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Political Power Alternation and the Challenge of Democratic Stability in Nigeria: Focus on Fourth Republic 1999 – 2013

Ereke Ernest^α & Okoli, Rowland Chukwuma^ο

Abstract- The wave of democratization in the post cold war era has contributed to democratic transition in most African states. However, stability remains scarce in most of these nascent democracies. Borrowing from the experience of Nigeria in the fourth republic, the study examined whether lack of political power alternation undermines democratic stability. Using secondary data collected from documentary sources, a qualitative descriptive method of analysis, the study argues that lack of governmental turnover undermines democratic stability. Relying on the theory of post-colonial state, we demonstrated that the limited autonomy of the Nigerian state and its employment as a means of primitive accumulation by the ruling elite has led to intense struggle on the one hand by the ruling party to retain itself perpetually in power and a corresponding struggle on the other hand by the opposition to change the status quo. As a corollary, we note that while the ruling party uses the instrument of the state to repress the opposition and manipulate electoral processes in order to remain in power, the opposition struggle to liberate itself from repression and to capture state power. We noted that Nigeria's experience in the period under investigation depicts lack of governmental turnover because the incumbent party has limited the political space by manipulating electoral processes and emasculating the opposition with the aid of state apparatus. We argue that this has heated up the polity and ignited vulgar politics expressed in political assassinations, pre and post electoral crises and rise in activities of insurgents in the country. The study avers that strengthening of state institutions would reduce impunity, increase possibility of power alternation and ipso facto enhance democratic stability in Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, there has been growing acceptance of liberal democratic principles as the solution to the political woes of the third world countries. Meanwhile, democracy is a progressive form of governance and philosophy that has moved from its classical formulation as practiced in Athens to its modern formulation that emphasizes personal liberty, inclusiveness and representative government with checks and balances to eliminate arbitrariness (Jega, 2007).

Meanwhile, scholars agree that periodic election remain an indispensable feature of every democratic polity because it grants the electorates the political space to choose their representatives periodically via free and fair election (see Appadorai, 2004; Alumona, 2007). More so, free and fair elections increase the chances of alternating political power – a situation where the opposition political party take over power from the incumbent democratically. Similarly, recent studies have argued that alternation in power institutionalizes democracy and differentiates democratic societies from authoritarianism (Przeworski et al. 2000; Huntington, 1991; Joseph, 2010).

Elsewhere, Milanovic, Hoff & Horowitz (2008) examined whether political power alternation fosters establishment of the rule of law, using data from 27 post-communist states, they investigated the effect of political power alternation on the quality of governance in the selected countries and noted that alternation in power breaks the vicious circle of weak institutions and strong particular interests. Conversely, Wahman (2010) argued persuasively that victory of opposition does not guarantee democracy because newly elected government also concerned with future re-election would not abolish incumbent advantages so as not to undermine future prospect of re-election. He noted that governmental turnover may be a window of opportunity for political liberalization only if new government is will to sacrifice the institutions that might give them electoral advantage in future elections. Citing Senegal and Kenya as example, he warned that if opposition political parties are used as means of achieving personal ambitions among state elites, it will be difficult to build stable ruling coalitions that could implement democratic improvements.

In Africa, there is increase in the number of countries transiting to democracy, for instance, between 1990 & 1994, thirty-one of the forty-one countries that had not held multiparty elections did so (Diouf 1998 cited in Ibrahim 2003). Paradoxically, despite the transition, the continent is still characterized by abuse of power especially by the incumbent, massive electoral malpractice and political repression especially of the opposition parties, alternation in power has remained difficult if not impossible in most countries and instability has continued to pervade most of the countries of Africa.

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In West Africa, a number of countries have experienced alternation in power, for example Senegal in 2000, Ghana in 2000 and 2008, Mali in 2002, Benin in 1996 and 2006, Cape Verde in 2001, Liberia and Niger in 2005 and 1996 respectively. Conversely, in Nigeria, alternation in power has remained elusive since the country's transition to democracy in 1999, political instability has remained the order of the day and the country appears to be at the brick of collapse. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to examine whether alternation in power enhances democratic stability. Specifically, the study provokes the following question: has the non-alternation in political power undermined democratic instability in Nigeria?

