

## **The Economics of Party Dominance in Nigeria, 1999 – 2013**

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999. Since then it has been ruled by the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). This article explores the economics of the PDP dominance in Nigeria's 14 years of civil rule in order to explicate the prevailing authoritarianism. The article observes that the elites partitioned the territory among themselves into spheres of influence and established offices in which those who serve their interests and ensure party victory at all costs are appointed. Further, the article notes that electoral officials, traditional rulers and the Nigerian police are alleged to be instruments of electoral frauds in their hands. Those officials who deviate from the practice face stiff penalty. It therefore concludes that the PDP dominance shall prevail until there is a crack in the walls of the ruling elites – one that has already started developing.*

### **Introduction**

There is increased discussion on democracy in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria. This is informed by the exit of the military from politics, and peaceful or crisis ridden handover of power from one civilian to another e.g. Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Central African Republic, Cote d'Voire, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe. However, little or no interest has manifested both in the academia and international community in determining factors that necessitated such crisis or peaceful handover. A critical evaluation of the scenario reveals that Africa in general and Nigeria in particular has relegated the military to the background through democratic transition but retained, in perfected form, its regimentary and autocratic style of power acquisition, use and consolidation. It is therefore a fundamental error to discuss or analyse democratic transition

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in Nigeria using the Western or Latin American constructs. For instance, Schumpeter's (1950:269) conceptualization of democracy as, ".....that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" is inconsistent to the Nigerian experience.

Democratic struggle in Nigeria is only but a competition among the military and civilian elites over the acquisition and use of state institutions to accentuate personal economic advantages. In the past, those who lost in the winner- takes-all competition between the military and civilian elites had recourse to ethnic and religious sentiments as instruments to destabilise the polity, cause division and conflict. True, Nigerian political history reveals that the break-up of Nigerian Youth Movement [NYM], the independent electoral crisis, the turbulent political transition of 1962 - 64 that culminated to the Nigeria civil war, the crises and failure of 1983 and 1992/3 democratic transition, attest to this. At the peak of military manipulations through palace coups and fake democratic transitions in the 1990s, and due to the military's inability to accommodate enough civilian elites in the balkanization of public wealth and treasury, many civilian but militarily trained and armed groups like the Oodua Peoples' Congress [OPC], Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND], Egbesu Boys were established by the civilian elites to challenge military regime.

The foundation of this challenge was laid by a famous civilian group known as G34 that eventually formed the Peoples' Democratic Party [PDP] on 19 August, 1998. Unlike every other political or civilian pro-political organisation that existed since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 till date, the members of G34 were elites from all works of life, professions, religion, ethnic nationalities and ideologies. The group headed by Dr. Alex Ekwueme - the Second Republic civilian Vice President - drew its membership from three main sources. These are: the group of politicians that were denied registration by General Sani Abacha during his self-succession project, the All Nigeria Congress (ANC) - a group that were not opposed to the self-succession of the Abacha but not part of his political machine, and the followers of the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua of Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) that died in military Prison detention such as Chief Tony Anenih and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. The death of General Sani Abacha led to General Abdul Salami Abubakar's one year transition to democracy, which necessitated party formation and registration in 1998. Consequently, the G34 was registered as PDP and eventually won the 1999 general election.

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Very important to note are the core objectives of the party, which include: to foster political stability and national unity and integration; to provide good governance that ensures probity and participatory democracy; to offer equal opportunities to hold the highest political, military, bureaucratic and judicial offices in the country to all citizens; and to provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise (see <http://pdpimostate.org/manifest.aspx>).

In pursuance to these objectives, the party introduced in its constitution and structures principles that are not enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria - rotation presidency and power sharing. Structurally, the party is divided into three major levels – National, six Geo-political Zones and states. The office of the National Chairman rotates among the six geo-political zones of the country, while the leaders of the party in the six geopolitical zones are national vice chairmen of the party at the National level. At the State level, it is headed by the Chairman of the State Party, while the highest political office holders at the local government, state and federal are known as the party leaders at those levels. From these, other important organs of the Party such as the 'Board of Trustee' (BOT), and the National Working Committee (NWC) and National Executive Committee (NEC) were formed. These organs oversee the smooth running of the Party, its policies, programmes and operations.

