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Reaffirming a Nation's Hijacked Future through the Ballot Box: X-Raying Nigeria's Political Landscape since Circa 1999 AD

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Abstract- Since independence in 1960, and the emergence of the military into the Nigerian political terrain in 1966, the woes of the country have been blamed on the military. After long period of military dictatorship in Nigeria, the advent of democratic rule through the ballot box (elections) in 1999 brought with it some rays of hope to the general populace who had believed that the country is on the verge of saving a future (especially of the youths) which was hijacked by the administration of the dictatorial rule of the Khaki boys and selected political godsons. However, political events in the last decade (since 1999) has shown that rather than liberating the people that voted them into power through the ballot boxes, activities of the politicians, political parties and their cohorts (militicians) seems to reaffirmed that the future of the country and her citizens (especially the youths and resources) have been hijacked. This has been exhibited in the wide spread cases of corruption, rigged elections, electoral violence and killings, as well as general state of insecurity that has pervaded the nation's landscape. This paper using historical methodology seeks to examine the relationship between the political activities in Nigeria (including the conduct of elections and electoral process), political class since 1999 and national development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Election is the process by which a person is linked to an office with due provision for the participation of the people meant to come under the officers authority. It is meant to give the electorate the opportunity to decide who should rule them, and who the rulers' policies and program should be; thus by this a sort of Social Contract entered into by both parties (Azkin, 1960). It is therefore in line with this, that this paper considers elections (and by extension all other processes associated with it) as veritable ingredient to the existence, stability and development of democracies; and for this to work, political parties and politicians play very significant roles (Azkin, 1960, Mayo, 1960).

In line with the above, it is clear that the essence of the people electing their government through the ballot box, is because they has realized that in organized democratic elections, the political parties and their candidates (voted into office), serve as the

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instrument for enforcing official responsibility and public accountability, using all available law enforcement agencies to ensure that the nation's constitution and laws of the land including electoral regulation and promises made during electoral campaigns are upheld, meting out punishments and rewards accordingly.

II. AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING: NIGERIA IN RETROSPECT

Historically, modern electoral process was first implanted in modern Nigeria by the British colonial masters as a response to the pressure of the nationalists, who were agitating for a greater participation in the colonial administration. From the above, it is clear that, the political terrain in what today constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria has not always been the same from the beginning. This assertion is based on the fact that the period before independence saw what could be described as a genuine move towards the formation of political parties with politicians who had the desire of total liberation of the people at heart. This was because the first set of agitators, were to later form a large chunk of the political class (although this does not in any way mean that they were all committed to national and selfless course, as there were cases of betrayer along the line. These were a class of people who got the mandate of their people because they liberated them from the shackle of oppression and deprivation. For instance, in the case of the early political class, the imposition of capitation tax, water rate as well as the land expropriation (for government purposes by the colonial government) was seen as inhuman and something that the people must be liberated from. This was largely due to the fact that the people were passionately attached to their land and the fact that such land was used for purposes not originally stated by the administration (Olusanya, 1980: 548). To this course, the political class was ready to lay down their lives for the people, and as such confronted all factors and actors considered as obstacle to this course. Force by these agitations, the colonial authority conducted the first election in 1920, for the seats of the Lagos Town Council (Abba and Umaru, 1989). Scholars have argued that although the franchise was restricted and representation limited, however, this action

represented a landmark achievement for the nationalists who were struggling for the enthronement of democratic order as a pre-requisite for greater participation of the people in the process of government. This can be seen from the fact that subsequent elections followed up in 1923 in Lagos and Calabar into the Legislative Houses of the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. At the end of the exercise, four seats were reserved for African in the council; three for Lagos and one for Calabar. (Abba and Umaru, 1989, Moru, 2004). This however marked the beginning of modern electoral process in the country, as political parties began to spring up. Olusanya (1980), gave a graphic picture of the nature of political landscape of the country thus;

In Nigeria itself the political awakening stimulated these grievances, ...brought into existence a political organization which was to play very important role in the history of the country. This was the NCNC, formed mainly as a result of the initiative of the King's College branch of the Nigerian Union of Students, in August 1944. The emergence of this organization heralded an era of more decisive battle with the colonial administration.

III. BALLOT BOX AND THE VIOLENT/HIJACKED FUTURE: TRACING THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN

Although the first sets of agitators and political party that emerged in the country has been argued to have been with the intention of moving the nation away from the doldrums of the imperial power, the election that ushered the country into independence, the 1959 General elections and the subsequent events the followed give a clear indication that the security of the future of both election, the people and their resources were not in any way guaranteed. Dudley (1982: 37) gave a vivid description of the conduct of the 1959 general election thus;

The electoral officers were terrorized into absconding from their offices once they receive the nomination paper of the governing party candidates, leaving the opposition candidates with no opportunity of registering the nomination papers. So, flagrantly was electoral procedure abused that at the close of nomination 88 out of total of 174 NPC candidates in the North had their candidature unopposed. In the West about 30% of the NNDP were supposed to have been unopposed. The situation in the East was not much different. Therefore, as envisaged by many people including the proclaimed winners of the 1964 general elections, the results was not only rejected, but the opposition in the Western region resorted to violence to contest what they perceived as the reverse of their mandate by the ruling NPC. The situation gave birth to arson, looting, killing, massive destruction of properties and total breakdown of law and order beyond the control of the central government. Consequent upon this, a state of emergency was imposed and the then Prime Minister declared the Western Region as "Wild-Wild-West"... The intensity of the electoral violence recorded after the 1964 General Election affected the

legitimacy of the new civilian authority and the subsequent military intervention in Nigerian politics on January 15, 1966.

