THE DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND PARTY SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper examines the relationship between electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria, a country that has experienced six rounds of national and state elections since the return to democracy in 1999. It argues that Nigeria's electoral system, which is based on a first-past-the-post (FPTP) principle, has contributed to the emergence of a dominant party system at the national level and a regionalized party system at the state level. The paper also explores the implications of these party systems for democratic consolidation, political representation, and accountability in Nigeria. It suggests that while the dominant party system at the national level may provide stability and policy continuity, it also poses challenges for political pluralism, opposition viability, and electoral integrity. On the other hand, the regionalized party system at the state level may enhance subnational autonomy and diversity, but it also creates incentives for ethnic mobilization, patronage politics, and intergovernmental conflicts. The paper concludes by discussing some possible reforms that could improve the quality of Nigeria's electoral and party systems.

Keywords: Party systems, electoral systems, governance, political participation, Nigeria.

Background to the Study

Most countries in the world regard periodic and regular elections as a core attribute of democracy. In 2020, a total of 132 elections were held worldwide in presidential, legislative or local contests (International IDEA 2021). Electoral processes held under conditions that meet global and regional standards for being credible give meaning to democracy's core values of political equality and the accountability of those who govern.

The rules embodied in an electoral system are critical to how democracy is practiced in a given setting. Electoral systems are the rules in constitutions or laws that describe how votes are translated into seats, such as a typical single presidential 'seat', a member of National Assembly's seat or a Local Government Chairman as well as Ward councillor's seat. The electoral system is a strong determinant of the features of democracy, and how the game of politics is played in campaigns and mobilizations. Most importantly, electoral systems strongly affect who wins and who loses in terms of the number of 'seats won and who ultimately forms a government.

The effect of electoral systems as rules for translating votes into seats, which in turn affects how parties organize and arrange themselves in relation to one another in a party system, is highly complex and varies according to context. Understanding the various ways in which electoral systems and political party dynamics can be evaluated is critical to enhancing

electoral integrity and achieving more genuine representation, which are necessary when seeking to challenge the apathy, mistrust and skepticism felt by voters when democracy does not appear to adequately represent them or their interests (Bratton & Van de Walle, 2017).

Electoral systems are the rules and procedures that determine how votes are cast and counted, and how seats are allocated in a representative body. Electoral systems can influence various aspects of political outcomes, such as the number and diversity of parties, the representation of minorities and women, the accountability of elected officials, the quality of governance and the level of political participation. Electoral systems can also affect the degree of legitimacy and acceptance of the electoral process by the voters and the candidates (Anifowose & Babawale, 2014).

According to Anifowoshe (2014), Party systems are the patterns of interactions and competition among political parties in a given polity. Party systems can shape the nature and quality of political representation, policy-making, coalition-building and conflict management. Party systems can also reflect the social cleavages, interests and identities of the electorate, as well as the institutional constraints and incentives of the electoral system.

Nigeria has experimented with different types of electoral systems and party systems throughout its history. The first post-independence elections in 1964 were conducted under a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, which awards a seat to the candidate with the most votes in a single-member constituency. This system favored regional parties that could mobilize ethnic and religious support bases, such as the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG). The FPTP system also contributed to electoral malpractices, violence and rigging, as well as political instability and regional tensions (Horowitz, 2013).

The second republic (1979-1983) introduced a presidential system with a two-round runoff system for electing the president, and a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system for electing the National Assembly. The MMP system combines FPTP seats with proportional representation (PR) seats allocated according to party lists. The aim was to ensure a fairer representation of parties and regions, as well as to encourage a two-party system that would foster national unity and moderation. However, the MMP system also created problems of vote splitting, over-representation of some parties and regions, under-representation of others, and confusion among voters (Adebayo, 2017).

The third republic (1993) adopted a modified version of the MMP system, with a single-round plurality system for electing the president, and a parallel voting system for electing the National Assembly. The parallel voting system combines FPTP seats with PR seats allocated according to party lists in separate ballots. The intention was to simplify the electoral process and reduce vote splitting. However, the third republic was short-lived due to the annulment of the presidential election by the military regime (Joseph & Gillies, 1996).