II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The study is anchored on the theory of post colonial state, originally developed by Hamza Alavi (1972), the theory is premised on the historical specificity of post-colonial societies, which arises from structural changes brought about by the colonial experience and alignments of classes, and by the superstructures of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context, and secondly from radical realignment of class forces which have been brought about in the post-colonial situation. Ake (1985) traced these political conditions to the political legacy colonialism bequeathed on Africa. Colonialism in Africa he said was unusually statist because the colonial state was called upon by the peculiar circumstances of the colonial situation to carry out so many functions – indeed to do everything – it was all powerful. The power of the colonial state was not only absolute but also arbitrary. These two features of the state power, its absolutism and its arbitrariness, framed colonial politics. Although political independence brought some changes to the composition of the state managers, the character of the state remained much as it was in the colonial era; state power remained essentially the same. At independence therefore, the political environment was hostile and the struggle for power was so absolute.

As a corollary, Ibeanu (1998) conceived of the state as 'the totality of the materiality of political class domination in a society', and surmised that since the postcolonial state is all-powerful and there are few safeguards on how its tremendous power is to be used in a moderate and civil manner, groups and individuals take a great stock in controlling the power of the state. So it is characteristic of the postcolonial state that its members put a premium on politics. Thus, politics is everything and everything is politics, including life and death (Ibeanu, 1998:11). He further argued that the role of the Nigerian state in democratization has to be understood in the light of the inner characteristics of that state, rather than more transient factors like ethnicity. These characteristics, he said, are conducive to the

negation of democracy. Similarly, Ake (1985) noted that post-colonial African states have limited autonomy resulting in the personalization of the resources of physical coercion by the hegemonic factions of the ruling class, right tends to be coextensive with power and security depends on the control of power. The struggle for power is everything and is pursued by every means, formal freedom, equality and competitive politics are inhibited. Thus, government lacks objectivity and legitimacy. Consequently, the possibility of resolving contradictions is severely limited and groups struggle brutally with little confidence of peaceful resolution of conflict which exacerbates the problem of political instability.

In the light the above, we shall apply the tenets of this theory in explicating how the state grew so powerful in Nigeria such that so much premium has been placed on capturing state power essential for accumulation of wealth by the ruling elite. Again, the theory will assist in explaining how the limited autonomy of state institutions impacts on political struggle and the outcome.

Against this backdrop, we make the following proposition which will be verified in the study.

a) Proposition

Non-alternation in political power tends to undermine democratic instability in Nigeria.

b) Nature of Politics in Pre-Independence Nigeria

The limited autonomy of most African states expressed in the existence of strong incumbents in elected offices is one of the bequests of colonialism. The colonial lords employed violence, repression and intimidation as a means of legitimizing their rule and avoiding resistance of any form. As a result, democratic institutions of governance were not developed neither was any form of opposition allowed to thrive. In fact, even the colonial legislative council functioned mainly as a ratificatory body giving formal approval to executive directives by the governor (Nwosu, 2007). The monopolization of the instrumentalities of the state for the protection of the colonial lords was so intense that Indirect Rule was employed as an instrument to extinguish every form of opposition, limit the political space and emasculate any opposition to the incumbent. Consequently, high premium was placed on state power such that at independence the emergent political elites struggled profusely for state power which would be employed as a means for primitive accumulation and suppression of political opponent. Hence, the political elites who inherited power from the colonial masters retained the state apparatus for the pursuit of their sectional interest, political opponents were silenced with the instrumentalities of the state to ensure that the incumbent remains in power in perpetuity. As noted by Ogban-lyam (2005), the colonialists left authoritative decision making in the hands of the minority urban elites

who they created and these elites have continued to use the government apparatus (the armed forces, police etc) to dominate the country and rule in their own interest. It is against this background that politics in Nigeria developed its character. We shall briefly examine the dynamics of political struggle in the country prior to the emergence of the fourth republic.

c) Nigeria before the Fourth Republic

There were four regional governments in Nigeria at independence – the Northern Region, the Western Region, the Eastern Region and the Midwestern Region. Meanwhile, there was intense struggle by different factions of the political elites to control the central government as those who captured it used it to acquire wealth and repress the opponent. Hence, the major political parties of the First Republic developed along ethnic lines, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) drawing its support from the Hausa/Fulani of the North, the Action Group (AG) drawing its support from the Yoruba people in the West and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) drawing its support from the Igbo people in the East.