Under the PDP power sharing and rotational arrangements of 1998, the six most important political positions in the federation were shared among the six geo-political zones as follows: President of the Federal Republic (Southwest or Yoruba zone), Vice President (Hausa-Fulani/minority or northeast zone), and Speaker of the House of Representatives (Northwest or Hausa-Fulani zone), and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives (South-South, Niger Delta, or Southern minority zone). They equally agreed that at the end of the maximum two terms of the incumbent, there shall be a rotation of these offices to other geo-political zones. This liberal type of democracy is different from the classic or Athenian notion of the rule of the people (Ake 2000), while Obi (2008:6) noted the consequences of this practice in the following words:

There are, in terms of notions of social justice and broadly legitimate systems of rule, three principal problems with these façade

democracies, sometimes also called anocracies. First, they are exclusionary. Often lacking in will and resources, leaders will not or cannot co-opt all segments of the population into the system, into a national social contract. This makes the system conflict prone and undemocratic. Second, they reward loyalty and obedience, rather than efficiency and creativity, not seldom leading to sacrifices in terms of productivity and resource growth. Third, and as a result of the two previous problems, neo-patrimonial systems are perceived by large parts of the population as corrupt and lacking in legitimacy.

As unconstitutional as this arrangement may be, it fairly eliminated ethnic and religious bigotry from inter-party politics in Nigeria. However, this laid a solid foundation for privatization and commercialization of people's mandate, entronement of civil authoritarianism, and the exclusion of the majority from the political process in the assumed democratization process. People are selected and appointed to occupy most of these offices. Their recruitment is one that has excluded the masses both at intra- and inter-party levels, and the inputs of the people with the system itself being distorted and dislocated to accommodate a cosmetic arrangement that may be manipulated at will and never stood the test of time (Abdullah 2007; Ibaba 2007). How this has altered genuine democratic system is the focus of this paper. A genuine democratic system is a system of interactions and accountability between rulers and ruled through which the ruling elites appeal to the majority for electoral purposes (Sartori 1987: 86-130). Consequently, this paper explores the dynamics and the economics of PDP dominance in Nigerian general elections since 1999 with a view to explicate the nuances of civil authoritarianism in Nigeria democracy. The paper concludes that the system of democratic transition in Nigeria holds potent value for social revolution if not checked.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Reviewing the avalanche of theoretical and empirical literature on democracy, democratization and democratic transition is like swimming across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in a stretch. However, as the paper is not joining issues with any scholar or school of thought, its focus becomes a panacea to this dilemma. Precisely, drivers of democratic transition, dynamics and methods of democratic transition, associated party politics and struggle for dominance, and Nigeria's experiences are the focus of this review. Many scholars such as Obodumu (1992), Oyediran (1997), Momoh, and Adejumobi (1999) among others have correctly explored the various

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distortions in political structures and democratic processes, electoral fraud and violence, military intervention that aborted many attempts at democratization, and lack of democratic depth in transition processes. On the concept of transition itself, transition literature reveals an existing conceptual controversy among scholars such as Schumpeter (1950), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), and O'Donnell (1988) among others on the meaning of democratic transition.

However, on a common note, most of the transition literature centred their analysis of democracy and democratic transition as a product of elite interactions. Scholars argue that democratic transition is a conscious decision at least on the part of the top political leadership wherein a small circle of leaders plays a disproportionate role. Drawing from the arguments and conclusions of Przeworski (2009), Lizzeri and Persico (2004), and O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986); Albertus and Menaldo (2013:2) affirmed that democratic transition cannot take place unless the elites give their concert, which is possible only when their interests are guaranteed in the following manner:

Despite the fact that there is often pressure from below for political reform, concrete steps toward democracy – such as scheduling elections and relinquishing control over the security apparatus – are often initiated by the elites themselves. Moreover, a democratic transition is more likely if elites manage to negotiate constitutional frameworks that continue to protect their interests after they exit.

Elites influence on democratic transition is so high that even after transition, they engage in “vote buying or clientelism that fractionalizes the political power of the poor” in order to circumvent democratic institutions and capture policy making and resource redistribution if their interests are threatened (Albertus and Menaldo, 2013; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2008; Keefer, 2007). The dynamics and nature of perennial political crises in Anambra state between different political godfathers (Chief Emeka Offor and Chief Chris Ubah) and their political sons (Dr Chinweoke Mbadinuju and Dr Chris Ngige) that emerged as governors of the state between 1999 and 2006 attests to this.