The fourth republic (1999-present) restored the presidential system with a two-round runoff system for electing the president, and a FPTP system for electing both chambers of the National Assembly. The FPTP system was chosen to avoid the complexities and controversies

of previous electoral systems, as well as to promote accountability and responsiveness of elected officials. However, the FPTP system has also been criticized for creating a winner-takes-all mentality, marginalizing minority parties and groups, encouraging ethnic-based voting and party formation, facilitating electoral fraud and violence, and undermining democratic consolidation (Nwankwo & Ojukwu, 2015a). The fourth republic (1999-present) has experienced several phases of party system development. The initial phase (1999-2003) was marked by a dominant-party system with one hegemonic party: the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP won the presidential, legislative and gubernatorial elections in 1999 and 2003, and controlled most of the states and local governments. The PDP was able to maintain its dominance by co-opting opposition parties and politicians, exploiting its access to state resources and patronage networks, and manipulating the electoral process and institutions.

The second phase (2003-2015) witnessed the emergence of a competitive-party system with two major parties: the PDP and the All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC was formed in 2013 by a merger of four opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). The APC challenged the PDP's dominance by mobilizing popular discontent with the PDP's performance and corruption scandals, forming strategic alliances with regional and ethnic leaders, and presenting a credible alternative to the electorate. The APC won the presidential, legislative and gubernatorial elections in 2015, ending the PDP's 16-year rule at the federal level and gaining control of most of the states (Ihonvbere & Mbaku, 2013).

The third phase (2015-present) is characterized by a fluid-party system with multiple parties and factions. The party system has become more fragmented and unstable due to several factors: the defection of prominent politicians from one party to another, the emergence of new parties and coalitions, the internal crisis and factionalization within the major parties, the increasing influence of independent candidates and civil society groups, and the growing dissatisfaction and apathy among the voters. The party system is also affected by the socio-economic and security challenges facing the country, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and secessionist movements. The party system as expected has undergone further changes in the 2023 general elections recently conducted (Omotola & Orjiako 2018 and Pharm, 2023).

The electoral system and the party system are two key aspects of any democracy. They shape how citizens choose their representatives and how political parties compete for power. They also influence the quality and stability of democratic governance, as well as the representation and participation of different groups and interests in the political process. As the electoral system can have significant effects on the representation of different groups and interests, the accountability of elected officials, the stability of the political system, and the legitimacy of the electoral process so also the party system can influence the degree of political pluralism and competition, the formation of government coalitions and oppositions, the responsiveness of public policies to societal demands, and the cohesion and effectiveness of governance. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the dynamics and implications of electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Today, there is much debate about the problems of elections and in particular how electoral systems affect turnout. Electoral systems and party systems are important factors in how democracy works in any given country or context where elections are held. Studies on whether populism as a type of ideology is on the rise in World democracies have also raised concerns about how electoral system choices could enable, or magnify the influence of, illiberal nationalist leaders and parties that seek to undermine human rights (Norris 2017). Some analyses of populism argue that political actors from both sides of the ideological divide use the features of electoral democracy in anti-democratic ways (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Mudde 2013). Thus, to understand the phenomenon of populism, it is more important than ever to understand elections and electoral systems, and how they affect political parties and the nature and quality of representation.

Nigeria is a country with a complex and diverse political landscape, where different ethnic, religious, regional and ideological interests compete for power and influence. The country has experienced several transitions from military to civilian rule and from one-party to multi-party democracy, since its independence in 1960. However, despite these changes, Nigeria still faces many challenges in consolidating its democratic institutions and processes, especially in the areas of electoral systems and party systems. Nigeria has adopted various types of electoral systems and party systems over the years, with varying degrees of success and failure. The current party system is characterized by a high degree of fragmentation and volatility, with frequent defections, mergers and splits among parties. The dominant parties are the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which have alternated in power at different levels since 1999. It is against this background that this study examines the dynamics and implications of electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the dynamics and implications of electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria, with a focus on their effects on democratic consolidation, governance performance, political participation and representation.