It was in line with the above and an analysis of the general atmosphere that Usman (2002), argued that this dangerous development is not new in this country, as it has happened before in 1964-1965 and in 1983, and had been used as an excuse by the military to overthrow the civilian government and impose on Nigerians years of military dictatorship, retarding the nation's development and wasting potentials. The scholar was also quick to point out that, although the military often give the impression that they have come to save the country, they sooner than later, end up conniving with the political class to entrench such impunity. At the end of the day, it is a movement within a circle, either in what have become known as *tazarce* (transformation in Hausa) or planting of political stooges through some form of kangaroo elections.

a) *Disappointment of the Ballots and the Confusion of Military rule: The Beginning of the Long Journey of Bad Governance*

The disappointment of the people with those that have been elected into political office, led to their cry for salvation. It was therefore not surprising that just six years after independence (precisely 1966) the first major coup under Major Nzogwu was carried out, thus altering the nation's political scene. Hardly had they settled down, when a counter coup was staged under the leadership of Gen. Yakubu Gowon was to lead the government. Dissatisfaction among the rank and file of the army plunged the country into civil war, which lasted till 1970. Gowon's government was later overthrown by another group of military officer under Gen. Murtala Muhammed. Although during this period, a coup was staged but it was unsuccessful, leading to the death of Murtala, and the entry of Gen Olusegun Obasanjo who was his second command. By 1979 there was handing over to a civil administration under Alhaji Shehu Shagari, but the administration lasted just a short while, as the military again took over the reign of power on December 31st 1983, under General Muhammadu Buhari.

Although, analysis of the way and manner the military invaded the political scene, often suspending the constitution, the rule by Decree and the trampling on the fundamental Right of the people. However, one cannot deny the fact that it was as a result of the way the affairs of the country have been handled by the civilian government that necessitated military intervention to save the country from disintegration when it was not prepared for the task. This was justified by the Buhari led military intervention, when he gave it as part of the inaugural speech of his government thus;

There is ample evidence that rigging, thuggery were relative to the resources available to the parties...it is true that there is a world wide economic recession, However, in the case of Nigeria, its impact was aggravated by mismanagement. We

believe that the appropriate government agencies did give good advice, but their advice was disregarded by the leadership. The situation could have been saved if the legislatures were alive to their constitutional responsibilities. Instead there were salary scales, fringe benefits and unnecessary foreign travels, etcetera, which took no account of the state of the economy and the welfare of the people they represented. As a result of our inability to financial discipline and prudent management of the economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic price problems and soaring external debts, this giving the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources. Nigeria was already condemned to live perpetually with the twin problems of heavy budget deficit and weak balance of payments position with little prospect of building a virile and viable economy (Okoye M (nd) 279-282, Usman, Y.B, 2002:93)

The period of military rule in Nigeria no doubt altered the people's perception in the military and the institution. Although the people had thought of the military as a better institution to clean up the mess of the political class, however, its involvement in politics has been a fundamental factor in subsequent political engineering. It has turned out that the top military class serving and retired determine the direction where the political pendulum in Nigeria should swing to as a result of huge resources available at their disposals, which were acquired largely fraudulently through their involvement into politics. To maintain and sustain this status quo, the military had to stay within political relevance. Thus the political terrain under the military has been summarized by Ojakaminor E (nd), thus;

Under the military rule in Nigeria, there were full manifestations of bad governance, abuse of Power and office, corruption, breakdown of the rule of law, collapse of social infrastructures, high poverty and general deprivation. While it could be said that corruption for instance had existed in Nigeria even before the military came to power, what perhaps, was new, was the rapid rate at which it engulfed the society. And how it was carried out with impunity. The most worrisome aspect of these social ills was the absence of checks and balances, a body to moderate and curtail the excesses of the military. The absolute power of military regime plugged Nigeria back to the colonial days.

Ironical, during the period of military rule and overthrown, being birds of the same stock, the military rarely detained, convicted and imprisoned the military officers they overthrew, even when there was substantial evidence of similar misconduct by them. This situation has led to further decadence in the system.

b) *Sinking into Political Doldrum: Nigeria since the 1990*

Although from the 1980's the military continued to parade the corridor of the political scene, however, it became clearer with time that it was in collaboration with some of their politician friends who have not been able to have access to the national purse. As such they continually took the advantage to their closeness to

those with the power of the guns to destabilise the nation's political arena. It was this situation that brought in the regime of Ibrahim Babangida and his "transition without end Program". The administration of Babangida and his visionless transition program played the role that further damaged elections and party system in the country. After overthrowing the government of Buhari and consolidating himself in power, the administration registered two political parties, namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC), with the full sponsorship of the government including the building of offices in the headquarters of all the local government areas across the nation and state capitals. Political friends of the administration's (under the cover of Civil Servants) were appointed as administrative heads, while the government under the guise of sanitizing the system, banned all the old breed politicians, from participating in the political process, empowered the so called new breed as well as funded the political parties, thus turning the parties into more or less a government parastatal and another avenue to sap the nation. This so called funded did not last long as, what the government claimed to have eliminated (godfatherism) by funding the political parties began to emerge, most of whom were collaborators of the military men in power. Adetula and Adeyi(2009:10), clearly stated the situation thus;

As elections drew closer, individual candidates opened their campaign offices, sourced for fund independently for parties. Some of the candidates organized their special fund raising activities, and some were almost operating parallel organizations with their parties. The consequence was that the parties were reduced to mere clearing houses where candidates came merely to obtain party tickets for the elections. The parties gradually came under the influence of money bags that were able to pay their ways through the most difficult situations. There were no guideline or law regulating how and where to source for funds by the candidates and parties. The shoddy party primaries that led to the emergence of the two candidates that contested the presidential elections in June 1993 best illustrate the subordination of the parties to individual money bags.

In a related manner (especially as it relates to the issue of insincerity of the government and the process of election under the system as a way of siphoning public funds), Dare O (1993), painted the picture of democratic process under the military with specific focus on the Babangida regime thus;

The core enterprises itself i.e., the scheme of replacing a military with a democratically government, has been one of the major linguistic casualties. Officially called the "transition", it has been a dubbed a "transfiction" on account of the very many qualities it shares with fiction, not least of which is, the delusion that two synthetic political parties created.

