

## Nigeria and Election Crises: Debating the Causes

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### Abstract

*Election Crisis has always characterized any general election in Nigeria, and there has been no general election since independence in 1960 that did not end in serious disputations, crisis, violence and even bloodshed. Today, it is like Nigeria is not capable of conducting free and fair election that will not end in chaos and violence. However, what are the causes of this nightmare? Here in lies the debate. Some scholars argue that the problem is caused by ethnicity, others claim it is a problem of modernization while some relate it to inter-class struggle. This paper disagrees with the above positions and adopts an alternative model which is factional struggle within the dominant class, in the process of state formation when there is no cohesive dominant class, or a ruling class. And the solution lies in the re- definition of the economy, to make it more citizens' friendly, in terms of its ideology and its essence. The present position where there is state absolute involvement and control of the economy is inimical to liberal democracy. Secondly, the federal system in Nigeria is terribly awkward and not functioning. It concentrates all powers at the centre, and makes election a zero some competition. Thus, in Nigeria, he who loses an election loses everything and must "fight" back.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Election Crisis, State formation, Dominant Class

### Introduction

Political violence and political crisis have been favorite topics for some social scientists, who wish to know why citizens result to political violence. This is why scholars posit explanations on political crisis and analyze political actors (Ted Gur, 1970; Lucian Pye, 1962; Charles Tilly, 1978) But election crisis, particularly in developing countries, in spite of its being the root cause of some of the political crises that have been studied, have not been related to the nature of the problem that characterize a society in state formation process. The reason for the so much attention on political crisis and not specifically on election crisis stem from the approach with which social scientists adopt in explaining political problems, such as psychological factor and the functionalist theory with little or no cognizance of the role of history in the determination of the specific problems that are attendant to specific stages of the development of a society (Anifowoshe, 1982; Smith, 2010) Thus, studies on political problems in Nigeria have not departed from the above pattern; namely attention on political violence and political crisis without due attention on election crisis as one of the attendant problems of state formation. We now have some ideas why people rig election in Nigeria, ideas we can collate from available works on theories of political violence.

We now can talk of the frustrated aggression theory, rising expectation and the low level and underdeveloped culture (Almond and Verba, 1966; Gordon and Gordon, 2007) In spite of these arguments; however, there have been no satisfactory explanations for instance, on why people are aggressive during election time and what makes them to be frustrated afterwards. Why should people wait till during an election before venting their anger? One thing is however certain, that is, since political independence in 1960 there had been election crisis at each general election in Nigeria. The problem of election crisis in Nigeria therefore, becomes an interesting and pertinent exercise for a rigorous political analysis precisely because of the way it has come to be associated with general elections since independence.

Not doing enough rigorous political analyses by relating election crisis to state formation in a society where there is no hegemonic order continues to make our understanding of the problem elusive. In addition, whatever explanations that have been given hitherto continue to generate debate. Thus, what are the causes of election crises in Nigeria?

Arising from our recognition of election crisis as a problem that had accompanied all the general elections after independence, the following questions thus, arise. How can we understand election crisis in Nigeria? What are its nature and character? Why did it occur immediately after the attainment of independence? What are the roles of socio-cultural cleavages in the crisis? In the first place, from our survey of literature, three broad themes emerge under which the various factors so far given by scholars as being responsible for election crisis can be classified. The three broad themes see election crisis as a problem of:

- a) Ethnicity;
- a) Modernization;
- b) Class relations.

Second, we posit an alternative model of explanation, which is , the lack of cohesive dominant class that results in factional struggle for power in a weak state and in the absence of hegemonic order.

### **Ethnicity**

By far the most emphasized of the causes of political problems in Nigeria is ethnic problem or ethnicity, the argument that has been on since the sixties. In fact, it is common to hear an average Nigerian and foreign observers argue that Nigeria's problems take their root in ethnicity. Thus,( Akinyemi, 1976; Ukiwo, 2005; Metumara, 2008) said that one factor which has frequently been employed to explain the recurrent crisis and conflict in the Nigerian political system is ethnicity. Ironically, this is the most ambiguous of the factors, which are often cited as the causes of political problems in Nigeria.

It is true that some scholars have used ethnicity as an argument, but it is equally true that this is the factor that stands out as the most pedestrian argument, particularly from its conceptual interpretation and even definition.