The specific objectives of this study are to:
i. assess how have electoral systems and party systems evolved in Nigeria since independence and how the factors have influenced their development and change;
ii. examine how the electoral systems and party systems affect the behaviour and strategies of voters, candidates, parties and elites in Nigeria as well as how do they shape the outcomes of elections and government formation;
iii. investigate how the electoral systems and party systems affect the quality and effectiveness of governance in Nigeria as well as how they influence policy-making, service delivery, accountability and corruption;
v. investigate how the electoral systems and party systems affect the legitimacy and stability of democracy in Nigeria and how they contribute to conflict resolution or escalation, consensus building or polarization, trust or distrust in institutions?

Literature Review-Concept of Electoral Systems

An electoral system is a set of rules that determines how elections and referendums are conducted and how their results are determined. Electoral systems consist of various components, such as the electoral formula, the ballot structure, the district magnitude, the threshold of representation, and the degree of proportionality. Different electoral systems have different effects on the political outcomes, such as the number and diversity of parties, the representation of minorities and women, the accountability of politicians, and the stability of government (Aiyede, 2018).

According to Falola & Heaton (2008), there are three main types of electoral systems: plurality/majority systems, proportional representation systems, and mixed systems. Plurality/majority systems are based on the principle that the candidate or party with the most votes wins, regardless of whether they have a majority of votes or not. Examples of plurality/majority systems include first-past-the-post (FPTP), alternative vote (AV), two-round system (TRS), and block vote (BV). Proportional representation systems are based on the principle that parties or candidates should receive seats in proportion to their share of votes. Examples of proportional representation systems include list proportional representation (List PR), single transferable vote (STV), and party-list proportional representation (Party-list PR). Mixed systems are based on the combination of plurality/majority and proportional representation elements, such as mixed-member proportional (MMP) and parallel voting (Lijphart, 2009 and Lijphart & Grofman, 2013).

Electoral systems are not neutral; they have advantages and disadvantages depending on the context and the criteria used to evaluate them. Some of the criteria that can be used to compare electoral systems are: simplicity, fairness, inclusiveness, accountability, responsiveness, stability, and legitimacy. There is no perfect electoral system that can satisfy all these criteria at once; therefore, choosing an electoral system involves trade-offs and compromises among different values and goals (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2016). According to Adejumobi (2007), electoral systems can also be influenced by various factors, such as historical legacy, political culture, social cleavages, party system, constitutional framework, and international norms. Electoral systems are not static; they can change over time due to various reasons, such as political reform, social mobilization, judicial intervention, or external pressure. Electoral system change can have significant consequences for the political system and society at large, such as altering the balance of power among parties and groups, enhancing or reducing political participation and representation, fostering or undermining democratic consolidation and quality. Therefore, electoral system change should be approached with caution and deliberation, taking into account the potential benefits and risks involved.

Concept of Party Systems

A party system is a term used to describe the configuration of political parties in a polity. A party system is usually classified according to the number of parties, their ideological orientation, their degree of institutionalization, and their relationship with the electoral system and the state (Aiyede, 2016). One of the most common ways to classify party systems is by the number of parties that have a realistic chance of winning power or influencing policy. A one-party system is where only one party is legally allowed to exist or effectively dominates the political arena. A two-party system is where two parties alternately win power or form

coalitions with minor parties. A multiparty system is where more than two parties compete for power and often form coalitions or alliances (Lijphart & Grofman, 2013).

Another way to classify party systems is by their ideological orientation. A party system can be homogeneous, where all parties share similar ideologies or policy preferences, or heterogeneous, where parties differ significantly in their ideologies or policy preferences. A party system can also be polarized, where parties are divided along extreme ideological lines and have little room for compromise, or moderate, where parties are closer to the center and have more room for cooperation.

