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Elite Bargaining  
The Glue That Holds Nigeria's Democracy Together

An Honors Thesis in Political Science

By

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**Abstract**

Nigeria is a unique case in the study of democracy because it seems that there is so very little holding it together; as a country, let alone a democratic one. With the history of Nigeria riddled with military regimes interrupting its democracy, the abundance of oil and the resource curse that it comes with, and the weak democratic institutions in the country, a lot is fighting against it being a democracy. However, Nigeria just celebrated twenty-one years of interrupted democracy. This is because the country's political elites use democracy to bargain amongst themselves and find it more beneficial than authoritarian regimes such as a military rule to getting their share of the 'national cake. I argue in this paper that while the ethnic tensions of the country continues to be a reality as seen in the history of Nigeria and the mismanagement of the oil resource in country, democracy has managed to survive in the country since 1999 and democracy holds its survival to elite bargaining as seen through the lenses of the system of presidentialism and two party system.

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This Paper is dedicated to all who continues to fight for the existence and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria and all who continues to strive for further understanding of it.

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Figure 1: Map of Nigeria (Nations Online Project)

## Introduction

Nigeria is an interesting case to study for democracy. When it became independent in 1960, there was much hope that this new country will be the start of a wave of democracy on the continent of Africa and it will be a regional leader in the fight for democracy. From the start, it seems the country was doomed to fail because of the many things working against this goal of the new country being democratic, at least for the long term. The country's

history is checkered; when it became an independent country, some of the leaders of the newly independent country pushed for democracy, having a president and prime minister from different ethnic groups to unite the different ethnic groups of the country. This proved impossible because all the power rest in the prime minister's hand, and a power struggle ensued; this will lead to a coup in 1966, and it will start a culture of military coups in the country. The presidency as it exists currently is the goal of many politicians in the country because so much power is concentrated in the president's hands. The national legislature that should act as a check on the executive branch is only known for its inefficiencies and its members' lavish lifestyle. The judiciary does not have the independence that it should have as the interpreter of the law; instead, it acts as another way the executive branch uses to do what it wants. The sanctity of elections is also not trusted in the country because the body in charge of elections is known to be corrupt, and elections have a record of been rigged in the country. One of the things that Nigeria is known for is the abundance of oil that it has. It is a member of OPEC, exporting large quantities of crude oil to many countries; among them, the United States, but this abundance of oil have not worked for the country because even with this oil wealth, Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world and this oil wealth have impacted the state of democracy in the country.

These and many other reasons seem to signal that democracy should not work in the country, but despite these many obstacles facing the country, it is a democracy.

The argument of this paper that democracy in Nigeria holds its survival to elite bargaining. Elite bargain is "a discrete agreement...that explicitly sets out to re-negotiate the distribution of power and allocation of resources between elites" (Cheng, et al., 2018). The

elites of the country coming together and deciding that democracy is a better tool to divide up the country's resources than an authoritarian regime like a military government because democracy requires coalition building, and in a democracy, no one can rule alone. This paper is divided into three sections; section one will explore the different elements listed above, such as the history of democracy in Nigeria and how it is connected to ethnic tensions, section 2 looks at the struggle of the resource curse and conflicts on how to divide the oil wealth and section 3 focus on how democracy has existed in the country through the lens of elite bargaining and how it plays out with the presidential system of government and the two-party system that exists in Nigeria.

## Section 1

### I: Literature review

Democracy as a concept has become a widely accepted norm on how to govern a state and it is believed to be the best way of governance, not only in terms of politics but for growth, but what is democracy. Democracy in its simplest form, as defined by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address, is 'government of the people, by the people and for the people.' While this definition serves its purpose, political science has come a long way in understanding the concept better. Better understanding, however, does not mean consensus in the definition. Democracy has its origins in ancient Greece, having come from the Greek word 'demokratia,' meaning 'rule of the people' (Nwogu, 2015). According to a lecture given by Larry Diamond, democracy is "a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office" (Diamond, 2004). Another definition has democracy as the contrast to dictatorship or tyranny (Nwogu, 2015). The practice of democracy also manifests differently, whether it is practice as direct democracy or representative democracy.

Nigeria has democracy, and there exists extensive literature on the many problems that exists in Nigeria's practice of democracy. Like other countries, there are features that distinguish Nigeria's brand of democracy from others and one of the prominent and most studied is corruption. Democracy and the way it is practiced in Nigeria has become a money making scheme for a select few rather than benefitting the people, creating a "culture of



waste” (Ajayi & Ojo, 2014), that benefits the few that are in power. However, this paper's question is different; this paper seeks an answer to the survival of democracy since 1999.