### **Ethnicity: A Problem of Nigeria Politics**

In analyzing the causes of the breakdown of constitutional government in 1966, Post and Vickers remark that foremost among the proffered explanations have been the destructive twins of tribalism and regionalism and see in particular, the problem of tribalism as the bedrock of the crisis that account for the breakdown of the elections of 1964. Other problems were further aggravated by tribalism. And to them, this attitude of the different "competitors" was determined by the ideology of tribalism' rather than class-consciousness (Post and Vickers, 1960) Thus, the cumulative effect of the tribal consciousness invariably led to those participating in central government, for instance, to be concerned with gaining a share in control of the system of rewards with the benefits this share in control could produce quickly. Arguing that tribalism or what they also call "primordial attachment" has always meant something fundamental to Nigerians. They affirm that tribal identification is so important that not only does it override loyalty to Nigeria as a whole it led to a bitter polarization between the major cultural groups.

In terms of party alliance, (Post and Vickers, 1960) argue that the election alliances ultimately formed by the parties from the regions explained the fact that the general election during the first republic shaped up relentlessly as a North versus South contest. As a result therefore, the polarization that subsequently developed led' to a growing tension between North and South. In this regard, the low degree of cooperation between the politicians of rival cultural groups only led to a common desire to secure the largest possible share in the benefits to be had through the system of rewards.

In a detailed account of Nigerian government and politics, Mackintosh describes the evolution of Nigerian constitution and the struggle for power, including the various crises, both intra-regional and inter-regional crises that occurred before 1967 (Mackintosh, 1966) He argues that in Nigerian politics, nothing succeeds like success and to lose power may be an irretrievable disaster. His account of politics in Nigeria up till 1967 demonstrates the belligerence that shrouded the practice of Western democratic values. It also shows clearly how antagonistic the different ethnic groups had been with each other and how intransigent they were in terms of one ethnic group allowing power to be held by another ethnic group.

To (O'Connel, 1070) tribal consideration largely informed the ideas of Nigerian politicians to the extent that the founders of the various political parties sought support mainly from among their own ethnic groups and those who led Nigeria had made their way up in politics by appealing to communal traditions and they remained communal in outlook.

Thus, the fragile nature of the first republic is traceable to the fact that the founders of Nigerian political parties sought support mainly from among their own ethnic group. The local communities within each ethnic group grasped the advantages of organizing along ethnic lines, to promote their own welfare and interests and to protect their own social identity against the encroachment of other groups.

Political tension in Nigeria, it has been argued, has its root in personal and to some extent ethnic rivalries which divided the politicians. Thus, the causes of the tension in Nigeria are seen as fear of domination, expressed by the ethnic groups which vocalized most frequently in ethnic terms and representing the supremacy of values in pre-modern society. Again, party alliance created political schism which resulted in the breakdown of democratic principles during the first and second republics (Lloyd, 1967; Salamone, 1997; Kaufman and Haklai, 2008)

It has been argued, that there is a general agreement that members of major and minor ethnic groups have difficulty getting along with each other and this difficulty has had serious political consequences (Peil, 1976; Kaufman and Haklai, 2008; Collier, 2010). In fact, ( Peil, 1976) argues that the elites are more tribalistic in Nigeria than the masses, and since the tribes are led by the elites, *ipso facto*, the tribes become hostile to one another and this because the elites are tribalistic because according to her, the society is believed to function as a series of ethnic power groups.

### **Ethnicity: A Critique**

A critique of ethnicity, as the problem with Nigerian politics and with election crisis should start with the concept itself, which is manifested in ambiguous definitions of ethnic group and ethnicity, ethnic group and tribe as well as tribe and tribal relations ( Okediji, 1976; Collier, 2010; Osaghae, 2009). Ethnicity, according to (Nnoli 1980) is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups, with the “ethnic groups” as social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries making ethnicity a phenomenon of relations between ethnic groups within the same political system. There are, even, attempts to see ethnicity as class (Sokdov, 2008) or a regional analysis (Hechter, 1987).

One unique thing about the concept of ethnicity is that it has always been defined with two features. First, ethnicity is seen as encompassing interaction and second, it is associated with competition. It is also interesting to note that because ethnicity is associated with interaction and competition, it is often interpreted to embody conflict. In other words whenever the concept is analyzed, some scholars have the tendency to do so in a way that it will give expression to people of the same culture interacting with others but whose interactions are necessarily conflictual

The term ethnicity refers to strife between ethnic groups in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness (Cohen (1965). Thus, some often assert that crises and conflicts arising from ethnic hostilities are the results of the following, namely, competition among the ethnic groups resulting in hostility and intolerance, cultural differences resulting in different value orientations towards western institutions and ethos and unequal distribution of power to the different ethnic groups resulting in wide spread fear among the numerically small ethnic groups in the country ( Sklar,1963; Coleman, 1958; Mackintosh, 1966; Melson and Wolpe, 1971). Looking at ethnicity as a phenomenon that is conflictual, (Dovos, cited in Sanda, 1976) asserts that ethnicity implies a form of separateness and instability in respect to questions of dominance that can easily lead to social conflict.