It is instructive to note that each of these parties dominated political activities in their respective region without any tolerance for opposition parties in any of the region. Consequently, after the 1959 election, the alliance of NCNC and NPC controlled the central government while the AG became the dominant opposition party. The instruments of the state were used to repress and emasculated the opposition to the extent that the leaders of the opposition were tried for treason and Chief Obafemi Awolowo sentenced to ten years imprisonment thereby bringing about the collapse of the opposition party. The ruling faction of the elite monopolized all machineries of the state and inflicted all forms of harassment on any opposition such that as the country prepared for January 1965 election, in Bauchi South-West, the constituency of the Prime-Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, there was no opposition. The first time the opposition tried to nominate a candidate, the nominators were arrested, on the second attempt, the opposition were carted off and on the third attempt, they were held until the time for nomination lapsed. Two other opposition candidates for Binji-Tangza-Silame and Gwadabawa were assassinated (Ake, 1985). All these were in the bid by the incumbent to remain in power and ensure power was not captured by the opposition. These attempts to silence the opposition gave rise to disorder in the polity which eventually led to the collapse of the First Republic with the takeover of government by the military in a bloody coup on 15th January 1966.

With the return to civil rule in 1979, the political parties and ethnic groups who felt marginalized in the First Republic saw it as an opportunity to take over control of the government. Hence parties were again built along ethnic lines, the 1979 Presidential Election was however won by Shehu Shagari a Hausa/Fulani

from Northern Nigeria who contested under the platform of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The repression and emasculation of the opposition continued and the plan by the incumbent to remain in power manifested in the 1983 General Election where the incumbent won the Presidential election and his party – NPN also got majority of the seats in the National Assembly. The state-sponsored malpractice witnessed in the election led to widespread protest and socio-political unrest in the country. This chaos led to the collapse of the Second Republic with the takeover of government by the military in the coup of 31st December 1983.

Essentially, up to the end of the 2nd Republic, politics in Nigeria was characterized by intense struggle among the political elites to capture the central government and more fundamentally, we saw the abuse of government machinery especially the police and electoral body by the incumbent to remain perpetually in power.

A two party system was experimented in the Third Republic, the result of the election organized by the Babangida led military was equally annulled by same regime and an Interim National Government installed which was overthrown by the military led by Gen. Sani Abacha. The death of General Sani Abacha paved way for the emergence of the Fourth republic with the inauguration of a democratically elected government on 29th May 1999.

d) Nigeria's Fourth Republic and Elusiveness of Power Alternation

The advent of the Fourth Republic brought about great expectation and rising hope to the Nigerian populace and the political elites. For the masses, the return to democracy would improve standard of living, create jobs etc, for the political elites, the political space would be widened to enable them pursue their political ambition in the country. Again, not only was a civilian regime inaugurated in 1999, a new constitution was also handed over by the military. It is instructive to know that the 1999 Presidential election was keenly contested between Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Olu Falae of Alliance for Democracy (AD), Obasanjo emerged winner with a total vote of 18,738,154 (62.78%) (<http://www.electiontripod> retrieved 15/01/2014.), the PDP also emerged majority in the Federal House of Representative and the Senate by winning 206 seats (57.49%) out of 360 seats and 59 seats (56.4%) out of 109 seats respectively.

The 2003 Presidential election was a replay of the incident that characterize the 1999 General elections. Though the election was organized by a civilian government, it turned out to be one of the worst elections in the history of Nigeria. The Executive demonstrated its power of incumbent and retained itself in power by ensuring that Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (Rtd) of the PDP swept the votes at the poll while the

PDP also got majority seats in the National House of Assembly (see table 1).