## II: History of Nigeria with ethnic tensions and democracy

Nigeria has a history of ethnic relations that has been defined by conflict even before the coming of the Europeans into the continent and the establishment of the geographically defined area known as Nigeria as a result of colonization. When the British empire drew Nigeria's borders, it brought together a group of more than 250 ethnic groups with three prominent ethnicities dominating each of the country's three major regions. The three major regionally bound ethnic groups are Yoruba in the southwest, Igbos in the southeast, and Hausas in the north. These three groups had the largest number in population in their different regions. According to 2018 estimate, 30% of Nigeria's population is Hausa, Yorubas are 15.5%, while Igbos are 15.2%. (CIA.gov, 2021). The country's language structure is also ethnic-based. Each of the three ethnic groups has its language, with English being the official language brought over by the white men. Since the creation of Nigeria, its politics have been defined by ethnic relations between the three major groups. These ethnic tensions were further fermented with Nigeria's experience with colonization and continue to color Nigeria's politics since independence.

The place that is called Nigeria today came to be known as that in 1914. Before that, it was divided into three parts along clear ethnic lines administered by the British to be as

profitable as possible for the British empire. The southern protectorate was administered by Sir Ralph Moore, the northern protectorate administered by Sir Frederick Lugard. The Lagos colony and its protectorate encompass all of Yorubaland administered by Sir William MacGregor. The amalgamation of 1914 will bring all these parts together to make them even more profitable to form what is known today as Nigeria. A partial amalgamation happened in 1906 to resolve the problems of administering the state, but this did not work as intended. The southern protectorate was more profitable, able to balance its budget, while the northern protectorate could not even with revenue from the southern protectorate been given to them. The answer to this was a total amalgamation to run things more smoothly. Sir Lugard was the architect behind this amalgamation, bringing all the parts of the country together in 1914. This was the state of the country when independence came in 1960. With serious ethnic tensions and cultural divide, if the option had been available for secession before independence, some parts of the country would have seceded.

Lord Lugard, the author of the amalgamation and the first Governor-General, was clear in the British mandate in bringing about the state of Nigeria. It was to Britain and its people's economic benefit, and whatever happens during that to the native people happens. This was made even more explicit in 'The Dual Mandate' published after his retirement in 1920, "Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes" (Alao, 2012). This attitude, echoed by other British officials and evidenced in the policies enacted to govern the state, led to a rise in nationalism from the native population in which journalists played a pivotal role.

Journalists were able to use their medium to criticize the colonial government in its policies. In turn, it stimulated nationalism that the colonial government seeks to control by bringing out new constitutions to correct the previous ones' deficiencies. The Clifford Constitution of 1922 allowed political parties to be formed, Richard Constitution of 1946, Macpherson Constitution of 1951 in which opinions of the local population were considered, and the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. (Alao, 2012). This ultimately did not work, and independence was seen as the only resolution, and the years after 1954 were used to prepare for independence. Independence was called for in 1956 by the Action group from the south, but the Northern People's Congress blocked it from the north. The struggle for independence parallels the ethnic line of the country, with the Southern part of the country consisting of Yorubas and Igbos wanting independence while the north, made up of Hausa, was "anti-nationalist" (Lancia, 2007). This struggle for independence came about due to how the British govern the different parts of the country; the southern part of the country has been granted some limited autonomy that the north did not have. There was more drive for independence in the south than in the north.

Independence came on October 1, 1960, with the British flag's lowering and raising the Nigerian one at midnight. The realization of independence might have come on that day, but it has been a long fight, with fighters from different regions; Nnamdi Azikwe from the north, Obafemi Awolowo from the south, including journalists like Herbert Macaulay and so many others. The freedom fighters fought for independence. They also fought for democracy; they believed that the bond of a newly free country would be stronger than the

many bonds that divide the nation, and the only way to move forward as a country is a democracy.

That belief only lasted for six years. In 1966, Nigeria began a military rule, which will become the first of many military rules due to coups and counter-coups. The Nigerian state inherited systems when it became an independent country, a bicameral legislature (Emeagwali, 2008) (Odeyemi, 2014), and a parliamentary system with a president with no power, among many others. The system of government that the new country had required some power-sharing between the three major political parties, the Action Group (AG), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). All these parties were made relevant by the Macpherson constitution of 1951. (Alao, 2012).

Due to simple population size, the north is bigger than any other part of the country, which means the Northern People's Congress with the numbers can control the majority of the seats and thus control this new government, "Knowing this, NCNC and AG, the two major Southern parties, tried to counteract NPC hegemony in the North" (Osaghe, 1998). The two southern parties entered into alliances with NPC's main rivals in the north to chip away at its vote count. The strategy worked, and that forced NPC to make an alliance to form a government. They allied with NCNC, making the AG the opposition party. Fractions within the AG on what strategy to employ as an opposition led to opportunities for the NPC to make the party as ineffective as possible an opposition party. At the time of independence, "Nigeria was a federation of three largely autonomous regions each of which had its own constitution, public, service, judiciary, and marketing boards alongside

those of the federation” (Osaghe, 1998). The parties that came together to form a government did not trust each other because of many reasons, ethnicity being chief among them, and this turned "into a power struggle between President Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa over who actually exercise executive power, including control of the armed forces" (Osaghe, 1998). This was at the time struggle for the armed forces, this did not bode well for the future of the government, and this rivalry led to the eventual collapse of the first republic. The western region election of 1965 followed the uncertainty of the federal election of 1964, and it was both utter chaos. There was apparent election rigging with the people voting for one party and a different party mysteriously winning, "the result of this was that the people took laws into their hands" and "a mass uprising broke out in the west" (Alao, 2012).