In the case of Abacha's political program, Dagne (2005:5), put it thus

In October 1995, under pressure to implement political reforms, Abacha announced a three-year transition program to civilian rule, which he tightly controlled until his death on June 8, 1998. Abacha established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), which published guidelines for party registration, recognized five political parties in September 1996 and officially dissolved opposition groups after refusing to recognize them. The military professed its support for Abacha should he seek reelection as a civilian, and by April 20, 1998, all five parties had nominated Abacha as the single presidential candidate despite criticism by the international community and dissident groups. Major opposition figures, especially those in exile, dismissed the transition program and called for boycotts of the parliamentary and presidential elections. Only candidates from among the five state sanctioned political parties participated in state assembly elections held in December 1997 and parliamentary elections held on April 25, 1998. The United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), considered by many government opponents to be the army's proxy, won widespread victories.

IV. NIGERIA SINCE 1999: DEMOCRACY OR MONEY POLITICS

Historian and Political analysts are of the view that since the emergence of this democratic dispensation in 1999, political corruption has been expressed with reckless abundance by the political class either in the form of outright thuggery, embezzling public resources on the basis of direct access to state power or through money politics to subvert the will of the people, who brought them into power. For example, Aedtula in his analysis, opined thus

Money politics is fast shrinking the political space, becoming a key variable in determining who participate in electoral politics, and how? For example, the nomination fees for party members seeking elective positions have become so high that only the rich few and the daring 'political entrepreneurs' can participate in party primaries. In 1992, for example, presidential "hopefuls" spent over one billion naira during the primaries while other 'not-so-rich' contenders had about 120 million naira as budget for primaries. Although the 'abiku' political transition programme of the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida under which such recklessness took place was aborted, this trend of unrestrained use of money for political influence persists to date. Money continues to drown votes and voices in Nigeria as godfathers openly confess about their shady deals; how they fund or sponsored elections for their 'godsons' and even purchased electoral victory. Businessmen and women are not left out in this illegitimate and illicit use of money for political influence (Adetula V (2008; 22-23)

This impact on the recklessness and it national politics was expressed the administration between 1999 to 1997. This was first pointed out by Obasanjo as a serving President in 2003, when he pointed out the availability of massive resources at the disposal of the elected officers and their allies, as well as the deployment of this resources to capture elective offices,

it is not difficult to see the correlation between politics and the potential for high level of corruption. He went on to opine that when this happens, the greatest losers are the ordinary people, whose faith and investment in the system are hijacked and subverted because money at their will, is made the determining factor in election. In a summarized form, he captured the situation thus;

Elective offices become mere commodities to be purchased by the highest bidders, and those who literally invest merely see it as an avenue to recoup and make profits. Politics become business, and the business of politics becomes merely to divert public funds from the crying needs of our people for real developments in their lives (Obasanjo 2003 cited in Adetula V (2008), The Electoral Journal, 2009:9)

He was quick to make this observation, even though his election and administration was not free from this infectious disease. This situation has been given a more broader dimension, by the Secretary General of the United Nations (cited in Ake C, 1996:3), when he posited thus;

The nature of political power in many Africa states, together with the real and perceived consequences of capturing and maintaining power is the key source of conflict across the continent. It is frequently the case that political victory assumes a 'winner-takes-all' form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage and the prestige and the prerogatives of office. A communal sense of advantage and disadvantage is closely linked to this phenomenon, which is heightened in many cases by reliance on centralized and highly personalized forms of governance. Where there is insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of transparency in regime, inadequate checks and balances, non-adherence to the rule of law, absence of peaceful means of change or replace leadership or lack of respect for human rights, political control becomes excessively important and the stakes become dangerously high

As pointed out above, although the Obasanjo administration, condemned the act of money politics and flagrant use of public fund and monies from godfathers, he has never debunked claim by Theophilus Danjuma, that his election success was as a result of the fact that, he singlehandedly sponsored him to the tune of seven million dollars. This situation was to later play itself again, when under the aegis of the friend of the president, so group of people and companies claimed to contribute monies to the election purse of the administration. The is represented in the table below

Table I: Fund Raising for Obasanjo/Atiku Campaigns in the 2003 General Elections

S/No.	Donor	Amount
1	Friends of Atiku	1 Billion Naira
2	Aliko Dangote	250 Million Naira
3	Emeka Offor	200 ,,
4	21 PDP Governors	210 ,,
5	Group from Europe	1 Million Euro (144 Million Naira)
6	Rivers Friends of Obasanjo/Atiku	150 Million Naira
7	Grand Alliance	Boeing 727 and two luxury buses for campaign
8	Another Group	Two Luxury buses
9	Construction Companies in Nigeria	200 Million Naira
10	Dr. Solomon Uche	50 Million Naira
11	PDP Caucus in Senate	12 Million ,,
12	Principal Staff of the Villa (Aso Rock)	10.6 Million Naira
13	Air Vice Marshal I.A. Shekari (rtd)	10 Million Naira
14	First Atlantic Bank	10 ,,
15	Ministers	,,
16	Otunba Fasawe	6.5 Million Naira
17	50 Parastatals	5 Million Naira
18	PDP National Working Committee	3.6 ,,
19	Dr. Ngozi Anyaegbunam	500,000.00 Naira
20	Dr. Gamaliel Onosode	100,000.00 Naira
21	Corporate Nigeria	Pledge 2 Billion Naira

Source: Ezomo, E and Okoror F (2003), "Campaign Finance: Donations or Buying up the Democratic Process? The Guardian, Friday, January 24, pp 22-23; See also Yaqub Nuhu (2005), " A Critical Assessment of the Presidential Model of Democracy", in Jega A and Wakili H (ed) (2005), *The Question of Democracy: Direct or Representative?* Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Mambayya House, Bayero University, Kano. Pp158

An analysis of the above shows that this may have been one of the features inherited from the pre 1960 politics of deploying public fund to personal usage as revealed by both the Foster-Sutton Tribunal and the Coker Commission of Inquiry. For example the result of the Foster Sutton Inquiry which investigated the scandal which involving the African Continental Bank (ACB) and key politicians of the former Eastern Region shows that the politic actors used their positions as custodian of the public assets to divert resources into

private businesses. In a similar manner, the Coker Inquiry established the fact that fact that the heavy weights of the then Action Group and other party functionaries used a government corporation as a tool for siphoning public fund, as they were able to allocate "loans" from public monies to finance private businesses (Sklar, 1963: 171ff). This situation has not change, as it continued into the new democratic dispensation as revealed in the table below.

