DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Okeke, Remi Chukwudi

Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Email: remiokeke@Gmail.Com
Phone: 2348035523818

Abstract
We have in this study, identified democratic consolidation as a process and not a realization. In this process, therefore, the nature of democratic consolidation in Nigeria has been characterized by the determination of the nation’s political actors to squarely face the challenges of the surrounding vicissitudes of democracy. We have essentially in the study, identified some of the features of the progress made in democratic consolidation in Nigeria within the period of focus (1999-2015). We have examined the nature of the attendant challenges and made some far-reaching recommendations on how to enhance the chances of democratic consolidation in this West African nation-state.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Nigeria, Progress, Challenges

INTRODUCTION
The Nigerian state is a study in political and developmental unpredictability - a nation that in empirical terms continuously contradicts political bookmakers. Thus, as this West African nation-state trudges on in nation building, she has continued to negate every uncharitable visioning. In this process, within and outside her territorial confines, Nigeria has continued to defeat the numerous naysayers whose positions had attempted to create immense wedges, for the nation’s ambitions and aspirations - the hopes and aspirations that continue to hold her together, despite the darkest political astrology (Adebanwi & Obadare 2010). Many insiders in Nigeria (and outsiders also) know that this same country is not working (see Kukah 2012; Coulter 2013)

Very many scholars therefore have remained amazed by this Nigerian contradiction - a country that is working and is not working. Furthermore, Amuwo (2009) had described Nigeria as witnessing a democracy, political, economic and development impasse. Has the situation grown less traumatic?

To some scholars therefore looking at Nigeria, it would appear as if British colonialism actually left an indelible conservative imprimatur on the country’s politics and society. The general perception of an otherwise informed public opinion in this regard; is that ‘the British
programmed Nigeria to fail’ (Amuwo 2009). Indeed, Adebanwi & Obadare (2010) succinctly present the dejection that characterizes Nigerian analysis as follows:

Nigeria offers a magnificent template for examining the chronic schizophrenia that characterizes the African postcolonial state and the resulting social (de)formations that (re)compose, and are, in turn, (re)composed by, the state. Although rigged against reason and rhythm from its very conception and inception, Nigeria ironically, contains perhaps the greatest combination and concentration of human and natural resources that can be (re)mobilized in creating an African power state with a capacity to stand at the vortex, if not the centre of continental revival and racial renewal. This paradox raises a fundamental question: Why have the socio-economic and political actualities of, and in, Nigeria, been historically (permanently?) subversive of her potentialities?

Thus, here and there, there are dark prognoses and invidious conclusions about this crippled giant (Osaghae 1998), a country whose common future as a united polity has been severally questioned as a possibility by many of its frustrated citizens (Adebanwi & Obadare 2010). Bourne (2015) thus adds that the year 2015 may be another in which Nigeria seems to teeter on the edge of the abyss but it would be surprising if it were to fall in. Bourne was alluding to the tendencies of political bookmakers who envisioned doom and destruction as the aftermath of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The elections have since been conducted, won and lost and the unpredictable Nigeria State did not break up. Hence this study was actually conducted as preparations were being made for a change of baton in the governance of Nigeria, after the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Retired General Muhammadu Buhari, defeated the sitting President of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, in the 2015 Presidential election. In democratic configurations, all this present the portrait of democratic consolidation, particularly from 1999, when the country returned to the path of democracy, after the long period of military aberration.

Consequently, the general objective of this study is to establish the nature of the democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to (i) identify the features of the noticeable progress in democratic consolidation in Nigeria (ii) examine the nature of the attendant challenges and (iii) make recommendations on how to enhance the chances of democratic consolidation in this West African country.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: A CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION

The apposite place to begin the conceptual elucidation on democratic consolidation is perhaps the operationalization of the concept of democracy itself. Therefore, democracy in this study stands for a people-centered system of government, which entails periodic popular elections, in which the sanctity of the electoral process is strictly guaranteed. Implicit in this position is the connotation that democracy not only allows mass participation, by way of encouraging the electorate to participate in the selection of their representatives, but also that democracy is nourished by transparency and accountability in public administration (Yagboya 2013). It should be emphasized that democracy thrives better in many parts of the world where there are also strong democratic institutions. In other words, democratic principles thrive and are more effective when they are supported by strong institutions of modern government (Yagboya
2013). Therefore, when Yagboyaju, cites Ake (1996) as opining that democracy is about principles rather than about institutional forms, there appears to be a contentious issue in this proposition.