The public unrest led to the military taking control in January 1966 in a bloody coup in which many national and regional leaders were killed; “the Prime Minister, Balewa, the Premier of the West, Akintola, the Federal Minister of Finance, Festus Okotie-Eboh, the Premier of the North and Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmad Bello, and other prominent Nigerians were murdered.” (Alao, 2012). Because the military was also overwhelmed by ethnicity rather than what is in the country's best interest, a counter-coup occurred in July 1966.

The original coup plotters were killed, and a popular Lieutenant Colonel from a minority ethnic group, Yakubu Gowon, was chosen to serve as the head of state. Despite the military government's best efforts to return to civilian rule as quickly as possible, "the tempo of violence increased" (Metz, 1991). Within a year, the military coup had led to a civil war that threatens to fracture the nation completely. A civil war that started with atrocities

committed against Igbos in the north and retaliatory strikes against the Northerners in the south. This led to the conclusion that if you are out of your ethnicity's geographic location, you are not safe, which if that is the case, then there is no reason to stay together as a country. This call for secession was not coming from the Igbos alone; Awolowo, head of the Action Group(AG), "warned that if the Eastern Region left the federation, the Western Region would follow" (Metz, 1991). This civil war was devastating in terms of numbers, with the dead numbering in the millions and also in national morale. Through blood and the refusal of the Gowon military government for secession, the country stayed together.

The Gowon military government was overthrown in a bloodless coup on July 29, 1975. "Gowon pledged his full loyalty to the new regime and left for exile in Britain" (Metz, 1991). Brigadier General Murtala Muhammad was picked to succeed Gowon. In turn, he begins preparations to hand over the government to civilians in 1979, the same year that Gowon was planning to step down before he was ousted. Muhammad was assassinated in February 1979 during an unsuccessful coup; according to evidence from the military government, Gowon in exile in Britain was implicated in the coup attempt (Metz, 1991). The nation went into mourning. His successor, Olusegun Obasanjo, promised to keep to Muhammad's plan to hand over power to a civilian government by October of 1979.

Obasanjo kept to his promise, and a new constitution was formulated. Under it, elections were held, and power was handed over to a civilian government on October 1, 1979, the government of Shehu Shagari. This was the beginning of the second republic of Nigerian democracy. This second republic was not destined to last long despite the hopes of many. It did not escape many of the first republic's shortcomings; a weak national coalition and

ethnic tensions still was the reality of the second republic. The apparent fraud of the 1983 elections, even to the dominant party's supporters, led to the government's collapse and subsequently of the second republic, lasting from 1979 to 1983; even shorter than the first republic.

The military took power on December 31, 1983, with major general Muhammadu Buhari leading the coup. Due to the Buhari military regime's inability to resolve the issue that they used to justify taking power from the civilian government in the first place, a counter-coup occurred in August 1985, putting Ibrahim Babangida in power. The new regime promised a return to civilian rule but using one excuse or the other and overturning the election result; it remained in power till 1993.

Elections were held in 1993 to return the country to civilian rule, Chief M.K.O. Abiola was believed to have won the election, but the Babangida regime overturned the result. When leaving office in 1993, Babangida gave power to Chief Ernest Shonekan for an interim government, but within three months, he was kicked out, and General Sanni Abacha took power.