A third way to classify party systems is by their degree of institutionalization. A party system can be stable, where parties have strong roots in society and enjoy high levels of legitimacy and support, or volatile, where parties have weak roots in society and suffer from low levels of legitimacy and support. A party system can also be consolidated, where parties have clear and consistent identities and programs and adhere to democratic norms and rules, or fragmented, where parties have vague and shifting identities and programs and violate democratic norms and rules.

A fourth way to classify party systems is by their relationship with the electoral system and the state. A party system can be proportional, where parties receive seats in proportion to their votes and representation is inclusive and diverse, or majoritarian, where parties receive seats based on a winner-take-all principle and representation is exclusive and concentrated. A party system can also be autonomous, where parties are independent from the state and act as checks and balances on its power, or dependent, where parties are controlled by the state and act as its instruments or extensions.

The concept of party systems is useful for understanding the dynamics of political competition and cooperation in different contexts. Party systems can affect the quality of democracy, the responsiveness of government, the accountability of politicians, the representation of interests, and the stability of regimes. Party systems can also change over time due to various factors such as social movements, economic crises, electoral reforms, institutional changes, or external influences (Lijphart, 2009).

The Evolution of Electoral systems and Party systems in Nigeria since independence: What factors have influenced their development and change?
Nigeria has used different types of electoral systems for different levels of government since independence. According to Nwankwo & Ojukwu (2015b), the main types of electoral systems are:

Majoritarian: This system requires a candidate or a party to win more than 50% of the votes to be elected. If no candidate or party achieves this threshold, a runoff election is held between the top two contenders. This system is used for presidential elections in Nigeria.

Plurality: This system requires a candidate or a party to win more votes than any other candidate or party to be elected. There is no need for a runoff election. This system is used for legislative elections in Nigeria.

Proportional: This system allocates seats to parties or candidates based on their share of the votes. This system is used for some local government elections in Nigeria.

The choice of electoral system has implications for the degree of representation, inclusiveness, accountability and competitiveness in the political system. For instance, majoritarian and plurality systems tend to favor larger parties and candidates with broad appeal, while proportional systems tend to favor smaller parties and candidates with niche support. Majoritarian and plurality systems also tend to produce single-party or two-party dominant systems, while proportional systems tend to produce multi-party or coalition systems.

The evolution of electoral systems in Nigeria has been influenced by several factors, such as:

Constitutional reforms: The constitution is the supreme law of the land that defines the structure and powers of government, as well as the rights and duties of citizens. The constitution also determines the type and design of electoral system for each level of government. Nigeria has had four constitutions since independence: the 1960 Independence Constitution, the 1979 Second Republic Constitution, the 1999 Fourth Republic Constitution, and the 2010 Amendment Constitution. Each constitution has introduced some changes to the electoral system, such as the introduction of direct popular election for the president in 1979, the introduction of proportional representation for local government elections in 1999, and the introduction of independent candidacy for all elections in 2010.

Electoral reforms: Electoral reforms are changes to the laws, rules and procedures that govern the conduct of elections. Electoral reforms aim to improve the credibility, transparency and fairness of elections, as well as to address emerging challenges and issues in the electoral process. Nigeria has witnessed several electoral reforms since independence, such as the establishment of independent electoral commissions, the introduction of electronic voting machines, the adoption of biometric voter registration, and the creation of special courts for election petitions.

Political dynamics: Political dynamics are the interactions and influences among political actors, such as parties, candidates, voters, civil society groups, media outlets, security agencies, and international observers. Political dynamics shape the outcomes and impacts of elections, as well as the demands and pressures for electoral reforms. Some examples of political dynamics that have affected electoral systems in Nigeria are:

- The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, which sparked widespread protests and led to the emergence of a pro-democracy movement that demanded a return to civilian rule (Ojo, 2009).
- The death of President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2010, which triggered a constitutional crisis over his succession by Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, who later won

The death of President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2010, which triggered a constitutional crisis over his succession by Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, who later won the 2011 election, was a turning point in Nigeria's political history, Yar'Adua was Nigeria's first civilian president to die in office, after a long battle with kidney and heart problems that kept him away from public view for months. He was widely regarded as a humble and honest leader, who declared

his assets when he took office in 2007 and initiated a series of reforms to tackle corruption, electoral fraud, oil theft and militancy in the Niger Delta. He also brokered a peace deal with the rebels in the region, offering them amnesty and rehabilitation in exchange for laying down their arms. His death left a power vacuum that threatened to destabilize Africa's most populous and oil-rich country, as different factions within his ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), jostled for control.

