

Power Rotation and Crisis of Political Succession in Nigeria

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Abstract

The quest for a political system that will guarantee stability and national development and serve as a panacea to Nigeria's political succession crisis has remained elusive. This study seeks to find a political framework that constitutionally shares power among the diverse regional and ethnic groupings and promote mutual trust and national integration in Nigeria. Empirical evidence was applied in the discussion to interrogate the thesis that the non-entrenchment of the rotation of power in the constitution encourages political succession crisis. The study used documentary method for data collection from secondary sources, and applied content analysis for data analysis. Among the key findings of the study were that the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power encourages crisis of political succession and undermines national development. It therefore recommends that there is urgent need for constitutional provision for rotation of power to all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria in order to assuage the fears of domination and marginalization, reduce the hostile contest for power among the component units and ensure national development.

Keywords: Power rotation, Political succession, Crisis, National Integration, Nigeria.

Introduction

Globally, the challenge of leadership and transition of power have remained of critical importance to the stability of any country. This is so because man, being a "political animal" is always conscious of who leads him and how he is led. The problem of leadership is also central because every society has its own history and ethnological realities. The framework for political organization suitable for homogeneous (non-multi-ethnic) societies may not adequately suit multi religious, multi lingual and multi ethnic ones. Also, different homogeneous and heterogeneous societies may not adopt the same political systems due to their historical and ethnological antecedents.

Post-independence African countries are bedevilled by corruption, political, ethnic and religious crises as a result of their failure to evolve autochthonous political leadership styles which suit the multi-ethnic and cultural realities of the states. These have led to the hitherto military coups, dictatorships, political and economic crisis,

electoral violence, secession struggles, and most recently, succession crisis and many other impediments that have continued to haunt African countries' national integration and development. The sub-Sahara Africa is worse hit by these plagues as they continued with their colonizers'-imposed systems of administrative, economic conveniences and negligence of the peoples' interest after independence. Some of the post-colonial states like Nigeria, Ghana, Congo Democratic Republic, and host of others that dropped the colonial-imposed political systems failed to evolve political leadership approaches that reflect the multi-ethnic societies that comprised the new states, as the post-colonial leaders rather adopted or 'borrowed' foreign political systems that not only served their interests but aggravated the already sown seed of ethnicity and religious cleavages in the emerging states.

As if the precursor was not worse enough, the new states were forcefully taken over in quick succession by the military with the promise and pretence of correcting the ills of the foremost political elites. The soldiers rather changed from the promised correction agenda to looting of the already ailing economy. The situation politicized the military, created billionaire military officers, and deepened corruption and ethnic identity; widened the gap between the political class and the masses, and the rich and poor. The military imposed-authoritarian rule intimidated the people and took back their psyche to the colonial era of repression with no option of agitating for political arrangement that is best suitable for them. Thus, bequeathing the legacy of corruption, ethnic politics, military imposed constitution, sit-tight or tenure-elongation and above all, weak political institutions that could not guarantee fair and peaceful succession of power that can ensure stable system. The above scenarios have remained the bane of Nigerian politics as the country can be described as a laboratory of African politics. In other words, Nigeria showcases all the features of the political nuances of the continent.

As a product of British colonial manipulations, the historical background and development of Nigeria started with the colonialist's vested interest in the control and administration of the "Niger area" from 1900, ceding and merging of Lagos, Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 by Sir Fredrick Lugard; and the subsequent division into three unequal regions by the Clifford constitution of 1922 (Onwubiko, 1973, p.253). This structural imbalance of the Nigerian state by the British coupled with the Northern favoured fraudulent and crisis-ridden 1953 and 1963 censuses made one

section of the country, precisely, the North to believe that not only the leadership of the highest position in the country, but also strategic positions in most sensitive federal ministries and parastatals are their exclusive or birth rights. This has created the problem of political succession and the inherent crises in Nigeria.

It is as well identified that the origin or greatest source of Nigeria's political problem is the colonial legacy of 1914 to 1946, namely, the arbitrary amalgamation of the diverse ethnic groups into a single entity called "Nigeria" and the regionalism policy of 1946 which divided the country into three unequal regions, deliberately giving the North more land mass and population over the South combined. The ethnic and regional political parties of the first republic were used by the post-colonial political elites to serve their ethnic and regional interests. The military continued pattern of authoritarian rule from 1966 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1999, a system which concentrates power at the centre with weak and largely economically insolvent states. The problem of over-value of power that is largely concentrated in the centre, particularly in the office of the President that is perceived and assumed to be a divine right or preserve of a class of northern elites.