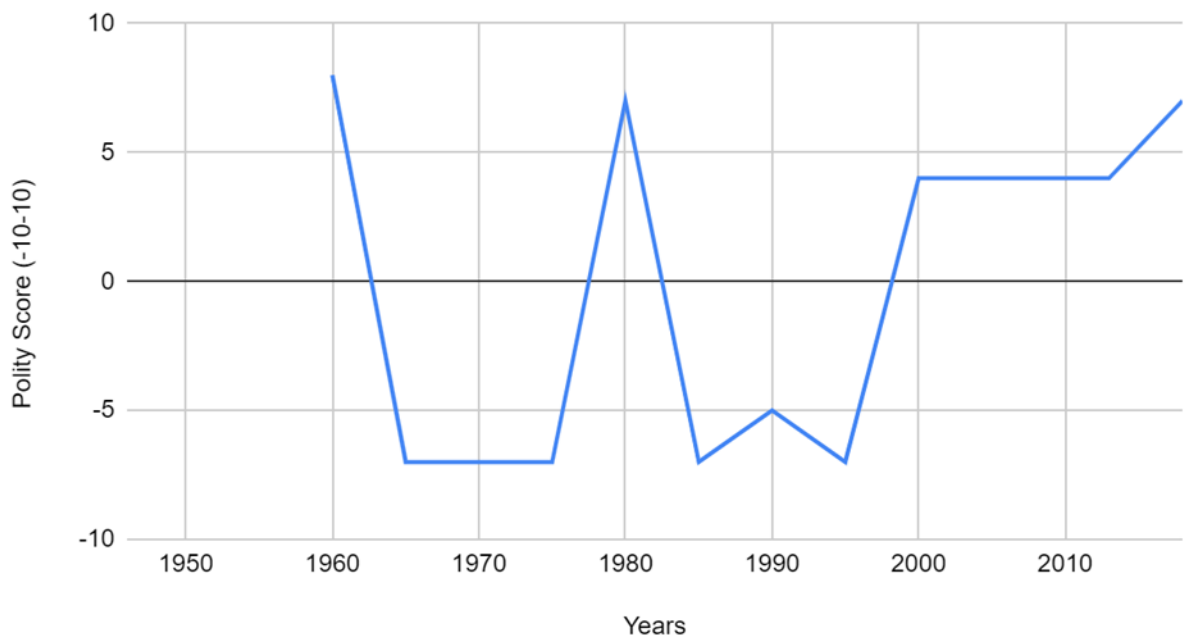
Abacha put Chief Abiola in prison, where he died, and Abacha remained in power till 1998. His regime was known for the atrocities committed during his time, which was many, even for a military regime, and "in spite of several international sanctions against Nigeria during Abacha's regime, he attempted to transform himself to a civilian president by being the sole presidential candidate of his five political parties" (Alao, 2012). Before he could become president, however, he died a natural death in June of 1998. After him, the regime that

came in after him worked towards a less than a one-year transition of power to civilian rule. The election of 1999 sees Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military ruler that transferred power to the civilian government ending the first military rule in Nigeria, emerged as the winner.

The polity project research and collate data about the state of democracy in nations worldwide, the figure below is from the Polity5 dataset. The score goes from 10, full democracy, and -10, a full authoritarian state. The figure below shows the time of different regimes, democracies, or military junta in the country. During the times of democracy beginning in 1960, when data is available, Nigeria's polity score was 8. This changed during the upheaval of 1965 that led to the coup in 1966; the polity score became -7 reflecting the country's regime at the time and lasted till the end of military rule in 1979. Coming back up to above 5 lasting for just four years reflects the second republic's short lifespan. The election of 1993 is also reflected in the uptick of the 1990 score but went back down with the crackdown of the military government until 1999 with the beginning of the fourth republic where it has been trying to get to the immediate post-independence score although it is not there yet. It is currently a 7 in as recorded in 2018.



Nigeria Polity Score over time



Graph 1: Polity 4

This marked the beginning of the current republic that Nigeria is now, the fourth republic, that has lasted from 1999 to date. It has lasted, yes, but it has weathered its waves, from corruption to inefficiency. This history of ethnic relations and democracy in Nigeria showcased the underlying tensions of ethnicity that had existed before colonization because the different ethnic groups were independent states before being cobbled together by

colonization; tensions have further deepened and exacerbated by colonial rule and since independence.

However, the civilian to the civilian transfer of power occurred in 2007, marking a first in Nigerian history. Unfortunately, the winner of the 2007 election, President Umaru Musa Yar'dua, died before completing his term, and his vice president Goodluck Jonathan completed his term. His government was largely seen as corrupt and incompetent, and the kidnap of the Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram that brought international attention did not help.

The presidential race of 2015 also brought another familiar face into the race—the former military head of state, Muhammadu Buhari. Running from a disciplinarian perspective, as someone who will bring discipline to the president's job and make it work for the people, he won the election. Despite multiple allegations of playing favorites in terms of ethnicity, putting the north first, seeing as he is a northerner, he won his re-election campaigned in 2019.