However, competition and cooperation are part of the vehicles that keep society functioning. This is so because in economic terms, society is conceptualized as an arena where the basic needs of man including the provision of material goods which, in the process, compels man to cooperate with others in production/consumption relationships (Otite, 1972). And as expounded by Peter Blau whose economic model in analysing social action hinges on exchange, man must cooperate by exchanging what he has for what he does not have, the practice of which is the *raison d 'ere* of society ( Blau, 1964) Thus, competition which characterizes any society does not ordinarily lead to crisis. Therefore, to argue that an ethnic relation is what causes election crisis in Nigeria is unconvincing. Thus, tribalism (ethnicity) should be viewed as a dependent variable rather than a primordial force in the new nation and political tension in Nigeria, as in other African states have not been purely tribal (Sklar, 1976; Smith, 2009; Collier, 2010).

Again the concept of ethnicity is often used interchangeably with tribalism indicating that the tribal group is the same thing as the ethnic group. This is why some writers take the two concepts as being synonymous. Ethnicity as a concept has become a polemic enterprise in social theory.

Thus, it continues to attract criticisms by social scientists because of its lack of convincing characterization. Ethnicity has been variously defined but we find them to be of limited utility especially looking at the concept of tribe the way it has also been variously defined. However, Wallerstein's definition of ethnic group is indeed helpful and illuminating. Wallerstein distinguished between the tribe, by which he referred to the "Gemeinschaft Community" which claims the allegiance of people in the rural area and the ethnic group which is the new form of the tribe, claiming the loyalty of members in the towns (Wallerstein, 1965). Thus, ethnicity became an instrument of propaganda by the elites during the politics of pre-colonial and post-colonial eras. Second, ethnicity became an easy tool in the hands of the elites because it was convenient for them to remind the peoples of their differences as the peoples were geographically delineated by the colonizers, along those things that differentiate them, such as language and culture. Also, in the post-colonial era, ethnicity became a class tool properly wrapped in class ideology, which was effectively used for the furtherance of class interest. Consequently, a careful examination of what we often take to be the manifestations of ethnicity or tribalism in Nigeria are therefore but "external quests of the oppressed, the exploited and the disadvantaged," (Bretton, 1973; pp 263) either in their attempt at fighting oppression or at seeking a greater share in economic rewards.

It is from this standpoint that ethnicity or tribalism becomes highly deceptive when seen as a primary problem in Nigerian political processes. Thus, ethnicity and tribalism have become exacerbated as the society continues to grapple with the maintenance of western institutions. Tensions and emotions are quite often weep up because the ethnic groups have their expectations exaggerated not because they abhor interaction with each other, but because their expectations fail to be satisfied, and in the process, increased frustration will push the people to seek relief in ethnic protest. In other words, what engenders ethnic crisis is not that the ethnic groups interact, but the crises are smacked of the quest for physical survival and a share of the wealth, a phenomenon that is common to all oppressed, neglected and dominated people all over the world. Thus, ethnic groups, according to (Salamone, 1997) are political, economic and social action groups, formed for a particular purpose; that is, in order to obtain something that is more easily attained by belonging to an ethnic group than as an individual or as a member of some other group. That precisely is what gives ethnic loyalties a whole new possibility for being valuable to the group, yet damaging for the society (Collier, 2010). In fact, ethnicity ought to be a positive phenomenon, indeed a desirable feature of any nation-state (Sklar, 1976) This is precisely because ethnicity should be able to play a constructive role in the creation of national unity because it will be a form of allegiance that is a focus of loyalty which is essential and useful for effective nation-state (Bretton, 1973) Again, a society can function perfectly well if its citizens hold multiple identifies, but problems arise when those sub-national identities arouse loyal ties that override loyalty to the nation as a whole (Collier, 2010).