Nigeria is one large "polygamous" setting whose fratricidal feuds over the years provide useful lessons for those who care to learn from history. The major feuds in the Nigerian polity since independence in 1960 have been mainly over leadership. Out of 61 years (1960-2021) of Nigeria's political independence, the North has ruled the country for 44 years while the South has done same for 17 years, mainly by mere accident of history, as the two Southerners, Obasanjo in 1978 and Jonathan in 2010, emerged accidentally as heads of Nigerian Government owing to the death of the Northern heads - Murtala Mohammed and Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, whom they deputized, Ezeani (2018). It is as a result of this that Nigeria's political leadership has been bedeviled by crises and subsequent general call for consensus power rotation to different regions of the country.

The basic realities are that the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural Nigeria has tremendous influence on the political philosophy, democracy and political life of the people, (Falola, 1998, p.7). Agudiegwu and Ezeani (2015) observe that there seem to be a contradiction between the expressed desire for one Nigeria and the practice of ethnic politics in Nigeria, as too much consciousness of ethnic identity also explains the centrifugal tendencies. A sense of mutual mistrust and suspicion rules the life of the country's different ethnic groups and power sharing generally. This has degenerated to a

situation where Nigeria presently only exists in the mouth but not in the conscience of the citizens. It is for these reasons, among others that therefore necessitate the dire need for a power rotation that may suit the heterogeneous realities of the country and ensure peaceful political succession and national development. Hence, the objective of the study is to establish the link between absence of constitutional rotation of power and political succession crisis and how it undermines national integration and development in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to establish if the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power accounts for political succession crisis in Nigeria.

In respect of this, it is pertinent to determine a political power rotation formula that will dispel continuous domination of political power by one section, and more importantly, guarantee peaceful rotation of power and discourage persistent power succession crisis which is the thrust of this study.

Efforts have been made by different scholars and analysts to explain the link between constitutional rotation of power and political stability in Nigeria. Hence, Akinlola, (1996), (2010); Adamolekun, (1996); Achime, (1986); Obasi, (2013); Eresia-Eke and Eberiyé, (2010); Okwenna, (2011); and Bello, (2017) agreed that power rotation is traditionally and internationally accepted norm and convention that offer solution to leadership problems and ensure stability of nations and organisations. On the other hand, Nwosu and Ugwuera, (2014); Ambali and Mohammed, (2016); Odunze, (2012); Orji, (2008); Haruna, (2010); Kuka, (2012); Nwabueze, (2013); and Odetunde, (2006) contend that power rotation breeds bias and corruption; and blame its agitation on greed of some political stakeholders and lack of democratic maturity. In all, while some of the scholarly debates on constitutional rotation of power and political succession crises in Nigeria view it as a panacea to leadership and stability problems, others argued that it is undemocratic and instigated by bias and greed; however, they failed to address the constitutional rotation of power and succession crises in Nigeria and how it affects national integration and development.

Against this background, this study attempts to analyse the link between the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power and political succession crises in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study will attempt to provide answers to the following research question: Does the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power account for political succession crises in Nigeria?

Assumption of the Study: Pursuant to the aforementioned objectives, the study makes the understated assumption:

i. The absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power accounts for political succession crises in Nigeria.

Methodological Approach: This study adopted the *time series* research design in studying the political trends; using the qualitative approach, it applied the documentary method of data collection. The secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, conference papers, internet materials; official documents from the Political Bureau and National Constitutional Conference among others. Data collated were analysed using content analysis and systematic logical induction.

Perspectives on Power Rotation and Political Succession Crisis

The concept of constitutional rotation of power and crises of succession in Nigeria has received the attention of different scholars and a sizeable volume of literature that attempts an explanation in diverse ways exists.