## Section 2

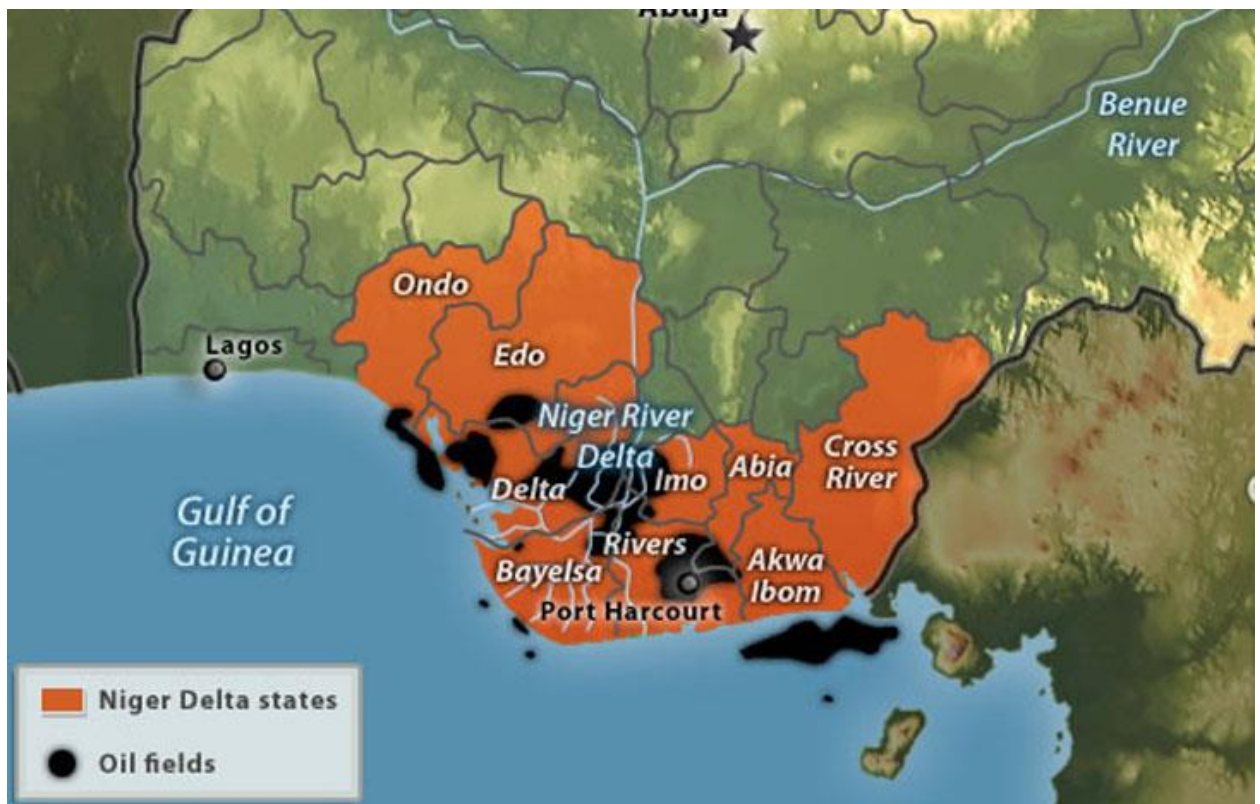


Figure 3: Niger Delta (Premium Times Nigeria)

### Resource Curse

Oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (NNPC, 2021). Since the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, of the nine states in the region, 3 of the states, "Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa states make up about 80% of the Niger Delta Region. Together, they produce about 75% of Nigeria's oil and over 50% of federal revenue" (Romanova, 2007). Besides the production of oil from the region, there is virtually no other industrialization. Nigeria became a significant oil player globally in 1958

when the first oil field began producing 5,100 barrels per day(BPD) (NNPC, 2021). With independence, other foreign companies got exploration rights to the Niger Delta area besides Shell-BP, the British company that discovered it in 1956. By the 1960s and '70s, oil production has jumped to "over 600 million barrels" (Romanova, 2007).

Natural resource-rich countries can sometimes suffer from what is called the resource curse. The natural resource that these countries have can impede democracy while at the same time fermenting authoritarianism. While many countries in the middle east and Africa supports this claim, Nigeria seems to be an exception to some extent. While subscribing to some part of this, Nigeria escapes the most lethal part, which is the absence of democracy in oil-rich countries. Nigeria does suffer from resource curse but not in totality; through many struggles, it is a democratic country, but the resource available in the country does not bring about economic growth. A resource-rich country but an undeveloped country, the resources that could have served as upward mobility for the people became a curse in that it is not working for the majority of the people of the country but for the few that have access to the revenue of the oil and those few have been different with different regimes. However, the situation remains the same in that oil revenue only goes to a few pockets. The average Nigerian is not benefiting from the abundance of resources available in the country.

The discovery of oil right at the cusp of independence was impactful in the development of the new nation. The discovery in large commercial quantities continued the extractive economy that the British had set up in the country before independence, with oil being the thing that is being extracted. Like the British case, no efforts were made by the new

government to develop the infrastructure of the country but rather to claim ownership and control of the oil revenue in the country. This lack of development can be seen even more clearly in the Niger Delta region. Since the discovery of oil, the region has been and continues to be one of the country's most unstable regions, with militant insurgency rising among the ethnic population. Their grievance is that they are the country's purse, but they do not feel like it. Oil is extracted from the region in such ways that are causing, among many things, environmental degradation in the region, such as lack of good drinking water. Part of the problem due to the lack of development of the region by the federal government is the creation of crude oil black markets where insurgency groups are drilling oil in irresponsible ways and smuggling them to neighboring countries and on the black market. This irresponsible way of drilling oil then exacerbates the region's terrible environmental conditions.