Thus, democratic transition and democracy itself are products of oligarchy more than being the product of popular protest against oligarchy. The observed limitation in this conception is its indifference or omission of the

involvement or dynamic interaction between elites and masses in the process (Stephens, 1987). Transition pressure usually begins with a division among the elite components of incumbent authoritarian regimes, and progresses to recruit others outside the incumbent regime (Sandbrook, 2000). Even the multiple civilian forces or groups that join the deviant elites or that initiate open movement for transition are in most cases sponsored or engineered by the brake-away factions of the incumbent regime. Without the initial cracks in the incumbent coalitions, the impact of these later forces will either be suppressed or limited (Acemoglu and Robinson, 1999 and 2002). For instance, Ollier (1986) argued that the broad acceptance of violence in Argentina in the early 1970s was due to difference among the ruling elites. It gave legitimacy to anti-regime forces such as guerrilla organizations and the terrorism of the right.

Therefore, none harmonization of elites interests or resolution of cracks in the wall of ruling elites before elections leads to electoral violence and bloodshed. Thus, democracy and electoral outcomes do not correlate strongly in Nigeria and Africa generally (Cowen and Laakso, 2002). ‘Democracy’ and electoral outcomes in Nigeria are inconsistent with the principles of popular mandate but of elite conspiracies and agreements. Avalanche of literature has demonstrated this but have failed or paid little attention to the pattern of interest harmonization among the elites and methods that ensured the dominance of one party in Nigeria’s multi-party democratic setting since 1999. This article pursues this task.

Consequently, this article adopts the theory of privatized state espoused by Ibeanu [2006] and Chukwuemeka [2009] as its framework of analysis. According to Stein (2007:6-7) and Giddens (1985:17), previous conceptualizations or theories of the state are either state-centred theories with a realist outlook that perceive the state as a unitary actor with interests to pursue (i.e. theories that focused on the indices of institutional structure, apparatus of power and their functions – see Munro, 1996; Niskanen, 1974), or society-centred theories that perceive the state as a consequence of the character of the society [i.e. pluralism, class structure, inevitable competition among interests, and social norms – see Held, 1989; Dahl, 1971]. I argued earlier that: The common feature of these sub-groupings is their appreciation of the fact that the state is derived from or reduced to the society. Thus, any state is a reflection of its society, a consequence of the dynamics of its interests, and norms hegemonization among competing inter-and intra-class and ethnic groups. The character of these configurations and the outcome of

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their rivalries structure public institutions, roles, power structures and programmes. Thus, Ake (1985b) defined the state in this perspective as modalities of class domination (Chukwuemeka, 2009: 444).

In accord with Ake's conception, Bayart (1993) noted the forms of class domination in Africa are different from dominations in both the capitalist and socialist societies and are determined by the heterogeneous character of its society. Ibeanu (1998:8-9) therefore noted that the character of domination in Nigeria is particular and located in the genealogy of global capital accumulation by Nigerian elites. State system or the system of class domination in Nigeria emerged out of the need to control the evolving capital market and accentuate accumulation there-from (Zolberg, 1985; Ibeanu, 1993).

The centrality of this control of this capital, which becomes an instrument of capital formation in Nigeria, orchestrated the struggle for colonial transition of power to the emerging Nigerian elites in 1960. However, the non-harmonization of elite interests during the transition led to inter and intra sectorial pristine interests struggle that culminated to various crises of nation building and struggle for hegemony among these sectorial pristine interests. It is pertinent to note that the struggle was drawn along ethnic or regional lines due to ethnically skewed structural and systemic framework for appropriating national wealth that was consciously established by the British imperial power. In search of solutions to the persisting crises, the elites introduced federal character principle and quota system as yard stick for national wealth and power distributions. Basically, these policies demand that government activities and institutions must reflect the interests of diverse ethnic groupings that characterize the geographic expression called Nigeria (1999 Constitution, Section 14 (3-4)). Consequently, states, senatorial districts, local governments, and wards were created and used as functional units for distribution of government amenities, political appointments, recruitments and promotions in the civil service.

