

THE IMPACT OF ETHNIC RIVALRY AND GULF OF TRUST ON NIGERIAN POLITICS: THE CASE OF THE FOUR-PARTY ALLIANCE, THE PROGRESSIVE PEOPLES' PARTY AND THE PROGRESSIVE PARTIES' ALLIANCE, 1979-1983

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ABSTRACT

Ethnicity was the most recurring decimal and dominant feature of Nigerian politics between 1951 and 1983. Since each of the ethnic groups – particularly the three major ones: Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba – almost always held one another in utter suspicion, the basis of enduring political collaboration and partnership was almost always exactly nil. Thus, political collaboration between the three major ethnic groups became almost unachievable and when and where circumstances compelled some forms of political partnerships, they floundered over irreconcilable differences that revolved around ethnic rivalries and vagaries. This gulf of trust characterized the entire political process in Nigeria up to 1983 with very few instances of rapprochement among the major ethnic nationalities. While appreciable literature is available on the impact of ethnicity on Nigerian politics in the period before and after the attainment of independence and indeed up to the outbreak of the Civil War; not much is available in print on the rivalry that prevented the formation of a Four-Party Alliance, a Progressive Peoples' Party as well as a Progressive Parties' Alliance between 1979 and 1983. This almost entirely neglected aspect of Nigeria's political history is the focus of this paper. The paper contends that the gradating rivalry and gulf of trust amongst Nigeria's major ethnic groups did not only prevent the formation of the above alliances; it smoldered the Second Republic and sounded its death knell. The study utilised both primary and secondary data and employed the narrative and descriptive method of data analysis.

Keywords: Politics, Nigeria, Military Coup, Ethnicity, Alliance, Intrigues, Political Parties

BACKGROUND TO THE POLITICS OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC – THE MILITARY INTERREGNUM

The political circumstances that led to the intervention of the military in the Nigerian democratic process on 15 January 1966 have been analyzed by scholars; there is therefore no need for repetition or embellishment here.¹ However, the military intervention further thwarted political sustainability in Nigeria as it could not immediately put an end to the large scale political and serial crises that had engulfed the young nation since independence in October 1960. This was largely because of the ethnic nature of the 1966 coup – Major C.K. Nzeogwu, the arrow-head and other masterminds of the coup were Igbo while the victims were non-Igbo. These included the two top-most religious and political leaders of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of Northern Nigeria and Federal Prime Minister respectively. Furthermore, Northern Nigeria lost four of its five senior military officers;² Western Nigeria lost two of its six; the Mid West lost one of its four while the Eastern Region lost none of its seven. This lopsidedness obviously informed the description of the January coup as a 'Ibo versus Hausa affair'.³ This is a wrong classification because the Yoruba had their own share of the dead. In addition to the Premier, Chief Ladoke Akintola, Western Nigeria lost Brigadier Samuel Adesiyi, Colonel Adetunji Shodeinde and Major Samuel Adegoke, among others.

Be that as it may, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, became the Head of State and on 17 January, his regime promulgated the Constitution Suspension and Modification Decree which suspended the central and regional executive and legislative bodies (*Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1966). Under this decree, the Federal Military Government (FMG) acquired the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria or any part thereof with respect to any matter whatsoever.⁴ However, the Ironsi regime was overthrown on 29 July 1966 in a counter-coup executed by soldiers who were predominantly of Northern Nigeria extraction. Although, there is no paucity of literature on the factors that were responsible for the intervention of the military in the Nigerian democratic process and lack of sustainable socio-economic and political development; a brief analysis of some of the factors that led to the fall of the Ironsi regime may be necessary for at least two reasons. One, it will show that the intervention of the military in Nigerian politics neither ended ethnic chauvinism nor narrowed the gulf of trust amongst Nigerians ethnic groups. Two and more importantly, it will explain Nigeria's stunted political growth. Indeed, the fall of the Ironsi regime and the 30-month civil war that ensued was the

¹ A fundamental clog in the wheel of Africa's desire for sustainable development is political instability and intervention of the military in politics. Thus, in addition to discussing the factors that are responsible for the prevalence of military coups in Africa, scholars have propounded several theories on the intervention of the military in the politics of developing countries. For a fairly detailed examination of these theories, see Eva Nwosu, "Why the Military Seize Power", Nigerian *Daily Times*, 12 January, 1979.

² These were Brigadier Zachariya Maimari, Lt -Col. Yakubu Pam, Lt.-Col. Abogo Largema and Lt.-Col. Kuri Mohammed. Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon was the only survivor.

³ *West Africa*, 22 January, 1966

⁴ While a casual observer may dismiss this Decree as harmless; as far as Northern Nigerians were concerned, it was both offensive and destructive. Up to the time the Decree was promulgated, despite its relative backwardness particularly with regard to the acquisition of western education and availability of skilled manpower, the federal system allowed Northern Nigeria, like other regions, to control the Region's structural frame and system of reward. Since a unitary system may not permit this, Northern Nigerians concluded that the Decree was designed to rob them of whatever benefits they still derived from the Nigerian Federation. Interview with Aliyu Usman Shagari, 80, No 6, Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria., 5 June, 2009. Alhaji Shagari was the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1 October 1979 and 31 December 1983.

climax of ethnic rivalry and gulf of trust in Nigeria. Moreover, rather than striving to achieve sustainable development through massive construction of social amenities and viable institutions, Nigeria committed enormous human and material resources to *reconstruction* and *reconciliation* after the War.

As this author (2014) has pointed out elsewhere, ethnic rivalry was the immediate cause of the collapse of the First Republic. Unfortunately, advertently or otherwise, Ironsi's appointments tilted too much in favour of the Igbo. For example, apart from surrounding himself with scores of advisers who were almost exclusively of Igbo extraction, Ironsi appointed his friend, Gabriel Onyiuke, as Attorney General of the Federation while another Igbo, Dr. Pius Okadigbo, was appointed Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance while also serving as Economic Adviser to the Federal Military Government. Indeed, Ironsi attempted to appoint Professor J.C. Edozien of the University of Lagos as the Vice Chancellor of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria but was fiercely opposed by the Governor of Northern Nigeria, Lt.-Col. Hassan Katsina who preferred Professor Ishaya Audu. Thus, the lopsided nature of Ironsi's appointments aggravated ethnic resentment. A well thought-out and fairly balanced appointment policy would have most probably narrowed the gulf of trust amongst Nigeria's major ethnic groups and widened the support-base of the Ironsi regime. While it is not unusual for leaders to be swamped by scores of unsolicited advisers from their ethnic groups, Ironsi should have been more sensitive in some of his appointments more so since appointments anchored on ethnic and tribal considerations rather than on merit and national needs may be at cross-purposes with sustainable development.

