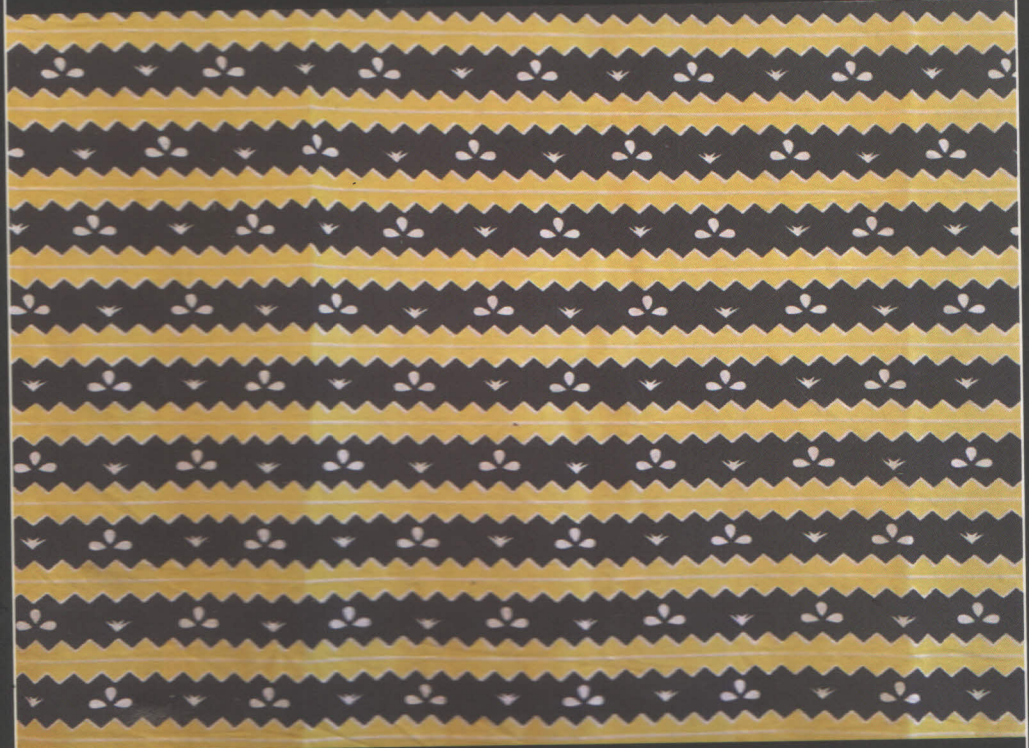


MYTHS OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY?

Towards Building Pillars of Hope,
Unity and Transformation in Africa



Edited By
Munyaradzi Mawere &
Ngonidzashe Marongwe

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&
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Chapter Eight

Two Party '*de facto*' and the Future of Democracy in Africa: The Nigerian Experience

Abdulrasheed Alada Muhammad

Introduction

In most democracies, political parties are vital agents in the democratisation project. In the least, they serve as viable means of political succession through competitive elections (Yaqub, 2002; Ujo, 2001). Aside of serving as a critical agent of political succession, studies by scholars (Ogundiya, 2010; Matlosa, 2007; Mato, 2006; Muhammad, 2006; Matlosa, 2004; Janda, 1993; Janda 1980) reveal that political parties play the role of interest articulation, aggregation and many others that are vital for the sustenance of the democratic system. Although Ancker and Ancker (2000) have noted some exceptional cases of democracies without parties, the pivotal place of political parties in a democracy is not lost to many African countries that tend to adopt multi-party democracies at moments of transition from authoritarian regime to democratic administration. While many of these countries such as Tanzania under Nyerere; Ivory Coast which was ruled by Félix Houphouët-Boigny as a one-party state since independence in 1960 until 1990 and Ghana under Nkrumah where the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) later became the only legal party were once one-party states, global realities especially with the democratisation wave have compelled the embracing of the multi-party system. According to Southhall (2003), 'Africa's second democratisation' phase which began in the early 1990s, cannot be divorced from the wave of democratization which was already sweeping across the whole world. Similarly, Isaac (1998) and Hadenius (1997) in different studies noted that there were decisive changes in the democratic direction in Spain and other Mediterranean Western Europe countries in the second half of

