

Nigerian Election: A Democratic Truce or a Political Conundrum?

Today March 01, 2015 mark another strange but yet promising phenomenon in Africa's democratic process after independence. The supposedly "biggest democracy" in the continent has stunned the international community with little or no opposition from usually disgruntled mobs after the incumbent Goodluck Jonathan was defeated in a landslide victory by the leader of the All Progressive Congress (APC) Party Mr. Muhammadu Buhari; a born-again democrat whose military regime at the helm of Nigerian Presidency lasted for 20 Months and he was subsequently jailed. Unlike previous elections in the country wherein supporters usually storm the streets in anguish as was seen in the 2011 elections that resulted to the death of about 800 people¹, this election turns out to be a happy accident in the country's election history as the country jubilates over the victory of their new president while for the first time in the country's turbulent election records an incumbent called his rival to congratulate him for election victory.

The outcome of this election is obvious, however, it is too early to predict how the coming days or months will play out in this highly contested election that was postponed.

Multiparty elections in the continent have not always been a pleasant experience as was in Kenya after the 2007 elections; Ivory Coast in 2011; Senegal and in October 2014, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso tried to amend the constitution to prolong his 27-year presidential rule but he was chased out by thousands of people who took to the streets and stormed parliament forcing him to flee.

Buhari is now 72 years as he prepares to lead a country that has for decades grappled with corruption, electricity shortages and economic growth as its main challenges. The first democratic election for instance wherein another former military leader Mr. Olusengun Obasanjo's government was hailed with euphoria for "Change" in early 2000, but it turns out that the level and extent of corruption during his term of office was alarming; his daughter Iyabo (a former senator) in April 2008, came under investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over a bribery allegation involving the Ministry of Health and

¹The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/18/nigerian-election-marred-by-violence>, [01 March 2015].

the Senate Committee on Health which she chaired. She is being charged for corruption allegations.²

One party rule has dominated most of the so called "democratic regimes" in Africa; this ubiquitous scenario is very much alive in the continent for instance, South Africa - African National Congress (ANC) for 21 years; Cameroon - Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) for 30 years; Zimbabwe - The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) for 28 years; Equatorial Guinea - Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea for 28 years; Ethiopia - Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement for 33 years; Rwanda - Rwandan Patriotic Front for 28 years; Sudan - the National Congress Party for 17 years and Nigeria - People Democratic Party (PDP) for 16 years. This chauvinistic adherence to partisan democracy is the *modus operandi* in Sub - Saharan Africa that seems to be for eternity.

A new chapter has open today in Nigerian politics and hopefully the others in the continent will toe the line. For Mr. Buhari, the task ahead of him is greater than the victory in this election. What Nigerians need is a time laden strategy to tackle the challenges that await them; this will require concerted efforts from all Nigerians, the government has to engaged in robust planning that is horizontally inclusive of all Nigerians so that the country's oil revenue and other resources is equitably spread out to benefit all citizens. This means the government has to engaged in sincere dialogue with the people especially local communities which all too often are left in the cold. For those placed in positions of responsibility, they should be accountable to the populace; this approach I want to believe may be one way out of the puzzle that Nigerians are hopefully looking for the new government to deliver.

² Leadership, <http://leadership.ng/news/391995/corruption-senate-reps-reply-obasanjo>, [01 March 2015].