According to Nigeria's constitution, the vice president should automatically assume power in case of the president's death or incapacitation. However, Yar'Adua's loyalists tried to prevent Jonathan, who belonged to a different ethnic and religious group from the north-south power-sharing arrangement that had governed Nigeria since 1999, from taking over. They argued that Yar'Adua was still alive and could recover at any time. They also feared that Jonathan would not respect the unwritten agreement that the presidency should rotate between the north and the south every two terms. The impasse lasted for several weeks, until the National Assembly passed a resolution on February 9, 2010, empowering Jonathan to act as president until Yar'Adua returned or a new election was held.

Jonathan faced many challenges as acting president. He had to deal with a divided cabinet, a hostile parliament, a restless military and an increasingly frustrated public. He also had to cope with a resurgence of violence in the Niger Delta, where some militants rejected the amnesty deal and resumed attacks on oil facilities. He also had to confront the growing threat of Boko Haram, an Islamist militant group that launched a series of deadly bombings and shootings across northern Nigeria. To assert his authority and legitimacy, Jonathan dissolved the cabinet on March 17, 2010, and appointed new ministers loyal to him. He also sacked the national security adviser and the Chief of Defence Staff, who were seen as close to Yar'Adua. Jonathan's boldest move was to declare his intention to run for president in the 2011 election, despite opposition from some northern leaders who felt that it was their turn to produce the next president (Omotola & Orjiako, 2018). Jonathan argued that he had a constitutional right to contest for a full term, since he had only completed Yar'Adua's remaining tenure. He also claimed that he had a vision to transform Nigeria into one of the world's leading economies by 2020. He launched an ambitious campaign slogan: "Goodluck Nigeria". He won the PDP's nomination after defeating former vice president Atiku Abubakar in a primary election. He then went on to win the general election with 59% of the vote, defeating his closest rival Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who got 32%. The election was widely praised as free and fair by local and international observers.

Jonathan inherited many of Yar'Adua's policies and programmes, such as the anti-corruption drive, the electoral reform, the amnesty programme and the Vision 2020 plan. He also initiated some new initiatives of his own, such as launching a sovereign wealth fund to save some of Nigeria's oil revenues for future generations, privatizing some state-owned enterprises to improve efficiency and attract investment, launching a youth empowerment scheme to create jobs and skills for millions of young Nigerians, and convening a national conference to address some of the longstanding issues of constitutional reform, federalism and national unity. However, he also faced many criticisms and challenges during his tenure. He was accused of being weak and indecisive in dealing with security threats such as Boko Haram and kidnappings. He was also blamed for failing to curb corruption and mismanagement in

his administration. He also faced protests and strikes over his decision to remove fuel subsidies, which led to a sharp increase in the prices of petrol and other commodities.

This is how many Nigerians described their former president, Goodluck Jonathan, who lost the 2015 presidential election to Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler and anti-corruption crusader. Jonathan's defeat was historic, as it marked the first time that an incumbent president was voted out of office in Nigeria's history (Nwankwo & Ojukwu, 2016).

How do electoral systems and party systems affect the behaviour and strategies of voters, candidates, parties and elites in Nigeria?

Electoral systems are the methods through which citizens elect their representatives in a democracy. Party systems are the patterns of political parties that compete for votes and seats in a legislature. Both electoral systems and party systems have significant implications for the behaviour and strategies of voters, candidates, parties and elites in Nigeria. Nigeria operates a multi-party system, with two or three strong parties and a third party that is electorally successful. The current dominant parties are the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), while the third party is the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Nigeria also uses a majoritarian electoral system for presidential and gubernatorial elections, where the winner must obtain at least 25% of the votes in two-thirds of the states, and a plurality electoral system for legislative elections, where the winner is the candidate with the most votes in each constituency.

