Old Wine in a New Wine Skin: A Sociological Reflection on Nigeria’s Democratic Regimes

1 Lawrence Okoronkwo Udensi and 2 Esther Onyinyechi Udensi
1 Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria
2 University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract
Both military and civilian regimes in Nigeria’s leadership history ought to have drawn practical lessons to tackle corruption and enhance the much needed development that the nation desperately deserves. Democratic regimes in the evolution of the nation’s political history have continued to witness a trend of leaders that have transited from military to civil rule, defection from one political party to another as well as formation, re-formation or reconstitution of various political groups. Adopting Robert Michels’ Iron Law of Oligarchy to reflect on Nigeria’s democratic regimes, this paper systematically and analytically reviews the dimensions and trend of various democratic regimes in Nigeria, in order to sociologically, make a case for strategies that could adequately assist to fight corruption and set an agenda for sustainable leadership, development and progress. The paper assumes that, unless visionless political formations and political party ideologies are deconstructed and pruned, combating corruption and deliberate action for sustainable leadership, which every nation of the 21st century yearns for, will continue to elude Nigeria.

Keywords: Corruption, democracy, politics, democratic regimes, sustainable leadership

Introduction
The context of democratic regimes in Nigeria suggests a vicious cycle of leaders whose focus and manifesto had consistently eluded the citizens of the
dividends of democracy. A sociological discourse around the concept of democracy may be a futile effort without an understanding of what the concept is all about. The popular definition of democracy has been that it is the government of the people, by the people and for the people (Epstein, 2011). But what that even means is still an issue to explore, since it is contested in many quarters and many countries, the extent to which the people are involved in the process of governance of the said democratic systems. According to Kolawole (2004), democracy is not the absence of military rule nor necessarily the presence of civilian leaders, but a system where political actors and institutions of state are wired with democratic values, norms and ethos. This implies that the impact and effects of democracy must permeate all the strata of society and governance. In relation to the above definition, Franceschet defined democracy under three basic requirements which are: non-violence, political participation and control, and political equality (Franceschet, 2009).

Franceschet argues that for a system to be described as truly democratic, the political and administrative process must be non-violent, the citizens must be allowed full political participation, such that without prejudice, the winner of an election must be a reflection of the people's choice. And finally, participation in the political process must be with equality and no prejudice. Therefore, this discourse shall be anchored on these two views of democracy which when juxtaposed, portrays democracy as a system (whether military or civilian) which allows the citizens equal participation in the political process of the nation, in order to get fully involved in determining the administrative actors that will represent the interest of the people for equitable development and security of the nation, rather than a party or personal event, as in the case of Nigeria.

Democracy has been widely and globally considered as a suitable form of government and consequently, it has received wide acceptance and adoption across the globe, including the developing African countries. Nigeria, at the forefront of the developing African countries, reverted to democracy on the 29th of May, 1999 hoping that democracy and its tenet will help in solving governance and development challenges faced during the military regimes. Such hope is definitely hinged on the belief that leadership failure is the major problem that is confronting most Third World Countries, particularly in countries where other systems of regime, other than democracy, are in existence (Asaju, Arome and Mukaila, 2014).

The adoption of democracy in Nigeria and other developing countries who hitherto practiced some other forms of governance, has been seen as a political revolution that toppled and jettisoned all those other systems of government which have been termed dictatorship (Urim, Imhonopi and Ojukwu, 2013). Although, most African countries including Nigeria have been formally established as a democratic nation, in reality, they are not yet compliant in the
efforts of governments, particularly politicians and political entrepreneurs have engaged and sponsored all types of demagoguery in the search for power. They have abandoned the needed dividends of governance with no respect to democratic standards, norms, values and good governance.

After several national and state elections in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic which was characterized as war-like and accompanied with human life and property losses undermining the process and results of these elections, it becomes imperative to examine anti-democratic practice, and the roles they play in the country’s democracy. Thus, with the enormous debates and assertions concerning democratic anomalies like imposition of aspirants, intimidation of political opponents and fraudulent democratic system, democracy in the Nigeria’s context appears to retains most of the characteristics of dictatorship as witnessed before 1999, aside from the incidence of elections that are nevertheless, violently and extremely contentious and compromised.