1970s, in Latin America in the 1980s, though less far reaching, as well as in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991. These developments within the contemporary international system coupled with the resilience of African people made the democratization ferment inevitable on the African continent (Rakner and Skage, 2011; Jega 2007; Saliu, 2004; Bratton and de Wall, 1997; Olowu, 1995).

Nigeria is a vast country both in terms of population (170 million people according to projections of the 2005 population census) and land mass which is about 923,708 square miles. It is the 10th most populous country in the world (Gulrez, 2002) and among five most populous in the tropics (Adelema and Baba, 1993). These credentials make it a significant force in the African continent. Perhaps this informed the conclusion of Chadian President, Idris Derby, that when Nigeria sneezes, other countries catch a cold (quoted in Opeyemi, n.d.). In addition, being the most populous in Africa, it currently operates the largest democracy and as well is Africa's largest economy by volume having recently rebased its economy. With this, it overtook South Africa in terms of largeness of its economy. It began its own series of democratic transition in the early 1990s under the Babangida military regime after prolonged years of military autocracy. The series of 'transitions without end' (Diamond, Kirk-Greene, Oyediran, 2007) or what Bratton and De Wall (1997) referred to as 'Blocked Transition[s]' that is, situations in which rulers made insincere and tactical concessions aimed at buying time to shore up collapsing authority with no sincere intention of handing over, owing to failure of several attempts became successful in May 1999 with the successful conduct of multi-party elections in April and consequent assumption of power by an elected civilian President. Noteworthy is that Nigeria had been operating [a failing] multi-party system since independence, except for the period of the moribund Third Republic (1992 – 1995) when two parties were decreed by the state. While multi-party politics, as recognised by law, had continued into the current Fourth Republic, the Republic has witnessed the emergence of two out of the many parties becoming domineering on the political process, especially in the period before the 2015 general elections thereby constituting two party *de facto*. These are the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The character and activities of these two dominant parties in the build up to the 2015 general elections in the country is not without attendant implications for the future of democratic process in the country and indeed, for the entire African continent. In specific terms, what is the impact of these two parties on the democratisation process? It is against this background that this chapter examines the phenomenon of two party '*de facto*' and the future of democracy in Africa noting Nigeria's experience. Through a content analysis of observed trends in party politics, the chapter highlights the implications of this development for Nigeria's democratisation process.

Party System and Two-Party '*de facto*': A Global Survey

The party system implies the number or strength of political parties existing in a political system. As Anifowose and Enemuo (1999 cited in Muheeb, undated) noted, a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence the political process. The general trend in the literature is to classify political party systems as one party, two parties or multi-party system. Another discernible trend is to equate multi-party system with the practice of liberal democracy. This is more so given the fact that the demise of one party system has always been accompanied by the ascendancy of the liberal democratic practice which recognises the divergences of political interests competing in the state. Such divergences are reflected in the institution of multi-party democracy.

In Africa as at 1989, only four countries in sub-Saharan Africa - Botswana, Gambia, Senegal and Mauritius - could be accurately described as competitive electoral democracies (Manning, 2005). But by 1994, not a single *de jure* one party state remained in Africa (Bratton and Van de Wall, 1997). This reflects the fact that while one party system is no longer the fad, multi-party system is gaining currency within the African political environment. Apart from this, there have been attempts to justify the nature of party system within the democratic context. While many have seen multi-party system as being in line with democratic practice, some others have seen one party system as more compatible with especially African democratic

practices. For instance, Julius Nyerere (cited in Rupert, 1966) opined that where there is one party and the party is identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than they can ever be where you have two or more parties, each representing only a section of the community. It is on the basis of the above that Nyerere saw no wisdom in two or multi-party systems. However, when one takes into cognizance the fact that it is practically impossible for a single party to accommodate and satisfy all interests at any particular point in time, the above nationalistic justification becomes nothing but farce more especially with increasing global popularity of multi-party democracy in the post bi-polar world.