According to Yagboyaju, Ake had argued that it is the principles of public accountability, mass participation, majority rule, and minority rights that define democracy as a concept. Thus, citing Mimiko (2010), Yagboyaju concludes that it follows therefore, that any political system that provides for these principles qualifies to be called a democracy (anyone that does not, no matter the majesty of physical infrastructure of democracy put in place, cannot justifiably refer to itself as a democracy). The problematic issue here is that the sanctity of these principles is a function of the majesty of physical democratic infrastructure – the excellence of strong democratic institutions. Hence, according to Ogundiya (2009) cited in Akubo and Yakubu (2014), democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and about regarding the key political institutions as the only framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game. Democratic consolidation should therefore consequently connote a consistent and sustained practice of democratic principles (Yagboyaju 2013).

Beyond conceptual orthodoxy however, democratic consolidation might as well be denoted as when democracy is being consolidated (when democracy is being consolidated in defence of the people-centeredness of the precepts of democracy). Democracy is therefore, a system of government and a system of defence. It is a system for defending the powers of the people against usurpation by political goons. Democracy defends the hopes of a people against onslaught by sundry intruders. Therefore, in the context of developing democracies, the stronger the defence mechanisms of democracy the nearer the tendencies of the system towards democratic consolidation.

Hence, democratic consolidation critically refers to the growing of the defence mechanisms of democracy. Consequently, democratic consolidation is a process. It is not an accomplishment. Some scholars tend to view democratic consolidation as a realization – an achievement. According to Valenzuela (1990) cited in Akubo and Yakubu (2014), the building of a consolidated democracy involves in part an affirmation and strengthening of certain institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights, which have been created or recreated during the course of the transition. In this context, democratic consolidation becomes a post-transitional condition, curiously akin to some developmental fixity. Yagboyaju (2013) further opines that democratic consolidation could be said to effectively prevail in most mature and advanced democracies of the world, where many of the prominent democratic principles largely constitute the political culture.

But democratic consolidation is a lot more than all of this. In fact, democratic consolidation is a feature of all democracies. While the need for building the defence mechanisms of democracy may be more pronounced in emerging democracies, all democracies are prone to attacks that necessitate the fortification of democracy. It is this process of fortification that is democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation therefore is not an end in itself. Hence, the issue of a consolidated democracy is out of consideration. This is because, assuming that such a state is attainable, the subsequent development will invariably translate to a different type of monstrosity which would be anathema to strong democratic ideals.
PROGRESSIVE ASPECTS OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

We shall use the following subheadings to present a case of progress in democratic consolidation in Nigeria, with a focus on the period commencing from 1999 (when the Nigerian nation embarked again on the journey of democracy). These subheadings of course do not lay claim to exhaustiveness but are rather more of highlights to explicate on the progressive tendencies in democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

At The National Assembly

At the inception of the current democratic dispensation in the country (in 1999), the hallowed chambers of the central legislature became an auditorium of monumental political dramaturgy. Extant literature on this episode is humongous. We shall only sample the aspects that had to do with leadership instability and the meddlesomeness of the executive branch of government, personified by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo, in the affairs of the two arms of the National Assembly in Nigeria: the Senate and the House of Representatives. In Banjo (2013), we see a well-documented effort in chronicling the Nigerian Senate’s leadership embarrassment between 1999 and 2007. In most cases, the executive branch of government was behind this leadership imbroglio. In conclusion, Banjo posits:

We have proved in this descriptive analysis that the upper house of the Nigerian National Parliament that sat from 3 June 1999 to 29 May, 2007 produced financial scandals as well as a leadership crisis as its major defining attribute. In conclusion, we submit that whenever the history and politics of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic are examined/re-examined, the Senate will face a rather critical review for some unparliamentarily attributes.