One of the reasons that the military claimed to take power in 1966 from the democratic government is corruption, which comes from how the oil revenue is managed in the country. Because the primary source of the government's revenue divided among the states is from oil revenue, control of oil in the country is the control of the country itself, which means that the scramble for the control of oil in Nigeria.

The resource curse can affect a country through the rentier effect, the repression effect, and the modernization effect. The rentier effect has to do with the way that government tax works. There is less incentive to tax the people in resource-rich countries since the government can fund itself through resource revenue, such as oil revenue in Nigeria. This lack of taxation by the government can lead to less accountability on the part of the

government. If they are not asking people for money to run the government, they are less likely to demand to know what the government is doing with the money. The repression effect looks at the fact that oil wealth can provide the government with a much more significant internal security capacity to block people's demand for democracy and because the cost of heavily repressing the people can not be felt much on the economy of the country since it is not reliant on the people's labor; instead, the economy is reliant on the extractive natural resource available in the country. This effect is seen in Nigeria. Any insurgency targeting oil drilling in Nigeria is repressed thoroughly by the government because those actions hurt the country's bottom line. The third effect is the modernization effect or modernization theory. The theory states that democracy comes as a result of social factors such as increasing education and skills level that are caused by economic development. In Western civilization, this effect is seen with the industrial revolution that brought about a middle class that demands more political rights. In resource-rich countries, this economic development that is supposed to bring about the social changes that will make a populace demand for democracy does not exist. (Ross, 2001). This is where Nigeria stands apart because oil was discovered when negotiations for independence were already happening; it became an independent country and a democratic one.

As discussed above, becoming an independent and a democratic country did not make Nigeria escape some of the perils of the resource curse, and oil became another way for the ethnic tensions of the country to play out.

### Section 3:

This section seeks to prove the central point of this paper that through elite bargaining using democracy as a tool to divide up the country's resources, finding it a better way than the previous way that has been tried.

#### Elite Bargaining

Given the history of ethnic tensions and democracy in Nigeria, it seems all the factors are working against the existence of democracy in Nigeria when the experiment was once again embarked upon in 1999. However, despite the history, democracy has managed to survive in Nigeria for the past 22 years. I argue that Nigeria has managed to hold on to democracy for this long because of an agreement amongst the major political elites of Nigeria to avoid the conflicts of civil war and military coups because it has proven a costly way of dividing up the resource of the country through a process of elite bargaining. Elite bargains is “a discrete agreement, or a series of agreements, that explicitly sets out to re-negotiate the distribution of power and allocation of resource between elites” (Cheng, et al., 2018). This system in Nigeria by the elites has been able to mitigate ethnic tensions that have proven fatal to previous iterations of democracy.

Elite bargaining in this paper is defined as political elites coming together and negotiating that democracy would be the best way to divide the country's resources, divide them fairly, and divide it without violence. This elite bargaining is an informal way of dividing up the country's revenue between the country's elites. Because the country's political arena is open

to so few people while keeping the people in it for as long as possible, the country's political elites have found a way of negotiating amongst themselves using democracy as a tool instead of military rule.

One of the ways that this manifest is from the shift of parliamentary system of government after independence and ceremonial president to fully presidential in 1999.

### I: Presidentialism

The executive branch has been through many iterations in many different regimes. The system of government after independence was a parliamentary and presidential style of government. There was a prime minister and a president with most of the power in the prime minister's hands. The lack of power and the struggle for power between the president and the prime minister of the country, who were from different tribes, was part of what caused the collapse of the first republic in 1966 and led to the military taking over. During the time of military government, almost all the major branches were connected, with the legislative branch's dismissal and the co-optation of the judiciary branch. When democracy made a brief comeback in 1979-1983, the system was a full presidential system, but that proved too weak to hold the coalition together to maintain democracy. When the time came again for democracy in 1999, the form of government was a presidential system, heavily influenced by the United States model.

The allure of a strong executive that can build and sustain a lasting coalition that supports democracy was the primary reason why so much power was given to the president in



Nigeria. However, the executive has grown to dwarf the other branches of government since its inception in 1999. Moreover, it has been beneficial because this is the longest that democracy has lasted in the country.

The constitution of Nigeria gave much power to the executive; therefore, the president. These powers range from executive lists that are solely the purview of the federal governments, and concurrent lists of powers where some powers are shared with the state.

This system has proven a way for the elites to successfully divide up the country's resources without resulting in the disasters of previous ways of 'slicing up the national cake' due to inefficiencies that can come from war and coups. The winner takes all presidential system made it so that everyone gets their turn to enjoy the country's profits with an understanding that everyone will get their turn at the profits through the position of president.