It is true that Nigeria is made up of diverse ethnic groups, making it a fact that the Nigerian nation is a colonial creation. Thus, Awolowo remarked that Nigeria is but a geographical expression ( Awolowo, 1968) But as argued by (Arikpo, cited in Otite, 1976), nations are made and not born. Therefore, the issue of ethnic relations in Nigeria which creates the usual complex social relationships in a plural society ought not to be perceived as conflictual. And (Magubane, 1969) argued that a focus on ethnicity impedes a serious effort to understand African societies because it ignores the ownership of the primary productive forces, the material basis of society and the nature of the social system. We can then argue that matters that are strictly ethnic or tribal in nature quite often do not advance beyond the frontiers of the local people. But when matters are couched ethnically or tribally, transcending the boundaries of the tribal people to assume ethnic political strength, and are made national issues then we should search for more substantial and more enduring explanations. This is precisely because such matters must have been invoked by the leadership for the struggle for power. This is perhaps why (Hodder, 1978) says that ethnicity, like a boundary or landlockedness, is rarely the root cause of instability but is used or manipulated by politicians for their own purposes. Sklar(1976) adds that in Africa, violent passions flow easily into tribalistic channels but political science should seek deeper to find the root cause of tension and violence. Thus, ethnicity is a tool and not the driver of intergroup conflicts and therefore, we should refocus our attention to the political triggers of conflict (Aapengno, 2010).

It is against this background that it has become imperative to re-examine the phenomenon of ethnicity as the problem with Nigerian's political process because it has been so highlighted in Nigeria that unless a careful and rigorous dialectical study is done, political and election crises and violence will continue to be erroneously linked with ethnicity.

### **Theory of modernization**

Election crisis and other political problems in Africa, Asia, and Latin America where there have been decline in political order, problem with legitimacy of government, violence and instability have been explained with various theories of modernization (Shils, 1963; Apter, 1968; Almond and Verba, 1966). The theory of modernization either explains economic development or describe socio-political change (McLelland, 1964; Herskovtis and Marwitz, (eds) 1964).

The theory of modernization had been the position of some Western scholars who use the economically advanced and politically stable societies as models for analyzing emergent societies, the societies that have been devastated by exploitation and brutally plundered by colonialism and imperialism. They tried to explain why constitutional democracy declines, the role that political attitudes and individual behaviour played in the nation-building processes, and how economic backwardness affected the nature of politics (Verba, 1980) The concept of modernization was used to explain the degree of democratization as measured by parliamentary and election records and the problems of political stability ( Verba, 1980) Modernization therefore became the yard-stick with which scholars measured the ability of the new states to cope with the intricacies and, of sustaining Western institutions brought by colonialism. Thus, modernization was seen as a process based upon the rational utilization of resources and aimed at the establishment of a modern society (Verba, 1980)

### **Election and Political Crisis as Problems of Modernization**

In their analysis of Nigerian political and election crises, Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe argue that an analysis of the Nigerian case suggests that modernization, far from destroying communalism in time, both reinforces communal conflict and creates the conditions for the formation of entirely new communal groups (Melson and Wolpe, (eds) 1971). To them, communalism refers to a group of persons who share a common culture and identity in a range of demographic divisions within a wider society. They also argue that the Nigerian case is a particularly appropriate illustration of the relationship between communal conflict and modernization. They added that Nigeria's economic and social progress sowed the seeds of the nation's political crisis because the crisis is traceable directly, not to poverty nor cultural diversity but to the widening of social horizon and the process of modernization at work within the national boundaries ( Melson and Wolpe, 1971)

Finally, (Melson and Wolpe, 1971) argue modernization as being responsible for social mobilization and communal conflicts. In this regard, they discuss the Nigerian political crisis in a way that it manifests the complicated web of factors which link communalism with modernization. They focus on (a) competitive communalism, (b) institutional communalism, (c) communal transformation, (d) communal compartmentalization. Under these four themes, they argue that intergroup differentiation is -created in the following ways, namely the nature of Western contact, the environmental opportunities and cultural predispositions. It is against this background that they see the Nigerian case ~s where modernization creates social institutions which divide groups from each other and at the same time encourage political competition and participation thereby exacerbating communal conflict. Dudley (1973) has analyzed Nigerian politics particularly the first republic in his "Instability and Political Order" where he critically examines Nigerian politics, based on the theoretical models of Zolberg, Huntington and V. O. Key's concept of "critical elections". Looking at Instability in Nigeria, Dudley argues that in the new states where political institutions are of a rudimentary nature, they will be incapable of processing the inputs into effective outputs, thereby creating bottlenecks, which tend to stress the system. Dudley defines instability as changes within a society which do not conform to, or proceed from the rules that govern organizational process in society. He goes on to argue that instability should be seen as a necessary and inescapable condition in the creation of political order and is thus intimately bound up with the process of modernization and political development (Dudley, 1973)

One notable study on election crisis in Nigeria is the one by (Anifowoshe, 1982) in which he uses modernization theory to explain the 1964 election crisis and political violence in some parts of the country. He argues that the process of modernization in Nigeria, undoubtedly gave rise to cleavages and political conflict as they increased the inter-dependence of major groups and strata and brought these groups into a relatively common political and economic framework. Arguing further ( Anifowoshe, 1982) asserts that the crisis in Nigeria manifests a situation of a society in which the modernizing leaders are committed to a rapid expansion but where there is no corresponding increase in the level of economic opportunities.