Certainly, wherever there exists a regime or a form of government, the principle of democracy has always generated intrigues, apprehensions and excitement as it is expected to tackle the minority’s tyranny and injustice over the majority within any society, and fears for the contemptuous manipulations and obvious flaws associated with democratic practice (Signer, 2009; Urim, Imhonopi & Ojukwu, 2013). Although, democracy should mean the way individuals govern themselves, either directly or through relatively elected officials, there has been a right point to emphasize that not every country which calls itself democracy enables individuals to rule over itself (Bessette and Pitney, 2012).

Some research reports (Adeniyi, 2011; Ariye, Ogbomah, Ebipre and Eric, 2012; Urim, Imhonopi & Ojukwu, 2013) have argued that party politics through godfatherism is the focus of the debates that submerge democracy as a system of government within the developing world, which encompasses a manipulative, an illegal, and undemocratic process of deflating the ideals, rules, and values of democracy and consequently, evading the democratic procedure before, during and after elections to attain and encourage the partisan drives of a few, to the detriment of the majority. This however reflects a system of democratic regime which favours only political party’s affinity, rather than the collective welfare of the governed.

Various political regimes in Nigeria have severally manifested hightandedness, which is accompanied by a continuous rotation of governance within cabals that had existed from the conception of democratic rule. The Nigeria democratic regimes consistently portray the situation of “old wine in a new wine skin”. This situation remains a serious concern about the nation's emerging democracy. It is against this backdrop that this paper sociologically reflects on democratic regimes in Nigeria. The rest of the paper considered: democratic regimes in perspective; reflecting Nigeria's democratic regimes on the iron law of oligarchy; democratic regimes and the challenges of sustainable leadership in Nigeria and concluding remarks.
Nigeria Democratic Regimes in Perspective
The evolution of democratic regimes in Nigeria is traced to the first civilian republic which characterized the first attempt at democracy. Though it was short lived by a military coup in 1966, which further laid the foundation for subsequent devastating antecedents (including the Biafra civil war and several more military governments) which set the pace on which the leadership structure of Nigeria still flouts up to this moment. The period from independence to the beginning of Fourth Republic in 1999 shows a very brief engagement of civilians in governance. This section therefore x-rayed democratic regimes starting from 1999-2019, bringing into perspective all the democratic regimes that had ever existed (Obasanjo/Atiku regime (1999-2007), Yar’Adua/ Jonathan regime (2007-2010), Jonathan/Sambo regime (2010-2015) and currently, Buhari/Osibanjo regime (2015-2019).

The Obasanjo/Atiku Regime 1999-2007
General Abdusalam Abubakar handing over to civilian government On May 29, 1999 heralds the beginning of the longest civil rule period in the history of Nigeria. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo by that transition became Nigeria’s second elected executive president which ushered the beginning of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic (Olurode and Anifowoshe, 2004).

The regime conducted two general elections between the period it lasted, with the first election in 2003, which had Obasanjo reelected on the platform of the PDP; and the second election in 2007 which brought in Umaru Musa Yar’Adua as president. Though, the election had winners declared, though with much controversies hinged on rigging on an unprecedented scale as it has been severally witnessed in the history of Nigeria’s electoral system (Falode, 2013). The build-up to the election and campaigns witness pervasive intimidation, political assassinations, corruption and fraud. The consequence of the flaws in the two elections was the blight on the administration’s legacy.

The regime witnessed various degrees of corrupt leaders within its administration (Nwankwu, 2008 & Falode, 2013), and this lead to the establishment of ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices Commission) and EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) in 2000 and 2004. The degree to which these anti-corruption agencies fought corruption remains undoubtedly unrealistic, with much political undertone and opponents hunting across the major political cabals in existence. These two institutions were used extensively through the span of this regime, though with defeated intentions to the laws and objectives that leads to its establishment. Thus, describing the activities of the anti-corruption agencies “as a toothless bull dog”, and had accompanied the anti-corruption fight of various regimes to recent times.