Akinlola (1996, 2010) avers that the major source of bad blood in the Nigerian polity since independence in 1960 has been mainly over leadership. He contends that the arrangement by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to rotate the presidency in Nigeria is an acceptance that in the course of our existence as an independent nation, Nigerians have understood the enormity of the leadership question as indeed a disturbing national problem which rotation provides a practical solution to it. According to him, the rotation principle of the PDP appears to have reduced the fear of "ethnic hegemony". He however laments that the principle is yet to be entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution where its "nitty gritty" and usefulness to survive the test of time can be spelt out. He emphasized that "the success of the American constitution is the acknowledgement by America's founding fathers that the problem of cleavage can only be resolved by addressing it" (Akinola, 2010, p.15). He also observed that Switzerland which has cleavage problems quite similar to Nigeria's operates a system of "collective presidency" in which president is rotated annually has remained one of the world's most democratic and stable nations; emphasizing that our corrupt politicians find the country safest place for their stolen monies because it enjoys such stability. He opines that the message of his essays, "*The Zonist Papers*", is that Nigeria must seek its own democracy through zoning the presidency in rotation, because it is the system which addresses the ethnological realities of the Nigerian state. He specifically declares:

There is no single model of democracy. Ranging from French presidential/parliamentarism to Swiss collective presidency, the countries of Europe operate a variety of political systems which conform to the characteristics of the individual countries. Even the most advanced democracies of the world, America and Britain, operate different political systems and employ different approaches in electing their national leaders (Akinola, 1996, p.71).

Also, in his forward to the book *Rotational Presidency*, Ademolekun (1996) attempted to proffer solution to the leadership question when he argued that “as one dimension of the political leadership; the idea of rotational presidency is specifically concerned with tackling the political leadership problem in Nigeria” (Ademolekun, in Akinola, 1996, p. xi). He agrees with the view that rotational presidency constitute a way of overcoming the cleavages of ethnicity, regionalism and religion, such that each of Nigeria’s component units is provided the opportunity to produce the president of the nation.

However, Haruna (2010) differs with the above scholarly contributions. He argues that Nigeria do not need leadership by rotation but the kind of leaderships that shows a demonstrable patriotism, transparency in their behaviours, and accountability in their actions. According to the writer, where the leader comes from does not matter. What Nigerians need are leaders who use their powers judiciously for the good of the entire society. He maintains that rotation of power is part of a bourgeois solution to sustain themselves in power and in a way attempting to deceive the masses. He noted that all the major crises in the country did not originate from the question of where the leaders come from, but have been occasioned by the conflicts of interest evident in the quest for capital accumulation among the ruling bourgeois class whose interests are decisive and deceitful, and has nothing to do with ethnic group.

In the same vein, the agitators of rotation of power citing Switzerland as an example were criticized by Odunze (2012), according to him, the rule of law and checks and balances which are hardly respected in Nigeria, are some basic principles that make rotational presidency thrive there. He also argues that the prevailing belief in Nigeria that government offers an opportunity to amass wealth is not the same in Switzerland. Tracing the statistical occupation of the presidency in Nigeria since independence, he rhetorically asked whether “the 36 out of 53 years the North had occupied the highest office in Nigeria has transformed the lives of its people in relation to poverty reduction,

employment opportunity and better social services” Odunze, 2012, p.18). He maintains that in contrary, the Northern region earned zero; rather, it harbours more beggars, destitute, reservoir of criminals, unemployed youths, infrastructural decay and underdevelopment. Comparatively, he insists that what drives citizens’ support and power struggles in developed countries like the United States and Britain, are not based on perceived personal gains, as obtained in Nigeria, but on principles and ideologies. In his words:

Citizens strive independently from the government as much as possible and their potential has comparatively remained the same regardless of who occupies the presidency. In drawing a comparison between Nigeria and the US, the later is equally heterogeneous.... Yet, cleavages have not taken centre-stage in the US politics.... It is clear that what drives the power struggle in Nigeria is greed (Odunze, 2012, cited in Ambali and Mohammed, 2016, p.7).

Achime on the other hand (1986) opines that rotational presidential system is a viable option for Nigeria’s future political system. He sees it as a system that attempts to postulate a political ideology that will dispel the fear of ethnic domination in the country. He equally argues that it will ensure that the administration of the country is not the divine right or preserve of any particular region, section or ethnic group; and “minimize the problem of political alienation which has characterized our political past” (Achime, 1986, p.215). He recommended rotational presidency as a viable option for Nigeria’s future political stability.

Equally, Obasi (2013) argues that rotational presidency in Nigeria will offer a lasting solution to the lopsided political leadership as it will ensure even development of Nigeria by encouraging integrity, accountability, transparency, equity and fairness in the political leadership. He likened rotational presidency to a table fan that oscillates and gets to everybody in a room and by so provides a lasting solution to the ethnic hegemony as the person in power from whatever ethnic group will like to see Nigeria as his/her constituency by impacting on every nook and cranny of the entire country. He also maintains that it will change the mindsets of some section of the country who believe that they are born to rule, while others are born to follow, to hold their peace when they see people from other ethnic groups on the throne.

