

Second Tenure Syndrome and Consolidation of Electoral Democracy in Nigeria: A Reflection on the 4th Republic

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Abstract

With an increasing wave of global appeal, democracy as a practice has no doubt become the most acceptable form of government in modern times for both the developed and developing states obviously for its majoritarian appeal and the capacity to sustain national development and sense of belonging to the citizenry. However, the Nigerian democracy of the 4th republic has taken an obvious new twist following from the rising appetite for a **second tenure** bid in office by many political incumbents who were elected to serve for a term of four years in the first instance but are now clamoring for what they term, **second term bid** as if to say that democracy confers electoral victory outside the power of the ballot box. As most African states have been thrown into a new sense of learning along the lines of democratic practice, some unusual behaviors have continued to manifest itself which often times tend to compromise the democratic spirit and its consolidation in the African environment one of which has remained the desire for a second term in office or outright perpetuation in office both of which may be antithetical to the tenets of true democracy the world over. In her fifteen (15) years of unbroken democratic sustainability, the Nigerian state has got to contend with the insatiable appetite of political leaders who are bent at either perpetuating themselves in office or earning a second term in office at the expense of the ballot box, the practice which has led to a brazen quest for political victory by all means or its aftermath as **a do or die** affair. This work is therefore an attempt to periscope the impact of the increasing wave of political office holder's desire for a second term in office on Nigeria's over all democratic sustainability and the **political economy** implications of such a desire. Employing therefore the content methodology and the Marxian class theory of the state as a framework of analysis, the work was able to find out, amongst others, that the desire for a second term in office among Nigerian politicians has always overheated the democratic space thereby subjecting it to a contest of "the winner takes it all". Secondly, the urge has exacerbated the craze among politicians to hoard state scarce resources only to deploy same to their **selfish advantage** of securing their second term ticket during elections thereby aiding and abetting political corruptions of various magnitudes. Based on the above, this paper recommends that African states in general and Nigeria in particular should rather opt for a political tenure of a single five (5) year term as a means of mitigating the daring effects of second tenure ambition at all costs among her political class.

Key Words: Democracy, Democratic consolidation, Election, Electoral Democracy, Second tenure

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that one of Nigeria's post independence ambitions has remained the urge to institute a virile democratic practice and electoral process that can sustain both international and local appeal. This is evidenced from the series of concerted efforts she has

been making to engender credible democratic governance and at best, keep the military at bay from interfering in the political and administrative governance of the Nigerian state. However, with the military now out of politics for nearly fifteen (15) years and an unbroken chain of presidential democratic practice, the country's democratic spirit is now at the cross roads of possible truncation ostensibly as a result of undue ambitions on the part of her political class as it concerns tenure perpetuation and the dangerous perception of political contest as a matter of "do or die affair".

It has to be noted that the beauty of any democracy depends on its capacity to sustain a credible electoral process where the majority can always have their way and the minority their say. It is in this consideration that the democratic option of governance is eulogized for being famous for empowering the voters to determine and stir the democratic boat which had ultimately led to a better guaranteed responsiveness of leadership to the people. However, the Nigerian democratic practice of the fourth republic is obviously taking a new dangerous twist as the political class is up again with every design and machination to deny the country's democratic spirit of the chances of free, fair and credible elections by cunningly hatching circumventive strategies to better their chances of ascendancy to political office at the expense of transparent electoral process. As aptly noted by Nwobu (2010), Nigerians are reeling in disappointment as they live through a 419 democracy that has turned out to be the most visionless and corrupt in the country's historical epoch. Whereas the foremost democratic orientations of the early post independence periods were unduly infested with **tribalism and ethnic divide** which culminated in the eventual demise of the country's first three republics, the fourth republic has however brought a new dimension of maneuver into the country's political space where political incumbents that were offered democratic opportunities into their first four years of tenure or more are now leaving no stone unturned in order to secure a return to office at all costs as if to say that electoral victory in any meaningful democratic practice can be won outside the power of the ballot box.