Moreover, of the twenty-one officers promoted from Major to Lt.-Colonel in April 1966, eighteen were Igbo (Elaigwu, 1986). To make matters worse, the arrow-head of the January coup, Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues, who were seen as villains by the generality of northerners were not dealt with in a way and manner that would have assuaged northerner anger. For example, Nzeogwu and his colleagues whom the Northerners accused of decimating the ranks of the civil and military leadership of the North still drew their salaries and were seen as heroes in Eastern Nigeria. In addition, the 'royal' treatment Nzeogwu was accorded in prison exacerbated northern anger. Azikiwe (1969) has argued that General Ironsi precipitated the downfall of his regime by refusing to court-martial the 'January Majors'. Azikiwe argued that since the Majors were described as mutineers, they were liable for trial. However, Ironsi's dilemma should be appreciated. The two halves of the country perceived Nzeogwu and his colleagues differently: while many southerners (particularly the Igbo) saw Nzeogwu and his colleagues as saviours; the generality of Hausa-Fulani saw them as villains. Thus, while court-martialling the 'saviours' was tantamount to southern displeasure; sparing the 'murderers and mutineers' was an invitation to northern anger. The latter was what eventually happened.⁵

It was in the rather unfavourable situation described above that the Ironsi regime promulgated Decree 34 on 24th May 1966. The Decree abolished federalism and replaced it with unitarism. According to Ironsi, since the federal system encouraged ethnic chauvinism, Decree 34 was intended to remove the 'last vestiges of the intense regionalism of the recent past, and to

⁵ Interview with Adewumi Adegbonmire, 75. Adegbonmire represented the students' wing of the Action Group of Nigeria in the Supreme Council of the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) between 1964 and 1966. Interview was conducted on 30 November 2010 at No 16, Wunmi Adegbonmire Street, off Ala Estate, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria..

produce that cohesion in the governmental structure ...necessary in achieving and maintaining national unity' (*Daily Times*, 25 May, 1966). Among other things, Decree 34 provided for a national (unified) civil service and the abolition of regional civil services. Thus, one important implication of the Decree was that the educationally backward North would have to compete with the better-educated South for appointments into the civil service. Yet, the North was very conscious of its educational limitations *viz-a-viz* the South. One could guess what the reaction of the North was likely to be to any arrangement or policy that hampered or arrested the appointment of Northerners into the federal civil service and prevented them from controlling the structural frame and the system of reward in the defunct Northern Region.

A number of factors may have influenced Ironsi's preference for unitarism. Obviously, ethnicity was the hallmark of Nigerian politics up to the time Ironsi assumed office as Head of State. He may have abolished federalism because of its centrifugal tendencies in the confident expectation that unitarism would provide some centripetal pulls capable of driving sustainable development. However, Ironsi and his advisers probably failed to appreciate the fact that the problem was not with federalism as a concept but the fact that unity, an important prerequisite for the survival and sustenance of federalism and sustainable development, was lacking amongst the ethnic nationalities in the country. Unitarism is not a magic wand and could not have produced centripetal pulls in a nation where the region loomed larger than the nation. It is therefore not surprising that rather than producing centripetal pulls, Decree 34 produced unprecedented East-North centrifugal pulls with grave socio-economic and political consequences. Economic considerations may have also influenced Ironsi's preference for unitarism. Apparently, unification would have been economically cheaper than multiple layers of administration in the country. Indeed, in several newspaper articles, Samuel Aluko, a notable economist, emphasized the cost effectiveness of unification.⁶ Finally, another reason for the promulgation of Decree 34 may have been to remove the 'iron curtain' and open up every inch of Nigeria to Nigerians irrespective of their regional or religious affiliations. Apart from the fact that this would enable more Southerners to get employment opportunities in the 'northern frontier' and vice versa, it would have also promoted and boosted the economic interests of the ubiquitous Igbo traders.

To worsen the situation, complaints about 'Igbo provocation' were widespread in the Northern Region. Northerners criticized the Igbo who resided in Northern Nigeria for celebrating what was referred to as the 'January Victory'. Photographs showing Major Nzeogwu standing akimbo on the late Northern Premier, Ahmadu Bello, were said to have been widely distributed in several parts of Northern Nigeria including markets places. It was even said that stickers were distributed showing Nzeogwu saying '*Shi ne maganin ku*' meaning 'he [Nzeogwu] is the one who can knock sense into you [Northerners]' (*Nigerian Tribune & Nigerian Citizen*, 23 May, 1966). Furthermore, Northerners were constantly reminded of the bullets that felled their civil and military leaders in January while derogatory remarks about Northerners were reportedly commonplace, even in Army Barracks. Consequently, Northerners took up arms against the Igbo. This was probably what Ukpabi Asika was referring to when, in a statement in November 1967 in Enugu, capital of the defunct Eastern Region, he said "some of you, the Ibo of the Central-Eastern State, suffered either directly or indirectly from the acts of some of your brothers, especially in

⁶ See, among others, *Nigerian Daily Times* 11 & 13 June, 1966.

the former Northern Region. It is true the tragedy was not wholly unprovoked”.⁷ This view is more objective than the one expressed by the Eastern Nigeria Government. Writing from a partisan and ethnic position, the latter argued that the simultaneity and common pattern of the violence (against the Igbo in the defunct Northern Region) showed that it was planned and directed solely against the ‘surprised and unsuspecting Eastern Nigerians living, working or resident in Northern Nigeria’ (National Archives, Ibadan: CWC2/1/1, 1966, p. 6).

The crisis that trailed the Unification Decree and Igbo-Hausa/Fulani hostilities climaxed on 28 May 1966 with the arrival of copies of the June edition of *Drum Magazine* in the North. The Magazine contained two provocative articles. The first, written by Nelson Ottah and entitled ‘Why Nigeria Exploded’ thoroughly derided northern leaders. Ottah blamed the Balewa-Bello-Akintola ‘alliance’ for the intervention of the military in the country’s democratic process and poured unrestrained invectives on Northern leaders. The second article, written by Coz Idapo and entitled ‘Sir Ahmadu rose in his shrouds and spoke from the dead’ featured a cartoon in which the late Premier accepted responsibility for the collapse of the Nigerian democratic process and consequently asked for forgiveness from Idapo (*Drum Magazine*, June 1966). All these offended the sensibilities of a large number of Northerners.