Beyond the issue of popularity of multi-party systems or their relative advantages, comparative literature has revealed that in spite of the popularity of multi-party democracy, many countries in practice tend to have domineering parties out of the multitude of parties in existence. In other words, while the constitutions or electoral laws may allow for the existence of multi-party systems, the obtaining reality in several countries, be it Presidential, Parliamentary or Hybrid; has been the emergence of few and in most cases two parties as capable of winning elections or exercising profound influence on the electioneering process. In this instance, while one constitutes the ruling party, the other forms the major opposition party. In the United States for instance, which is usually flaunted as the bulwark of multi-partyism, though the law recognises the existence of many political parties, only the Democratic Party and the Republican Party seem to be strong enough as to exercise profound influence on the American electioneering process. Indeed, since the mid-19th Century, power (in terms of control of the executive arm) has oscillated between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The implication of this is the existence of two-party *de facto* within the American political system.

The same scenario also obtains in the United Kingdom (UK). In the United Kingdom (UK), the Electoral Commission gives the number of registered parties in the UK and Northern Ireland as at 2015 as 492 (www.electoralcommission.org.uk). Notwithstanding this massive number of political parties, since 1945 power has oscillated between the Conservative Party whose origins go back to

the Eighteenth Century and the Labour Party which emerged in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century. Although other parties have at different moments grown -up their support base by winning more seats in general elections, they have been unable to match the two dominant parties in electoral outcomes. In France, which is operating a hybrid of the Parliamentary system, there exist a multi-party arrangement but since the early 1980s, power has oscillated between two major coalitions. That is, the Centre-Left led by the Socialist Party (Party *Sociale*, SP) and the Centre-Right led by the Republicans. Both parties obtain support from other smaller parties. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has been the ruling party since the end of Apartheid in the early 1990s. Its closest rival is the Democratic Alliance (DA). Thus, despite the existence of many political parties in the country, the ANC has remained as the ruling party, while the DA constitutes the main and official opposition party. What can be inferred from this comparative experience is that although there are other parties in existence, two parties seem to be dominant in terms of electoral strength not only in Africa but across the world. This is not without its attendant implications for democratic processes in such countries.

Overview of Party System and Party Politics in Nigeria

It has been established that the democratic process in Nigeria took place at two epochs. The first which occurred before independence witnessed struggles for liberation from the colonialists and attainment of self-rule by the country in October 1960. The second was the series of tenuous attempts after independence to enthrone a lasting democratic process. This second epoch had been characterised by fluctuations emanating from military interventions in the governance of the country and several, unsuccessful, attempts to transit to a sustaining democracy. This is not to suggest that military intervention in governance is peculiar to Nigeria alone, rather, it is a phenomenon that was pervasive in most African countries between 1970s to the early 1990s. Equally, some scholars (Jega, 2007; Osaghae, 1998) have advanced reasons for such pervasiveness noting both the peculiar and general circumstances

that were receptive to military intervention in Nigerian governance. It is worthy of note that, attempts at transiting to democracy in the country have always been marked by the need to allow for greater participation by the people through their political parties. Hence, there is always a preference for multi-party system. For instance, while the constitution of 1922 blazed the trail for the emergence of party politics in Nigeria through introduction of the elective principle, it did not limit the number of parties that were to be in existence. However, circumstances of the period led to the emergence of only one party. That is, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was formed by Nigerian nationalist elements in 1922. The Lagos Youth Movement (LYM), also formed by some Nigerian nationalists, and that later transformed into the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) later joined the list of political parties in the country. Both parties, however, later died a natural death.