The obvious implication of the above desire is that the beauty of **democratic election** is increasingly being watered down through the instrumentality of **selection and consensus candidature or endorsement** which has now over taken that of the emergence of successful candidates through the power of the ballot box. Of course and perhaps too, the Nigerian political class has been unmindful of the impact of credible elections in engendering genuine democratic governance. Elections in the words of Alapiki (2004:130) represent the barometer to measure the political maturity, health, legitimacy and stability of democratic governance. In his opinion, elections should be held to denote the single most important indicator of the presence or otherwise of democratic governance. This therefore follows that how a state arranges and executes its elections is a critical pointer to the level of political development of that particular state (Paki & Inokoba, 2006: 181).

Putting side by side the above indispensable role of elections in any democratic project, there is every sense of worry surrounding the increasing dimension of electoral abuses to which the Nigerian democratic practice of the fourth republic has been subjected to for no just cause than the undue ambition of her political class to retain political power at all costs. This work is therefore bothered by a number of issues ranging from the effects of the rising appetite for second tenure bid or tenure perpetuation by politicians in office on the country's democratic sustainability, the political economy implications of such inordinate ambitions on good governance, the increasing spate of do or die attitude towards political victory and the corresponding implications of such on national life to the obvious consequences of the influence of money or hegemonization of capital as the critical yard stick upon which the impoverished electorates now hinge their voting decisions as well as the overall exacerbation of political corruption within the country's democratic space.

The fact here remains that within the context of the Nigerian democracy, the electorates have often been at the receiving end of the debilitating effects of pecuniary politics and the urge to resort to **politics of the stomach** as a result of widespread poverty has torpedoed any concerted effort at enthroning deep seated democratic culture that is best for the country's socio-political and economic development. It is therefore against the background of the above concerns that this paper has undertaken to examine the issue of the second tenure syndrome on Nigeria's democratic consolidation with the country's present fourth republic as a study case.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Marxian class theory of the state stands out as one of the efficacious tools for the explanation of the interplay of capital reproduction in bourgeoisie capitalist and neo capitalist societies such as the Nigerian state. Despite the fact that there exists no common consensus among scholars as regards the notion of the state (Lenin, 1975), the central role of the state in capital reproduction has continued to attract scholastic attention following from its popularization in the works of Marx and Engels(1977), Lenin (1975) and a host of others.

The above classical works have no doubt, guided scholars of the Marxist persuasion in fine tuning the overall concept of the state and today, they have emerged with what Alan Wolf (1973) would refer to as the concept and theory of the state. From the point of view of the Marxian school, the state is nothing but a representation of the dominant interests of the ruling class. The idea that the state has often acted as an unbiased regulative umpire has been severally punctured since in the conception of the Marxian school, it is nothing but an instrument of primitive accumulation that is in the hands of the dominant class in the society commonly referred to as the bourgeoisie or the ruling class.

As a matter of fact, the origin of the state has been linked to the emergence of classes in the society and the consequent struggle among the two antagonistic classes over the expropriation of the social wealth particularly the surplus value. Towards this end and in the words of Ezeh (2008:113), not only is the state an agent in the hands of the ruling class but an organ for the oppression of one class by another and a serving instrument for the maintenance of pecuniary socio-economic and political order.

As clearly noted by Lenin (1975), the modern state is an instrument of exploitation which by implication exposes it as an institutional mechanism for resolving the inherent contradictions of capitalism (Obianyo, 2008). Ever since the disintegration of the primitive communal system in the words of Mba (2007), the history of all antagonistic class societies has been that of the struggle between classes. The ideological explanation of the class theory as projected by Marx has always referred to the inherent exploitative tendencies in the relationship between the proletariat and the ruling class or the bourgeoisie. From the dimension of political struggle, the ruling class has always lorded it over the masses using the state and its designated programmes of which elections is one of them. In this regard, elections as a state programme for the recruitment of political leadership has often fallen into the hands of the political class who invariably are members of the ruling class in which case, they use same for the recruitment of its members into the state positions where they control both the political and economic means of production and distribution.