Ironsi made some feeble attempts at arresting the above situation so as to engender national cohesion and ultimately sustainable development. For example, on 1 June, his regime promulgated Decree 40 which banned the display of provocative pictures or singing of offensive songs. The Decree prescribed three months imprisonment or 50 pounds fine or both for offenders (*West African Pilot*, 2 June, 1966; *West Africa*, 15 June, 1966). These belated measures could however not salvage the situation as massive anti-Igbo pogroms broke out in the North and on 29 July 1966, the Ironsi regime was overthrown in a coup executed by soldiers of northern extraction. From the above outline, the reasons for the fall of Ironsi and the inability of Nigeria to sustain whatever benefits she may had had at independence should be fairly clear. The brief analysis presented above punctures the claim of the Eastern Nigerian Government that the fall of Ironsi’s regime was “not because of bad policies or a lack of will and ability to carry out the excellent policies of the Military Government, but because of his place of birth – he was an Eastern Nigerian, an Ibo!” (NAI: CWC2/1/1, 1966, p. 5).

Ironsi’s successor, Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon held the reins of government for nine years thirty months of which was devoted to prosecuting a brutal civil war, the very antithesis of sustainable development. Though, generally credited for his administration’s ‘no conqueror, no vanquished’ declaration; aggressive post civil war reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation; launching of National Development Plans; indigenization policy; unprecedented development of Lagos; introduction of odd and even days to manage Lagos traffic and creation of twelve states; he reneged on his promise to restore constitutional rule in 1976. It would be recalled that Gowon had on 1 October 1970 outlined a nine-point programme the last of which was “the organisation of elections and installation of popularly elected governments in the states and in the centre by 1976” (*Daily Times*, 2 October, 1970). However, in his 14th independence anniversary broadcast to the nation on 1

⁷ National Archives, Ibadan (NAI): CWC1/5/1: “Enough is Enough – A Challenging Appeal to the Ibos of Nigeria”, p. 2. Ukpabi Asika was appointed Administrator for Enugu and liberated areas of the Central Eastern State by Gowon on 28 October, 1967.

October 1974, in flagrant contradiction of the above promise, Gowon declared that Nigeria would not be ready for civil rule by 1976 and announced an indefinitely postponement of the restoration of the democratic process (see *Daily Times*, 2 October, 1974 for the full text of the speech). On 29th July 1975, while Gowon was attending an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in Kampala, Uganda, a group of army officers led by Colonel Joe Nanven Garba announced his overthrow. Thereafter, Brigadier Murtala Muhammad, a Northerner, became the Head of State.

Murtala addressed some of the issues his predecessor had either altogether neglected or given inadequate attention. Among other things, he replaced corrupt state governors; purged the public service; promised to return the country to democracy in 1979 and almost immediately initiated a five-stage transition programme. However, on 13th February 1976, Murtala was assassinated in a coup plot but the plot was not fully successful and Murtala's second-in-command, Lt.-Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba, became the Head of State. Obasanjo continued with Murtala's reforms, created seven new states; reformed the local government system and convened a Constituent Assembly which recommended the replacement of the British-style parliamentary Westminster with the American-style presidential system. On 15 November 1976, the Federal Military Government promulgated Decree 41 which established the Federal Electoral Commission (NAI: PX/G7F, 1979).

The 12-year old ban on partisan politics was lifted in September 1978 and barely 24 hours later, Chief Awolowo announced the formation of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and its four cardinal programmes of free education at all levels; free health services; full employment and integrated rural development (*Manifesto of the Unity Party of Nigeria*, 1978). This was followed by the launch of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), a fusion of three political associations – the National Union Council, Club 19 and the Council for National Unity and Progress. However, due to irredeemable differences, the NPP later split into two: the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) led by Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri and Dr. Azikiwe respectively. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian National Congress (NNC), the Dr. Braithwaite-led National Advance Party (NAP) and the People's Redemption Party (PRP) emerged in quick succession.

Between 21 September and 18 December 1978, about 53 political associations were formed in Nigeria (Ladun, 1980). However, by 18 December – deadline for the collection of application forms for the registration of political associations as political parties – only 35 had collected application forms from the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). Of the 35 political associations that collected registration forms, 19 actually returned completed forms while only 5 were registered by the FEDECO (*ibid*). These were the NPN, GNPP, UPN, NPP and PRP. The 1979 general elections were contested on the platforms of these political parties. The elections began on 7th July stretching over a six week period (August 11). Except for the presidential election which was held after a two-week break, the others had one week between them, running every Saturday. The tables below show the electoral strength of each of the political parties in the five-legged elections.

Table I: 1979 General Elections - Breakdown of Senate Results

States	NPN	UPN	NPP	GNPP	PRP	Total No of Seats
Anambra	-	-	5	-	-	5
Bauchi	5	-	-	-	-	5
Bendel	1	4	-	-	-	5
Benue	5	-	-	--	-	5
Borno	1	-	-	4	-	5
Cross River	3	-	-	2	-	5
Gongola	1	2	-	2	-	5
Imo	-	-	5	-	-	5
Kaduna	3	-	-	-	2	5
Kano	-	-	-	-	5	5
Kwara	3	2	-	-	-	5
Lagos	-	5	-	-	-	5
Niger	5	-	-	-	-	5
Ogun	-	5	-	-	-	5
Ondo	-	5	-	-	-	5
Oyo	-	5	-	-	-	5
Plateau	1	-	4	-	-	5
Rivers	3	-	2	-	-	5
Sokoto	5	-	-	-	-	5
Total	36	28	16	8	7	95

Source: Uma Eleazu, *Nigeria: The First 25 Years*, p. 39.