According to Okolie (2012) who reported the submissions of Emeka Ihedioha, former Deputy Speaker of Nigeria’s House of Representatives, the political leadership that emerged in 1999 was coming from a military background where the idea of a legislature was totally unknown or greatly detested. Under succeeding military regimes, Ihedioha highlighted, the ruling military High Command always combined executive and legislative powers. Government policies and programmes were carried out with “immediate effect”. The military had no patience for “too much grammar” and debates often associated with parliamentary democracy. So, for a former military leader who was used to issuing out orders and getting things done, it was inconceivable for former President Obasanjo to be sharing powers with “idle civilians” who constituted the legislature in a democratic setting. The tendency to assert total control was ever present. This mental construct or military hangover was primarily responsible for the adversarial relationship that existed between the Executive and the Legislature, between 1999 and 2007 in Nigeria. Ihedioha further submitted that the desire of the Executive to exercise total control over the Legislature led to the imposition of leadership in the two chambers of the National Assembly, against the preferences of majority of the members. Hence, the two chambers of the National Assembly: the Senate and the House of Representatives, similarly witnessed crises of leadership, which had their origin in the meddlesomeness of the Executive (Okolie 2012).

Within the specific context of democratic consolidation, it is highlighted in this study that as the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan came to an end in 2015 and Retired General
Muhammadu Buhari was about to become the President of Nigeria, such executive meddlesomeness was no longer presentable as a feature of Nigeria’s democracy. Both the Senate and the House of Representative had freely elected their leaders, who were successfully leading them to the end of the tenure of Nigeria’s seventh National Assembly. In the case of the Senate President, David Mark, who had served for an unprecedented two terms of four years each, as Senate President, he maintained a reciprocally cordial relationship with the executive branch of government. In the case of Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal, who had also completed a single term of four years as Speaker, he actually emerged Speaker against the evident wishes of the executive branch of government. Throughout his tenure, he retained the strong support of a majority of the House Members while disagreeing most times with the policies and administrative tendencies of the Executive. Even when he (Tambuwal) decamped from the then majority party in the House, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), under which platform he became Speaker and moved to the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), he still remained Speaker, (in contentious circumstances) but with the evident support of his colleagues in the House (across party divides). These developments in the National Assembly we submit are testaments to democratic consolidation. They refer to the independence of the legislature and typify the principle of separation of powers (in practice), as all of these are strong benchmarks of democracy. They are also benchmarks of democratic consolidation.

**Freedom of Speech**

It is instructive to point out that this subsection of the study is not called “Freedom of Speech” in error. It was not meant to be captioned “Freedom of the Press” which is equally a necessary condition for democratic consolidation. We specifically underscore by this caption, the notion of the right of the citizen to freely express his views as his contribution to democratic consolidation. This is conceptually different from freedom of the press, even where the two concepts may overlap. Freedom of speech entails that the citizen expresses his views without being abused by the person he elected into office. We are of course already alluding to the Presidency of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria. According to Obafemi (2004), with regards to Chief Obasanjo:

Nigeria’s President, Olusegun Obasanjo has become an institution or rather a wild thorn that is uncontrollable ... There are many reports in the news media both locally and internationally of his convulsive and abusive tempers which is unbecoming of a leader. It is still fresh in our mind the insult he hurled on the victims and families of the Ikeja military cantonment hardware explosion. Hundreds of people died in that explosion and the President was reported to have insulted the victims and their family, calling them stupid as they attempted to find an answer to their calamities. And now in Plateau State, the Nigeria President has thrown the temper tantrum again, calling the Chairman of the state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) an idiot in an open forum.