This presidential system is very powerful because much power is concentrated in the hands of the president and "the competitiveness inherent in presidential systems worldwide is heightened in Nigeria's case by the immense power, resources, influence and perks constitutionally granted to the President" (Owen & Zainab, 2015). This means that the president's job is a very attractive one, and people are willing to do anything to get the job. This also means that Nigeria's presidential elections are notorious for being rigged and corrupt. The last presidential elections were full of so many irregularities that it took a whole week to tally up all the votes, and it did not happen during a pandemic. This competitiveness has also created a pseudo-two-party system that though it is not officially

recognized, the presidential elections always become a two-person race between the two major parties; PDP and APC.

## II: Party Politics

Political parties are an absolute necessity in a competitive democracy, and it is no different in Nigeria. Different party systems exist to serve the needs of the society they exist in. There are one-party systems, two-party systems, and multi-party systems. In a one-party system, only one party is allowed to exist, as is China's case. In two-party systems, there are usually more than two parties in existence, but maybe only two parties dominate society's politics. In a multi-party system, multi parties exist to serve the need of the polity they exist in. Although Nigeria has, as of 2019, 91 political parties (Yagboyaju & Simbine, 2020), Nigeria currently exists in what is essentially a two-party system.

Like many aspects of Nigerian society, the political parties are influenced by the different ethnic groups of the country. With changing political climate, there was an evolution of the Nigerian political parties. When political parties were being formed before independence after World War 2 and rising nationalism, the parties were formed along clear ethnic lines and backed by the region's traditional and cultural societies. The three main political parties were the Action Group from the southwest, and they were backed by the Yoruba's traditional rulers known as Obas and groups like Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the Northern People's Congress from the north, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens from the southeast backed by Ekpo Society, an eastern region organization. While the parties might

have had their ideologies, it was not so much the ideologies that people subscribe to, but the idea of ethnic loyalty; this is my ethnic group's party, so this is my party.

Unfortunately, with the collapse of the First Republic in 1966 came the collapse of the political parties that were the country's leaders then also. When Democratic rule returned in 1979, the parties were not strong enough. Much attention was not paid to them because the second republic would collapse four years after this, and the military came back into power. This military rule lasted until 1993 when elections were called for to transition the government back to civilian rule, but because of the greed and the power that military leaders of the country were enjoying, the elections of 1993 were nullified, and the alleged winner of that election; MKO Abiola was jailed because he contested the annulment of the elections. Abiola will later die in jail, and the military dictatorship will continue until 1998 when elections were held to transition the country back to Democratic rule.

This election that was held in 1998 was between three parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP), and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The PDP candidate was Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state and the APP and AD formed a coalition that ran the same candidate for president, Olu Falae. The choice of candidates who are running for president was surprising because both of them are from the same ethnic group and the reason why that came about was that the southwest chooses another candidate; Olu Falae as their preferred candidate because they believe that the military and northern cabal chose the PDP flag bearer and that made him untrustworthy as far as the southwest was concerned. This choice of a PDP candidate, which was supported by northern cabals, was surprising but also understandable because they were trying to

appease the southwest. After all, MKO Abiola died in prison. The north believed that if a northerner was the person chosen as the party's flagbearer, then the likelihood that the southwest will descend into civil war is highly likely because Abiola was from the southwest. The southwest spoke in the election that Obasanjo was not their chosen candidate; they voted overwhelmingly for Falae. Unfortunately, he did not win, but he did challenge the elections' results; this challenge will prove fruitless, the court ruled for Obasanjo, and he became president in May of 1999. The PDP won the presidential election and won the elections overwhelmingly into the National Assembly, which meant that there was no need to build a coalition government between the winner and the opposition, which enabled the PDP to carry out their legislative agenda without being beholden to the opposition.

This landslide victory will prove helpful in terms of the laws that PDP was able to get enacted; one was an electoral reform bill, the 2001 Electoral Bill (Omotola, 2010), which rearranged the order in which elections would be held in the country. The election of 1999 to transition to civilian government was ordered from the lowest level to the highest level, so from local government to the presidency, but this bill rearranged in that the presidential election came first and every other election follows it. This election move proves helpful in solidifying the PDP as a national Party and the total eclipse of one of the three parties that voted in 1999 even though the number of parties ballooned to thirty.

The reform bill of 2001 ensures that the PDP enjoyed the advantages of being the incumbent party; the party would go on to win a greater landslide victory than the one in 1999 in all of the elections from the presidency to the local council elections of different

states. The All People's Party, by the time of the election of 2003, changed its name to become All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), and they ran a candidate who came in second in the presidential election, Muhammadu Buhari. This election will also see the near-death of AD; in the southwest, which was its stronghold, it was decimated in the elections with no victory except for six seats in the national assembly. During his first term, Obasanjo was able to position the PDP as the party of choice for the southwest by giving some high-level appointments to the region, not minding that he was from the southwest.