Explicating the nuances of the implementation of this arrangement and implications for political stability and democratization during the 2006 NPSA Kalu Ezera Lecture Series, Professor Okechukwu Ibeanu in a famous paper titled "Breaking the Promethean Chain: Protecting Popular Electoral Mandate in the South East Zone of Nigeria" laid the foundation for the emergence of the theory of privatized state. Ibeanu explored the dynamics of elite harmonization of their individual interests through the introduction and

implementation of the federal character principles and quota system that led to the establishment of elites' functional unit of control in the system. Each of the functional units such as states, senatorial districts, local governments, and wards, is allocated to elites from those units depending on their financial contribution to party formation and activities, and level of capital base as their personal territories. That is, parts of the country were parcelled out to a group of individuals usually under the leadership of one or two nobles or indeed a family who maintain their prebend essentially by force. In the distribution of appointments, recruitments, projects, and even candidate nomination for elections, these individuals reserve the right to fill the quota of their own unit. Ibeanu (2006:7) called this machine politics. It has also been established that for any citizen to get anything from the federal, state and local governments, they must present identification letter from such elites.

Therefore, these elites operate and reproduce wealth by exploiting government activities and programmes for their private gain. Therefore, harmonization of elites interests in Nigeria for purposes of democratic stability through the federal character principle and quota system has increased their access to state funds, extended their political influence, and made them proprietors of the areas allotted to them. They began to sponsor candidates to high political positions, and ensure party victory through fair or foul means in their areas as a means of retaining the territorial control of their units. "Consequently, systemic output, ascendancy to positions of power and influence, wealth acquisition, are determined by these few individuals. Government businesses and activities became personalized and are piloted even from individual homes. Laws became personified; any dissent or opposition amounted to suicide. Therefore, the state in Nigeria is parcelled out and privatized" (Chukwuemeka, 2009).

#### **Democratic Transition in a Historical Perspective**

Nigeria has a long history of political transitions with many failed and successful attempts to transfer power to civilian government. The emergence of educated elites during the colonial period led to a democratic pressure that culminated in the gradual but successful transition through elections in 1959 and handover in 1960. This was followed by the worst civilian to civilian transition programme in Nigerian history, which took place in 1963/64 and led to Nigerian civil war of 1967 – 1970. The failure was mainly due to the ruling Northern elites' use of force, falsification of census figures, and interference in the interests of elites in the Western and Eastern regions to



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impose hegemony or dominance. There was no consensus among the elites or harmonization of elite interests across the three major regions.

The military terminated the transition through coup and counter coup. This itself is also a product of mistrust, suspicions, and disagreement over who heads the federal military government based on rank, and over con-federal arrangement between Colonel Ojukwu, then military governor of the Eastern region and Colonel Gowon who assumed the post of Head of State. These differences sparked off a chain of events that culminated in the secession of the Eastern region from the Nigerian federation, and the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967. At the end of the war in January 1970, General Gowon promised among other things to return the country to democratic rule in 1976. However, on 1 October 1974, Gowon postponed the return to democracy indefinitely and was consequently overthrown in a bloodless coup on 29 July 1975.

His successor General Murtala Mohammed initiated another transition to civil rule programme that was completed by his deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo after his assassination in an abortive coup attempt on 13 February 1976. Power was transferred to the civilian elites on 1 October 1979 with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as president (Oyediran, 1981; Kurfi, 1983). This regime was terminated also by a coup after four years when its transition programme in 1983 became a replica of the 1963/64 transition programme.

Unlike the preceding military regime, the Generals Muhamadu Buhari and his deputy, General Tunde Idiagbon's regime did not promise any transition. Rather, they embarked on tight and hard socio-economic reforms that ignored the interests of imperial elites and that of many national elites. Consequently, they were overthrown by the then Chief of Army Staff, General Ibrahim Babangida who wasted no time in announcing imminent transition to democracy. Babangida's transition to democracy was the most elaborate, ideological, expensive and longest transition programme in Nigeria history that was meant to disengage the military and hand over power to civilians, but it failed also. His personal ambition to hand over to himself made him to first discredit and ban many political elites (Momoh, 1996). This offered the democratically demobilized elites the opportunity to indirectly frustrate his own ambition. In the transition, government formed two parties under ideological framework of capitalism and socialism i.e. National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), built the structural frameworks for their operations by handing them over

party manifestos and party offices across the 774 Local Governments in the country. Politicians and Nigerians were asked to join any party of their choice, and they willingly obliged.