Table II: House of Representatives Election Results

States	No of seats	GNPP	UPN	NPN	PRP	NPP
Anambra	29	-	-	3	-	26
Bauchi	20	1	-	18	-	1
Bendel	20	-	12	6	-	2
Benue	19	-	-	18	-	1
Borno	24	22	-	2	-	-
Cross River	28	4	2	22	-	-
Gongola	21	8	7	5	-	1
Imo	30	-	-	-	2	28
Kaduna	33	1	1	19	10	2
Kano	46	-	-	7	39	-
Kwara	14	1	5	8	-	-
Lagos	12	-	12	-	-	-
Niger	10	-	-	10	-	-
Ogun	12	-	12	-	-	-
Ondo	22	-	22	-	-	-
Oyo	42	-	38	4	-	-
Plateau	16	-	-	3	-	13
Rivers	14	-	-	10	-	4
Sokoto	37	-	-	31	-	-
Total	449	43	111	168	49	78

As for the governorship election, the NPN won in seven (mostly northern) states, the UPN won in five (all in the defunct Western Region) while the NPP won in three (mainly Igbo speaking states). Expectedly, the GNPP and PRP won in their respective pre-military areas of strength. A cursory glance at the above results reveals that ethno-politics was still a dominant issue in Nigerian politics in 1979. Of course, this was not surprising given the fact that the political parties that contested the 1979 elections were, almost without exception, the reincarnations of the political parties of the pre-military era: while the NPP was the reincarnation of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC); the UPN was the offshoot of the Action Group; the PRP succeeded the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) while northerners supported the NPN the same way they had supported the NPC. Finally, the GNPP replaced the Borno Youth Movement (BYM). Thus, Nigerian political elites once again launched ethno-regional political parties that could neither initiate national cohesion nor sustain national development.

From the above tables, it is obvious that the GNPP did not enjoy national spread but was confined to Borno and Gongola States. For example, the party won 4 out of the 5 senatorial seats, 59 out of the 72 House of Assembly seats and 22 out of the 24 Federal House of Representatives seats in Borno State alone. Indeed, the presidential candidate of the party, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, obtained nearly half of his votes from Borno and Gongola states. Expectedly, the PRP, the successor of the Aminu Kano-led NEPU, was relatively strong in Kano State. Of the 7 senatorial seats won by the PRP, 5 came from Kano and 2 from Kaduna. Out of the party's 144 state assemblies' seats, 123 were from Kano while 39 of its 49 seats in the Federal House of Representatives also came from Kano. Out of a total votes of 1, 722, 173 in the presidential election, Aminu Kano obtained 923, 803 from Kano State alone.

The NPP, like the post 1951 NCNC, was nothing more than an Igbo party. Also, the UPN did not receive much support outside the defunct Western Region. The five states won by the party, with the exception of Bendel State, fell within the Yoruba-speaking area. Comparatively, the NPN was the most national of all the political parties. The party won in 8 states in each of the elections and in about 12 (13?) states in the presidential election. This relative electoral strength may have been due to the party's zoning formula: while Alhaji Shagari, the presidential candidate of the party, was from the North; his running mate, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, was an Igbo while a Yoruba was the National Chairman of the NPN. This was more balanced since the three principal ethnic groups in the country had a share in the allocation of principal offices unlike that of the UPN where Chief Awolowo, a Yoruba, was both party chairman and presidential candidate. The presidential election was the last in the series of elections that were held in 1979. Judging from the number of votes received by each of the five political parties and the number of parliamentary and governorship seats won by them, the NPN was electorally superior to the others and since a repeat of the voting trend in the four earlier elections meant that the NPN candidate would win the presidential election; an alliance of the four other political parties was proposed. The proponents of the alliance probably felt that since the total votes and parliamentary seats obtained by the four political parties out-numbered those of the NPN, a joint presidential candidate of the four-parties would most probably win the election.⁸

⁸ Interview with Aliyu Usman Shagari, the NPN presidential candidate for the 1979 general elections, 5 June 2009.

THE FOUR-PARTY ALLIANCE PROPOSAL

It has been pointed out earlier that the Federal Electoral Commission registered five political parties for the 1979 general elections. These were the Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN; Nigerian People's Party, NPP; Great Nigeria People's Party, GNPP; National Advance Party, NAP and the National Party of Nigeria, NPN. Following the electoral superiority of the last party in the elections, the other four proposed a presidential or parliamentary alliance – while the former (plan A) would have enabled them to field a joint presidential candidate for the election; the latter (plan B) would have enabled secure the majority of seats in both chambers of the federal legislature. According to the proponents of the alliance, its formation was to protect the rights and freedom of the various ethnic groups in the country and ensure the supremacy and freedom of the legislature from executive control (*Daily Sketch*, 8 October, 1979). It appears the latter reason presupposed that the NPN might win the presidential election and that the remaining four parties could form a parliamentary alliance in the federal parliament. While the leaders of the UPN and the GNPP supported the formation of the alliance unconditionally, the PRP listed four conditions for its membership. One, the retention of the separate identities of the alliance members; two, the denunciation of ethno-religious politics in all its ramifications; three, eradication of corruption; and four, the alliance should be anchored on principle and should aim at solving the nation's problems in the interest of the country and its people.⁹

The second and fourth conditions listed above hold special significance because this was one of the rare occasions a political party publicly advocated the formation of a populist alliance which would have probably succeeded in enunciating, fashioning and sustaining developmental policies in Nigeria. However, probably because of the fear of being left out of the alliance and consequently out of the Structural Frame (should the alliance candidate win the presidential election or should the other three parties form a parliamentary alliance in the federal legislature), the PRP's insistence on the formation of a populist alliance was feeble and it fizzled out shortly afterwards. The alliance members described the alliance as “insurance against instability and anarchy” and insisted that it would act as a springboard for Nigerian “unity, peace and progress” (*Daily Times*, 24 July, 1979). However, without any fear of contradiction, given the disparate ideologies and propensities of the four parties, it was doubtful they could have formed an alliance that would have furthered the unity of Nigeria. This probably informed the NPN's description of the alliance members as “water and kerosene which can never mix or cooperate” (*ibid*, 22 July 1979). Indeed, the NPN insisted that rather than being a springboard for national development and sustainability, the alliance would hasten the exit of democracy from Nigeria.¹⁰ The NPN's claim is however ironic. Since forming an alliance that would have brought all the major ethnic groups in Nigeria together could not have resulted into a stark North-South political or parliamentary confrontation, the alliance would have sustained and strengthened Nigerian democracy rather than precipitating its exist.¹¹

On the other hand, the view expressed by the NPN was also probably correct. From the onset, it was obvious that the intrigues that had always characterised Nigerian politics would make it difficult to form a functional four-party alliance and

⁹ *Daily Times & Nigerian Tribune*, 20 July, 1979.