The combination of a multi-party system and a majoritarian electoral system creates incentives for voters, candidates, parties and elites to adopt certain behaviours and strategies. For voters, it means that they have to consider not only their preferences, but also the viability of their preferred candidates or parties (Orji, 2014). They may vote strategically to avoid wasting their votes on candidates or parties that have no chance of winning, or to prevent their least preferred candidates or parties from winning. For example, in the 2019 presidential election, some voters may have voted for APC or PDP even if they preferred APGA or another party, because they perceived APC and PDP as the only realistic contenders.

For candidates, it means that they have to appeal to a broad range of voters across different regions, ethnic groups, religions and interests. They may adopt moderate or populist positions on issues, form alliances or coalitions with other candidates or parties, or use patronage or clientelism to attract support. For example, in the 2019 presidential election, both APC and PDP chose running mates from different regions and religions than their presidential candidates, to balance their tickets and appeal to diverse constituencies.

For parties, it means that they have to be inclusive and cohesive, as well as competitive and adaptable. They have to recruit candidates that can win elections, mobilize voters that can deliver votes, and maintain discipline among their members that can ensure loyalty. They may also merge with other parties, split into factions, or switch alliances depending on the political context. For example, in the 2019 state elections, some parties formed coalitions with other parties to challenge the incumbent parties in some states, while some party members defected to other parties before or after the elections.

For elites, it means that they have to exercise power and influence within and outside their parties, as well as balance their personal ambitions and collective interests. They may use their resources, networks, charisma or ideology to shape party policies, agendas and nominations, as well as to negotiate with other elites across party lines. They may also seek alternative platforms or positions if they are dissatisfied with their parties or lose elections. For example, in the 2019 state elections, some elites contested for gubernatorial seats under different parties than their previous ones, while some others sought senatorial seats after losing gubernatorial primaries (Oyediran & Agbaje, 1999 and Reynolds *et al.,* 2015).

From the aforementioned statement, electoral systems and party systems affect the behaviour and strategies of voters, candidates, parties and elites in Nigeria in various ways. They create opportunities and constraints for political actors to pursue their goals and interests in a competitive and complex environment. They also shape the outcomes and quality of democracy in Nigeria by influencing representation, accountability and stability (Macaulay, 2023).

How do electoral systems and party systems affect the quality and effectiveness of governance in Nigeria? How do they influence policy-making, service delivery, accountability and corruption?
The electoral system and party system in Nigeria have significant implications for the quality and effectiveness of governance in the country. This paper discusses some of the main effects of these systems on policy-making, service delivery, accountability and corruption.

Policy-making
One of the effects of the electoral system and party system on policy-making is that they create incentives for political parties to form broad coalitions across ethnic, regional and religious lines. This is because no single party can win a majority of votes or seats in a diverse and fragmented country like Nigeria. Therefore, parties have to appeal to different segments of the population and form alliances with other parties or groups to secure electoral victory.

This can have positive consequences for policy-making, as it can foster dialogue, compromise and consensus among different stakeholders on national issues. It can also encourage parties to adopt moderate and pragmatic positions that can appeal to a wide range of voters. For example, the APC was formed in 2013 as a merger of four opposition parties that had different ideological orientations and regional bases. The APC was able to present itself as a viable alternative to the PDP by offering a common agenda of change, anti-corruption and economic development (Horowitz, 2005).

However, this can also have negative consequences for policy-making, as it can lead to instability, fragmentation and lack of coherence within parties and governments. This is because parties may have to accommodate conflicting interests and demands from their diverse coalition partners, which can undermine their ability to formulate and implement consistent and effective policies. It can also create tensions and divisions within parties and governments, as different factions may compete for power and resources. For example, the APC has faced several internal crises since it came to power in 2015, as some of its members

have defected to other parties or formed new ones, while others have challenged the leadership of the party or the president.