The security issues that bedeviled the regime did not end with religious tensions as ethnic tension also ran high in the country throughout its
administration Korieh and Nwokedi, 2000; Odeh, 2010). In the Southeast, MASSOB (Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra), which was founded by Ralph Uwazuruike in 1999, campaigned actively for the reassertion of the state of Biafra (Ukiwo, 2009). In the Southwest, OPC (the Oodua People’s Congress) constituted a torn politically in the side of the administration (UNHCR, Canada, 2000). In the Niger Delta, the confrontation by the Ogoni’s and other ethnic minorities over the control of oil resources and an end to the pollution of their territories took an unequivocally violent turn during the administration’s second-term (Crisis Group, 2006). For the Ogoni struggle, the regime adopted both a preventive and proactive measures that lead to the creation of NDDC (Niger Delta Development Commission) with the mandate to cater for the socio-economic desires of the people of the Delta; as well as the establishment of a special military unit tagged JTF (the Joint Task Force) which was empowered to wipe out forces that is threatening the internal security arrangement in the Niger Delta including various militants hideout (Crisis Group, 2006).

**Yar’Adua/Jonathan Regime 2007-2010**

The regime was instituted on 21st April, 2007 through a presidential election. The election was highly criticized to have been largely rigged by observers and especially the two primary opposition parties: ANPP (All Nigeria Peoples Party) and AC (Action Congress). The administration pledged to defend democracy and adopted a government of national unity, though the regime was short-lived, the extent to which it would have achieved these feats remained inconclusive. However, the regime ended with much expectation and hope, as its leadership drive transparent and inclusive governance (Josephine, 2007). With its take-off and the precedents, it laid within the possible short time in existence, Nigerians would have wished “it’s a nightmare that never ended”.

The seven-point agenda herald the drive of the administration to deliver the democratic dividends to the citizens. The high point of the agenda of President Yar’Adua’s administration includes: the provision of critical infrastructure, ensure national security and intelligence, wealth creation, food security, land tenure and home ownership, Niger Delta and human capital development. The seven point agenda according to Dode (2010) was pivotal to the administration’s efforts and strategies to confront the challenges that have hindered the development and inclusion of the nation’s economy among the world’s twenty largest economies by year 2020. Nevertheless, by 2010, the administration struggled to achieve many of these stated goals. The extent to which the impact of the seven point agenda can be evaluated is constraint by obstruction of the focal person, due to ill health and death. However, the fracas that played out among the power blocs prevalent at the period is a pointer to the reality of the same old system, style and focus.

The Yar’Adua regime as part of its efforts to change the narratives of Nigeria’s democratic regime inaugurate the presidential electoral reform committee with the mandate to consider the social, legal factors, and political
institutions and security issues affecting the quality of elections and its credibility in Nigeria as well as make recommendations on ways of improving the credibility of elections in the country. While submitting its report in December 2008, the presidential committee on electoral reforms among other things recommends that a constitutional reform that will make INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) truly independent; taking out some of the activities of INEC like the creation of an electoral offenses commission and party registration agency. The report further suggested a prompt resolution of legal challenges of elections, possibly before the swearing in of the winner of the seat being challenged (Agbese, 2018). To a large extent, the implementation of the report at the point of submission was belated, as the president's health had already taken a nose-dive. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to conclude the assessment of the regime under Yar’Adua.

**Jonathan/Sambo Regime 2011-2015**

This regime was led by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who succeeded Yar’Adua and also contested and won the 2011 presidential election. At assumption of office, the administration launched series of programmes aimed at delivering the needed democratic dividend to the citizens. The extent to which citizens were impacted remains a mirage. The Transformation Agenda was the overall programme/policy focus initiated by the administration in 2011. The Transformation Agenda was focused on a review of how the federal government plans to implement initiatives, services and core priority policies from 2011 to 2015 through the National Planning Commission (NPC). The programme seemed laudable for the development of the nation, but its implementation seems weak, as its legacy can only be traced to the document that leads to its establishment. The core focus of the transformation agenda according to Nkwede, Udu and Onwe (2014) includes: 1) infrastructural development, 2) power, 3) economy, 4) energy and gas, 5) security, 6) agriculture, 7) education, 8) women, 9) water resources, 10) mineral