¹⁰ Interview with Alhaji Usman Shagari.

¹¹ The PRP and GNPP had large Hausa-Fulani followers just as the UPN and NPP enjoyed unassailably robust support from the Yoruba and Igbo respectively.

that the possibility of the four political parties fielding a joint presidential candidate was almost exactly nil. Therefore, the best political objective the four political parties could have achieved was probably the formation of a parliamentary alliance in the federal legislature. This would have given the alliance 59 seats in the senate against the NPN's 36 and 281 seats in the House of Representatives against the NPN's 168. The implication of the above would have been that the combined votes of the alliance members would have overwhelmed those of the government party in the federal parliament and all government bills to which the alliance was opposed would have met with defeat. This would have created a serious parliamentary confrontation which would have probably hastened the collapse of the Second Republic.

Be that as it may, the alliance was never to be. Indeed, the four-party alliance proposal began to show serious signs of stress almost as soon as the idea for its formation was mooted. This was not surprising given the gulf of trust among Nigerian politicians. For example, in the spirit of the alliance, the UPN directed its members and supporters to vote for the governorship candidates of the UPN in Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Bendel, Benue and Kwara States while those in Bauchi, Borno, Cross River, Gongola, Niger, Rivers and Sokoto States were asked to vote for the GNPP. The party further directed its members in Kano and Kaduna States vote for PRP candidates while those in Anambra, Imo and Plateau States were to vote for the NPP (*Daily Times*, 25 July, 1979). The above reflected the areas of strength of the parties. However, only the GNPP reciprocated the UPN's gesture by directing its members and supporters to vote for UPN candidates where the latter was sufficiently strong to win elections. On the contrary, the NPP dismissed the UPN's gesture as un-solicited, baseless and of no effect (*Nigerian Tribune*, 27 July, 1979) while the PRP, which never fully supported the alliance, dismissed it as unnecessary and frivolous (*Daily Times*, 29 July, 1979).

Although the leader and presidential candidate of the UPN, Chief Awolowo and Ibrahim Waziri, the presidential candidate of the GNPP, had thought that the alliance would field a joint presidential candidate; all the parties eventually fielded candidates for the presidential election. Indeed, what the proponents of the four-party alliance eventually had was a two-party alliance: while the NPP worked more firmly for an NPN-NPP alliance; the PRP neither fully supported nor totally opposed the alliance. Thus, the primary objective of the alliance fell through. The question this paper should ask and attempt to answer is: why could the four parties not form an alliance, electoral or parliamentary?

Anyone who is sufficiently familiar with the political maneuverings and gulf of trust amongst Nigeria's main ethnic nationalities in the pre-military era would not be surprised at the failure of the four-party alliance proposal. For instance, the NEPU/NCNC alliance of the First Republic was not an entirely happy one. After the 1959 federal elections, despite the great political persecution to which the NPC subjected NEPU members, the NCNC formed an alliance with the NPC at the central, thereby abandoning its NEPU ally to fend for itself against the NPC to which it stood opposed. This kind of experience would not have been the best recommendation for Alhaji Aminu Kano (the leader of NEPU and PRP) to enter into another political partnership with the leaders of the NPP with whom he formed an unhappy alliance twenty years earlier. Furthermore, the leaders of the UPN and the PRP never really operated on the same political wavelength. It would be recalled that in 1961, J.S. Tarka, the leader of the United Middle Belt Congress (an ally of the AG), approached Aminu Kano for the possibility of a NEPU-UMBC/AG alliance but Aminu Kano declined and dismissed the AG as "a tribalistic and

vindictive party”. Indeed, Aminu Kano declared that Chief Awolowo and himself were politically incompatible and as such, would never enter into any political collaboration with the latter (*Nigerian Citizen*, 8 February, 1961). There is no evidence to suggest that there was marked improvement in Awolowo-Aminu Kano relationship between 1961 and 1979 and since it was NEPU that transformed into the PRP under Mallam Aminu Kano, the possibility of a purposeful UPN/PRP political collaboration was probably exactly nil.

Indeed, available evidence suggests that the PRP detested the UPN. For instance, the former accused the NPN and the UPN of “injuring the emotions of the PRP” because of what it described as the ‘special status’ the UPN and NPN enjoyed from FEDECO. According to the PRP, the newspapers controlled by the two parties consistently “scooped out the most confidential and authoritative information from FEDECO” (*Daily Times*, 24 April, 1979). It is interesting to note that Dr. Azikiwe also accused the Police of according the NPN ‘special status’. It would be recalled that while on a campaign tour of Anambra State (Eastern Nigeria) in January 1979, Dr. Azikiwe wanted to have dinner in the Presidential Hotel, Enugu. Even though the NPP had already booked the Hotel, the Police prevented Azikiwe from using it; whereas the presidential candidate of the NPN had dinner in the same Hotel a few days earlier. Ironically, the Hotel in question was built by Dr. Azikiwe when he was Premier of the defunct Eastern Region.

With reference to the UPN/NPP, one would recall the NCNC/AG collaboration in the United Progressive Grand Alliance which, by every parameter, was a failure. Following the final breakdown of the NPC/NCNC Coalition Government in 1964, the former and the AG formed an alliance (christened UPGA) for the 1964 federal elections. At the end of the inconclusive election, the President (Azikiwe) refused to invite the candidate of the Nigerian National Alliance – the supposed winner of the election – to form a government. The political stalemate was however partially resolved after some agreements were reached. One of the agreements was that the Prime Minister should form a ‘broad based’ government. This, literally, should have meant a government formed by the three major political parties and the Nigerian National Democratic Party. On the contrary, the ‘broad based’ government formed by Alhaji Tafawa Balewa consisted of the NPC, NNNDP and NCNC and completely excluded the AG. The exclusion of its alliance partner notwithstanding, the NCNC participated in the Balewa-led government. Thus, just as the NEPU felt ‘betrayed’ by the NCNC in 1959; so did the AG in 1964.