Table II: Compiled Cases on Accused Politician and Political Actors.

S/No.	Name	Designation	Offence
1	Saminu Turaki,	Former governor of Jigawa State,	N36 billion;
2	Jolly Nyame	Taraba	N180 million;
3	Orji Uzor Kalu	Abia	N5 billion;
4	Rasheed Ladoja	Oyo	N6 billion;
5	Joshua Dariye	Plateau	amount not stated;
6	Chimaroke Nnamani	Enugu	N5.3 billion;
7	Boni Haruna	Adamawa	N93 million
8	Michael Botmang,	Former acting governor, Plateau	N1. 5 billion.
9	Chief Bode George,	PDP chieftain,	N100 billion;
10	Patrick Fernandez	Indian businessman	N32 billion;
11	Roland Iyayi,	Former Managing Director of FAAN,	N5.6 billion;
12	Prof. Babalola Borishade,	former Minister of Aviation,	N5.6 billion;
13	Eider George,	an Austrian businessman,	N5.6 billion;
14	Kenny Martins	Police Equipment Fund (PEF),	N7.7 billion.
15	Dr. Yuguda Manu,	Chairman, Taraba State Civil Service Commission,	N17.5 million
16	Senator Nicholas Ugbane and nine others	Members , House of Rep.	N5.2 billion;



17	Iyabo Obasanjo,		N10 million;
18	Nyeson Wike,	Chief of Staff to Rivers State Governor,	N4.7 billion;
19	Femi-Fani-Kayode,	former Aviation Minister	N250 million;
20	Four staff of Zenith Bank	senior managers,	N3.6 billion;
21	Molkat Mutfwang and three others,		N636 million;
22	Dr. Ransome Owan and six others,		N1.5 billion;
23	Dr. Albert Ikomi,	a retired Permanent Secretary,	N43 million,
24	Tom Isegholi, Mohammed Buba, and Mike Okoli	Transcorp Plc.,	. N15 billion;
25	Jibril Aminu	Former Min. Of Petroleum Resource	17.5 million euros (Siemens bribery)
26	Maj.-Gen. Tajudeen Olanrewaju	PDP Chieftain	„
27	Haliru Bello Mohammed,	PDP Deputy National Chairman	„
28	Chief Cornelius Adebayo	former Ministers of Communication,	„
29			

Source: Compiled from the Farida Waziri led Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) released names of 56 Nigerians it alleged collectively removed over N243 billion from the nation's treasury

Some of these politicians (except for Bode George and Kenny Martins, served prison terms have continued to appear in public and are referred to as politically revered people in the international community; while some others are still serving as senators and Members of the House of Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (<http://thenationonline.ng/web2/articles/47608/1>). Apart from the above there has been a systematic loot of public fund through the payment of salaries and benefits of the elected officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and others at the helm of

affairs. The result of the above situation as presented above and the inability of various governments to check this, has led to massive looting of the nation's treasury, therefore plunging her into serious crises. It was therefore in the light of this that Global Financial Integrity to come out with figures of the loot from Nigeria throughout the period 1970-2008, as produced by the Report is represented below. This became necessary, because it revolved around the same circle of people who have been in government since independence.

Table III: List of Fund Looted from the Country since 1970

S/No.	Year	Administration	Head of Leadership	Amount
1	1970	Military	Gen Yakubu Gowon	\$ 2.2 million
2	1971	Military	Gen Yakubu Gowon	3.8 million
3	1972	Military	Gen Yakubu Gowon	2.7 million
4	1973	Military	Gen Yakubu Gowon	4.4 million
5	1974	Military	Gen Yakubu Gowon	10.5 million
6	1975	Military	Gen M Muhammed	12.5 million
7	1976	Military	Gen M Muhammed	43.7 million
8	1977	Military	Gen M Muhammed	2,098.4 million
9	1978	Military	Gen M Muhammed	573.4 million
10	1979	Military/Civilian	Gen Obasanjo/ Alhaji Shagari	55.4 million
11	1980	Civilian	Alhaji Shagari	2,789.2 million
12	1981	Civilian	Alhaji Shagari	1,550.8 million
13	1982	Civilian	Alhaji Shagari	35.6 million
14	1983	Civilian	Alhaji Shagari	2,301.2million
15	1984	Military	Gen Babangida	165.8 million
16	1985	Military	Gen Babangida	3,636.2 million
17	1986	Military	Gen Babangida	4,872.8 million
18	1987	Military	Gen Babangida	7,460.8 million
19	1988	Military	Gen Babangida	1,343.0 million
20	1989	Military	Gen Babangida	2,762.1 million
21	1990	Military	Gen Babangida	7,191.4 million
22	1991	Military	Gen Babangida	2,984.4 million
23	1992	Military	Gen Babangida	2,383.8 million
24	1993	Military	Gen Babangida/ Shonekan	1,674.5 million
25	1994	Civilian/Military	Gen Abacha	1,861.1 million
26	1995	Military	Gen Abacha	10.8 million
27	1996	Military	Gen Abacha	5.3 million

28	1997	Military	Gen Abacha	2.7 million
29	1998	Military	Gen Abacha/ Gen Abdulsalam	16.9 million
30	1999	Military/Civilian	Gen Abdulsalam/Mr. Obasanjo	2,011.5 million
31	2000	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	6,335.8 million
32	2001	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	5,463.5 million
33	2002	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	5,135.4 million
34	2003	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	9,750.6 million
35	2004	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	14,990.8 million
36	2005	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	18,662.7 million
37	2006	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo	23,217.4 million
38	2007	Civil Rule	Mr. Obasanjo/ Yar'Adua	34,620.0 million
29	2008	Civil Rule	Alh. Yar'Adua	51, 694.6 million