Anifowoshe's use of modernization model can be seen from his analysis of the 1964 crisis, which, to him, can be explained by examining legitimacy of regime, coerciveness of regime and the impact of social structure and domination. In this regard, he argues that the low level of legitimacy of authorities was an important determining factor in explaining the relations between the outbreak of violence and the political process. He argues further that authorities relied on coercion, purchased by force and repression which only strengthened opposition and forced the people to search for counter force roles (Anifowoshe, 1982) This assertion is based on his conclusion that parliamentary elections as a constitutional device to allow for peaceful change of a discredited government proved impossible.

The Nigerian society has been analyzed with regard to political instability, highlighting such aspects as the political philosophy of transition from colonial to independent state, preparation for democracy, the values and means of the people, pattern of partnership and the organizing power of a new regime. All the above analyses verge on the theory of modernization because it is a study on structural changes that create the forces of differentiation, reintegration and disturbance. The Nigerian society has therefore been described as one undergoing transition, because there are no philosophic links between the substantial historic past of Nigeria and the modern legal constitutional system under which the country now operates.

In a description of the collapse of the Second Republic (1979-1983) and its antecedents (Richard Joseph, 1987), why trying to unravel the nature of the fundamental processes of Nigerian political life, argues that politics, being fundamentals about the struggle over scarce resources, makes Nigeria a viable arena because the state has increasingly become a magnet for all facets of political and economic life. Joseph employs what he calls "prebendal" politics to describe the scenario in Nigeria, means patterns of political behaviour which rest on justification principle that such offices should be competed for and then utilized for personal benefit of office holders as well as of their reference or support groups.

Thus, the major political challenge which confronts Africa is to involve forms of political order in which history is made relevant to the present in a positive way.

### **The Critique of Modernization Theory**

We shall briefly attempt a critique of modernization theory for the following reasons, namely, that those who have used it to explain election crisis and political problems in Nigeria have only described peripheral problems leaving the substance untouched.

Modernization as a concept is very difficult to define (Verma, 1980) and therefore a discussion of modernization as a theory of social change which involves a complex set of inter-related processes of change presents its own brand of difficulties (Barnabas, 1978). As noted by (Lucian Pye, cited in Barnabas, 1978), there are probably as many versions of modernization as the people who are impressed with visions of utopia or visions of how societies might be changed.

It has been noted that the structural functionalism was the catalyst that parented the modernization theory which, according to (Hoogvelt, 1978), has become a popular and prolific theory about social change in contemporary developing countries. Hoogvelt (1978) adds that structural functionalism which has nothing to say about social change has become the dominant intellectual force behind theories of social change. To him, modernization theory is faulty from its methodological premises and also suffers from the ethnocentricism of Western social scientists. Modernization theory grew out of the dichotomous approach to the study of political development, based on evolutionary theory and a comparison between ideal type of variables, tradition and modernity (Higgot, 1983). As argued by (Packenham, cited in Barnabas, 1978), modernization theory brought with it a shift in methodology in political studies and the social sciences; shifting emphasis from legal and institutional approach to economic and social-psychological variables. Higgot (1983) adds that the development of modernization theory is seen in its political guise, as a means of facilitating the establishment of liberal democracy in the new states.

Thus, it has been argued that election crisis and collective violence in Nigeria, for example, corresponded not with the period of growth as the theorists of modernization will have us believe, but with the major struggle for power by the principal power blocs of the contending elites (Nkemdirim, 1974). Political crisis in Nigeria therefore is rooted in a more fundamental factor than the differentiation of social structures in the process of transition.

For example, how does modernization theory explain the insatiable desire for power and economic gains in the developing countries? And why do politicians and other aspirants to power immediately after independence quickly take advantage of the great opportunities while in office to consolidate political power and secure economic accumulation (Otite, 1975). It can be argued that modernization explains the developing societies in terms of internal forces which are uniquely working in each society. Thus the theory views such societies as if they exist in total isolation. Etzioni-Halvey (1981) says that modernization theory is thus chastised for failing to take notice of the international power network of which both western and non-western societies are part and which does not recognize the role of the West in causing and perpetuating underdevelopment that enables the adherents of the theory to blame the people. The theory is thus an ideological cover for the evils of colonialism and imperialism.

The theory of modernization does not take cognizance of the fact that each epochal stage of any society has its own specific character which leaves an indelible mark upon the structural elements of the society. Since Nigeria was struck by the tragedy of capitalism, she has had to grapple with imposed capitalist institutions and the development of a new social formation. Apter (1964) argues that before the advent of the Europeans, African societies had elaborate markets and ports with great commercial activities with all the trading sectors highly developed, all that were attributes of great empires in Africa.