Furthermore, in 1966, the Eastern Region took the path of secession in the confident expectation that Chief Awolowo would lead the Yoruba to follow suit. It would be re-called that on 1 May 1967, Chief Awolowo had said that the Eastern Region must be encouraged to remain part of the Nigerian Federation and that should it be allowed by acts of omission or commission to secede from Nigeria, then the “Western Region and Lagos must also stay out of the Federation” (Awolowo, 1967, p.1). Even though the above may not have been an invitation to Eastern Nigeria to secede nor an absolute guarantee that Western Nigeria would secede from the Federation; Igbo leaders felt betrayed when the defunct Eastern Region seceded and Chief Awolowo did not lead the West to follow suit. It would be recalled that General Yakubu Gowon released Chief Awolowo from prison on 2 August 1966 and appointed him the Vice-Chairman of the Federal Executive Council and Federal Commissioner of Finance on 4 June 1967.

Although, the condition upon which Awolowo premised the secession of the Western Region from the Nigerian Federation – i.e. the secession of the Eastern Region – was fulfilled, he did not lead Western Nigeria to secede. While Chief Awolowo may have meant exactly what the Igbo thought he meant; his appointment as Federal Commissioner of Finance and Vice-Chairman of Nigeria’s Federal Executive Council, which made him the highest ranking political office holder in the country, may have influenced his decision not to pull Western Nigeria out of the Federation. Also, the secession of the Igbo from the Federation left Nigeria with only two of the three major ethnic groups, being a Northerner, Lt.-Col. Gowon was probably absolutely sure of the loyalty and support of his kinsmen; getting Awolowo, leader of the Yoruba ethnic group, on his side was a very good political strategy by Gowon. It should also be emphasised that Awolowo was a civilian who could not have declared and sustained secession like Ojukwu did. Whatever reasons were responsible for Chief Awolowo’s action, Biafran leaders felt betrayed.

As a result of the above, Chief Awolowo had great difficulties explaining to eastern audiences the difference between what he had meant in 1967 and what Biafran leaders had understood him to mean. Indeed, virtually everywhere he went to campaign in Eastern Nigeria in 1979, Chief Awolowo was greeted with the shout of ‘Awo’, meaning ‘frog’ in Igbo language.¹² This may have been because Biafran leaders saw Chief Awolowo as politically unclean. Thus, in spite of the fact that the UPN spent huge sums of money on electronic and print advertisement in an attempt to explain to the Igbo what Chief Awolowo meant by his 1967 declaration, a cursory glance at the results of the 1979 general elections shows that the UPN failed woefully to endear itself to the Igbo. Apart from the general Awolowo-Igbo animosity discussed above, the rivalry between Chief Awolowo and Dr. Azikiwe throughout the campaign and more importantly, the gulf of trust between the two men did not conduce or augur well for the possibilities of an alliance embracing the two parties in 1979.¹³

The Federal Electoral Commission also contributed to the failure of the four-party alliance proposal. Since he who plays the piper dictates the tune, since independence, more often than not, Nigerian electoral bodies had tilted in favour of the party in power. While pointing out that there was nothing inherently or constitutionally wrong with the four-party alliance at that stage of the elections; FEDECO insisted that where two parties merged, one must drop its name, symbols, close down its field offices and assume the identity of the other (*Daily Times*, 25 July, 1979). Moreover, FEDECO insisted that if two or more parties formed a new party and adopted a new name, they would have to devise new symbols and seek fresh registration. At this point, the four-party alliance proposal ran into two hitches. One, there was no sufficient time for the parties to go through all the above formalities; two, and more importantly, none of the four parties involved in the alliance talks was prepared to opt for disbandment or subsuming of identity. While the deep-seated rivalry and gulf of trust between Chief Awolowo and Dr. Azikiwe prevented them from stepping down for each other; the travails of Aminu Kano with

¹²Interview with Nbazulike Amechi, c. 80, No. 17^A, Umuagbai/Okoloma Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, 22 February, 2010. Amechi He was a prominent leader of the NCNC. Popularly referred to as ‘basket mouth’, his utterances were largely responsible for the collapse of the NPC-NCNC alliance.

¹³ Interview with Alhaji Lateef Jakande, c.72, No. 5, Toyin Street, Ikeja Lagos, Nigeria, 3 August 2008. Alhaji Jakande was the Lagos State governorship candidate of the UPN in the 1979 elections and the governor of the State between 1979 and 1983.

respect to the issue of tax clearance probably prevented him from stepping down for any other presidential candidate. On the eve of the elections, FEDECO alleged that Alhaji Aminu Kano did not pay tax for 1976/77; 77/78 and 78/79. However, after a tortuous legal battle, on 1 August 1979, Justice Richard Rowland ruled that Aminu Kano was not a tax defaulter and was consequently cleared to contest the presidential election (*Ibid*, 2 August, 1979). Aminu Kano might have found it difficult to step down for another candidate after going through the harrowing legal tussle mentioned above. Indeed, only the GNPP presidential candidate, Waziri Ibrahim, offered to step down for Chief Awolowo (*Daily Sketch*, 23 July, 1979).

Furthermore, the NPP played a fundamental role in the failure of the alliance proposal. Considering the strategic position of the party in the four elections that preceded the presidential election, its consent and support was inevitable for the formation of any functional alliance. With 168 seats in the Federal House of Representatives and 36 in the Senate, the NPN controlled 37% of the former House and 38% of the latter. Thus, its largest number of seats in the federal parliament notwithstanding, the NPN did not have a working majority. With 16 seats in the Senate and 78 in the House of Representatives, the NPP controlled 17% of both Houses of the federal parliament (NAI: PX/G7F, 1979). The implication of the above was that an NPN-NPP Alliance would yield a working majority of 54% parliamentary seats in the Senate and 55% in the House of Representatives, although this would not have been sufficient to pass any bills requiring two-thirds majority, such as bills to amend the Constitution or create new states.

On the other hand, combined, the UPN, GNPP and the PRP controlled 46% vote in the Senate and 45% in the House of Representatives. Without the NPP's 17% control in both Houses, the three parties would not be able to muster a working majority in both Houses of the federal parliament should they form a parliamentary alliance. Thus, the NPP was wanted by the NPN as much as it was needed by the three other political parties. The strategic position of the NPP informed Dr. Azikiwe's description of the party as a beautiful bride being sought by many suitors (*The Punch*, 23 July, 1979). Indeed, Dr. Azikiwe described himself as "a [political] bride who can be wooed" (*Daily Times*, 1 August, 1979). From the beginning of the political maneuverings, it was almost obvious that the NPP would form an alliance with the NPN. Indeed, one of the probable reasons for the half-hearted and wavering support of the PRP for the four-party alliance proposal was what could be described as 'double-dealings' by the NPP. Just as the AG was alleged to have simultaneously dispatched two alliance-seeking delegations to the NPC and NCNC in 1959; the PRP alleged that the NPP held alliance talks with both the NPN and the UPN-GNPP in 1979. Available evidence suggests that the NPP actually sought a post-election parliamentary alliance with the NPN while simultaneously featuring in the four-party alliance proposal talks (see, for example, *Daily Sketch*, 30 August, 1979).