This attempt at multi-party democracy continued till the period of independence in 1960 as more parties emerged on the political terrain especially with increased tempo of nationalist agitations. Other parties that later emerged included the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) – formerly National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon, United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). These later parties existed till the end of the First Republic in 1966. The implication of this is that Nigeria had a multi-party system throughout the first epoch of its democratisation process up to the end of the First Republic. It is also worthy to note that of all the parties that remained in existence, the NPC, AG and NCNC became dominant in terms of electoral strength as reflected in the outcome of both the 1959 and 1963 general elections. The outcome of the 1959 elections showed that out of 312 seats in Parliament, the NPC was able to garner 134 making it possible to align with its closest rival, the NCNC which had 89 seats in order to have majority in parliament and form the government while the Action group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo remained the major opposition party having won 73 seats while the remaining seats were not occupied by any political party. Although

the national government was the result of party alliance, all the three major parties had a very strong hold of their respective regions especially, in terms of voting pattern by the citizens. That is, the NPC controlled the Northern Region, the NCNC controlled the East while the AG was in absolute control of the Western Region (Muhammad, 2015).

The Second Republic which lasted from 1979 – 1983 also saw the practice of multi-party system in the country. Following intentions of the then military government to transfer power to elected civilians, the democratisation process witnessed the emergence of five political parties. That is, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP), Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP), Great Nigeria Peoples' Party (GNPP). Later in 1983, the Nigeria Advance Party (NAP) joined the array of parties in the country. This was the situation of Nigeria's multi-party politics before the military intervened again and regained government control on December 31, 1983.

Military rule in Nigeria following termination of the Second Republic lasted from 1983 to 1999. Throughout this period, there were series of unsuccessful attempts by successive military governments to return Nigeria to democratic politics. Although the series of attempts were not successful, the process always involved attempts at the [re]introduction of multi-party politics. For instance, General Babangida (1985 – 1993) who first instituted a transition programme initially allowed for multi-party system to exist. According to him in his Independence day broadcast in October 1985 (cited in Eleazu, 1988), the administration would begin a vigorous search for a new political order capable of ensuring sustained socio-economic growth and political development of the country. This effort produced according to Yaqub (2004) produced thirteen political associations that included All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), The Ideal Peoples Party (IPP), The Nigerian National Congress (NNC), Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party (NPWP), The National Union Party (NUP), Peoples Front of Nigeria (PFN), Patriotic Nigerians Party (PNP), Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP), Republican Party of Nigeria (RPN), United National Democratic

Party (UNDP), Peoples Patriotic Party (PPP), The Liberal Convention (LC) and The Nigerian Labour Party (NLP). However, all were decreed out of existence and in their place, the government established two political parties in the country. These are, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) with the ideological inclination of 'a little to the right' and 'a little to the left' respectively (Qouted in Yaqub, 2004). In addition, the two parties had their manifestoes and constitutions prepared by the government which also appointed interim officers to run their affairs. The two parties eventually contested the June 1993 Presidential election which climaxed the attempt at establishing a Third Nigerian Republic.

Earlier in 1992, the two parties contested for seats in the National Legislative Houses. The results of the elections according to data from African Elections Data Base indicated that the SDP had an edge over the NRC in both the legislative and presidential elections.

Table 1: Results of 1992 Legislative and 1993 Presidential Elections

Party	Presidential Election (% of Total)	Number of Seat in Senate (Total is 91)	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives (Total is 593)
SDP	58.36%	52	314
NRC	41.64%	37	275
Vacant	-	2	4
Total	100.00%	91	593