It is in this capacity that they exercise control over the state resources which affords them the opportunity for undue aggrandizement or primitive accumulation. Therefore, the instrumentality of state power has often aided the ruling class to control both the economic as well as the social base of the social wealth and this account for the incessant struggles that are associated with the contest for electoral positions in Nigeria. This struggle for control of state machinery has become even more intense following from the perception that access to political power equally amount to access to economic stardom. In what may appear as a dangerous interlink between politics and economics, there has remained a very narrow

perception of the state as an enabling tool for ascendancy to economic stardom and this accounts for the reason why Nigerian politicians today regard any expenditure in politics as an investment that would after all be recouped when one wins an election. This is why the political economy implications of elections in Nigeria have become very enormous and the mentality of victory as **winner takes all** has come to stand.

Within the Nigerian political corridor, the quest for political positions has been translated into nothing short of an expanded scope and hope for improved returns through primitive accumulation in the long run. At the receiving end of this unwholesome relationship are the masses who, due to their peculiar state of economic existence have often been bought at pittance during elections only to be abandoned thereafter in terms of provision of basic necessities of existence.

ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

Since the attainment of nationhood on October 1 1960, Nigeria has passed through a number of elections all aimed at achieving a democratic reality. This is essentially because there has been an ample linkage between elections and democracy to the extent that the quality and nature of democratic success that can be recorded by any state is intractably interwoven with the manner elections are conducted and seen as being credible. In this regard, democratic governance is therefore rooted in the capacity to uphold the verdict of an electoral outcome that is borne out of the wishes and aspirations of the electorates. The fundamental fact here lies in the capacity to convoke an election that is within the corridor of **one man, one vote** and very much devoid of undue electoral maneuvers which often exacerbates the chances of mediocrity and unpopular choices in governance. There is no doubt that in Nigeria; there have been repeated instances where elections have turned out to be the greatest unmaking of democracy (Olaitan, 2005:44, Inokobia and Kumokor, 2011:142). It therefore follows that true democratic process can only be borne out of true elections while undemocratic elections in likewise manner cannot guarantee democratic sustainability. The idea of elections has become an imperative factor in democratic governance following from the incontrovertible failure of modern governance to provide for everybody to occupy political positions at the same time. This is therefore the basic explanation that justifies the instrumentality of elections as the basic means to arrive at minority representation of the majority at any point in time. However, walking through the plane of credible democratic elections has remained a tortuous journey for Nigeria and indeed many other African states.

The efforts to grapple with the tenets of democratic elections as the best means for leadership succession has often remained conflictual and a hard nut to crack with many factors counting against its chances of survival. However, as an indispensable part of the democratic process, election is a critical tool which assures the electorates that their decision matters most in any democracy, it offers them the unwavering powers where better managed to realize their freedom to make choice, the capacity to hold their elected representatives accountable and above all, act as the only singular weapon to guard against arbitrary rule by elected officials who, if found to have demonstrated noticeable lapses, can be voted out in subsequent elections. As pointed out by Inokobia and Kumokor (2011), it is only by the weapon of election that formal allocation of powers can occur in every democracy which helps to define power relationships within any given political community. In this direction, election is therefore the foundation of the social contract between the electorates and the elected. One of the cardinal reasons why democratic governments have been adjudged to be responsive and responsible stems from the fact that power of governance emanates through elections and the will of the people under its practice remains the final decision upon which power can be conferred on a candidate. For the fact that power to decide on who governs rests with the electorates, elected officers are often compelled to act responsibly and supposedly where possible, in line with the wishes and aspirations of the people. The attempt to toe this option