Claude Ake (1979) has therefore dismissed modernization theory for being a tool of imperialism, one that is born in the context of a struggle for hegemony. He says further that the theory is a very long way from offering us a causal or sequential mode of change which can be used to work out strategies of societal change in the underdeveloped societies.

Smith (1973) also argues that the difficulties with the theory of modernization is the vagueness and negativity of definition, the facile applicability, the ambiguity of cultural categories and so on, which led critics to abandon altogether the concept of modernization. This is precisely because modernization has become a relative concept, denoting a type of change in the context of given situations. The theory of modernization is therefore an account of the varieties of selective adaptation or imposition of western beliefs and institutions in alien setting (Chailiand, 1980; Nwabueze, 2010).

Modernization theory has not explained in a vivid manner, the background to western intervention in Africa, i.e. the causes and extent of western imperialist incursion. The theory does not see colonialism as being responsible for the underdevelopment of the Africa continent, which has made the continent a dependent and politically fragile one (Rodney, 1972).

Modernization theory is not well informed by history to note that the exploitation unleashed on Africa by Europe and America has brought great political and economic calamities to the African continent. If Africa were a human being, she would cry out thus:

Listen to my sorrow  
Listen to my lament  
The bat was struck by misfortune  
Its head is hanging low. (Ulli Beir, 1960)

It is against this background, therefore, that we see modernization theory as purely descriptive and therefore inadequate for properly accounting for the African political problems. Because the theory views society as being distrust of mere tradition as a guide and also stresses some commitment to the potentiality for moral and political progress (Sibley, 1970)

One implication of the above is that modernization theory sees society from the point of view of consensus and integration. Thus, it looks at society and anchors it upon the relationship between differentiation and disturbance it produces (Smith, 1973). It talks of inputs and outputs of sub-systems and system (Swingewood, 1975). Indeed, the theory describes the social order as a system of elements, each of which is defined by its relation to all other elements; the elements being individuals and groups and their position in the system is a social place (Unger, 1975). The theory thus leans on the massive but disproportional weight, which it has accorded values and consensus and its neglect of economic factors, power, dissent and conflict (Etzioni-Halvey, 1981). Modernization theory ignores the fact that Africa's mastery and adaptive ability to Western institutions, such as democracy, depends on international conditions with respect to global capitalism and its attendant problems and crises.

The theory does not recognize that African societies have been distorted by the impact of colonial conquest, the commercialization of production and the response of Africa to these challenges (Bottomore, 1979). Modernization theory according to (Smith, 2009) is over ambition in its attempt to incorporate all social change since the seventeenth century making all its concepts too vague and open ended, often reducing theoretical propositions to tautologies. As a result, the theory cannot adequately explain election crises and political problems in Nigeria

### **Capitalist Class Relations**

The radicals, on the other hand, adopt the power and conflict theory (class analysis), rejecting the explanations of the liberal scholars which is embodied in the ethnic and modernization theories. The power and conflict theory does not see society as being essentially constituted on the basis of complementarity and reciprocity of roles in the social division of labour. Rather, it views society from the angle of exploitation and oppression, domination and subordination and the antagonism of class interests (Alavi, 1982; Giddens, 1999; McNaughton, 2004; Goodwin, 1099). Thus, the theory sees the functioning of any political system in terms of structured class interests in conflict.

In class analysis, it is recognized that it is not only the private ownership of the means of production by one class that is the problem but also the power which one class wields over the other class (es). The theory recognizes class antagonism and explains that democracy is continually threatened and often stifled by property owning, privileged and dominant groups no are always fearful of any autonomous and unregulated incursion of the masses into politics (Bottomore, 1979).

Quite a number of scholars have used class analysis, based on the materialist conception of history, to explain the political problems in the developing, countries. Thus the capitalist mode of production and its attendant class struggle has been adopted by some scholars in preference to the modernization theory. The same approach has also been attempted by other scholars in explaining the same problems in Nigeria.

However, it is pertinent to state that historical materialism is a mode of explanation that seeks to analyze the causes of past events and the causes of what is taking place at any moment in the history of any social formation. It is a general theory of the motive forces and laws of social change (Comforth, 1977). Thus, the analysis of class relations, for explaining political problems and election crisis in the developing countries and in Nigeria in particular, began to gain currency from the early seventies. We shall, however, not go into details on the theory of class and the state, but we shall briefly say why the class analysis has been what some scholars now embrace.