The leadership of President Jonathan’s regime could be adjudged as accidental. This is marked by abysmal failure of programmes and policies that should have driven or steer the wheel to progress of the transformation agenda. The level of insecurity, occasioned by recklessness and rascality on issue of national development by politicians puts the leadership at the rung of unprepared leadership. The policy document of the transformation agenda, is supposed to have carved a niche of success in its implementation, the outcome of the transformation agenda showed the lack of readiness of the administration to deliver the much needed dividend of democracy. This trend of failure has been re-occurring in previous administration, with citizens’ yearnings for a suitable and responsible governance that is not just sustainable, but devoid of administrative decay and re-cycling of leaders. This gave rise to a voting
revolution which ushered in the opposition into governance in 2015 general election.
**Buhari/Osinbanjo Regime 2015-2019**

During the 2015 general election, Nigerians were tired of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) led government with its attendant governance flaws led the voting enclave to opt for a change with the expectation of a radical transformation and progress of governance. The level to which these have been achieved and the expectation of Nigerian met remains elusive. Though, the promise of the Buhari’s administration remains massive, the Buhari led administration has continued to lay defense that it’s still in the reconstruction process due largely to the decay in governance and widespread corruption it inherited from the sixteen years of PDP led government. The present regime led by Buhari has continued to generate mix feelings, as the citizens evidently needed a change from the long decade of leadership by the PDP with no dividends. Buhari before the 2015 election promised the electorates to bring about the earnestly sought after change. He promised security, good economy, job creation among others.

The regime's most popular policy is on the anti-corruption campaign which is highly debated at various quarters, to what extent the campaign is anti-corrupt. The arsenals used by the regime in fighting the corruption war include the EFCC and ICPC inherited from previous regime, whistle blowing, and single treasury account to mention some (Macauley and Michael, 2018). The determination of the status and successes in the fight against corruption in Nigeria can only be assessed by trials and real convictions, as well as information on provisional and final revocation of court orders in high-profile corruption cases.

Unfortunately, it appears that the have lost most of its cases to the law court as a result of lack of thorough investigation, deficiency of equipment, inadequate and suitable personnel, deficiency of tactical planning and prosecution (Dania, 2017). In addition, the desire to fulfill the hunger of Nigerians for convictions in the face of meager remuneration to judges inevitably relegate some judges to the background of victim to the sumptuous offerings of crooked public and private officials in the process, with court sellers (Akinselure, 2017 and Agbakoba, 2017). This kind of situation is not peculiar to the regime in view as it has been the case with policies and their execution in Nigeria. The leaders are good in making policies and always in a haste to execute and take glory whether successful or not.

Considering the tenets of democratic leadership, a leader can only be adjudged successful or not, in relation to the level of representativeness of the government as well as the impact of their policies on the lives of the citizens. So, to conclude whether these different regimes have been able to meet the democratic expectation, one must understand the connection between political party and representation. This is because democracy is about involvement and representation, and participation is the magnitude to which a member of a society participates in the activities in their societies, while representation
refers to the process of people being elected to act on behalf of the community or those they represent (Omodia and Egwemi, 2011).

According to Agbaje (2005), the dominant form of democracy in the modern day is representative or indirect democracy, where political parties are the foremost machinery for guaranteeing the participation and representation of citizen in public policy. This is also the medium through which individuals share the democratic principles. Thus, Olarinmoye (2008) described political party as a structured group of individuals that share related political principles, interest, views, opinions and aspirations with the sole objective of exercising and capturing political power through various government formations. It is therefore a major vehicle for enhancing political participation.

Therefore, it could be rightly argued that as important as political parties are to democracy, it is only seen in theory in Nigeria; the activities of political parties as observed in Nigeria has not allowed for active political representation in the country. This submission will be explored under four variables (Defection, godfatherism, zoning politics and electoral fraud) which have together with the activities of political parties led to a representation discrepancy in Nigeria. But in order to grasp these variables, it is pertinent to reflect Nigeria's democratic regimes on the thesis of iron law of oligarchy.