The political elites in both parties nominated only Yoruba candidates as presidential candidates, while the perceived support or preferential interest of Babangida for Alhaji Toffa – the presidential candidate for NRC – made Nigerians to vote massively for Chief Moshood Abiola – the presidential candidate for SDP. Both international and local observers declared the elections as one of the fairest in Nigeria's history, yet Babangida annulled the 12 June 1993 presidential election (Obi, 1997, Ihonvbere and Shaw; 1998). This gave the elites enough impetus to organize the masses against Babangida who resultantly stepped aside in August 1993 and appointed Chief Ernest Shonekan – a Yoruba to douse the ethnic prone crisis – to chair an Interim National Government (ING). Shonekan was pressurized by the military elites to resign his appointment on 19 November 1993 leaving General Sanni Abacha to take over as the new head of state.

Gen. Abacha adopted the use of co-optation, blackmail, corruption, criminalization and elimination of all opponents while opposition groups such as the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Constitution Rights Project (CRP), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Campaign for Democracy (CD) and the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), were blackmailed by state owned media. Abacha's regime announced another transition programme that started in 1995, and was expected to end on 1 October 1998. Through a Constitutional Review Committee, Nigeria was divided into six geo-political zones; and the principle of a rotational presidency around the six zones was introduced. As a follow up, an electoral commission was set up and five political parties registered. These are the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Congress for National Consensus (CNC), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM) and the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN).

Through repression, the regime sent the opposition into jail, underground, or in exile on order to create the way for Abacha's candidacy in the proposed 1998 presidential elections. The method worked when the five registered political parties adopted General Abacha as their presidential candidate. However, death struck on 8 June 1998 and terminated both his life and

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presidential ambition. General Abdulsalami Abubakar took over as head of state and promised to transit power to civilians under one year. He released all political detainees, pardoned all that were condemned or jailed, established a new electoral body the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), set up a committee that reviewed the 1979 constitution in the light of the 1995 drafted constitution and eventually promulgated it into law in May 1999 as 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. INEC started registration and only three political parties out of the 26 that applied i.e. the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) scaled through the registration requirements. At the end of the elections, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP won the presidential elections and was sworn in on 29 May, 1999.

### **The Economics of Party Dominance in Nigeria 1999 - 2013**

Given the scenario under which the Fourth Republic began in 1999, high level compromises and alliances took place to produce the initial three parties - PDP, APP and AD. The scenario include the various party and electoral reforms that were targeted at eliminating ethnic politics and party system, the struggle between the military elites and the civilian elites for the control of the institutions and system of domination in Nigeria, tensions and pressures for democratization following the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, and the death of both Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'Adua and Chief Moshood Abiola in prison custody. The members of the G34, which I must admit here constitute the industrial giants, first line descendants of Nigerian foremost nationalists, elites drawn from different professions and major ethnic groups and who were allegedly the sponsors of many militias, were forced to synthesize and reconcile their multitude of competing interests into a broad national value that produce the largest and the most broad base party in the history of Nigerian politics - the PDP that eventually won the 1999 elections.

Prominent in their agreement is the acceptance of zoning formula as the basis for every ones accommodation in the system over time. The PDP constitution stated how elective and party offices should be shared or zoned. The party constitution states poignantly 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 (PDP Constitution, 1999, Article 7 subsection 2(c)).

The zoning was a formula adopted as a mechanism to manage the problem of presidency and other key political positions among the majority ethnic groups in Nigeria. The other key positions include the Vice-President, Senate President, Speaker House of representatives, Secretary of the Government of Federation (SGF), and Head of Service (HOS). These have been zoned to various geo-political zones in rotation as represented in the table below:

**Table 1: Showing the Power Sharing Arrangement among Geo-political Zones in Nigeria in PDP Party Politics**

| S/N | Position             | Obasanjo' Regime | Yar'Adua's regime | GoodLuck's Regime(2010-2011) | GoodLuck's Regime(2011 to date) |
|-----|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1   | President            | South West       | North West        | South-South                  | South-South                     |
| 2   | Vice President       | North East       | South-South       | North West                   | North West                      |
| 3   | Senate President     | South East       | North Central     | North Central                | North Central                   |
| 4   | Speaker House of Rep | North West       | South West        | South West                   | North East                      |
| 5   | SGF                  | South-South      | North East        | North East                   | South East                      |
| 6   | HOS                  | North Central    | South East        | South East                   | South West                      |

Source: (Alli, 2011) *The Nation*, Thursday, May 3, 2011.