is largely informed by the candidate's belief that his future political ambition can be brightened if the electorates can find in him some modicum of commitment to service during the past political representation. Therefore, modern democratic positions can only be legitimized through the instrumentality of elections outside which any other means amounts to an outright imposition. The separating line between a government that is therefore legitimized by elections and the one that is not has always remained very clear. More often than not, legitimacy when not accorded can amount to outright withdrawal of allegiance or at the height of it all, citizen apathy which is a trajectory to the institution of unpopular regimes and a gateway to anarchy. This is because governments that are instituted through questionable or unpopular electoral process tend to lack such vital democratic ingredients that make them popular and acceptable. It has often been in the habit of governments that came into power through fraudulent means to be less caring about the needs of the masses particularly when they hold the view that they owe their ascendancy to the political office they occupy to nobody. Regrettably, most politicians in Nigeria and indeed Africa belong to this stock of regimes that think less about their own people for the simple reason that the electorates did not empower them into office with the instrumentality of their votes. Since many of them may have bought their electoral victory through the exchange of votes for money or other items, the decision in this regard has often remained that the electorates have after all, been bought and paid off.

What has been the interplay in the Nigerian democratic dispensation is that the aspirants have often cashed in on the state of impoverishments of the electorates which is fundamentally the after effect of deep-seated years of mal-governance to reduce the voters to mere **cash and carry entities during elections**. As rightly noted by Inokoba and Kumokor(2011), democratic governance cannot be comprehensibly imagined outside the existence of free and fair elections as it is incumbent on elections to supply the basic ingredients that constitute the building block for a virile democratic system. But this no doubt, can only be if the Nigerian politicians can be managed to play the political game according to the laid down rules and the electorates too becoming wiser not to mortgage the future of democracy through undue compromises no matter the level of their impoverishment.

Notwithstanding the numerous important roles which elections play in the sustainability of modern democratic practice, election in the context of the Nigerian democratic practice has been grossly subjected to noticeable abuses by the political class. This state of affairs has made electoral violence more pronounced in each of her elections and now a burden to the quality of democratic delivery. The desperation on the part of the politicians to secure electoral victory at all cost has propelled the incidences of ballot box snatching and falsification of electoral figures which is facilitated by the failure of the electorates to live up to their electoral duties as a result of political apathy and poor economic frame of mind. The Nigerian elections have been turned into a period for making quick money by the electorates who see nothing wrong in it only but an opportunity to recover part of the politician's loot from the national wealth. Rather than live up to their status as the political sovereign in the words of Adigwe (1984), the electorates in Nigeria have rather subjected themselves to a mercantile economic relationship with the politicians who cash in on their depraved economic conditions to barter votes for money. This no doubt has led to a number of democratic compromises and the failure to brighten the chances of emergence of rightful candidates in elective positions. What is more worrisome today is the lack of internal democracy within the existing Nigerian political parties which has made many of them democratic deviants. The situation has led to the growth of the phenomenon of candidate selection or consensus candidature that now make it possible for the anointed aspirant not to stand for internal party primary elections to test his or her popularity before emerging as the party's flag bearer in a national election. What is the interplay here is that party caucus or

incumbents have resorted to presenting their anointed candidates whom they do everything possible to ensure their adoption as the sole candidate without any internal party elections. This is just the prevailing practice which Nigeria's ruling party- the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is grappling with and this is just a ploy to return her presidential flag bearer who is a serving president and others to their political positions without any internal elections within the party. What is even more disturbing is that most of the politicians that are intended for recycling do not have much to show in terms of their performances during their first tenure. The only fact that has continued to count for them is their ill gotten wealth which they feel can speak for them on the day of their **supposed election**. Nigeria has continued to slide into a state where the democratic wishes of the masses can easily be truncated without the existence of trusted and credible democratic institution to check mate such and return victory to the wronged candidate. The power of incumbency has often been employed to intimidate and maneuver through other candidates that are less in touch with the coercive state apparatuses. As it is today, the impact of these practices on Nigeria's fourth republic is still building up but the certainty here remains that this undue excesses on the part of the political class is no doubt becoming a challenge to the survival of the country's nascent electoral democracy only which time will tell their repercussions

POLITICAL PARTIES, SECOND TENURE SYNDROME AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

As noted by Dahl (1989), contestations and participation are defining elements of democracy. Party politics in Nigeria historically speaking can be traced back to the era of independence of the country from colonial Britain. This was the time when the nationalist struggle for independence became more intense with most of the educated African elites demanding for self rule from their colonial masters. Political parties began to emerge as platforms for aggregating the interests of the Nigerian political elites that were positioning themselves strategically to take over the mantle of leadership in the envisaged democratic self rule that would accompany political independence.