Service delivery

Another effect of the electoral system and party system on service delivery is that they create opportunities for subnational governments to play an active role in providing public goods and services to their citizens. This is because Nigeria has a federal system that grants significant autonomy and resources to state and local governments. State governors are directly elected by popular vote for four-year terms and can serve a maximum of two terms. State legislatures are also elected by first-past-the-post system for four-year terms. Local governments are composed of elected councils and chairpersons who are responsible for delivering basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation.

This can have positive consequences for service delivery, as it can enable subnational governments to tailor policies and programs to suit their local needs and preferences. It can also foster competition among subnational governments to improve their performance and attract more voters and investors. For example, some state governors have initiated innovative reforms and projects in areas such as health care, education, agriculture, infrastructure and security that have improved the lives of their citizens.

However, this can also have negative consequences for service delivery, as it can lead to duplication, wastage and inefficiency in the allocation and utilization of public resources. This is because subnational governments may have overlapping or conflicting mandates and responsibilities with each other or with the federal government. They may also lack adequate capacity or accountability mechanisms to deliver quality services to their citizens.

How do electoral systems and party systems affect the legitimacy and stability of democracy in Nigeria? How do they contribute to conflict resolution or escalation, consensus building or polarization, trust or distrust in institutions?

The majoritarian electoral system and the weakly institutionalized party system have significant implications for the legitimacy and stability of democracy in Nigeria. On one hand, they may enhance the accountability and representation of the elected officials, as they have to win a majority or plurality of votes in their constituencies, and face direct competition from other parties or candidates. They may also foster national unity and integration, as they encourage parties and candidates to appeal to a broad range of voters across regions and ethnic groups, rather than relying on narrow or sectarian bases (Udoette & Udoette, 2017).

On the other hand, they may also undermine the inclusiveness and responsiveness of the political system, as they tend to exclude or marginalize minority parties, candidates, or voters who do not have enough support to win seats or offices. They may also exacerbate social conflicts and divisions, as they create incentives for parties and candidates to mobilize their supporters along ethnic, religious, or regional lines, or to resort to violence or fraud to secure electoral victory. They may also erode public trust and confidence in the democratic institutions, as they expose the flaws and weaknesses of the electoral management body (the Independent National Electoral Commission), the judiciary (the Supreme Court), and the security agencies (the police and military) in ensuring free, fair, and credible elections.

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria illustrate some of these effects of the electoral systems and party systems on the legitimacy and stability of democracy. The presidential election was contested by 73 candidates from different parties unlike the 2023 elections which was 18 presidential candidates, but the main contenders were Bola Ahmed Tinubu from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar from the main opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), Peter Obi from Labour Party as well Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso of New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP). Tinubu won with 36.61% in 2023 unlike that of Buhari in 2019 who won with 55.6% of votes against Atiku's 41.2%, but Atiku rejected the result and challenged it at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal and later at the Supreme Court, alleging widespread irregularities and malpractices. The same thing is currently happening with the two major contenders; Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Mr Peter Obi contesting the declaration of Bola Tinubu as the winner. The case is still pending before the Presidential Tribunal as at the time of writing this paper (BBC News, 2023b).

The state elections were held two weeks after the national elections, and they witnessed more intense competition and violence among parties and candidates. A little known Labour Party even produced Governonr in Abia State with some representatives in both the lower and the Upper House of Representatives (BBC, 2023a).