Oduyela (2004) also has a record of Chief Obasanjo’s abusive methodologies. By 2015 however, under the Presidency of Dr Goodluck Jonathan, for a President to abuse a Nigerian citizen would be unthinkable. To demonstrate the extent to which Dr Jonathan liberalized the public space for the citizens to freely express their concerns and contribute to the democratic process, he once declared that he was the most criticized President in the world (see Chiedozie 2012). Further to
our democratic consolidation thesis, the freedom of speech that is currently available to Nigerian citizens is a positive development. Another positive dimension to the freedom of speech—characterization of the current democratic tendencies in the country is that those who express some otherwise provocative views are not even molested by government, knowing that the hunting of some of such characters in the past ended in wild goose chase (see Eziukwu 2015).

Professional and Administrative Capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

The professional and administrative capacity of an electoral umpire is critical to the credibility of the electoral process in particular and the overall assessment of electoral democracy in a specific polity. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria, under the leaderships of Justice Ephraim Akpata in 1999, Sir Abel Guobadia in 2003 and Professor Maurice Iwu in 2007 were usually perceived to be deficient in professional and administrative competencies. It was actually these deficiencies, which manifested as INEC-induced irregularities in the elections conducted by INEC, under the leaderships of these Chairmen. Citing Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013), Musa (2011) and EU Election Observer Mission Report (2011), Ebirim (2013) highlights as follows:

Justice Ephraim Akpata and Sir Abel Guobadia served as the Chairmen of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1999 and 2003 respectively. During these periods (1999 and 2003), it was reported that election results were widely condemned by the opposition, and the European Union Election Observers. The elections were marred by poor organization, lack of essential transparency, violence, widespread procedural irregularities and significant evidence of fraud, particularly during result collation process. In 2005, Professor Maurice Iwu became the Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). His tenure was perhaps the most controversial, when compared to his successors. The 2007 election he conducted was marred by massive irregularities and blatant favoritism and he was criticized by Nigerian and foreign observers for conducting election that fell below acceptable democratic standards and this statement was also admitted by the late President Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua, the ostensible winner of the 2007 election (Ebirim, 2013).

On June 8, 2010, Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega was nominated by President Goodluck Jonathan as the new Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), subject to Senate confirmation as a replacement for Professor Maurice Iwu, who vacated the post on April 28, 2010. Professor Attahiru Jega’s nomination as INEC chairman followed approval by a meeting of the National Council of State called by President Jonathan and attended by former Heads of State … Before the April 2011 elections were conducted (in Anambra State), the much maligned Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had undergone an internal overhaul, under its new boss, Professor Attahiru Jega. INEC claims that a great deal of time and money had been invested in technology, for a high-technological registration process, and in staffing, in order to ensure that the elections were free and fair (Ebirim 2013).

The elections in Anambra State were largely adjudged free and fair and subsequent elections conducted in Nigeria under the leadership of Professor Attahiru Jega as the Electoral body’s Chairman were usually adjudged largely free and fair by nonpartisan commentators. The cumulative successes in the conduct of such elections in the different states of the federation (where gubernatorial elections became due) culminated in the success recorded by the Jega-led
INEC in the 2015 general elections. The truth is that, the professional and administrative capacities of INEC witnessed immense boost under the leadership of Attahiru Jega. This competent disposition of the electoral umpire, in an electoral democracy, is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation.

Sanctity of Electoral Outcome
The reality is that everywhere in politics, sitting governments and entrenched/ruling parties do not lose elections easily (Amuwo 2009). Invariably, nobody rejoices when he loses election. For the politician leaving office by losing election, there are bound to be misgivings. When the contexts of the misgivings are historicized and the national interest placed above primordial, personal and party interests in a democratic setting, it leads to the smoothening of the process of democratic consolidation. The history of Nigerian elections has been a history of electoral fiasco in which the outcome of such elections are usually subject to disputations and litigations. Disputations and litigations are even the minimal ways of describing the hostilities that characterize the outcome of Nigerian elections. Election in Nigeria was the democratic equivalent of warfare.