Reflecting Nigeria's Democratic Regimes on Iron Law of Oligarchy

Iron law of Oligarchy as postulated by Robert Michels (1876–1936) underscored the relationship between the elites and governance. The main idea of iron law of oligarchy as postulated by Michels is derived from his research of the organization of the socialist party, which he was also a member. To him, revolution was the main reason of the creation of the socialist party. Though, maintaining a strong commitment towards the mandate of the creation of the party, after its creation, Charles (2010) explain that some elites (who are usually few) will reformulate the aim and philosophy of the parties to deviate from the original mandate of bringing about the revolution. Their personal and selfish goals were to replace the organizational goals. The iron law of oligarchy connotes the preservation and perpetuation of a few people in power. To realize these selfish goals of just a few members, the elites (the political class) devise a procedure of recruiting their likes and thereafter, purge young and radical members from the party. By dismissing the young and radical elements, the powerful few would readily entrench their positions and consolidate themselves around their ambition of taking over governance for their private interest (Charles, 2010).

The personal interest dimension that the elites assumes after ascending power reflects the precarious approach of leadership they adopt by impoverishing the masses (especially the youths) and turning them into praise singers and boot-likers which is a major sustaining strategy of the Nigerian political elites. The iron law of oligarchy also suggests that in a bid to sustain their political and leadership domination, the elites have caged and locked the power domain from further entering. The elites make concerted efforts to
restrict the power-flow, and continue dominating power and leadership domain. This is the major reason the Nigeria State have continue to rotate leaders (politicians), within the same categories of people and cabals (though in different political platforms) which is a reflection on the spate of development and growth of the nation.

The Nigeria political space have been severally dominated and influenced by a few crop of politicians (cabals) who have consistently ceased and control the political and governance space of the nation within the various democratic regimes. These crops of leaders have intermittently transposed from military regimes to democratic regimes, not excluding what have been described as an unseemly highest degree of cross-carpeting across political parties. The foregoing experience shows that common interest is what binds the Nigeria political elites. When there is a conflicting interest within a particular political party, dumping a party’s manifesto in other to actualize personal interest does not call for concern. This scenario shows the degree to which the governed have been caged, and leaders have no regards for their responsibility.

Nigeria’s democratic regimes in the context of the iron law of oligarchy reflect Michels’ argument that: once power is concentrated in the hands of a minority, the leadership develops an interest in maintain the status and perquisite of its position. Motivated by an apparently inherent craving of power to dominate, the minority, having reached this position, can engage anything that is necessary to remain and preserve their power. Irrespective if it demands, violating the interest of the membership, and will use undemocratic means to suppress internal oppositions that may be judged to threaten their authority (Leach, 2015). The foregoing describes the do-or-die context our politicians adopt to remain in power. The nature of the nations’ electioneering process as researchers (Nwokeke & Jayum, 2011; Awopeju, 2011; Obakhedo, 2011) have observed, depicts a domineering tendency by leaders to continue to remain in power. The major reason elites invent dubious strategies to ensure victory and success at whatever cost and whatever means is due largely to fear to lose their prestigious position and accompanying power (Charles, 2010).

In this paper, we assume a position that the masses sustain the activities of the elites. In other words, the elites take advantage of carelessness of the masses to perpetuate their recklessness. The divide and rule approach has so much manifested in the political manipulation of the political class. They disintegrate the unity of the masses for their selfish interest, which is obvious in ethnicity, religious bigots and the trend of activities on social media. The insensitivity to the pretense of Nigeria’s political leader’s manipulations on the masses, is a sustaining factor to the same old wine, in a new wine skin.

**Democratic Regimes and the Challenges of Sustainable Leadership**

The search for sustainable leadership and democracy has spanned several decades, since the country's existence as an independent nation. However,
political instability, the absence of visionary and committed leaders among other challenges triggered by anti-democratic activities has led to a series of military intrigues that have continually undermined the establishment of a stable democracy and the realization of sustainable leadership. Nigeria's history of democratization started in the terminal colonial period, partly as a result of nationalist activity. The independence on 1st October, 1960 marked a significant milestone for Nigeria's civilian rule in 1960, with democratic institutions based on the parliamentary system of the British West Minister. The British colonialist left the young nation for independence, and the subsequent Nigerian government had trouble tackling the issue of unbalanced federalism, regionalism, sectionalism and separation of the people from the governing institution and the main state apparatus. The new political leaders had a responsibility not only to institutionalize the democratic process, but to also establish a political culture that would underpin the inherited institutions.