The electoral system and party system in Nigeria have both positive and negative effects on the legitimacy and stability of democracy in Nigeria. On one hand, they can contribute to conflict resolution or escalation, consensus building or polarization, trust or distrust in institutions depending on how they are designed, implemented, and perceived by various actors and stakeholders. On the other hand, they can also be sources of conflict or instability themselves if they are flawed, manipulated, or contested by different actors and stakeholders. Some of the positive effects include:

- The two-round system for presidential and governorship elections can encourage coalition building among parties and candidates to secure majority support across regions and ethnic groups. This can foster national unity and reduce ethnic or religious tensions.
- The first-past-the-post system for legislative elections can produce clear winners and losers and facilitate government formation and stability. This can enhance accountability and responsiveness of public policies.
- The multi-party system can provide a variety of political choices for voters and represent diverse interests and opinions in society. This can promote pluralism and participation in democracy.
- The dominant party system can provide political stability and continuity by reducing uncertainty and

Summary
The electoral system and party system in Nigeria have significant implications for the political development and stability of the country. On one hand, they promote political competition and representation, as different parties and candidates vie for votes and seats across the country. They also encourage regional balance and power-sharing, as no single party or region can dominate the political landscape. On the other hand, they also pose challenges and risks,

such as electoral violence, vote rigging, ethnic polarization, patronage politics, and weak party institutionalization.

Electoral violence is a recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria, especially during contentious elections or in volatile regions. It involves physical attacks, intimidation, harassment, destruction of property, and sometimes killings of voters, candidates, party agents, election officials, or security personnel. Electoral violence can be triggered by various factors, such as political rivalry, ethnic or religious tensions, economic grievances, or external interference. Electoral violence can undermine the credibility and legitimacy of elections, as well as threaten the peace and security of the country (Collier & Vicente, 2012).

Vote rigging is another common problem in Nigerian elections, which involves manipulation or falsification of election results to favor a certain candidate or party. Vote rigging can take various forms, such as ballot stuffing, multiple voting, underage voting, vote buying, voter intimidation, result alteration, or collusion with election officials or security agents. Vote rigging can also affect the credibility and legitimacy of elections, as well as erode public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Ethnic polarization is another challenge that Nigerian elections face, as voters tend to align themselves along ethnic or regional lines rather than ideological or policy preferences. Ethnic polarization can create a sense of exclusion or marginalization among some groups or regions that feel they are not adequately represented or catered for by the government or the dominant parties. Ethnic polarization can also fuel inter-group conflicts or secessionist movements that can destabilize the country.

Patronage politics is another feature of Nigerian elections and party systems that affects their quality and performance. Patronage politics involves the exchange of material benefits or favors for political support or loyalty. Patronage politics can create a culture of dependency and corruption among voters and politicians alike, as they prioritize personal gains over public interests or national development. Patronage politics can also weaken party discipline and cohesion, as politicians switch parties or defect to other parties based on their personal interests or ambitions (Ekeh & Osaghae, 2019).

Weak party institutionalization is another issue that plagues Nigerian elections and party systems. Weak party institutionalization means that parties lack clear ideologies, policies, programs, structures, rules, norms, or values that guide their actions and interactions. Weak party institutionalization can result in low party identification and loyalty among voters and politicians alike, as they see parties as mere vehicles for power rather than agents of change. Weak party institutionalization can also hamper internal democracy and accountability within parties, as well as inter-party dialogue and cooperation across parties.

Conclusion
In this paper, the researcher examined the electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria, and how they affect the quality of democracy and governance in the country. It was seen that Nigeria operates a multi-party system, with three dominant parties (the All Progressives Congress, the People's Democratic Party and Labour Party) and several smaller parties that

compete for votes at the national and state levels. We have also seen that Nigeria uses a first-past-the-post system for presidential and legislative elections, and a mixed system for gubernatorial and local government elections. It was argued that the electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria have both positive and negative implications for the country's political development. On the one hand, they provide opportunities for political participation, representation, accountability, and alternation of power. On the other hand, they also pose challenges such as electoral violence, fraud, corruption, ethnic polarization, weak party organization, and lack of ideological differentiation.

The researcher suggested some possible ways to improve the electoral systems and party systems in Nigeria, such as reforming the electoral management body (INEC), strengthening the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms for elections, enhancing civic education and voter awareness, promoting internal democracy and transparency within parties, encouraging inter-party dialogue and cooperation, and fostering a culture of tolerance and respect among political actors and citizens.

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