According to Eresia-Eke and Eberiyé (2010), rotational presidency will resolved the problems of political leadership and encourage the practice of federalism in Nigeria

in a way that would enhance education, socio-economic, and political development, justice, equity and fairness for each of its component parts. They argue that the system holds solution to building of lasting democratic institutions and structures of power that would produce an effective cross cutting of political parties and a political leadership legitimated by the willing consent of the people. They equally opined that it will be a catalyst for political, economic and social re-engineering of Nigeria federalism.

However, Nwosu and Ugwuera (2014) examine whether rotation of Presidency has contributed towards reducing political corruption in Nigeria between 1999 and 2010. They observed that political corruption was not reduced by the hitherto consensus rotation of Presidency since 1999. They therefore contend that political corruption was at its highest level during the two regimes and argued that Nigeria's democracy especially the one that commenced from May 29, 1999 was born with persistent political corruption. They insisted that rotation is not the solution to political corruption in Nigeria but strengthening the anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to do their jobs without fear or favour, while people of proven integrity should always be appointed to head the affairs of these commissions, without any form of interference from the government of the day (Nwosu & Ugwuera, 2014, pp.50-51).

In the same vein, Ambali and Mohammed (2016) maintain that rotational presidency has challenges to the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria because the country is highly pluralized and an ethnically heterogeneous society, typified by competition for national resources and public or political offices. They observed that the aphorism "is born out of elite struggle for share of national cake via capturing power at the centre where primitive accumulation takes place." They also opine that power rotation is not democratic and dismissed the claim by some stakeholders that why there is intense struggles for power is because it is not "rotated between the South and the North or among the six geo-political zones; and that rotational presidency offers the only possibility for peaceful existence in Nigeria" According to them, rotational presidency breeds mediocrity, and even if every region has capable hands that can lead Nigeria, each president will be biased towards specific ethnic groups in giving key appointment because Nigerian politics is characterised by "winner-takes-all" (Ambali & Mohammed, 2016, p.15).

While making proposal for the entrenchment of rotation of presidential position in Nigeria, Nwobu (2010) observes that rotation of power particularly that of the president is no longer a new idea all over the world as many heterogeneous nations and institutions practice various types of it. Specifically, he explained that Switzerland and the European Union which have diverse ethnic groups and multi member states practice rotation of presidents among their ethnic groups and member nations respectively. He particularly notes that the rotation of presidential position in Switzerland where the German ethnic group constitutes 65% of the population which is an absolute majority capable of perpetual domination of political power, yet allow the rotational system that compromise and accommodate the ethnic minority groups is quite notable. He emphasizes that Switzerland and the European Union are outstanding example adherents of principles of rotation along ethnic and national directions; and has as a result remained one of the most peaceful, prosperous and stable democratic state, while the European Union has as well remained one of the most purposeful, functional and successful institutions in the world, which are premeditated to suit uniqueness of their geo-political existence.

The writer further proposes that Nigeria like other heterogeneous countries around the world should resolve her nationhood challenges by evolving a well thought-out rotational model that can sustain peaceful rotation of power and succession; through two options of constitutional review. These he insists should be achieved through rotation of power along the six geo political zone structure that will alternate between the North and South in alphabetical order of six (6) years single term or eight (8) years double term. This will compel all the political parties to produce their candidates from one zone that has the turn; and in an event of a president not finishing his/her tenure through death, impeachment or incapacitation, the same zone of the reigning president shall produce another president that will serve out the remaining tenure even if another party wins the in-between election.

Okwenna, (2011) argues that the rotation principle on basis of zones would also strengthen loyalty to the nation because it would guarantee access to the highest offices of the land to all sections of the polity if power is allowed to systematically rotate among the various zones; the political space will not only widen, the process will definitely throw out some capable leaders who can transform the country and bring it to greater heights.