However, with the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria and the immediate acceptance of the outcome by the sitting President (Dr Jonathan) who was defeated in the election a different scenario (positive in character and dimension) has been added to the culture of elections in Nigeria. In summative terms, this development is describable as the upholding of the sanctity of an electoral outcome. It has to be further noted that inherent in this characterization of sanctity for an electoral outcome, is the imperative that the said election, in its conduct and outcome have been free and fair. When the sanctity of an electoral outcome is usually upheld in a polity, it is indicative of democratic consolidation. Consequently, it can be safely assumed that in the Nigerian State there is currently a sign of the beginning of such indications.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Challenges

Voter apathy: Voter apathy has remained a recurring phenomenon in Nigerian elections (Ipinyomi, 2015). The June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria is usually seen as the freest, fairest and the benchmark Nigerian election (see Campbell 1994; Lewis 1994; Amuwo 2009; Ekanade & Odoemene, 2012). Nevertheless, the voter turnout in that election was less than 50 per cent (Ekanade & Odoemene, 2012). Where less that 50% attendance is recorded in an election, any winner can, still not boast because, those who chose to stay away can still turn the tide (Ipinyomi, 2015). Falade (2014) concurs that there is low level of political participation among Nigerian citizens. Many Nigerians are indifferent in political matters, he argues. The INEC (the Independent National Electoral Commission) he continues; noted that Nigerians’ participation during the general election in 2011 was low, as only 35% of the 70 million registered voters took part in the election. Amuwo (2009) described Nigeria as witnessing a democracy and development impasse. Recurring voter apathy is increasingly becoming an attribute of this impasse. Attendance is a crucial part of democracy as it connotes awareness, participation, freedom and fairness, and an unbiased result (at the end). If only a few people turn
out to vote, the voice of the silent majority may be lost because, the small percentage of the electorates that may have come out to vote, may not truly represent the wishes of the entire people (Ipinyomi, 2015). The impact of voter apathy on democratic consolidation is essentially in the negative regard.

**Elite-Manipulated Democracy:** The elite class in Nigeria is synonymous with Browne Onuoha’s depiction of the socio-political landscape of a post-military era in Nigeria, made up of three interconnected dominant social groups:

1. Ex-/retired military men, of the senior officer corps (citing Adekanye 1999);
2. A new rich who made their money from civil war economy (1967-1970), corruption and Military government patronages, in mineral oil exploration/allocation of mineral oil blocks, government contracts and related businesses;
3. A new rich who made their money through outright fraud (known as 419 in Nigeria), drug trafficking (drug barons) and other illicit and at times criminal businesses (see Onuoha, 2014).

Onuoha argues that this coalition has been in control of Nigerian politics since the aborted third Republic in 1993. The coalition took control of democratically elected government in Nigeria in 1999, and has been in charge ever since. Their boundaries are not readily perceptible and they have since 1999 coalesced to become difficult to distinguish. The coalition was the only force that had the type of big money required for success in Nigerian politics. In such a context, money was used routinely not only to corrupt the political and electoral process through vote buying and vote rigging, but also to attempt to buy justice (Amuwo, 2009). Consequently, Nigerian elections are often programmed to achieve pre-determined results (Amuwo, 2009). Most other politicians, who succeeded in Nigerian politics … but did not belong to any of the three social groups, would have been sponsored by a member from one or the other of the three groups; sponsors are popularly known as political “godfathers” (Onuoha 2014). The godfathers (the diabolical political elite) are immensely influential in the electoral process in Nigeria. They sponsor the formation of political parties and also determine who will be candidate at the elections. They determine the result of an election in advance and their dubious determination stands. They manipulate the democratic process.