Source: Bolaji Akinyemi (2011), *How to Combat Corruption. Lecture delivered at the 10th anniversary of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) on April 9, Arewa House, Kaduna*

The above table is a clear manifestation of the high level of corruption in Nigeria exhibited by those that came into power through the ballot and their military allies. The picture becomes even clearer when corroborated with the list released by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in 2009. The list by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) contain names of 56 Nigerians it allegedly stole over N243 billion from the nation's treasury. They have been argued to have stolen in billions, the money stolen ranged from N10 million to N100 billion. According to the list, only eight of the suspects allegedly stole in millions; 17 of them were alleged, by the EFCC, to have stolen in billions, while the amounts allegedly stolen by others were not specified. The irony of all this is that a large chunk of those involved are still serving as either governors, ministers, commissioners and local government administrators in different parts of the country

V. YOUTH WING OR POLITICAL THUGS

The situation as it is in Nigeria today is the emergence of what is fast becoming known as Progressive Youth for Democratic Rule. The politics class and their allies have taken advantage of the situation in the country to lure the youth under the name of progressives to unleash mayhem on the people. Thus, due to hardship of unemployment, these young men and women began to form the back bone primordial identities of ethnic, communal and religious formations which have taken the centre stage in social and political interaction- unlike what was obtainable in the days of Nigerian Youth Movement and Universal Negro improvement Association, they have constituted themselves into group fighting for individual survival. The political climate and the level of corruption and poverty, led to the formation of various groups which ordinarily would not have emerged. Some examples were the Association for Better Nigeria, (ABN) under Chief Arthur Nzeribe and Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) under Daniel Kanu. Subsequently, other groups have continue to emerge, with most having penetrating

networks and profound influence in politics in Nigeria, because of the role (dirty) some of them play during election. Although some of these groups argued that they have good agenda, but corruption, the unemployment level in the country as well as the love for money have made most of the jobless youth to hide under their umbrella. Examples of these groups include the Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Movement for the Sovereignty State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the Chicoco Movement, the Ijaw Youths, and the Bakassi Boys among others. The emergence of these groups and the role they now play in the political circle as a result of hardship has been emphasized by most scholars. For example, this situation has been graphically captured by Adekunle (2012:90) thus;

...campaigns were conducted under fearful conditions because thugs would scare away the supporters of opposing parties. Elections were conducted under a tense environment because hooligans manned polling booths. Thuggery became an integral part of politics; indeed, it was a profession for the jobless and uneducated youths who thronged to politicians for money, favours, or jobs. Thuggery became a means to secure and maintain power for politicians. It is a threat to sustainable democracy and a mechanism of perpetuating political corruption

In line with this, Ilo (2006:198), argued that it has become a source of tension and bitterness, as the political class, would recruit from among those who ought to be the future leaders of the country, thugs and foot soldiers to make sure they win elections at all cost. The danger here is that they are essentially youth based groups, with so much vigour and life, with intent of promoting and protecting the parochial interests of those who are able to give them food and pay their bills. In this way, the group employs violence and any means available to satisfy their pay master. From the definitions as far it is clear that these are group which have been put together to achieve some political relevance, by those who in one way or the other feel politically marginalized or cheated

With the above background, the processes leading to the return to democratic rule in 1999, did not

changed much. The expectation was that after years of military rule and the call for the return to democracy, there would have been a positive change. Instead the country has steadily increased her position in electoral fraud and violence with the youths as the apostles of this course. The election that brought President Obasanjo to power in 1999 and 2003 were marred by such widespread violence and fraud, so much so that the US-based Jimmy Carter Center for Democracy, argued that it was not possible to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election. For an understanding of the above, there is the need to look at some example for different parts of the country since the emergence of Democratic dispensation in 1999. This was because the armies of unemployed youths in various parts of the country under different ethnic umbrella became the foot soldiers for perpetuating electoral fraud and violence. This was to set the pace for further violence in 2003 and 2007, as each group canvassed and threatened brimstone and fire for their regional candidates. The cases of Odua Peoples Congress OPC (Yoruba) and Movement for the Advancement of Sovereign State of Biafra MASSOB (Igbo) represent a good example of this perspective, while various minority ethnic groups such as Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Middle Belt Forum among others, have been challenging the activities of the dominant ethnic groups. These competitions have ended up in ethnic militant attacks and ethnic clashes. However, it has been revealed that the youths constitute the bulk of these ethnic militias (Akinboye, 2001). In the early days of democracy, this manifested in the ethnic cleansing, political assassination as well as violent clashes. Some examples include the 1999 Odi Episode which involved the kidnapping and killing of policemen, the January 2000 Bariga clash between OPC and Policemen, killing of Bola Ige (2001), the assassination of Marshall Harry in 2003, the Militant Ijaw/Soldier Clash (2003) among other. All these prepared the way for the brutal dimension of violence and fraud which is being experienced today. However, there is the need to look at some cases, to buttress the point.

In Ekiti State, Human Rights Watch interviewed a group of NURTW members days ahead of the 2007 elections. They acknowledged that they had been hired by a PDP politician from their community to attack and chase away would-be voters in order to stuff ballot boxes and rig the 2003 elections but said they would not do so again in 2007.

We need to show people that we are not thugs... We are not ready to do it. But there is a likelihood that they [politicians] will approach us. It is left for us not to accept their offer. But in Oyo State, NURTW members have been at the forefront of a bloody and protracted period of election-related violence that continued well-past the closing of the polls. The central role of NURTW in political violence in Oyo is discussed in the Oyo State case study below.

In some cases the link between government officials and their hired thugs is formalized to some degree. For instance in Katsina for instance, the state government under Umaru Yar'Adua maintained several thousand "PDP Youth" on a monthly stipend that was paid with state government money. Credible sources maintain that many of those youth were allegedly involved in violence linked to the 2007 elections.