Source: Computed by author from: African Elections Data Base

It is significant to mention that this endeavour to decree two parties into existence by the General Babangida military regime was the first and perhaps the only attempt so far at establishing a two-party *de jure* in the country. Previous and even subsequent attempts have been on multi-party system. It is also instructive to note that although two parties were decreed, the transition exercise was inconclusive as the result of the presidential election contested by the two parties was annulled by the military regime. In the midst of the

resulting impasse, the regime of General Babangida stepped aside in 1993 after putting in place, an Interim National Government (ING) led by a civilian, Chief Ernest Shonekan. The ING was again sacked in another military *coup* which saw the emergence of General Sani Abacha as Head of State. According to Abacha, his military government given the circumstances of its emergence was, a child of necessity with a strong determination to restore peace and stability on the basis of which to enthrone a lasting and true democracy (Abacha, 1993). He also established a transition to civilian rule anchored on multi-party system and consequently, recognised five political parties. These were the Congress for National Consensus (CNC), United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), and the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN). In spite of public scepticism, low public ratings and high resentment to these parties, they all featured in the National Assembly (NASS) election of April, 1998, the result of which was later cancelled by the regime. Also, General Abacha died in office in June 1998 and following this was the swearing-in of General Abdulsalam Abubakar as the new military Head of State.

General Abubakar also instituted another transition to civilian rule programme anchored on multi-party politics. Out of the about 30 political associations that signified interest, only nine were short-listed for provisional registration. Indeed, the final registration of parties was designed to take place through a phased process of self-extermination (Muhammad, 2015). This was made possible with the provision in the electoral guideline that for any association to qualify for permanent registration as a political party, such must win no less than 5 per cent (initially 10 per cent) of total votes in at least 24 of the 36 states of the federation. The December 1998 local government election provided the litmus test after which only the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Peoples Party (APP) which later became All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP) got past the benchmark. The eventual registration of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) was only to satisfy some politically exigent factors (Muhammad, 2015). First, it was a way of assuaging the south-westerners who were still aggrieved by the June 12, 1993 election imbroglio. Second, a

provision of the electoral law stated that the third party with the highest score would also be registered in the event of only two parties meeting the requirements. Based on this modified criteria and the fact that AD was in the third position in electoral strength after the 1998 local government election, only the trio AD, APP and PDP were registered to contest the 1999 general elections. The outcome of the elections shows that the PDP won majority in the Presidential and parliamentary election thus, the PDP candidate, Olusegun Obasanjo, was sworn-in on May, 29 1999 as the democratically elected President of Nigeria. Obasanjo's election signalled the commencement of a new democratic administration and dispensation in Nigeria.

From the above overview, certain observations become compelling about Nigeria's democracy. First, there seems to be a general preference for multi-party system in the country. This is evident in the series of attempts at transitions which have been anchored on multi-party systems. Second, while Nigeria prefers multi-party democracy, previous endeavours have not resulted in only two parties becoming dominant. Rather, there is always a tilt towards three parties dominating the political process. This can partly be explained by the socio-cultural make-up of the country which makes parties to be more or less regionally based. For instance, while the NPC, NEPU and AG of the First Republic were products of Socio-cultural organisations in the North and Western parts respectively, the NPN, PRP and UPN of the Second Republic were seen as reincarnates of the NPC, NEPU and AG of the First Republic. Although the NCNC of the First Republic did not emerge from any socio-cultural grouping, its popularity later waned as it became identified with the Eastern region. Thus, ethnic and religious considerations have prevented the emergence of two party *de facto* in Nigeria's First, Second and perhaps, Third Republics.

Trajectory of Nigeria's Two Party in the Fourth Republic

Nigeria's Fourth Republic began in 1999 with the swearing-in of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The Republic was finally consummated with the inauguration of the National Assembly NASS

in June of the same year. Like previous democratic attempts, it started on a multi-party level. Although the Republic commenced in 1999, party activities had started earlier in 1998. As noted earlier in this chapter, the PDP, APP and AD emerged as political parties of the Fourth Republic through some processes that involved some level of compromise and concession by the government and political actors. Noteworthy is that emergence of these three parties is a reflection of the Nigerian state's preference for multi-party system. Following agitations for increase in the number of political parties and a court of Appeal verdict in 2002, the election monitoring body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had to allow the existence of more parties in the country (www.dawodu.com). Consequently, Nigeria became a multi-party democracy par excellence with the existence of over 50 political associations.