This election saw the country become a two-party country in all practical matters; there was the ruling party PDP and its opposition, ANPP. This continues to be how the country operates until today, with the ANPP changing its names over the years, currently called the All Progressives Congress (APC). Although these two parties are not the only parties in the country, they are the only ones that play roles in national politics; presidents and Governors come from them, so for all intent and purposes, they are the only players that matter much, it was only in the most recent national elections of 2019, that some third parties won seats in the House of Representatives. Because they are the two parties that matter, they have sought to evolve beyond geographical and ethnic lines.

Political ideology “is a belief system that explains and justifies a preferred economic and governmental order for society” (Ekundayo, 2016). Political ideology is what differentiates liberalism from marxism and socialism from communism. In the case of Nigeria, there has never been the development of political ideology since independence. Parties from their inception in Nigeria have existed along ethnic lines, letting that distinguish one party from the other.

This did not suddenly change with the coming of the fourth republic, there still exists no clear ideological difference between the two parties APC and PDP, that runs national politics in Nigeria, and this could not be more evident than the fact that people routinely move between parties like the former senate president, Bukola Saraki, who was from the president's party, APC, but transferred to the opposition party, PDP, during the 2019 elections due to alleged conflicts between him and the president.

This lack of ideological difference is also seen because the parties do not campaign based on ideological and even less on ethnic differences because you see candidates in both parties from all the ethnic groups in the country. The campaign is usually between the ruling and the opposition, "we can do better than the ruling is currently doing, and therefore, you should vote for us." Because there are only two choices, it is always picking the one the people think is less corrupt and will at least do something, but the opposition, whether it is the APC or PDP, always promises to do better than the other party.

This two-party system has been in existent for twenty years, able to exist in a way that avoids the underlying ethnic tensions that have led to the fall of the previous republics of Nigeria. It has found a way to manage ethnic conflicts through intraparty politics that allow the two parties to recruit across ethnic groups of the country to build parties that are not marginalized along ethnic lines. This allows the parties fluidity in the membership, with both PDP and APC having members from all ethnic groups. This makes maintaining the 'gentleman's agreement' this elite bargain, to rotate between Northerners and Southerners as the country's leaders because each party always has someone to nominate when it is the northerner's turn and when it rotates back to the south.

## Conclusion

Democracy in all of its iterations in the country has always demanded power-sharing; from the parliamentary system of 1960 to 1966, the democratic regime required multiple ethnic groups to work together to create a functioning government for the new country. The short-lived second republic of the country also demanded that multiple stakeholders work together in keeping the country together. With the military regimes of the country, what always happens is that one group gets into power and tries to keep power, by all means, this, in turn, will leave other stakeholders out of the government, which means power and the way to get power is through violent means. This has proven ineffective in that with every military government; There comes a time when the coalition can no longer stay together because not enough stakeholders needed to make sure that everyone gets a piece of the national cake. This creates a system where the belief and the thinking of gaining power are overthrowing the current regime. The country's elites find this unsustainable and find that democracy is a better way for everyone to get what they want in a way that is beneficial to everyone. Because democracy demands large coalition building, it means that nobody can govern alone; no ethnic group can govern alone. This has required negotiating so that everyone can get, if not all, of what they want, then a little bit of what they want. The country's elites' choice was made even more soundly by the unsuccessful bid of the first democratic president of the fourth republic; President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), to serve more than two terms granted by the constitutions. Before the federal elections of 2007, Obasanjo quietly, with the help of supporters, tried to lobby the National

Assembly to change the constitution so that he would be able to serve as president in a third term. His efforts were unsuccessful despite the many concessions he was willing to offer and hands he was willing to grease. This decision by the senate to essentially throw out any semblance of having a president for life, something that is quite common on the continent of Africa, shows the decision of the political elite of the country to throw their support behind democracy rather than authoritarian rule in the form of a president for life and trying to build a democratic government in actions; not just in word only.

So far, this elite bargaining process has managed to sustain democracy for the last 22 years, but the future is looking uncertain. The question of who will be the next president was being raised immediately after the 2019 elections, and it continues to be a hotly debated issue. With the understating of Nigeria's politics, the expectation is that the next president will come from the south. There is already a presumptuous nominee from the southwest, the national leader of APC, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. However, there are already grumblings of whether the agreement of rotating will be honored. The country's gaze has shifted to 2023 because it will be the true test of the elite bargain of rotation that holds Nigerian democracy together. So far, from 1999 to the election 2019, the president has shifted from the south for 12 years, and the north has held power since 2015; come 2023 is when the rotation should ideally go back to the south, but there is no guarantee that this will happen. And if this does not happen, the possibility of Nigerian democracy surviving this is slim.



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