Nigeria’s high hopes have emerged as a productive and wide area for the development of Africa’s democracy. Elaigwu (2011) maintains that by 1965, however, it had become very clear that the ballot box and the future plebiscetarian system had become very grim. A number of factors, according to him, have given these indications to the system; they include: breaking down the rules of the political game that contaminated the political stadium profusely (and in the absence of any means of political ventilation) made politics as unsafe for both players and spectators. Misappropriation of public funds, unwise political and economic decisions in the allocation of scarce but allocable resources, gross misuse of political power, and widespread corruption among public officials; support the erosion of the rights of individuals, support the disenfranchisement of the Nigerian people by the glaring rigging of elections; support conspicuous political consumption in the midst of the abject poverty of the masses; and support excessively powerful regional governments which endangered the relatively pathetic federal center which according to Elaigwu (2011) is the first attempt to use the ballot box, was punctuated by a crisis in 1965.

Although Nigeria appears to have broken free from the powerful and pernicious grasp of military dictatorship, there is still a democratic procedure that could produce the desired democratic dividend (Galadima, 2000). Retrospectively, the constitutional quest that began with the experiment of the First and Second Republics of 1960-66 and 1979-83 was rather disappointing as a result of the winning approach to governance, intense ethnic and sectional self-interest, political intolerance and violence, massive electoral fraud and the failure of the political class to forge consensus on critical and national issues. Nigeria's history from the first republic to the present as argued by Anger (2011) has shown the recurrence of events that has led to the reshuffling of the political class through the vehicle of political parties. Omotola (2009) succinctly stated, that despite all pretences to the contrary through their manifestoes, as much as the superficial classifications as the “left” and “right”, “progressive” and “conservative”, Nigerian political parties seem to be bereft
of clear ideological commitments. He argued this based on the observed relegation of politics of issues (replaced with the ascendancy of identity and money politics) seen across the various democratic regimes.

This discourse has identified the four variables of party politics (defection, godfatherism, politics off zoning and electoral fraud) which have found expression in the Nigerian democracy over the various regime and hindered sustainable leadership for decades:

**Defections**
Defection constitutes an impediment to political representation and sustainable leadership in any political sphere. Defection is described by Omotal (2009) as the movement of a member of party A into party B. Defection could not be said to be political crime as it is not a Nigerian issue. But the Nigeria issue here is that while in countries like USA (United States of America) and Britain where defection also can occur, it seldomly does because of their commitment to their political ideology. But in Nigeria, it has become part of the political process, where somebody who failed in a party's primary election is expected to be "politically wise" by defecting to another party to find expression. The question is: are we defending the ideology of the party or personal interest? That question seems to have been answered by Ereton (2009) who argued that the deficiency of ideological commitment and penchant for opportunism have been a feature common among Nigeria politicians.

Considering a political system and setting that is characterized in “a winner-takes-all”, opposition is an island of frustration and anger, and a situation of desperation that has led many to join them since they can't beat them (Kawu, 1999). These situation has led to lack of political representation in Nigeria, such that when a powerful political heavy weight defects to another political party, the consequence is that he/she robs the people who voted him in the first place of representation. In this paper therefore, we submit that, to quench the menace of defections, electoral reforms should look at a possible resignation of the defector from their elective positions before doing so, in order to check the opportunism of defectors.

**Godfatherism**
The politics of godfatherism has been one of the factors impeding political representation and sustainable leadership and development in the Nigeria political spheres. Godfatherism as expressed by Omotala (2009) is when a godfather (one with political and financial means) find ways of installing his godson(s) (one without political or financial means who will answer to the godfathers wishes). In agreement with Omodia (2007), Egwemi (2009a) argued that the presence and practice of godfatherism in a political sphere could hinder free choice of leaders and misrepresentation of the citizens. This is because; the godfathers have a lot of resources that can be applied to impose their will on
the people. Ayoade (2006) observed that the godfathers are people with anti-social behavior, political connections, security, and money or access to money, which give them the feeling that they are above the law and so becomes daring and unrestrained.