The above testimony as well as the existence of various camps with their armories is a clear evidence that they enjoyed politician and some government officials patronage. This also clearly give credence to the report in March 2002, by Centre for Democratic Development, when it argued that

.....The youths at the centre of the fracas resulting in the death of the policemen had gained prominence during the governorship and presidential elections in Bayelsa State in 1999. Some of them were recruited by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) politicians to intimidate their opponents in the other parties and ensure their victory

This position maintained by C.D.D, was further strengthened by Elizabeth Blunt, the BBC journalist who covered the presidential election in the Niger Delta when she reported that

that the February 1999 presidential election was heavily rigged by PDP elements in the area on behalf of Olusegun Obasanjo who later emerged President. The youths, largely unemployed and thus susceptible to financial inducement, were the shock troops that facilitated this victory.

It was activities as stated above and the high level of gun running in the country that made the Commandant of Nigerian Merchant Navy Corps Benson Allen Edema, in 2007, to raise alarm over the influx of illegal arms and ammunition into the country. He attributed crime upsurge to the high circulation of arms, suspected to be now illegal hands. (Guardian, 2005/50). Most of these arms according to him were mostly in the hands of youth (with specific reference to students) who use them for violence and crime.

As a confirmation to the above, the Society for the Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law (Intersociety) said that about 34,000 Nigerians have allegedly been killed unlawfully since 1999 when the nation returned to democratic rule. The Society for the Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law (Intersociety) specifically stated thus;

The number of those killed outside the law in Nigeria since 1999 might have increased to 34,000. They include over 160 political assassinations; over 10,000 vigilance-related killings. Over 13,500 killings have resulted from the ethno-religious and inter-communal violence in Nigeria since 1999. These killings were mostly carried out by non-state actors." Quoting the 2009 Report of the United States on the State of Human Rights in Nigeria, Intersociety said: "Nigeria's human rights problem during the year 2009 included the abridgement of citizens' rights to change their government, politically motivated and extra-judicial killings by security forces, including summary executions, vigilante killings, abduction by militant groups, torture, rape and other cruel, inhuman

degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees and criminal suspects.

Apart from the above specific cases, a few of the cult and gang members interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that they had been paid only to attend rallies in support of their patron candidates. But they admitted that they routinely attended such events armed and prepared to fight. Human Rights Watch during the 2007, reported thus;

While cults and other criminal gangs are often at the front lines of political clashes in Nigeria, they do not by any means have a monopoly on the market for hired thugs. In some states, politicians have drawn upon the membership of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) for paid thugs. NURTW theoretically represents the collective interests of commercial drivers and other workers tied to the industry but some of its chapters have been largely converted into reservoirs of thugs for local politicians... It's survival, it's an investment...to go to rallies... prepare with machetes, clubs and AK-47s.

VI. IMPACT OF HIJACKED FUTURE ON THE NATION AND YOUTHS

As far as scholars are concerned, the situation has put the country in a situation of sitting on time bomb, as the array of those whose existence is under threat are gradually forming irregular or paramilitary group of young civilians who might have received some form of non-formalized or unofficial military training, armed with small arms and light weapons (Sesay et al, 2003). In this way, they do not differ (both in character and operation) from the regular professional army in the manner of their operation and command structure. This view has further found support in Umar M (2003), who opined that the result of the band of unemployed youth constitute ready cannon powder for the perpetration of violence in the northeast as well as the nation at large. In his opinion, this owes its origin to the point at which politicians recruit them to serve as hitmen, bodyguards and militia for the parties. The makeup of these groups are largely constituted by street boys such as petrol hawkers, motor park touts, and to some extent the "self-liberated" *almajirai* (in the case of northern Nigeria, while in the south, they are made up of school dropout and addicts). By nature of their exposure and the type of activities they partake in, a large chunk of this group are criminal in one way or the other. It is this criminal tendency in the youths that politicians find convenient for exploitation. Adejumbi (2002), posited that this Militias are essentially youth based groups formed with the purpose of promoting and protecting the parochial interests of particular groups, and whose activities sometimes involve the use of violence. In a similar manner, Sesay et al (2003) argued that militia comprises and compose of irregular or paramilitary group usually made up of civilians who might have received some form of non-formalized or unofficial military training and are armed

with small arms and light weapons. In this way, they do not differ (both in character and operation) from the regular professional army in the manner of their operation and command structure. From the definitions as far as it is clear that these are groups which have been put together to achieve some political relevance, by those who in one way or the other feel politically marginalized or cheated. Since these people are jobless in economic sense and would do anything for survival, they become the ready contractor of the politicians. In turn, they provide some stipends for them considering their poverty level. This is appreciated when viewed in the light of the fact that of the number of poor Nigerians put at an estimated 90 million, over 70 million are youths, with no meaningful sources of livelihood. This number has continued to grow over the years. For instance in 1980, the figure was 28.1 million, it increased in 1985 to 46.3 million; in 1992, there was a slight decrease to 42.7 million; by 1996, the figure sky rocketed to 65.6 million and 70.0 million in 1999, while 2004 recorded 54.4 million (*Nigerian Compass*, August 21, 2008). A analysis of this shows that statistical breakdown along the six regional levels gave 72.2% to the "North-East; 26.7% to the South-East; 31.5% to the South-South; the South-West has 43.1 percent; North-Central 67.0 percent; and North-West, 71.2 percent.

This was happening a time when official poverty statistics revealed that over half of Nigeria's 150 million populations are poor in a country with abundant human and material resources. Up till 2007/2008, the economy was so gloomy that the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) Human Development Index (HDI) ratings placed Nigeria at 158th position out of 177 countries. These experiences are indexical of the tyrannical foundation for Nigeria's democracy. The above situation is true, when seen in the light of a recent study released by the British Council, which posits thus:

.... Nigeria fails to plan for its next generation, it faces serious problems as a result of growing numbers of young people frustrated by a lack of jobs and opportunities. If these young people are healthy, well educated (emphasis mine) and find productive employment, they could boost the economy and invigorate it culturally and politically. If not, they could be a force for instability and social unrest.