In his contention, Bello (2017) opined that it is a long-established tradition in Nigeria that most traditional institutions like the selection of EMIRS, OBI's and OBA's employ rotation among ruling houses as a means of power sharing. He equally observed that rotation is recognized even at international level by developed economies, hence, the United Nations rotate the office of Secretary General among the five continents of Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceanic/Australia. He therefore suggested that Nigeria should embrace an 'administrative restructuring' that will allow executive posts at Federal, State and LGA levels to be rotated among component units in line with what is obtained in most of our traditional geo-political institutions. He maintained that presidency of the country should be rotated in a two-dimensional axis, between north and south, which must thereafter rotate among the 3 geopolitical zones in the north and the south. Governorship position should be rotated among the three senatorial districts in each state, "with the condition that if the reigning governor/president dies or is impeached, he or she can only be replaced by someone from the same zone whose turn it is to produce the chief executive". He further enthused thus:

This is to prevent the temptation of vice Presidents or Deputy Governors planning the death or impeachment of their bosses knowing that the post will automatically revert to them. This can be a purely administrative restructuring embedded in the Electoral Act. A situation in which a dominant tribe in a state perpetually produces the state governor as a birth right will breed discontent, internal sabotage, low productivity and lack of commitment. Rotation will therefore ensure equity, justice and fair play. Also, rotation will put an end to 80% of agitation for state creation in Nigeria (Bello, 2017, p.13).

Conversely, Orji (2008) condemned the agitation for rotation of power. According to him, "it only emphasizes the differences among Nigerians and attests to the fact that State is the only major source of primitive capital accumulation" (Orji, 2008, p.9). He maintains that it is an informal arrangement devised by Nigerian elites in the course of their informal political exchanges as a result of the inordinate interests of the elites for power, which is a remarkable trait of Nigerian politicians. He argues that it will be futile to believe that the system will stabilize Nigeria, but rather; create ethnic heroes who will take pride in taking the larger part of the national loot back to their regions" (Orji, 2008, p.10). In his view, what is needed for Nigeria's democratic stability is not rotational

presidency, but leadership that will be transparent, accountable, respect the rule of law and other fundamentals of good governance.

Examining the impact of occupation of presidential position by different regions, Kukah, (2012) and Nwabueze (2013) viewed rotation of power from psychological perspective, both observed that, getting the presidency will not actually change the living conditions of any of the regions or ethnic group “beyond the psychological feeling that their ethnic group is in power” (Kukah, 2012, p.33). Similarly, Nwabueze, in arguing the case of rotational presidency, contended that it was for psychological reasons that groups want the presidency for themselves. “It is not because of their roads that need to be repaired, or hospitals that needs to be built. It is about their emotions, sentiments and feelings” (Nwabueze, 2013, p.1). Consequently, they agreed that the problem is in the inter-class conflict among the bourgeois for control of state power, and not in the regional or ethnic origin of the president.

Arguing in the same direction, Odetunde (2006) believes that it is the lack of maturity of Nigeria’s democracy that warrants people to agitate for zoning of political offices as a means of resolving our political predicaments, which according to him is undemocratic. He opines that democracy is essentially an uncomplicated system that when strictly adhered to makes an otherwise complicated political arrangement simple. Similarly, he argued that rotational presidency is undemocratic and has no basis and relevance in governance. He gave analogy to Obasanjo’s civilian regime that was supposed to represent the South West region while the South West people did not vote for him in any of the elections that produced him as president. He also claimed that Obasanjo represented the military, the Northern oligarchy and his friends that put him in office, but not the South West as was believed. However, the writer contradicted himself by accepting that:

Our president is a demi-god in our zone-based democratic presidency; while our legislators do not know their responsibilities because they are more interested in “Ghana-must-Go” bags than representing their constituencies, if they think they have one. Our judiciary is easily bought because they are not independent of the executive and their livelihood depends on the dictates of the “god.” The citizens see themselves as servants of politicians rather than the other way round. Unfortunately, our journalists are yellow-belly journalists that will allow themselves to be bribed in order to write positively about a well-known devil (Odetunde, 2006, p.3).

Olaniyi, and Umar (2014), identified that one of the problems facing Nigeria from 1960 to date is leadership succession. They argue that Nigeria's succession process was characterized by series of political assassinations, riots and election rigging; and blamed political elites who are more interested in the benefits attached to the political offices and refuse to play the game of politics according to the rules that guide the conduct of election as the cause of the tension in leadership succession in the country. In his assessment, Ojo, (2007) sees orderly succession of political power from a group to another as determinant of the level of state maturity, and as a measurement of both the consolidation and the quality of democracy in a polity.