However, in Nigeria, party politics dates back to the year 1922 following from the birth of the Clifford constitution which provided for the first time for an elective principle and representation. In this regard, Nwankwo (2005) notes that the first of the political party to emerge was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which started as a localized partnership under the headship of late Herbert Macaulay. Following from this, a number of other political parties began to emerge thereby expanding the country's multi party system. However, one of the significant characteristics of Nigeria's post independence party formations was their lack of national outlook both in memberships and representation. What became the trend was that each of the parties became a champion in the ethnic region of their founders thereby deepening the wounds of ethnic politics in the country. This was the case of the NCNC, NPC and the AG parties. However, an attempt to deal with the issue of regional cum ethnic politics in Nigeria has resulted in a number of efforts aimed at experimenting with a number of party options ranging from the multi party arrangement to the two party prototypes in order to determine the suitability of each for the Nigerian democratic convenience. Now that the prevalence of ethnic politics is beginning to give way to the emergence parties with condonable traces of national outlook, the Nigerian political parties are today up again with yet another detrimental phenomenon which one can refer to as the **second tenure, consensus or adopted candidate** mentality both of which are as undemocratic as ever and has the potency of truncating the entire democratic arrangement of the fourth republic. Even now, such overture has started to brew internal dislocation within some political party's frame work which has the potential capacity to spread into the entire democratic framework and the 2015 national elections in Nigeria.

The obvious misrepresentation of the provisions of the 1999 constitution as it concerns tenure eligibility for both presidential and gubernatorial candidates in sections 137 s.s (1b) and 182 s.s (1b) which states that a person shall not be qualified for election to the office of the president if he has been elected to such office at any two previous elections and same for governors if such a person has been elected to such office at any two previous elections is now treated as a political right by politicians to the effect that no matter the level of non performance during the first tenure, such a candidate is often believed to have the express right to an eight year term in office under the second tenure syndrome. An attempt to flush out such a person after the first tenure is always seen by many political loyalists as not deserving as if the electorates do not have the mandate to speak with the power of their votes irrespective of whether a candidate is seeking first election or re-election under the second tenure connotation. Even now that the 1999 constitution has remained silent over any possible tenure range for members of the National Assembly, most of them have taken the membership of both the upper and the lower legislative chambers as their traditional birth right to the effect that they have continued to re-cycle themselves endlessly as if to say that no other person is deserving to taste the same office and in each case, they buy their way back through democratic compromises and not due to their committed service to their own people. What is clear is that the idea of lack of internal democracy within political parties can generate crises with a spillover effect that can precipitate military take over as it has been the case in the past. This however cannot be the wish of Nigerians who have severally and sufficiently too demonstrated their favorable preferences towards the democratic form of government (IDEA, 2001).

Therefore, the practice of tenure elongation, consensus candidature or even candidate adoption are all manifestations of lack of internal party democracy which in all amounts to weakening the credibility of the Nigerian democracy and promoting the elite conspiracy to better their chances of ascendancy to political power.