Similarly, in the 2007 General elections, having completed the maximum two terms of four years each, the incumbent President Obasanjo saw to it that his anointed successor, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua of the PDP won the Presidential election. Despite the strong internal crises in the party and the breakaway of Atiku Abubakar led faction to contest under Action Congress (AC), the PDP still won 87 of the 109 seats in the Senate and 263 out of 360 seats in the Federal House of Representatives. The 2007 General election was characterized by serious irregularities and inadequacies and condemned by various election observers both local and International (see Alumona 2007). It is pertinent to state that the untimely death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua paved way for his deputy – Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to become the President of the Federal Republic in order to complete the four year tenure.

The 2011 General Elections was a watershed in the history of Nigeria. The untimely death of Umaru

Musa Yar Adua and the assumption of President Goodluck as the President led to widespread dissatisfaction among the Northern elites who felt that the North has not completed its turn in the Presidency and should be given another opportunity in 2011 to enable it complete its turn of at least eight years before power shifts to another region, ethnic or religious group. Nevertheless, Goodluck Jonathan got the PDP ticket to contest the Presidential election. Although, the 2011 General Elections were adjudged by many observers as the most credible election organized by INEC since 1999 (Orji & Uzodi, 2012), there was widespread dissatisfaction by the opposition parties in the country who felt frustrated and cheated by the incumbent who has been ruling the country since transition in 1999. Be that as it may, the fundamental issue remains that power was still not alternated as the ruling party (PDP) remained in power.

Table 1 below presents statistics of Presidential election results in Nigeria from 1999 – 2011 and how the ruling PDP has continued to win all elections to retain itself in power to the frustration of the opposition.

Table 1 : Nigeria's Election Results 1999 – 2011

Year	Contestants/Parties	Number of votes	% of votes	Remarks
1999	Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP)	18,738,154	62.78%	
	Olu Falae (AD/APP)	11,110,287	37.22%	
2003	Olusegun Obasanjo (PDP)	24,456,140	61.94%	No Alternation in Power
	Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP)	12,710,022	32.19%	
	Odumegwu Ojukwu (APGA)	1,297,445	3.29%	
	Jim Nwobodo (UNPP)	169,609	0.43%	
	Gani Fawehimi (NCP)	161,333	0.41%	
	Sarah Jubril (PAC)	157,560	0.40%	
	Ike Nwachukwu (NDP)	132,997	0.34%	
	Christopher Okotie (JP)	119,547	0.30%	
	Balarabe Musa (PRP)	100,765	0.26%	
	2007	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (PDP)	24,638,063	
Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP)		6,605,299	18.66%	
Atiku Abubakar (AC)		2,637,848	7.45%	
Orji Uzor Kalu (PPA)		608,803	1.72%	
Attahiru Bafarawa (DPP)		289,224	0.82%	
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (APGA)		155,947	0.44%	
2011	Goodluck Jonathan (PDP)	22,495,187	58.89%	No Alternation in Power
	Muhammadu Buhari (CPC)	12,214,853	31.98%	
	Nuhu Ribadu (ACN)	2,079,151	5.41%	
	Ibrahim Shekarau (ANPP)	917,012	2.40%	

*Table contains results for major political parties and candidates which obtained minimum 100,000 votes

Source: <http://www.electiontripod.org> retrieved 15/01/2014)

e) Factors Accounting for Non-Alternation in Power in Nigeria, 1999 – 2011

Several factors interact to make alternation of power elusive in Nigeria in the fourth republic. Although none of these factors should be taken *sui generis*,

emphasis is placed on how the following factors undermined power alternation in the country.

III. WEAK AND INEFFICIENT ELECTORAL INSTITUTION

The existence of a strong electoral institution is critical for organizing a free and fair election. As a corollary, if alternation of political power must take place in a democratic polity, then there must be in place an independent and efficient electoral body to ensure that the votes of the opposition and its supporters count. The electoral institution in Nigeria has remained an instrument in the hands of the incumbent for the frustration of the opposition at the polls and for self-succession of the incumbent political party. The Fourth republic is not an exception. The history of electoral authorities in Nigeria depicts a tale of interference and control of the authorities by the incumbent Executives. Ibrahim & Garuba (2010) gave incisive historical analysis and the trajectory of electoral authorities in Nigeria from independence and noted that the country's electoral authority has not been independent as it has been marred by fundamental structural and institutional constraints.