It is important to stress, however, that prelude to Nigeria's 2003 election; the AD was faced with series of internal crisis which grossly reduced its strength in electioneering. For instance, most of the states controlled by the AD were shared between the PDP and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) which was registered shortly before the 2003 election. At the national level, the AD could not win much seats at the NASS compared to 1999. Although the ruling PDP had the ACN to contend with at the states, it had the ANPP to contend with at the national level. This development signalled the trend towards a two-party *de facto* in Nigeria. However, this trend towards a two-party *de facto* was reversed with the emergence of many parties controlling seats at the national level since 1999. Although the PDP won the Presidential election and the majority of seats at the NASS, other parties nonetheless won seats for themselves at the NASS. This is presented in table 2.

Table 2: April 1999 and April 2003 NASS Election Results

Party	Senate (Number of Seats)		House of Representatives	
	1999	2003	1999	2003
Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP)	59	76	206	223
All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP)	29	27	74	96
Alliance for Democracy (AD)	20	6	68	34
United Nigeria peoples Party	--	--	-	2
National Democratic Party (NDP)	--	--	-	1
All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)	--	--	-	2
Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)	--	--	-	1
Others	--	--	--	--
Vacant	--	--	-	1
Total	109	109	360	360

Source: Adapted from: African Elections Data Base.

This multi-party character continued during the 2007 and 2011 elections. After the 2011 elections, the PDP was controlling the executive arm as well as majority in the NASS. Outcome of the 2011 elections reveal that the PDP polled 58.89 per cent while the closest rival, newly registered Committee for Progressive Change (CPC) polled 31.98 per cent. All other parties put together polled the remaining 9 per cent. Similarly in the NASS elections, the PDP dominated both the Senate and House of Representatives by having 76 Senators out of 109 and 223 out of 360 members in the House of Representatives (African Elections Data Base, undated). The remainder was shared among all the other parties. The implication of this is that the PDP was domineering while all other parties in opposition may be said to have lacked the stamina of constituting effective opposition. This is because, by having an overwhelming two-third majority of votes, the PDP was the decider on all issues of joint deliberation among the parties. It was the desire to avoid this

situation and to constitute a formidable opposition to the PDP that led some other parties to merge so as to gain more numerical strength.

Following recognition of the need to challenge the dominance of the PDP, especially in the NASS, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Committee for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) applied to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for merger into a new political party, the All Progressives' Party (APC). This desire of theirs was eventually granted on 31 July, 2013 when INEC withdrew the certificates of the parties and recognised the APC as their new party. Thus, the two parties emerged as the dominant parties in Nigerian politics. It is instructive to note that while other parties were in existence in line with the multiparty aspirations of the country, the PDP and APC became dominant and, therefore, constituted the *de facto* parties in the country. This became manifest in the build up to the 2015 general elections when in spite of the existence of other political parties, the contest was generally believed to be between the PDP and the APC. At the end of the March, 2015 elections, the two parties, PDP and APC, together won over 98 per cent of valid votes cast in the presidential election while other parties put together (about 12) won less than two per cent. This is graphically illustrated in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Parties and Votes Received during 2015 Presidential Election

S/N	Name of Political Party	Number of Votes Received	Percentage of Votes Received
1	All Progressives' Party (APC)	15,424,921	53.96
2	Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP)	12,853,164	44.96
3	All Peoples' Alliance (APA)	53,537	0.19
4	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN)	40,311	0.14

5	Citizens' Popular Party (CPP)	36,300	0.13
6	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	30,673	0.11
7	Africa Democratic Congress (ADC)	29,666	0.09
8	Peoples' Party of Nigeria	24,475	0.09
9	National Conscience Party (NCP)	24,455	0.09
10	Accord Alliance (AA)	22,125	0.08
11	United Progressive Party (UPP)	18,220	0.06
12	KOWA Party (KP)	13,076	0.05
13	United Democratic Party (UDP)	9,208	0.03
14	Hope Party (HP)	7,435	0.03
	Invalid / Blank Votes	844,519	-
	Total Voters' Turnout	29,432,083	100