**Politics of Zoning**

The politics of zoning is also seen here as one of the variables that has been responsible for the lack of political representation in Nigeria. Politics of zoning is the rotation of offices along the lines of ethnic divide, political bloc, religious affiliation and any characterization that is acceptable within the political spheres. The heterogeneous nature of Nigeria makes zoning seem good enough to give every zone a sense of belonging, and bring about some level of socio-political stability. However, it is argued here that zoning by geopolitical cluster or any other criteria is discriminatory, it further distorts the zoning arrangement and thereby deprive the people of proper representation as the peoples mandate and choice is deprived.

The multiplicity of the geographical contexts of Nigeria political spheres which made zoning an option can be traced to the inception and assumption of Nigeria as an independent State. The concept of zoning has become a full blown structure in the political system of Nigeria, which is marked by adopting a sharing formula for major elective and appointive offices using whichever criteria as may be deemed necessary. The crisis of zoning up till date has remained intense and it has continued to constitute a veritable threat to the country's democratic project and sustainable leadership. Yet, the gladiators keep changing their skin and take sides for selfish interest, some for and others against the zoning formula. Howbeit, the interest of Nigerian voters still remains relegated to the background (Anas, 2010; Akintunde, 2010; Musa, 2010; Okpara, 2010; Olaosebikan, 2010; Oguntola, 2010; Shobayo, 2010; Yakassai, 2010).

**Electoral Fraud**

Fraudulent electoral practices have been blamed as one of the major obstacle to political representation in Nigeria. In fact, since the inception of the electoral processes, there has been a continuous deficit in representation. This led to a major crisis of legitimacy in the process of electing political officers which have continued to plaque the country (Omodia, 2009). The inability of the political parties to comply with the rules of the game have further continued to compound and sustains the occurrence of electoral fraud in the Nigerian democratic process. This was more evident in all the dispensations across political parties. This is usually manifested by an unholy alliance between political parties, security agencies and the electoral management body (Ibrahim and Egwu, 2005; 2005b; TMG, 2007; NUD, 2007). It would be argued conclusively, that it is not a matter of the party name, but the people that make up the party. The same cabal who has controlled the fraud in a particular party, when their interests are not well covered, with a better promise in another
political platform, they may move to exercise their enterprise in a new political party.

**Concluding Remarks**

Clearly, democracy transcends the establishment and fusion of political parties, general elections, political office struggle and democratic government/leadership in control. It is a process that involves the active involvement of citizens in the determination of strategies and decisions that affect their daily lives at all levels. It involves the government's responsiveness to the aspiration and needs of its citizens. The nation should focus its capacity on providing platforms for dialogue, consultation and mobilization.

The paper argued that in the area of progress and peaceful coexistence of Nigerians, previous governments failed because they did not imbibe democratic values in coping with state issues and refused to follow the concept of true fiscal federalism. Therefore, because democracy and good governance are catalysts for progress, it follows that, in order to guarantee the future of the Nigerian state, the government must imbibe democratic values without political thuggery and assassinations, emphasize the involvement of all citizens in decision-making, free press, fundamental human rights, an impartial judiciary, the rule of law, curbing of corruption, and avoidance of all antidemocratic vices in the handling of state issues and application of the principle of true fiscal federalism.

Democracy vis-à-vis good governance includes all stakeholders, especially, in managing economic and political power in a way that strengthens one's confidence and commitment to the corporate reality of the country. This will undoubtedly expunge "economic godfathers" from the control of state powers. In order for Nigeria to get its democracy right and ensure that the democratic dividends reach the majority of its citizens, it needs to ensure and prioritize good governance in the nation such that will improve our democratic sustainability. The paper assumes that, unless visionless political formations and political formations and political party ideologies are deconstructed and pruned, combating corruption and deliberate leadership action for sustainable development which every nation of the 21st century yearns for will continue to elude Nigeria.

**References**