The Fourth republic elections have been organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which was created by Decree 17 of 1998, incorporated into the 1999 Constitution and bequeathed to the civilian government by the military.

Despite the inadequacies of INEC, successive incumbents have only paid lip service to electoral reforms and at addressing these inadequacies. The experience of election in the Fourth republic exposes the weakness of Nigeria's electoral institution and its constant use by the ruling PDP to its advantage. The legal framework under which INEC operates is provided by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, INEC Establishment Act 1998, INEC (Amendment) Act 1998 and the Electoral Act 2006. A lot of sections of these acts compromises the autonomy of INEC. For instance, the Chairmen of INEC are being appointed by the President and they are bound to report back to him. Section 154(1) of the 1999 Constitution empowers the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, subject to confirmation by the Senate to appoint the Chairman and members of INEC. This has been considered as one of the sections compromising the institutional autonomy of INEC (see Ibrahim & Garuba, 2010).

There is no doubt that various Presidents have continued to pick and drop chairmen for the Commission as they dim fit. Between 1999 and 2012, the Commission has been chaired by four different Chairmen – an average of one chairman per four year term. Table 2 shows the tenure of various Chairmen of INEC from 1998 to date.

Table 2 : Changes and Names of INEC Chairmen 1998 - 2012

S/N	NAME	PERIOD
1.	Justice Ephraim Akpata	1998 – 2000
2.	Dr. Abel Guobadia	2000 – 2005
3.	Professor Maurice Iwu	2005 – 2010
4.	Professor Attahiru Jega	2010 – Date

Source: Culled from Ibrahim & Garuba, 2010

The weakness of INEC as an institution is well encapsulated in the statement by The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Attahiru M. Jega. According to him:

The issue of electoral offences and the impunity with which they are committed is also something that we have to deal with. We have done our best since we came in as a new Commission to prosecute electoral offenders, both during the registration exercise and the elections. And we recorded quite a few number of successful prosecutions, even though these are relatively few compared with large number of offenders. One of the major challenges we have, obviously, has to do with institutional weaknesses, such as inadequacy of legal capacity to prosecute such large numbers successfully within a short period... (Jega, 2011)

The failed elections of the fourth republic in Nigeria are therefore symptoms of these inherent weaknesses identified. Consequently, elections in Nigeria have been characterized by poor organization,

widespread rigging, procedural irregularities, significant evidence of fraud, voter disenfranchisement, late arrival of voting material and polling officials, stealing of sensitive polling materials to mention a few (see Alumona, 2007).

IV. WEAK STATE SECURITY APPARATUS AND CULTURE OF IMPUNITY

The state security apparatus and law enforcement agencies have been unable to forestall electoral frauds or violence, they have also failed to apprehend perpetrators of these electoral frauds or violence, protect life and property of the masses especially members of the opposition. This weakness of the state security apparatus correlates with the culture of impunity among the political elites who indulge in and sponsor all forms of fraud and irregularities in the political process knowing too well that the security apparatus cannot apprehend them. This is also reflected

in the raising cases of political assassinations in the country, the fourth republic alone accounts for the highest number of political assassinations in Nigeria's history (see Igbafe and Offiong, 2007). More so, the incumbents in some occasions have been accused of using the law enforcement agents to harass and intimidate political opponents.

The inability of the state security agencies to resolve the numerous cases of political assassinations in the country depicts the weakness of these agencies as institution of government, this in turn stifles opposition in the polity. Below is a list of some cases of unresolved political assassinations that has taken place in the fourth republic Nigeria.

Table 3 : Selected Cases of Unresolved Political Assassinations During the Fourth Republic in Nigeria