Source: INEC database, 2015

From Table 3 above, the APC won majority in the presidential election while the PDP was in second place. The electoral strength of both parties shows that they are the two main parties existing in the post-2015 election Nigeria. This is because, while there were other parties recognised by law, they were not as strong as the APC and the PDP in electoral strength. Similarly in the NASS election, the APC won the majority of seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Its closest rival is the PDP which also had 44 out of 109 Senate seats. The implication of this is that both the APC and the PDP have emerged as two-party *de facto* in the Nigerian political system. This is not without some implications for democratic process in the country.

Implications for Democratic Sustenance

Democratic sustenance implies sustaining the democratic ferment. By transiting to a democratically elected Government in

1999 and conducting a series of elections in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 aimed at transiting from one civilian government to another, Nigeria can be said to have emerged as a democratic country. However, it is not enough to emerge as a democracy, conscious effort must be made towards its sustenance in order to avoid democratic reversals. For Nigeria, against the background of its experiences with military authoritarianism, sustaining the democratic ferment is a matter of no choice. Moreover, it has been noted that decisive changes in the democratic direction in Europe (Isaac, 1998; Hadenius, 1997) coupled with resilience of most Africans to democratic rule (Rakner and Skage, 2011; Jega 2007; Saliu, 2004; Bratton and De Wall, 1997; Olowu, 1995) are what inspired changes in the democratic direction on the continent. This is against the backdrop of their experiences under different forms of autocratic rule. Having gone through such experience, therefore, sustaining democracy on the continent is a matter of categorical necessity.

It must be pointed out that in sustaining democracy on the African continent and indeed Nigeria, the role of political parties cannot be wished away. Aside of the fact that they perform other functions in the political system geared towards democratic sustenance, the conduct and activities of these parties also have implications for the sustenance of democracy. In Nigeria, for instance, the unbridled competition between the two major political parties, based on the 2015 elections, has implications for the polity as a whole and the work of the electoral umpire, INEC. On the one hand, the country was inflamed especially with actions and utterances from parties and their supporters. For this reason, there was palpable trepidation across the land and more than a few were worried about what February 2015 (the initial election month) had in its underbelly (Eju, 2015). Such actions and utterances include, death-wish advertorials of the APC Presidential candidate by PDP's Governor of Ekiti state, Ayo Fayose, comments on the confusion and uncertainty that beclouded collection of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) from INEC, invasion of the APC data centre in Lagos by operatives of the Directorate of Security Service (SSS), threat of starting a war by Mujahid Asari Dokubo, leader of the militant group, Niger Delta Volunteer Force, if President Jonathan was not re-

elected by whatever means and the threat by APC to form a parallel government if it was not declared winner in the Presidential election, among others.

On the other hand, it resulted in tough situations for INEC as political parties often besieged the commission with petitions and counter petitions. There were also occasional outbursts from both the APC and the PDP that INEC may have been compromised. Also, the website of the Independent National Electoral Commission was hacked on Election Day by a group calling itself the Nigerian Cyber Army (*Premium Times*, 28 March, 2015). Although INEC later announced that it had recovered its website back, the event is, nonetheless, a reflection of the extent of desperation by some political party supporters.