As Baffour (2003), rightly observes "Orderly political succession through the ballot box and peaceful alternation of power are the hallmarks of effective democratization." He opines that for democracy and good governance to be sustained in Africa, there is the need for strategic thinking on succession management from the political, corporate, traditional and social perspectives. Diamond (2004), agreed with Baffour, as he insists that "orderly successions are democratic if the basic standards of free, fair, participatory, competitive and legitimate elections are met" (Diamond 2004, cited in Olaniyi & Umar, 2014, p.49).

In the same vein, Bratton and Posner (1999) agree that elections offer the best means of orderly leadership succession in a liberal democracy and also make government responsible and responsive to political developments. They argue that failure of government to provide the environment for peaceful transition encourage the citizens to engage in electoral violence.

In setting out the requirements for an orderly succession, Mackeaze (1958) argues that orderly transition of power requires competitive electoral system that is characterized by; a well-developed system of political parties organized to put their policies and teams of candidates before the electorate; an honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections; a general acceptance by the political community of certain rather vague rules of the game, which limit the struggle for power, independent judiciary to interpret the electoral law (Mackeaze, 1958, cited in Olaniyi & Umar, 2014, p. 51).

Iyayi, (2007), Omotola, (2007) Egbokare (2007) are of the same view that a culture of electoral violence and warfare in Nigeria are on the increase since inception of

democracy in 1999, as the governments in power and politicians have taken over the rigging of elections from political thugs. They ensure that all conducted elections are fraught with tension and controversy before, during and after elections. Usually aided by security agents, they personally participated in snatching ballot boxes, thumb printing, and disruption of voting while the police usually provided cover.

Knowledge Gap in the literature

Although the divergent views of the scholars cited above are quite apt, analytic and convincing, they failed to intellectualize that the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power accounts for crises of political leadership succession and undermines national integration in Nigeria. Besides, those who contend that rotation of power is not the solution to Nigeria's political and socio-economic problems equally failed to recognize that Nigeria's problem is fundamental - ethnic and religious heterogeneity; and as such, the remedy should be to fundamentally agree on constitutional rotation of power as solution to the perennial crises of leadership succession which hinders national integration. Again, while most of the scholars were particular on rotation of presidential position, none made conscious effort to interrogate whether the absence of constitutional provision for rotation of power in the constitution accounts for leadership succession crises in Nigeria. This gap therefore underscores the need to interrogate the link between the absence of constitutional rotation of power and the perennial leadership succession crises in Nigeria.

Evidence of Succession Crises in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Nigeria has witnessed many succession crises since she returned to democratic rule in 1999. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which came into power in 1999 entrenched rotation of power in her constitution. The zoning arrangement was premeditated by the party for smooth leadership succession at beginning of the fourth republic to cater for the interest of both majority and minority ethnic groups in the country. However, the beneficiaries (politicians) of this political arrangement refused to abide by the zoning rules as entrenched in the party's constitution. For instance, former President Obasanjo attempted to change the Nigeria's constitutional provisions so as to have his way for a third term in office in 2007. This created tension before and after 2007 general elections

to the extent that those who opposed his (Obasanjo) decision were made victims of harassment from the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC).

The palpable tension before the 2011 presidential elections of President Jonathan that culminated in post-election crises was the result of the discarding of the zoning principle of the PDP by the president and his supporters. This generated a lot of debate and litigation as the president and his loyalists argued that Nigerians should opt for competence and merit instead of sectional leadership which the zoning is assuming to present. Others argued that zoning negates both constitutional and fundamental human rights of President Jonathan to exercise his franchise irrespective of his ethnic origin. The outcome of the abandonment of zoning was the rejection of 2011 elections results by the opposition which eventually led to post election violence and loss of many lives in some part of the country.

The main reason why PDP lost power to the opposition party in the 2015 election was her failure to abide by the rotation principle. The party divided against itself as five governors of the PDP who were in support of zoning decamped to the opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) with their followers. This created tension before the election as both sides saw the capture of state power to be a matter of life and death. It did not only cost the PDP to lose power but also cost the Nigerian state stability and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be observed from our discussion that the non inclusion of rotation of power in the Nigerian constitution and poor adherence to the principle of rotation by political parties have not only continued to be a big challenge to smooth transfer of power by encouraging succession crises, but also has immensely contributed to political violence, instability and poor development of Nigeria.

It is therefore recommended that rotation of power among the six geopolitical zones at the federal and the three senatorial zones of the states be entrenched in the constitution of Nigeria to ensure peaceful transition of power, social economic stability and national integration.

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