Giliomee, H & C Simkins (eds). 1999. *The Awkward Embrace: One Party- Dominance and Democracy*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

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Spence, J. 2004. 'South Africa's Foreign Policy: Vision and Reality'. In E. Sidiropoulos (ed). *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004: Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future*. Johannesburg: The South African Institute of International Affairs.

Journal articles

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