In addition to the introduction of unconstitutional zoning formula, the members of G34 arrogated to themselves the power to determine what happens in their respective territorial origin in terms of party formation, party primaries, elections, appointments and contracts. Their method of implementation of this unwritten but binding agreement is that every form, materials and authority relating to geopolitical zones and states were given to these people. This enabled them to impose candidates, collect and commercialize positions and projects allocated to their various spheres of influence. It is the background and informs the various inter and intra-party conflicts that characterized democratic transition in 2003, 2007, and 2011 across the country.

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In all, this paper has been able to identify the methods through which the incumbent succeeds itself in power or ensure the imposition of its preferred candidates both on the party and the state generally. Prior to any general elections, the ruling elites declare their interests and the executive either approves or reshuffle those interests and assign positions to individuals from local government to the state level. This is with a condition that you must deliver every other candidate that needs the votes of your constituency/ward in addition to your own mandate through any means – fair or foul. Such receives state protection. This is the origin of such famous slogans among PDP ruling elites in the state like “the winning team”, “total mandate”, etc.

Their method is to impose candidates with unquestionable loyalty at the state level, while the respective state governors replicate the same practice across local government areas and senatorial districts within their jurisdiction. This has even led to the interference and politicization of the appointment of traditional rulers and creation of autonomous communities. They made it a policy that any citizen of the state applying for employment, contract or seeking political office in now required to produce identification letter from the traditional ruler or must ask him to sign as guarantor. Pre-eminence is now placed on traditional ruler’s identification over local government identification as a check on local government chairmen to avert harm as that is the level where major electoral frauds are committed. This conferred vital political power on traditional rulers, which they now employ for selfish interests to the detriment of the citizens.

However, as long as appropriate material “returns” are made and higher interests are protected, each leader or group of leaders in each level of authority i.e. community, local government, senatorial district, state, and geopolitical zone becomes the lord of the manor in his area of operation. It is alleged that they have both informal/unconventional militant groups a.k.a thugs and the security agencies at their disposal to enforce their interests and instructions. For instance, during the 2011 general elections in Enugu state, it was alleged that the elections were being fabricated or fogged at the DPO’s office in Igboeze South local government. When one of the governorship candidates – Dr Okey Ezea of the Labour Party – who hail from that local government, went to the station to investigate or verify the issue, he was arrested and detained by the police till the election was over.

In return, the civilian administrations at the three levels of government have increased their fiscal allocation, intervention and security fund for the various security agencies by over 200%. This ameliorated the quest or interest of the elites within the armed forces to capture and control political power. A great number of police personnel and members of the Civil Defence Corps are assigned to guard the various political office holders, their houses both in the city and village together with their families. This paper is limited in space and focus to analyze recent budgetary allocations and donations by various state governments and the federal government to these forces. However, it explains the multiplicity of security forces and the use of even local vigilante groups by many states and local governments across Nigeria.

Politically, the incumbent uses this regimentary and autocratic structure during transition programmes to ensure victory. Generally, elections are the only acceptable template for transition of power from one regime to another and have thus been manipulated and used as instrument of power consolidation by ruling elites. In such manipulations, electoral fraud and malpractices became systemic and institutionally integrated that new but unconstitutional state organs emerge constantly in Nigeria as key players in the electoral system. Such include the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) whose current chairman and the governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amechi has been suspended from the party because of his interest in the new All Progressive Congress (APC). This will substantially reduce his influence in his state as further federal government projects, appointments and recruitments for the state will be channelled through the highest PDP political office holder in the state. He will equally lose grip of the party and other political structures in the state being used by the PDP for its peculiar type of politics. Popular votes or popular mandates are alien to such structures and arrangements during elections. Kanyinga, Okello, and Akech (2010:1) put it differently in the following manner:

The ritual [i.e. election) was so effective that it, along with other factors, produced 'presidents for life', a breed of 'indomitable' leaders across Africa whose rapacity and ruthlessness permanently scarred Africa's democracy and development. Through domination and manipulation of political processes and institutions, the 'life presidents' turned elections into an instrument for punishing dissent and critics and rewarding loyalists. Ruling parties blended into governments and/or transformed into state parties.