The above became evident immediately after FEDECO announced the results of the election. It would be recalled that the NPP joined the UPN and the GNPP in rejecting the results of the 1979 presidential elections, which, according to FEDECO, was won by Alhaji Shagari, the NPN candidate. Indeed, the 'statement of rejection' prepared by the three parties was read by Dr. Azikiwe. In the statement, the three parties said "on behalf of our three political parties and in the name of the vast majority of the people of Nigeria, we reject in its entirety and without any reservation whatsoever the declaration of Alhaji Sheu Shagari as president-elect" (*Daily Sketch*, 30 August, 1979). However, three days later, Dr. Azikiwe made a *volte-face*

and declared that he had ‘no *animus*’ (animosity) against the NPN (*Daily Sketch*, 24 August, 1979). Days later, the NPN and NPP formed a parliamentary alliance in the federal parliament. This meant the four-party alliance proposal had floundered. Under the 1979 Presidential Constitution, the President was elected for a four-year term and could be re-elected for another and final four-year term. Thus, another general election was due in 1983. Like in 1979, attempts were made at forming a Progressive Peoples’ Party (PPP) and the Progressive Parties Alliance (PPA) in 1983. This is briefly discussed in the next section.

THE PROGRESSIVE PEOPLES’ PARTY (PPA) AND THE PROGRESSIVE PARTIES’ ALLIANCE (PPA)

The Progressive Peoples’ Party (PPP) and the Progressive Parties Alliance (PPA) were two unregistered political associations in the Second Republic. The origin of the PPA is traceable to Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Immediately after the 1979 elections and assumption of office by President Shehu Shagari, Chief Awolowo sought to prepare his party for the 1983 elections. Having refused to be part of the NPN/NPP alliance, he decided to reach out to other parties in order to spread the tentacles of his party and, at the same time, ensure a cooperative arrangement with other political parties. To achieve this objective, at a President-in-Council meeting in April 1980, Chief Awolowo directed the five UPN governors to reach out to their colleagues in other political parties for the purposes of coming together in regular meetings.¹⁴ These meetings were to allow for interactions that would make it possible for such governors to understudy each other in their respective states so that like-minded governors could work together and, on that basis, put in place an effective electioneering campaign, based on records of performance, for the 1983 elections.

Consequently, the UPN governors made overtures to other governors in the NPP, GNPP and PRP but only Governors Abubakar Rimi and Balarabe Musa of the GNPP welcomed the overtures.¹⁵ Consequently, the ‘Progressive Governors Forum’ was formed on 11 October 1981 (*The Punch*, 12 October, 1981) and commenced regular meetings almost immediately. At their fifth meeting held in Lagos on 12 January 1982, the ‘progressive governors’ broached the idea of forming a Progressive Peoples’ Party (*Daily Times & Punch*, 13 January, 1982). An Implementation Committee was subsequently set up but before further actions could be taken, some important events took place in quick succession.

The NPP which had earlier stayed away from the meetings of the ‘progressive governors’ lost its parliamentary alliance with the NPN. It would be recalled that the NPN-NPP alliance, which was a child of necessity rather than a product of ideological

¹⁴ Interview with Lateef Jakande, *op cit*.

¹⁵ Interview with Samuel Aluko, 80, No 30, Owo Avenue, Ijapo Estate, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Aluko was the leader of what could be described as the academic wing of the AG. He played prominent roles in the organisation and the day-to-day running of the AG particularly when Chief Awolowo was in prison. He also served as the Chairman of Ado Council between 1954 and 1956. Most of the series of meetings that eventually culminated in the formation of the Unity Party of Nigeria were held in his house. He was interviewed on 15 January and 27 August 2010 when this author was on field trip for his doctoral thesis..

compatibility, was not a functional one.¹⁶ While the NPN often accused its alliance partner of ‘non-compliance’ with the letter and spirit of the accord; the NPP consistently complained of not receiving anything commensurate with the number of parliamentary seats controlled by it in both Houses of the federal parliament.¹⁷ Consequently, the alliance hit the rocks. Comparing this with the failure of the NPC-NCNC alliance of the First Republic, Omotoso (2003, p. 334) wrote

The alliance between Shagari’s NPN and Azikiwe’s NPP mocked in its repetition of its alliance between Balewa’s NPC and Azikiwe’s NCNC...Just as the alliance of 1959 approached another election in 1964 and collapsed, the one of 1979 approached 1983 and broke down

The breakdown of the NPN-NPP parliamentary alliance meant that the NPP had to look elsewhere for political collaboration and, as should be expected, the party joined the ‘progressives’ and almost immediately advocated the merger of the four parties into a mega party (*National Concord*, 22 February, 1982). This sudden *volte face* and hard-line stance was obviously a punitive measure – the NPP was on a revenge mission: having been booted out of its alliance with the NPN, the former thought that the only way of crippling the latter was by presenting a strong and united front against it.¹⁸

On 15 January 1982 the governors and other leaders of the ‘progressive parties’ met in Benin. This date was probably chosen because of its importance in the political history of Nigeria. Apart from the fact that the First Republic collapsed on that date in 1966, the Nigerian civil war ended on that date in 1970. At the meeting, the importance of working together and presenting a common front against the NPN was stressed and a 40-member steering committee was thereafter set up to provide the operational framework of political collaboration amongst them. The committee, which comprised ten members from each party, met in Kano on 19 February 1982. However, as a result of conflict of interests and ideologies and the gulf of trust amongst them, the parties maintained irreconcilable standpoints at the Benin meeting. While the NPP maintained that nothing short of an immediate merger/fusion of the four parties was good enough; the PRP posited that immediate merger was not feasible. The GNPP was a little ambivalent as it pushed for a grand alliance while the UPN insisted that the four parties should first form an alliance for the 1983 elections and fuse into one party thereafter. These conflicting positions produced a stalemate which compelled the setting up of an 8-member Technical Committee to harmonise the various proposals and make recommendations as appropriate. The Technical Committee recommended that the four parties should first form an alliance and later merge under the name of the Progressive Peoples’ Party (*National Concord*, 26 February, 1982).