Apart from the above, the emergence of two strong parties polarised the citizens along bifurcated party lines thereby leading to an escalation of violence before and during the 2015 elections. For example, in spite of the existence of enabling laws that prohibited election related violence, on 10 January 2015, youths in Jos burnt cars belonging to PDP Goodluck Jonathan campaign organization, chanting Buhari slogans "Sai Buhari", which is Hausa for "It has to be Buhari", in reference to the presidential candidate of the APC and Jonathan's main opponent, Muhammadu Buhari (www.naij.com). This violent situation repeated itself in states like Bauchi and Katsina among others. Also, On January 24th, alleged thugs belonging to the PDP attacked the venue of the APC governorship rally in Okrika local Government Area of Delta state (www.naij.com). According to Nigeria's Human Rights Commission, between January and February, 2015, election violence occurred in 22 states with 58 people killed (www.naij.com). This suggests rising cases of violence prelude to the 2015 elections. Similarly, during the elections which observers adjudged to be peaceful on a general note, violence was recorded in some states. Mujeeb (n.d.) captures this scenario when he observed that:

INEC's records show that there were 66 reports of violent incidents targeted at polling units, the Commission's officials, voters and election materials. These were in Rivers State (16 incidents), Ondo (8), Cross River and Ebonyi (6 each), Akwa Ibom (5) Bayelsa

(4), Lagos and Kaduna (3 each), Jigawa, Enugu, Ekiti and Osun (2 each), Katsina, Plateau, Kogi, Abia, Imo, Kano and Ogun (one each).

While it must be acknowledged that elections in Nigeria and indeed, most developing countries have not been free from violence and other forms of coercive mobilisation, the 2015 election violence in Nigeria was accentuated by the dominant role of two parties. Apart from polarising the citizens along party lines, places of worship and religious groups are not left out in the polarisation. For example, in one context, many Muslims, especially in the northern part of the country, seems to pitch their tent with opposition APC. In another context, Christian leaders seem to be divided on who to support. Oikelome (2015) writes that after a meeting by President Jonathan with pastors of some Pentecostal churches to solicit their support for his presidential ambition bid, the pastors became divided with Bishops David Oyedepo of Winners Chapel and Felix Omobude, the Pentecostal Federation of Nigeria (PFN) president in the tent of Mr. President and by extension, the PDP political strategists, while Pastor Enoch Adeboye, of Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and his teeming followers, including fans and admirers were in the tent of the APC and its political gladiators. The heated situation also led to proliferation of hate speeches at campaign venues, media and at every opportunity available to the parties to address Nigerians. For example, the wife of the former President, Mrs Patience Jonathan was alleged to have asked supporters of the PDP to throw stones at supporters of the rival APC (<https://www.naij.com>).

Related to the above are disputes after the elections. While this is not a new phenomenon as politicians are known to always dispute outcomes of elections that is not in their favour, the militant and vociferous manner of the electioneering during and after the 2015 elections in Nigeria creates a source of worry for democratic sustenance in the country. The open and militant disputations by a former Minister of the Federation, Elder Peter Godsdai Orubebe, during collation of the 2015 presidential election result at the International conference centre, Abuja, Nigeria reflects the mind-set and attitude of politicians to the elections.

The emergence of two-party *de facto* in Nigeria also helps to increase the political consciousness of Nigerians before and after the

elections. In fact, so charged was the terrain that the aphorism 'change' became a popular slogan among Nigerians especially those in support of APC while 'transformation' was popular among supporters of the PDP. This was in apparent reference to desire of APC supporters to effect change to the national leadership through voting their preferred candidates. In fact, before the elections, several concerts were held in various parts of the country with the slogan, RSVP – Register to Vote; Select your preferred candidate; Vote during election and not fight; Protect your vote after voting.

Conclusion

Nigeria's democracy is founded on multi-party system but realities have made two parties (APC and PDP) to be dominant in the political system. Thus, there is two-party *de facto* operating in Nigeria. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria as comparative experience from other countries have shown. Among the factors that are receptive to the emergence of two-party *de facto* in Nigeria's current Fourth Republic is the desire to form a credible opposition to the ruling party which manifests in the formation of APC by some group of parties. The emergence of these two-party *de facto* is not without its positive and negative implications for democracy in the country and by extension, the African continent. Averting the negative consequences require that the emergence of dominant parties be accompanied by moderation in actions and sincere desires for the sustenance of democracy from both political actors, civil society groups as well as citizens at large.

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