Class analysis was adopted by scholars when it was noticed that the structural - functionalism approach became inadequate in explaining the persistent political problems in Africa. Thus, (Richard Sklar, 1983) says that if we think that social and political problems today cry out for radical solutions, we may prefer a school of analysis that is geared to the study of social conflict and deprivation. The class analysis is more likely to explain the relationship between the rulers of the new nation and foreign nations (Swingewood, 1975). The class analysis is more critical with the way western values are being institutionalized in indigenous Africa Society. The class analysis, Eskor Toyo argues, becomes more pertinent in looking at politics in Nigeria because capitalism has created a society that is undergoing the process of capitalist development that is subordinated to another society (Toyo, 1987).

One detailed work on the implications of capitalism on Nigeria's social structure, on the way it has transformed the country into an arena of struggles between the social classes, and on how it conceals class struggle but exposes ethnicity, is the work by Nnoli (1980), which predicates his class struggle on resources competition, that arose from the colonial economy. He argues that resources competition implies that resources that are scarce and their accessibility is limited. Although Nnoli addresses the issue of ethnic politics especially the relationship between the class element and the ethnic element, he demonstrates abundantly that ethnicity is not a critical variable in Nigeria because it lacks, according to him explanatory potency. He goes further to say that the central determining factor in Nigerian politics has been the rationalization of colonial economy with its consequent development of various regional factions of the dominant class. That, to Nnoli, led to Nigerian politics being turned into a struggle by the various factions of the dominant class, in order that they are able to dominate the wealth in the society.



Gavin Williams (1980) has systematically examined politics in Nigeria with regard to the allocation of scarce resources, the relations and conflicts among classes. Explaining Nigeria as a class society, (Williams, 1980) argues that in Nigeria, politics is the competition among and the alliances between politicians and their clients and associates which has its objective in the control of the resources of the state. Thus politics arise from the concern for the allocation of resources which leads to the various factions of the dominant class to disagree on such questions like, census, revenue allocation and election-results. He argues further that class conflict was incorporated into local politics which was subordinated to regional government, the government that had control of the instruments of patronage and coercion.

### **Alternative Working Model**

Political crisis has become a topical issue in contemporary African studies that a discussion on the economic backwardness of the continent ends up on 'the political table. Indeed, in Nigeria, election crisis has become a recognized nightmare which prompted (Paul Backett, 1987) to argue that after decades of independence, Nigeria remains very much a country in search of a form of government to successfully institutionalize democracy. Most of the academic contributions on the problem of election crisis in Nigeria have not paid sufficient attention to Nigeria as a society that is undergoing a travail in history and whose dilemma can only be understood in that context. Thus, the trauma of African movement, in historical context has to be recognized to properly comprehend her contemporary predicaments like Nigeria has to be put in historical perspective to understand her problem of election crisis.

It is against this background that we have adopted the power and conflict approach in this paper. We deem the class analysis appropriate because it will enable us grasp the issue about the state, especially its formation and problems, one of which is election crisis. It will also expose some primary questions about the state and classes under capitalism and in the case of Nigeria, under peripheral capitalism. We shall then be able to understand the nature and role of the Nigeria state in the context of the history of Nigerian project, the role of the state in the creation of the social order and its relationship with particular groups and classes that seek to control over it.

Our position is informed by the fact that every social class engages in two types of struggles namely, a struggle with an opposing class (es) and a struggle within itself. The former is the inter-class struggle which is associated with the capitalist and the proletariat where the owners of capital, not only embark on exploitation for surplus and accumulation but also thrive to consolidate and maintain their domination. The second is the struggle that is common when the dominant class is in the process of producing a faction for hegemony.

As can be noted above, we have rigorously disagreed that ethnicity or modernization is responsible for election crisis in Nigeria and we have also criticized the orthodox conceptualization of inter-class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as being the problem. Rather, we have adopted the factional struggle or intra-class struggle within the dominant class as being the cause of election crisis in Nigeria.

Our model for explanation is premised on the assumption that in Nigeria, the dominant class has not emerged as a strong and cohesive class, united with a common interest to enable them take the place of the state. In other words, the Nigerian state has not been fully formed by which it will have the autonomy to function and act above all other classes, thereby maintaining domination.

Why then should unity elude the Nigerian dominant class?

The state is the powerhouse of society because it is the instrument of order. A class usually holds this instrument in bringing about hegemonic order i.e. leadership, discipline and domination. For a class to successfully use this instrument, it must be cohesive, united and have a common interest to enable its members pursue their class project. The class that institutionalizes hegemonic order is usually the dominant class in society and one condition, so crucial to the successful institutionalization of hegemonic order, is the fusion of political power and economic power.