The above situation is true of the reality on ground in Nigeria today, while observers and political analysts are of the view that the country is yet to witness the worst (Adekanye, 2007, Adetula and Adeyi, 2009). At the end of the day, the youths are left cared for, thus leading to them taking to arms. The disappointment of the system by the people especially as it relates to the future of the nation put aside by the future of the nation, Ake (Cited in J.S. Jane, 1980), argued thus

The ordinary people of Africa are supporting democracy as a second independence. This time they want independence not from the colonial masters, but from indigenous leaders. They want independence from leaders whose misrule has

intensified their poverty and exploitation to the point of being life threatening. And they are convinced that they cannot now get material improvement without securing political empowerment and being better placed to bring public policy closer to social needs. [Nonetheless] democracy is being interpreted and supported in ways that defeat those aspirations and manifest no sensitivity to the social conditions of the ordinary people of Africa. Generally, the political elites who support democratization are those with no access to power and they invariably have no feeling for

democratic values. They support democratization largely as a strategy of power... The people can (only) choose between oppressors and by the appearance of choice legitimize what is really their disempowerment.

The tables below shows clearly the effect of hijacked life of the nation and what it has turned the youths into in various parts of Nigeria. While Table IV, focuses on the entire nation, Table V, is on the Niger Delta corner of the country

Table IV: Youth involvement in Violence in Nigeria (1999-2004)

Perpetrators	Motives	Date/Place	Nature Of Act	Targets/Casualty
Egbesu Boys	Revenge	November 8, 1999. Odi Bayelsa State	Kidnapping and killing of police men	Security agents
Odua Peoples Congress OPC	Revenge/clash between OPC member and police	January 2000, Bariga Lagos	Abduction & Murder	Divisional police officer (DPO) for Bariga was egregiously killed
Anonymous	Political fanaticism	February 22, 2001 Enugu State	Shooting & assassination Attempt	Abel Chuckwu speaker of the Enugu State House of Assembly
Anonymous	Political fanaticism	December 23, 2001 South Western State of Oyo.	Assassination	Federal Justice Minister and Attorney General Bola Ige
Anonymous	Political fanaticism	August, 15 2002 Ilorin enroute to Abuja	Assassination	The Kwara State Chairman of the PDP, Ahmed Pategi, and a police orderly were killed in a vehicle
Anonymous	Political fanaticism	August 30, 2002 Abia State	Failed bomb attack	Broadcasting Corporation of Abia, BCA
Anonymous	Political intolerance	September 2, 2002 Anambra State	Ambush/assassination & murder	Barnaba Igwe, Chairman of the branch of Nigerian Bar Association and his wife Abigail Amaka Igwe
Youth Democratic Movement YDM	Injustice in Niger Delta	December 23, 2002 Ikoyi Lagos	Arson	NNPC building; the fire burnt most of the computers software and hardware used by the corporation
Anonymous	Political fanaticism	March 3, 2003 Rivers State	Assassination	Dr Marshall Isokoari Harry, the National Vice-Chairman for the South-South zone of the ANPP
Militant Ijaw Youths	Self-determination/resource control	March 22, 2003 Warri south-west local government area Delta State	Clashes with soldiers	Two soldiers were killed and two others injured.
Militant Ijaw Youths	Self-determination & resource control	April 25, 2003 Warri, Delta State	Shooting/ armed attack	10 Navy, Army died. Their radio communication intercepted
Militant Ijaw Youths	Self-determination	April 30, 2003 Warri Delta State	Shooting & Murder	Five women were killed in a cross-fire between the militants and government security agents
Ijaw militants	Self-determination	May 1, 2003. Opumani Tank farm, Okeren koko, Delta State	Armed attack, hostage-taking and murder	Government forces and oil installations
Militant youths from Binioni	Self-determination Resource control agitation	November 2003. Foropo-Bakolga Local Council Bayelsa State	Hostage-taking	Targeted oil plat-forms. One of the militants was killed and an oil worker wounded during the rescue operation by the Nigerian Navy.
Niger Delta militant youths	Self-determination/resource control agitation	November 2003, Niger Delta	Hostage-taking	Oil platforms
Anonymous	Political cause	November 15 2003 Ilorin metropolis	Explosive bombing	National Pilot Newspaper office. The building was destroyed, five employees injured
Niger Delta militant youths	Self-determination, resource control agitation	November 27, 2003. Niger Delta	Kidnapping	Oil platforms
Taliban operatives	Religious fanaticism	January 1, 2004 Yobe State	Arson	The N100 million Tarmuwa local government secretariat.

Taliban operatives	Religious fanaticism	January 15 2004, Kanamma and Geidan Local Government area Yobe State.	Murder/ vandalism	Civilian population and government security agents.
Taliban operatives	Religious fanaticism	September 21, 2004 Borno State	Murder and theft of ammunition	Bama police station, killing six police officers, and carted away ammunitions
Taliban operatives	Religious fanaticism	September 21, 2004 Borno State	Murder/Arson	Gwoza police station, killed policemen and civilians
Taliban operatives	Fanaticism	September 22, 2004 Gwoza hills near Limankara village	Shooting	3 civilians were killed

Source: Adeoye, M. N. and Muhammed, A. Y. (2005) *Terrorism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implications for Sustainable Democracy and Development*. Paper presented at the National Conference on **Democracy and Development**, organised by the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences University of Ilorin, April.

Table V: Militants Activities in Niger Delta 2002-2008 (Akubor E, 2011)