ELECTIONS, SECOND TENURE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

It has been the contention of scholars that a given state is democratic or is said to practice democracy if elections into political positions are so organized in such a way that franchise is extended to all qualified adults to participate in an election(Wallenstein, 1968). The implication of the above therefore is that the electorates should have the opportunity to determine freely who should or should not hold electoral positions on their behalf and such choice remaining binding. However, the above case cannot today be said to be applicable to the Nigerian democracy of the fourth republic which is saddled with the politics of imposition. It is no longer the days when the choices of the electorates are held to be sacrosanct. There is no doubt that the essence of democracy at large is to ensure good governance anchored in the capacity of governments to operate within the ambit of the law while at the same time remaining responsive to the needs of the citizens. The rule of law presupposes the supremacy of the law of the land as demonstrated in its capacity to apply across board to all and sundry on equal weightings. Democracy is therefore worth its name only when through its practice, good governance can be guaranteed. In the words of Onyishi (2000:115) the extent to which the governing body can deploy public resources for common good is suggestive of good governance. But how can this be when all the Nigerian politicians have taken to all dubious tendencies in order to circumvent the decision of the electorates? still, how can this be when the same politicians have been indulging in the stashing away of the public wealth in foreign accounts with the view to unleash same on the gullible electorates at election times since the belief is that the impoverished electorates cannot withstand the influence of money in trading off their electoral votes? It is natural that good governance derive from accountability which has to do with the responsiveness of the government to the governed but again, how can this be in a setting where public corruption

and lack of transparency has become the hallmark of everyday life and all the anti graft agencies **not** in a hurry to bring all erring politicians to book? In this regard, Nwosu (1991) submits that such government is nothing but insensitive to its terms of reference and in this regard, irresponsible. The increasing demand for second tenure among the Nigerian politicians is not in any way an action informed by their desire to enthrone good governance but rather an opportunity to access state resources at the expense of the masses through the instrumentality of the state. Good governance in Nwosu's (1991) conception presupposes that laws are deliberately made which will grant the citizens the right to challenge certain political and administrative actions directly or through the law courts, Ombudsman or even the administrative tribunals. It is in a moment like this that the electorates can rise up and challenge the excesses as is being meted out to them by the political class such as candidate imposition and the craze for second tenure when there is nothing to show for such in terms of service delivery.

CONCLUSION

It is necessary for us to submit here that for the moment, there is no other form of government the world over that is better than democracy. This is why the Nigerian state and indeed most states in Africa must rise to its embrace and be better committed to its defense by eschewing actions that are undemocratic. Indeed, time has come for the political class in Nigeria to realize that politics cannot be approached with a do or die resolve and that nursing the ambition of perpetuity of oneself in office just for the mere reason of obvious economic edge over the electorates for pecuniary reasons does not conjure any sense of maturity. Therefore, to foster development and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, concerted efforts must be made to ensure internal democracy within the existing political parties since it is a common saying that one cannot give what one does not have.

Time has equally come to realize that poorly organized elections have the proven potentials to truncate the attainment of any country's democratic ambition on one hand and good governance on the other. Nigeria's fourth republic no doubt is today passing through the litmus test of survival occasioned by the undue desire for second tenure by politicians and the lack of internal democracy among the existing political parties. Regrettably too, in Nigeria just like in most states in Africa, enormous value and resources are tied to political offices which have led to increased attention on public positions by many thereby exacerbating the competition and struggle for state power. In order therefore to douse this tension and enthrone good governance, the value, benefits and resources that are attached to most of her political positions has to be commensurately stripped in order to serve as disincentive to many politicians who may not have as their sole aim the intention to serve the Nigerian state as against self enrichment. More so, to stem the craze for second tenure on one hand and the politics of selection on the other hand, the electorates must rise above their poverty state to the understanding that their present condition of impoverishment is all a matter traceable to mal-governance as occasioned by the acceptance of wrong persons in public positions. Therefore to turn down any offer no matter how enticing that would compromise electoral outcomes must be rejected by them. There is also the need to reconfigure the life span of any elective position to a one five year term in order to minimize the incumbency factor in politics and self imposition of candidates. The yard stick for any re-election bid must be predicated on capacity to perform and a thorough assessment of earlier contributions while in public position. To sustain this, the electorates must be exposed to better founded orientations anchored on the philosophy that notwithstanding their level of socio-economic depravity, the idea of parting with their votes for mere pittances or any form of gratification is tantamount to rocking the democratic boat and mortgaging the destiny of both the present and future Nigerians.

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