For reasons akin to those responsible for the failure of the four-party alliance proposal in 1979, the reactions of the leaders of the four parties to the recommendations of the Technical Committee were divergent. Consequently, both the 40-man

¹⁶ Generally, in Africa, coalition or alliance governments are not anchored on ideological compatibility but on political necessities and vicissitudes – another reason for non sustainability of development in Africa.

¹⁷ See, for example, *National Concord*, 15 September 1981; 26 October 1981; *Punch*, 2 November 1981; 22 December 1981 & *Daily Times*, 10 January 1982.

¹⁸ Interview with Ebenezer Babatope, c. 67, No.1, Fehintola Close, off Ijebu-Jesa Road, Ilesha, Osun State, South-West Nigeria. Babatope was the Director of Organisation of the Unity Party of Nigeria between 1978 and 1983. Interview was held on 20 November 2010

committee and its 8-member off shoot were disbanded.¹⁹ Attempts at forming the Progressive Peoples' Party had failed woefully; although, the leaders of the four parties agreed to form a Progressive Parties Alliance (PPA) with a proviso that any two or three of the PPA members could form the PPP while still retaining their membership of the PPA (*West Africa*, 17 March, 1982). This wretched compromise signaled the end of any serious efforts at forming the PPP. Thus, neither the PPP nor the PPA had any noticeable impact on the 1983 elections. A brief analysis of the factors that were responsible for this failure is apposite. It would be recalled that the NPP was in alliance with the NPN up till July 1981 before switching over to the 'progressives' in December. This was bound to turn the table and engineer suspicion. Indeed, Chief Awolowo opined that "the NPP are not easy to understand and so it is not easy to catalogue them" (*Africa Now*, May 1982, p. 21). Indeed, one may venture to conclude that the immediate reason for the failure of attempts at forming a functional PPP or PPA was Awolowo--Azikiwe vagaries and gulf of trust.

The two men realized this. For example, in a letter to Chief Awolowo, Dr. Azikiwe recounted how political vagaries and gulf of trust had consistently set them against each other and stressed the gains of working together irrespective of their ethnic, political or ideological leanings. The latter pleaded with the former "to forget the vagaries of the past, and...face the future with optimism with a heart for any fact" (*Sunday Concord*, 7 March, 1982). In his response, Chief Awolowo recounted how he had always respected the contributions of Dr. Azikwe to nation building which "politics and inter-ethnic suspicions have, over the years, inhibited from articulation" (*ibid*). Furthermore, Chief Awolowo said since grudges and vindictiveness were injurious to the mental well-being of whoever engaged in them, he said he had forgiven the past (*ibid*). After this fence-mending, Awolowo then went on to articulate the differing roles he felt the two men should play in Nigerian politics. According to him:

Fortunately for us, we could both claim to know, from private hints all over the place. that the burning, indeed the all consuming united desire of the vast majority of our people is that you and I should go into a partnership in which you will be the NATION'S GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER AND FRIEND, and I, its CHIEF SERVANT. The details can be satisfactorily worked out, and effectively implemented under our constitution. All of us know the honours which you richly deserve, and these will be assured by appropriate legislation (*Sunday Concord*, 7 March, 1982)

From the above, it is clear that Chief Awolowo proposed a purely ceremonial role for Dr. Azikiwe and proposed the position of the nation's chief executive for himself in any future political partnership. This also could not be realized. As pointed out above, neither of them was prepared to step down for each other. Indeed, the UPN declared unequivocally that "Chief Awolowo cannot and will never be a running mate to anybody at his age" and that he would not play a second fiddle to Zik (*Sunday Times*, 16 January, 1983). On the other hand, the NPP dismissed the possibility of Dr. Azikiwe stepping down for Chief Awolowo. Thus, like in 1979, the protagonists of the PPP and the PPA had thought that the alliance would field a joint presidential candidate for the 1983 elections. However, by November 1982, virtually all the members of the PPA had elected their presidential candidates for the 1983 elections. Indeed, in January 1983, Chief Awolowo said the possibility of a joint presidential candidate could be realized only through divine intervention (*ibid*). Thus, like in 1979, ethnic rivalry and gulf of

¹⁹ Interview with Lateef Jakande, *op. cit.*

trust hindered the formation of an alliance (or a mega party) that might have helped in smoothing some of the rough edges of Nigeria's pervasive electoral conflict, assuaged inter-ethnic rivalry, provided a fairly solid base for the Nigerian democratic process and acted as a springboard for sustainable development during the Second Republic and beyond.. Indeed, the 1983 elections were followed by wide-spread violence which once again propelled the army to interfere in the democratic process. Thus, of the approximately two and a half decades between 1960, when Nigeria gained independence from Britain and 1983, when the Second Republic collapsed, democratically elected governments lasted less than a decade while the military held sway for about one and a half decades.

CONCLUSION

Political stability and continuity are central to socio-economic sustainability. While a relatively stable political environment is a catalyst for socio-economic engineering and sustainable development; an unstable political environment inhibits the wheel of development. Since independence in October 1960, with the exception of the on-going fourth republic which commenced in May 1999, Nigerian politics had been devastatingly unstable. As can be inferred from the paper, even the military, referred to in some quarters as a redemptive institution, did not only subject the country's political process to unprecedented twists and turns; it plunged it into a 30-month Civil War, which, throughout the period it lasted, effectively arrested all forms of development in the country. Unfortunately, following the exit of the military from power in September 1979, ethno-regional cleavages prevented the initiation, emergence and development of policies, institutions and programmes necessary for sustainable development. The Hausa/Fulani-Igbo parliamentary alliance formed after the 1979 elections broke down over issues that bordered on gulf of trust amongst the leaders of the major ethnic groups while all attempts at forming a four-party alliance, a Progressive Peoples' Party and a Progressive Parties' Alliance fell through for the same reasons. Thus, ethnic rivalry and gulf of trust smoldered the Nigerian Second Republic, hindered sustainable development and sounded its death knell.

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