S/N	Names	Date	Location	Mode	Outcome
1	Patrick Okoye	January 31, 1999	Lagos	Shot	Unresolved
2	Sunday Ugwu	September 9 1999	Enugu	Shot	Unresolved
3	Igwe Francis Nwankwo	February 15, 2000	Anambra	Shot	Unresolved
4	Nicholas Okhuakhua	June 2000	Lagos	Shot	Unresolved
5	Mohammed Shuaibu	September 2000	Lagos	Shot	Unresolved
6	Obatou Mumbo	October 17, 2000	Onitsha	Shot	Unresolved
7	Idowu Braimoh	November 5, 2000	Ondo	Shot	Unresolved
8	Joseph Osayande	December 4, 2000	Benin	Shot	Unresolved
9	Chief Layi Balogun	December 10, 2000	Lagos	Shot	Unresolved
10	Monday Ndor	August 19, 2001	Port Harcourt	Shot	Unresolved
11	Onyebuchi Ede	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Shot	Unresolved
12	Chibueze Idah	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Shot	Unresolved
13	Ogbonna Odimbaiwe	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Shot	Unresolved
14	Ifeanyi Nnaji	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Shot	Unresolved
15	Odunayo Olagbaju	December 20, 2001	Ife	Shot	Unresolved
16	Chief Bola Ige	December 23, 2001	Ibadan	Shot	Unresolved
17	Mr. S. A. Awoniyi	January 7, 2002	Abuja	Stabbed	Unresolved
18	Eyo Eyo	April 2002	Calabar	Shot	Unresolved
19	Ifeanyi Igbokwe	April 18, 2002	Lagos	Shot	Unresolved
20	Musa Dayo	May 9, 2002	Bauchi	Shot	Unresolved
21	Christopher Ogbonna	May 26, 2002	Nsukka	Shot	Unresolved
22	Maria-Theresa Nsa	June 11, 2002	Cross River	Shot	Unresolved
23	Chief & Mrs Barnabas Igwe	September 1, 2002	Onitsha	Shot	Unresolved
24	Mr. Ogbonnaya Uche	February 8, 2003	Owerri	Shot	Unresolved
25	E. Emenike	February 13, 2003	Imo	Shot	Unresolved
26	Theodore Agwatu	February 22, 2003	Owerri	Shot	Unresolved
27	Emily Omope	March 3, 2003	Ibadan	Shot	Unresolved
28	Marshal Harry	March 5, 2003	Abuja	Shot	Unresolved
29	Bala Mai-Haice	March 17, 2003	Yamal tu Deba	Shot	Unresolved
30	Ajibola Olanipekun	June 21, 2003	Ibadan	Shot	Unresolved
31	Aminosoari Dikibo	February 6, 2004	Delta	Shot	Unresolved
32	Lateef Olaniyan	July 16, 2005	Ibadan	Shot	Unresolved
33	Peter Eboigbe	August 11, 2005	Benin	Shot	Unresolved

Source: Adapted from Igbinovia, P. E. as cited in Igbafe & offiong (2007:18 – 19)

As observed in the table above, the gruesome assassination of some notable opposition party stalwarts like Marshall Harry of the All Nigeria's Peoples' Party (ANPP), Bola Ige of Alliance for Democracy (AD), the inability of the state security to unravel the mystery behind these cold-blooded assassinations raises eyebrows.

V. SYSTEMATIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF ELECTORATES

A direct consequence of weak electoral institution and security apparatus is the systematic

disenfranchisement of the electorates. Situation where the ballot papers arrive very late to polling centers when most voters must have left after waiting for long hours, where names of some registered eligible voters are omitted in voters' register tantamount to systematic disenfranchise of electorates. For instance, INEC indicated that it needed 30,000 data capturing machines for registration of voters during the 2007 elections but only about 10,000 were eventually provided and were being rotated around polling stations for registration. Most Nigerians were disenfranchised in this process because they were not aware of when INEC officials

came to their neighbourhood (NBA, 2007). Again, the weakness of the state security apparatus expressed in its inability to protect most of the electorates from intimidation and to secure the ballot boxes from theft translates to voters' disenfranchisement. The Centre for Environment Human Right and Development (2007) noted that the INEC, security agencies and party members were responsible for the 110 reported incidents of electoral violence in the South-South region of Nigeria during the 2007 elections. These acts of violence led to disenfranchisement of most voters who had to stay back at home because they were psychologically intimidated by the terror gangs. As a corollary, the inability of the electorates to speak through their votes during elections thwarts any attempt to change the incumbent via the polls even when the electorates are not satisfied with the incumbent and are willing to give the mandate to alternate party.