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This practice has continued far into 2013 and has equally structured multi-party democratic system being practiced across Africa particularly Nigeria. It has been integrated into the political system that a very fine line differentiates party administration and policies from governance and state policies. In the economy of the systemic electoral fraud perpetuated by constitutional and unconstitutional state organs in Nigeria lies the dynamics of PDP dominance in all democratic transitions since 1999.

Experiences have proved that during transition programmes or general elections [direct or indirect democracy], the originals of election reporting forms i.e. result sheets are directly or indirectly under the control of this political structure. Fake result sheets were issued to field election administrator. Consequently, it has been alleged that original result sheets are diverted to the party leaders [i.e. the highest political office holder] at the state, senatorial and local government areas with the primary objective to ensure the victory of the party in their areas. In some polling booths, electorate could neither see the presiding officers nor result sheets, yet results were declared for such centres.

The 100% one party victories in all electable offices in states controlled by the ruling party and their complete loss in states controlled by other parties can be explained by this system of prebend. This is because the effective manipulation of electoral results by leaders at the community, local government and senatorial district guarantees their political aspiration, political appointments, award of contracts and the security of their business ventures within the state. The massive judicial annulment of electoral mandates during the 2003 and 2007 transition programmes attests to the fact that election results in Nigerian transition programmes are not products of popular mandate but fixed actions.

These political leaderships utilized the traditional rulers, the police and thugs as instruments of electoral victory. During the 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections, it was alleged that most of the traditional rulers and police stations provided the environment and personnel that rigged/falsified/fogged election results in favour of the incumbents at the federal, state and local government levels. In appreciation, government increased their monthly salaries, and distributed brand new cars to them as state gifts or democracy dividends. There is also an unconfirmed allegation that most of these traditional rulers and police officers that were used during the transition periods have been allocated plots of lands in the urban centres without

payment. In addition, materials like rice, fertilizers, landed property; contracts, appointments, cars etc are being constantly distributed to party officials from ward to state levels, political office holders, and traditional authorities in the country. Therefore, the relationship between them is that of master-servant relationship whose security is limited to serving the interests of political incumbents.

Any perceived sabotage or deviation from the philosophy of the incumbent structure attracts repression, possible death or disappearance, contrived impeachment for those occupying political officers, termination of appointment or dismissal from service for public servants or civil servants. As noted earlier, Governor Rotimi Amechi is suspended from the PDP because he aligned with a new party formed through opposition parties' coalition to challenge PDP in the forth coming 2015 general elections. Governor Aliyu Wamako of Sokoto state was equally suspended but latter recalled. This has continued to be a veritable source of conflict and disunity in the country's political system. The masses are moving away from democratic euphoria to apathy, and towards possible revolts. If this method of dominance and electoral victory is not checked, what Mkandawire (2008) observed i.e. "...the long-term result being the tendency by a people denied the right to a free choice of their leaders to write electoral lists in blood" will come to pass. The truth is that unless there is a crack in the walls of the current ruling elites, which is perceived to be developing now with the resignation of all National Working Committee of the PDP, the party will continue to reproduce itself in power in subsequent transition programmes.

### **Conclusion**

This article explored the dynamics and economic nature of the method of party domination in Nigeria since 1999 using the ruling or incumbent PDP as the case study. Available literature revealed that democracy is a product of elites' harmonization of their interests and a crack in the wall of this leads to democratic transition. The article observes that non-harmonization of elites' interests were the major cause of political crises and instability in Nigeria between 1960 and 1998. It observes specifically that the harmonization of such interests through the introduction of zoning formula in 1999 gave the ruling PDP advantage and dominance over others. Their method was to partition and allot different territories to their members who hail from there, and set up a regimentary structure that rewards addict loyalists with electoral victories, appointments, contracts, and material possessions. The only prove of loyalty is to ensure complete delivery of their communities,



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local governments, senatorial districts, and states during elections through fair or foul means. In this practice, it is alleged that the Nigerian police, traditional rulers and staff of INEC has been willing tools in their hands to ensure electoral victory. Any deviation or disobedience attracts severe penalty and in some cases, supreme price is paid. This has characterised Nigerian democracy as civil dictatorship or civil authoritarianism.

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