**Parties without Ideologies:** According to Amuwo (2009), virtually all Nigeria’s post-colonial governments to date have been thrust to power without a concise national ideology, let alone a popular and liberating one. Between 2009 and 2015 also, nothing has really changed. Consequently, the Nigerian political system had not developed much since the colonial period (Amuwo, 2009). Amuwo further posits that in theory, political parties are premised on the concept of political inclusivity and anchored in political participation. In practice, however, parties are born mainly due to political exclusivity, that is to say, for purposes of wresting power and controlling the masses. There are likely to be few parties where politics and elections are structured by ideologies about the use to which power is put. Consequently, where ideologies are lacking and political formations are bereft of identity, as in Nigeria, we are confronted with the efflorescence of several look-alike political parties, differentiated only by the fatness of the purse of their main sponsors and the unique mannerisms and idiosyncrasies of their leaders (Amuwo, 2009). Invariably, the electorate is left without options. Voting is done based on nothing.
Election campaigns are reduced to disco sessions. In place of orators, the process produces inelegant speakers, who have no ideologies to propagate.

**Gender Issues:** The participation of women in the democratic process in Nigeria is still largely ephemeral and peripheral. In the name of women empowerment, women are merely given appointments into public offices, as a demonstration of the increasing sophistication of democracy in the Nigerian State. But when they indicate interest to stand for elections as candidates of the major political parties in the Nigerian system, they are hardly afforded the opportunity. They turn to the minor-league political parties, which easily avail them their platforms and subsequently, the electorate dismisses them as jokers. The only evident visibility of women in the major political parties in Nigeria is when they feature in the women-wing of the parties, as they add colour and razzmatazz to electioneering campaigns. Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013) has amply demonstrated that women are still immensely under-represented in the democratic system in Nigeria. Arowolo and Aluko (2010) also expressed the view that the low level of political participation of the Nigerian woman is becoming alarming and disturbing. Since the emergence of political independence in 1960, Nigerian women have remained invisible in the political process (Falade, 2014). Luka (2011) concludes that the exclusion of women from participation on the economic and political fronts is an affront to the spirit and values of democratic governance. It is indeed, an affront to democratic consolidation.

**Recommendations**
To impede the negative effects of these challenges, it is recommended as follows: In the first place, Nigerian political parties must be compelled to conduct issues-based electioneering campaigns. During the 2007 election campaign for instance, very few of the 20 or so presidential candidates led an issue-driven campaign. Apparently, to avoid antagonizing the then Imperial President Obasanjo, the kingmaker-in-chief, the most notable refrain of their speeches was that they would ‘continue the reform programme of the present administration’. Hardly any of the many pertinent policy issues begging for lucid and clear-headed public debate were raised in any sustained manner by most of the presidential aspirants/candidates (Amuwo, 2009). Nigerian political parties should be compelled by election guidelines, to submit to the nation's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a list of the issues on which they intend to conduct their campaigns. Deviation from such issues, to mundane matters, disqualifies a candidate.

If for instance, a political party says it will provide water supply to all the households in Nigeria the party’s candidates from the Presidential level to ward level, will concentrate on this subject matter, explaining to the electorate how the party intends to achieve this; the funding sources, possibilities of working with development partners, the gestation and actualization period, the tax component of the amenity, etc. If the party has a list of five of such issues submitted to the Electoral Commission, the party’s campaigns would be based only on such issues. Consequently, such a party will not for instance, deviate to concentrate the members’ campaigns on whether a certain opposition candidate actually sat for the mandatory final examination in the post-primary institution he said he had attended. Such issues do not interest the Nigerian voter. Such issues will not make the Nigerian voter to vote against the opposition candidate.
Secondly, Nigerian elections should be conducted on the days that the citizens go about their normal businesses. After all, the political parties conducted their campaigns on such days and these same citizens were expected to have observed the campaigns on such days, while going about their various businesses. Suddenly on voting days, everybody is chased inside by heavily armed security personnel, in the name of averting trouble during voting. This leads to voter apathy. The potential voters are intimidated out of the process of voting. Above all, under this scenario, the dubious political elite usually manipulate the electoral process to their dubious advantage, as a large segment of the critical stakeholders have all been sent indoors. Hence, whoever the elite chooses as the winner emerges the winner. The elite know that the citizens, who would have successfully questioned the propriety of how the elite-chosen winner emerged, did not leave their homes on the Election Day; therefore they lack the requisite pedestal to question the outcome of the election. In other words, such class of citizens did not even vote on the day of voting, because there was the order for them to remain indoors, go out to vote and either remain within the area of the polling booth or go back to your home. This order they detested and therefore did not even leave their various homes. Democratic consolidation therefore must encompass the casting of votes by citizens who may not spend the upwards of an hour to do this and then continue with their schedules for the day.