VI. PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

Primitive accumulation implies the use of state power for accumulation of private wealth. Ake (1985) noted that primitive accumulation is the appropriation of means of production of the society by few through the use of force. As accumulation with state power becomes the norm for the political elite, the premium on political power has increased. He added that:

The use of state power for accumulation means of course the abuse of state power; above all, it means corrupt practices – the award of contracts to those who will pay the highest kickbacks – the inevitable nonperformance in the execution of the contract, the sale of jobs to the people who are too incompetent to carry them out successfully, the sale of import and export licenses to the highest bidders to the detriment of national interest, the evasion of exchange controls, quality standards, administrative procedures, import and export duties on the payment of the appropriate fees to officials etc.

Primitive accumulation plays dual role in thwarting political power alternation – it induces the incumbent and opposition parties to want aspire for state power by all means, it also empowers the incumbent party with the economic resources used in financing and manipulating the electoral process to their favour.

Primitive accumulation has been a feature evident in Nigeria since independence. For instance, the Forster-Sutton Tribunal indicted key public officials of the former Eastern Region for using political positions to divert public resources into African Continental Bank (ACB) which is a private business in which they had interest. Similarly, the Coker Commission of Inquiry revealed how political elites of the defunct Action Group party diverted public funds to the tune of 7,200,000 pounds to private firm (National Investment and Property Corporation) in which Chief Obafemi Awolowo – the

leader of Action Group party and premier of Western Region – had interest (see Ibeanu & Egwu, 2007; Ojukwu & Shopeju 2010).

Lamentably, the situation has not changed in the fourth republic. Ojukwu & Shopeju (2010) chronicles the incidence of primitive accumulation in Nigeria's fourth republic, the authors argued that conversion of public funds to private resources has remained the order of the day. This is also encapsulated in the words of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who asserted that:

Every month immediately after the sharing of federal allocation, governors and/or their aides to abroad to stash away a good chunk of their states money in coded accounts. Some who are smart siphons the money away through companies which are awarded contracts whose components are sourced abroad... (Agbo, cited in Ojukwu & Shopeju, 2010).

Beyond these looting and privatization of public fund is the fact that these stolen fund are plowed back into politics by the political elites especially the incumbent to ensure they remain in control of state power. Thus state power which has become the umbilical cord between the political elite and their wealth is held onto tenaciously by the incumbent party to ensure the opposition does not capture power as power shift to the opposition will not just amount to loss of political power but will also automatically lead to severance of members of incumbent party from their wealth.

VII. IMPLICATION OF NON ALTERNATION OF POWER FOR DEMOCRATIC STABILITY IN NIGERIA

Democratic stability has remained a scarce attribute in Nigeria. Consequently, successive leaders have had to face the challenge of implementing its programmes in the unstable political environment. In most cases, government development programmes and policies have been modified or even abandoned in the face of instability in the polity.

The political system in Nigeria's Fourth republic is characterized by a situation where the ruling party continues to seek strategies to retain itself in power through all possible means, while the opposition has equally continued to initiate its own tactics to take over power. The result, on the one hand is the frustration of the opposition resulting from its inability to capture power, the refusal to accept election results due to perceived widespread malpractice sponsored by the incumbent, the use of state security apparatus to repress political activities of the opposition, the hopelessness that future elections would not be free and fair due to the fear that no objective reform has been carried to ensure independence of electoral authorities etc. Conversely, the incumbent strives to consolidate its control of state power by using state

machinery to appropriate resources and to extinguish any form of opposition. In the face of this stiff competition, both the incumbent and the opposition have continued to exploit the interstices in the polity and in most cases employs various tactics including ethno-regional and religious manipulation of the populace, using militant and extremist groups to perpetrate all kinds of violence in the struggle for power and control of resources. This struggle by the incumbent and the opposition make political leaders loose sight of the needs and aspiration of the masses whose poverty, exclusion and deprivation are intensified as resources meant for national development are misdirected for sponsoring political thugs and build up of weapons of violence by the political class. In line with this, Danbazua (2013) noted that many of the thugs used by politicians to either grab or retain power are those who formed the nucleus of Boko Haram members; militants in the Niger Delta; Ombatse in Nasarawa; and increased the strengths of armed robbers and kidnappers on our highways. Consistent with this view, Ogban-Iyam (2005) noted that the formation and emergence of groups like Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Odua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa People's Congress (APC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Republic of Biafra etc., is directly linked to the failure of the rulers to deal meaningfully with various demands made by the masses.