Date/Year	Location	Company Affected
May 2002,	Bori, Ogoniland in Rivers state	30 Houses belonging to individuals set ablaze and three persons killed
March, 2003	Upomani village	Total and ELF tank farm attacked, killed five soldiers and destroyed property worth billions of naira
Nov. 2004;	Odima community in Brass Bayelsa state	Attacked, shut down and occupied Shell Petroleum Dev. Company Station.
January, 2006	Forcados export terminus	Shut down shell's offshore E.A. oilfield and blow up crude oil pipeline, kidnapped 4 foreign workers.
Feb. 2006		US oil services company, NNPC and Shell loading platform, abducted nine workers
March, 2006		Agip, and Italian oil company, pipeline blown up.
May, 2006	Port Harcourt	Killed an Oil Executive of Baker Hughes(an American Company)
May 11, 2006	Port Harcourt	Saipem, an Italian Oil Contracting Firm, kidnapped 3 oil workers
June 2, 2006	Port Harcourt	Bulford Dolphin Oil rig, own by Norwegian oilfield service, kidnapped 6 Britons, 1 Canadian and an American
June 7, 2006.	Niger Delta	Shell attacked Shell oil facilities, killed five soldiers and kidnapped five South Korean contractors
June 20, 2006	Port Harcourt	kidnapped two Filipinos with Beaufort International
July, 2006	Bayelsa	Attacked Dutch Oil, kidnapped Michael Los, while Niger Delta mob seized Agip Ogbainbiri Flow Sation taking 24 workers hostage
August, 2006	Port Harcourt	kidnapped Schiffarth Guido of Bilfiger and Berger
August, 2006,	Port Harcourt.	Filipino oil, abduct 3 Filipino oil workers
9 th -10 th August,	Port Harcourt.	Kidnapped Norwegian oil workers, Belgian and Moroccan contractors
Aug, 2006	Nightclub in Port Harcourt.	Oil Companies lost six (two Britons, a German, an Irish, a Pole and an American)
Aug, 2006	Port Harcourt.	A Lebanese Company, kidnapped a Lebanese
Aug, 2006	Port Harcourt.	Saipem Italian oil, kidnapped oil worker.
Oct, 2006,	Shell facilities in the Cawthorne Niger Delta	Gunmen ambushed oil workers, attacked Royal Dutch Shell facilities in the Cawthorne Channel boats carrying supplies of Shell Niger Delta (twenty five Nigerian employees were seized).
Oct, 2006	Port Harcourt	Exxon Mobil lost seven foreign oil workers (four Britons, one Indonesian, one Malaysian and a Romanian)
Nov, 2006,	Off the coast of Bayelsa.	Militants raided survey ship, Petroleum Geo-Service (PGS) lost British and American employees.
Nov. 22, 2006,	Port Harcourt	British oil Company lost a worker during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free seven hostages abducted by militants.
Dec 7, 2006:	Port Harcourt	Raided residential facility.Oil Company lost 3 Italians and a Lebanese
Dec 14, 2006.	Bayelsa State	invade the Nun River logistics base.Royal Dutch Shell lost 5 workers to kidnapping.
Dec 18, 2006:	Port Harcourt.	Agip and Shell P.D.C, lost residential facilities.
Dec 21, 2006,	Obagi oil field in Rivers State	Attacked oil facilities Total Oil lost three staff
January 5, 2007;	Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warri.	Chinese Telecom Firm and Shell PDC lost workers and residential facilities.
January 10, 2007;	Bayelsa state	Attacked a base operated by South Korea. South Korea's Daewoo Engineering lost ten workers to kidnapping.

January 16, 2007;	Around Island Bonny export terminal.	Attacked boat, operated by South Korean firm Hyundai, lost three people including a Dutch oil worker
January 20, 2007;	Around Warri Port	German shipping line Baco-Liner cargo ship, seized a 24 Filipino crew members..
January 23, 2007;	Port Harcourt,	Oil Installations
January 25, 2007;	Bayelsa state	Chinese National Petroleum Company and Shell Kidnapped lost nine employees to kidnapping
Feb 6, 2007;	Port Harcourt - Owerri road.	Filipino Oil, kidnapped Oil Worker
Feb 7, 2007	Port Harcourt.	Total Oil Co lost a Filipina woman and a French oil worker Gerard Laporal, kidnapped oil workers.
Feb, 2007	Port Harcourt.	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lost 4 missionaries
Feb, 2007	Port Harcourt	Hydrodrive lost 3 Croatian workers

In the opinion of scholars and analysts, the situation above as presented in both tables iv and v are clear manifestations of the practice of a supposed democratic system peculiar to Nigeria, which demonstrates betrayal of the people mandate and hijacked future. It is therefore not surprising that while in other parts of the world, democracy and governance is all about the people, their voice and welfare, Nigeria for example (as in most African state), democratizes with no separation of powers, all powers having been vested in an imperial presidency and his acolyte. There is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, no transparency (Ake, 1995). It is even more disturbing that even under civil administration, the coercive institutions of the state are above the law, civil society is below it, ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond protection; The Judiciary is dissociated from justice, and the bureaucracy is oppressive and arbitrary. The Nigerian state like the colonial state before it turns on the calculus of strengths (Ake, 1995).

The above table which represents the frustration of the supposed leaders of tomorrow and other related activities in different parts of the country, may not have been part of the nation, if those entrusted with power through the ballot boxes, their powerful friends in the military and some corrupt official in the electoral offices, had managed judiciously the power, resources and lives entrusted to them by the Constitution. The resources that have been carted out of this country in the name of governance, would have made the difference. It is in this vein that the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, argued thus;

By some estimates, close to \$400billion was stolen in Nigeria between 1960 and 1999...If you were to put 400 billion dollar bills in a row, you could make a path from here to the moon and back, not once but 75 times... think of the millions of vaccinations that could have been bought; the thousands of kilometers of roads that could have been paved; the hundreds of schools, hospitals and training centres that could have been built; and the water treatment facilities that could have been modernized with this money. The "opportunity cost" of the stolen wealth is enormous. Think of how different Nigeria would look today"(Akinyemi, 2007)

VII. CONCLUSION

From the discourse, it is clear that although, it is argued that civil rule, which is often ushered in through the ballot box is better, but in the case of Nigeria, it seems to be an aberration. This is because, by omission or commission, the voices of the electorate have been relegated to the background and their future hijacked by those who ought to have protected it. It is even more worrisome that the youths who have been acclaimed the future leaders have not been represented anywhere close to the process of leadership. It is therefore no surprising that as a way of making themselves relevant in the society (having been denied their rightful place), they have taken to arms. Since they have become relevant only when it is time for snatching of ballot boxes, helping to deal with political enemies and forming the youth wings of movements and later dumped, they have decided to irk out life for themselves through full time thuggery. This is a situation that must be urgently considered and tackled, if the dreams of the founding fathers of Nigeria must be realized.

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