In Nigeria, at about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, effective British occupation began in the societies that today constitute Nigeria. By 1900, British colonial administration took effective operation and by 1914 the protectorates of North and South became one geographical entity with a uniform political administration. And from that date, the nationalist struggle became highly intensified. By 1960, Nigeria attained independence.

However, at independence, the dominant class got political power but without economic power because economic power was still with the metropolitan capitalists in Europe, as they dominated the economy.

Consequently, what we had at independence was a dominant class who was given political power but who did not have economic power. The result was that the dominant class, who had broken into factions during the period of nationalist struggle, began to struggle, among themselves, for resources, political and economic, with the aim of taking control of state power and consolidating it (Fadakinte, 2013). In other words, those with political power did not have control of the economy and the implication was that at independence, there was no ruling class except a political class, those who had attained their political positions only because they had championed the struggle for self-determination. Therefore, conscious of the necessity to fuse political power and economic power and in their attempt at the realization of this imperative, the indigenous dominant class could not agree, among themselves on the *modus operandi* of some socio-economic and political processes. Such as, election results, census figures, revenue allocation formula and all became contentious issues and election results, in particular, could not be resolved amicably and had ended in chaos (Fadakinte, 2013). Thus, the state became a tool in the hands of the faction that has political power which it uses to intimidate opponents and even liquidate them

As argued by (Gavin Williams, 1980), Nigerian politicians sought to gain control of revenues to finance their political and commercial interest and this is a problem that is particularly acute with the Nigerian indigenous bourgeoisie because they are economically weak which makes them to be vulnerable crisis, rely on expatriate capitalists and also fall back on the peasants for support. It has to be recognized that the Nigerian indigenous bourgeoisie, being weak and given the fact that the state had not secured the needed relative autonomy for domination, the political arena is one that is dominated by the struggle among-the factions of the dominant class. And the struggle is what is transformed into the struggle for state power. Thus, since the bourgeoisie use election to acquire and legitimize power, it then becomes imperative for the factions to fiercely struggle and contest elections. In the process, those factions that loose in an election turn to mobilize the people, their supporters, thereby creating violence and crisis.

Thus, in Nigeria, election crises are not caused by ethnicity, modernization or inter-class struggle, but by factional struggle for power in the process of state formation when there is no cohesive dominant class, no ruling class and there is no hegemonic order.

### **Conclusion**

This paper tried to establish that in Nigeria, the cause of election crisis is traceable to the weak nature of the state and its manifest character, violence. And that is why the paper disagreed with such positions like ethnicity, modernization and class struggle as being responsible for election crisis in Nigeria.

Consequently, the state becomes the institution that needs attention, in order to find a solution to election crisis in Nigeria. Thus, in the first place, we need to develop a mechanism that will mediate the bitter struggle by the factions of the dominant class. To do this, we shall address two areas. First, the economy. The economy needs a redefinition in order to make it citizen's friendly, in terms of its ideology and its essence. The current state absolute involvement and management of the economy is inimical to liberal democracy. Thus, attention to the economy will alter the existing state – society relations where those in power are self-centered, greedy, and corrupt and most importantly get away with inequities. Consequently, there is a need for economic reform either to the left, with strong central planning based on the principle of self-reliance or to the right, with minimum state involvement in economic enterprises.

Secondly, Nigeria, as a federation should be redefined. The present federal system in Nigeria is so awkward that Nigeria is the only country in the world with such a spoilt system. For example, in Nigeria, the central government is responsible for the production of vehicle licenses, drivers' licenses, birth/death certificates and the funding of local councils/governments. The principle of division of powers is, therefore, so blurred that the central government can legislate on any matter.

Thus, each state, i.e. the federating units, should enjoy high autonomy particularly in terms of resource control and management. In addition, a weak federation should be adopted where there will be proper division of powers, making the component units to be strong so that they will not depend on the centre for funding. And According to (Smith, 2005) the division of powers between regional and national governments has been seen as an additional safeguard of the rights of the people and against governments misusing their powers. And to (Emeka Ayaoku, 2014) true federalism is the only way to progress and development as the present structure breeds high cost of governance, tribalism and religious bigotry.

With these recommendations the federating units will be strong where politics will be more manageable and provide the opportunity for hegemony to grow from the component units and coalesce at the centre, to form a ruling class and build a strong and viable state. In addition, the centre will be more peaceful because it will be devoid of the 'do or die' struggle that characterizes Nigerian politics, making political competition (politics) a zero-sum game and therefore those who hold political power control everything, and must always win election and those who lose in election must collapse the place because they have lost everything.

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