Meanwhile, the emergence of these militant and extremist groups has been turned into opportunity by the ruling elite who manipulate and instigate these groups to destabilize the country in order to satisfy their selfish political ambition and further loot the national treasury. This is especially as more elections take place in the country and the struggle to capture and/or retain state power intensifies. For instance, the political environment after the 2011 General elections has been characterized by some of the worse forms violence in most parts of the country, Orji & Uzodi (2012) documented some of these incidence of post election violence most of which were linked to both the ruling party and the opposition parties.

Related to the above is the issue of ethnicity and religion in Nigerian politics. The manipulation of the various ethnic and religious groups by the political elites have contributed in no small measure to the current

instability in the country. For instance, the demise of President Umaru Musa Yar'dua, and the assumption of office by the Vice President Goodluck Jonathan has created opportunity for some political elites to fan the embers of ethnicity and religion by mobilizing political thugs to cause mayhem in parts of the country under the guise that the northern Nigerians have not completed their eight-year tenure and should be given the opportunity to take back the Presidency. Similarly, beneficiaries of the incumbent have continued to argue it is the first time the Presidency to getting to someone from the South-South region of the country and he should be allowed to complete two-terms of four years each in the office. All these are struggles and strategies by both the incumbent and opposition parties to get hold of state power and have led to political statements and messages made by political elites capable of destabilizing the country.

Again, the escalation of the activities Boko Haram in Nigeria in recent times has been used as an opportunity by both the opposition and the incumbent to seek political goals and further heat up the polity. Both the incumbent and the opposition have continued to blame each other for the failure of the state security to curb the activities of Boko Haram. In the midst of these fissures, the activities of the extremists have continued to escalate. Although Boko Haram has been described as an Islamist movement which opposes Western civilization, the involvement of the group in the series of bombing, assassination of innocent civilians (irrespective of their religious belief and ethnic group), attacks on state security personnel/installations and the disruption of government political activities are indicative of the failure of political elites to unite in the fight against the menace. Hence, the sect is exploiting the heated political scene to unleash violence and cause untold hardship to the masses all of which destabilize the polity.

Apparently, the non-alternation of power, the struggle by the opposition to capture power by all means and the fight by the incumbent to retain its hold on state power has undermined the democratic stability of Nigeria. Thus, the country has performed poorly in terms of democratic stability, this is further buttressed by the 2012 Freedom House rating which rated the country 'Partially Free' as seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5 : Freedom House Rating For Nigeria and Ghana 2012

	Nigeria
Political Rights	4
Civil Liberties	4
Status	Partially Free

Source: www.africanelections.tripod.com/gh.html

VIII. CONCLUSION/PROGNOSIS

Democracy entails inclusiveness which ensures that the people become the object and subject of good

governance. Meanwhile, democracy cannot thrive without stability in the polity. Unfortunately, despite the transition to democracy, most African states are still plagued by instability. Focusing on Nigeria, the study

investigated how lack of alternation in power undermines democratic stability, it demonstrated that governmental turnover via free and fair elections can enhance stability in democratic societies since it promotes inclusiveness, reduces the chances of frustrated opposition resorting to violent means to emancipate itself from incumbent party's repression and builds trust in institutions of the state. We noted that post colonial African states are interventionist as state power is virtually the only means for wealth acquisition and sustenance, as a result, so much premium is placed on state power. Nigeria has not been able to alternate power in its fourth republic and the polity is characterized by instability and chaos as the opposition has lost faith in government institution. The intense struggle by both the opposition and incumbent capture and/or retain state power has heated up the polity.

The study avers the need to strengthen state institutions especially the electoral body and state security apparatus. This will enhance level playing ground and fair competition, and guarantee that the votes of electorates counts thereby preparing the polity for possibility peaceful alternation in power especially considering the fact that Nigerians yawn for a government that can deliver the cargo promised by democracy which includes provision of basic amenities, employment, food, clean water etc.

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