In addition, Nigerian political parties must be compelled to tend towards ideological divides, to avail the voter a choice. Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission should do this. The existing parties will be guided to conform to certain identified divides; for instance, between being known as progressives or conservatives. The parties would be made to submit to the Electoral Commission, their parties’ positions on such issues as; should Nigeria be strict or flexible on the issue of Foreign Direct Investment? Party A says Yes to FDI and party B says nay. Party A belongs to the progressives and party B to the conservatives. When the parties’ responses to a number of such questions are weighted, it is circulated to the citizens and accordingly, the nation and the international community will know the ideological leanings of the political parties. Voters would cast their votes for these parties on the bases of these ideological tendencies.

Finally, the electoral system in Nigeria truly needs to feature more female candidates. Incidentally, the meeting of this need must also be by a truly democratic method. It should not be by decree or legislation, as this would introduce bias against men, which is then undemocratic. In this regard, the only apposite recommendation hereby made in this study is to legislate against the existence of women wing in all the political parties in Nigeria. After all, there are no male wings in the parties. This now gives the male and female members of the political parties, equal footing in party affairs. If the party is marginalizing the women and not fielding them as candidates, etc., it becomes obvious. Under this scenario, the chances of women in mainstream political participation in Nigeria will become more enhanced.

CONCLUSION

One of the darkest astrologies of Nigeria’s democratic journey was the widely circulated misinformation that the United States of America had predicted the disintegration of the Nigerian State in 2015 (see Adedoja 2012). The apologists of this assumption continued to refer to Nigeria’s 2015 general elections as the harbinger of the inevitable cataclysm. The much-dreaded election has been conducted and winners and losers have emerged with an immensely minimal
level of animosity. This is evident of the progress of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. We have in this study identified democratic consolidation as a process and not a realization. In this process, the nature of democratic consolidation in Nigeria has been characterized by the determination of the nation’s political actors to squarely face the challenge of the vicissitudes of democracy. We have in this study identified some of the features of the progress made in democratic consolidation in Nigeria; within the period of focus of the study (1999-2015). We have examined the nature of the attendant challenges and made some far-reaching recommendations on how to enhance the chances of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. We conclude this study on the note of the hope that the newly elected All Progressives Congress (APC) Administration, under the leadership of Retired General Muhammadu Buhari as President, will not embark on policies that could reverse the benchmarks of democratic consolidation already recorded in this West African country. Invariably, such a development will become tantamount to democratic weakening, an antithesis of democratic consolidation.

NOTES
1. Actually, this becomes the first time in the history of Nigerian elections that a sitting President would be defeated by an opposition candidate. Nigeria was granted independence in 1960 by her British colonial rulers. There were military regimes that frequently interrupted democratic governance in the country. However, beginning from the year 1999, it appears as if the military have gone for good.

2. Nigeria’s economy is currently rated the largest in Africa. Invariably, the country is the dominant state-actor in the West African sub-region. Political developments in Nigeria therefore usually possess sub-regional and wider social and economic implications.

3. Obasanjo was a Military Head of State in Nigeria between 1976 and 1979.

4. Obasanjo returned to power, became President in 1999 at the commencement of the current democratic dispensation in Nigeria, and left office in 2007, after two terms of four years per tenure, giving him a total of eight years in office as President.

5. President Jonathan did not wait for the final results to be declared; he called the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari and congratulated him on his victory.

6. A major plank of the presidential campaign of the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria, during the 2015 presidential election was that Muhammadu Buhari (Retired General in the Nigerian Army and former Military Head of State (1983 to 1985) had no post-primary school certificate. He later won the election.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


