people believe that democracy transitions in many African countries, consolidation of democracy has been a huge problem. These international organizations are mainly divided to avoid conflict in terms of the needful of what might happen next. The political reality in these successful countries may have exhibited an attitude conducive to give credence to the existence of the right path, a few have succeeded. The political parties should also be trained to be ideological based and principle inclined instead of just capturing power for personal benefit. This, will no doubt enable for proper monitoring, implementation and effective utilization of supports from donors agencies henceforth.

Keywords: International Donor Agencies, Election support and Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Election is one of the cardinal principles of a democratic system anywhere in the world. It is basically a peaceful means in which power is transferred from one democratically elected government to another thereby leading to positive continuity and freedom of choice willingly for the electorates (Mahajan, 2012). Election has recently become an international concern with the advanced democratic states using the platform of international organizations to foster and promote democratic governance especially the aspect of the election. The international donor agencies in collaboration with civil societies have been pushing for electoral support globally and most especially in emerging democracies (Abdullahi, 2015). One of these developing democracies that have been receiving attention and support from international donor agencies for electoral conduct is the Nigerian state.

Nigeria has been receiving foreign democratic assistance since the rebirth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 through different international agencies (Bariledum, Godpower & Tambari, 2016). These international organizations are mainly from the US and other developed countries of the world. Agencies such as UNDP and its umbrella organizations under it are not left out in contributing their supports to ensuring peaceful conduct of elections in Nigeria. The organizations are often engaged in the act of either monitoring of elections or providing financial and technical support to the electoral body, civil societies and other specifically targeted groups in the country.

Despite successful transitions in many African countries, consolidation of democracy has been a huge problem confronting political elites (Van de Walle & Butler, 1999; Barkan, 2000; Sandbrook, 1996). Donor countries have encouraged African political elites through aid to establish democratic consolidation to ensure that these emerging democracies don’t fall back into the authoritarian regimes that governed these countries before the early 90s. However, while many African countries struggle to get their democracies on the right path, a few have succeeded. The political elites in these successful countries may have exhibited an attitude conducive to give credence to the existence of the democratic features that made consolidation possible. On the other hand, the expectation people believe that democracy might bring to many African countries, such as Nigeria, after several military takeovers has not yielded any meaningful results in consolidating democracy.
Accordingly, (Ihovbere, 1999; Mustapha, 1999; Enemuo, 1999) are of the views that the Nigerian transition election of 1999 was massively rigged right from the onset, and that the outcome did not represent the will of the people, and that the electorate ignored the flaws in the processes because they were bent on getting rid of military rule. Even after that, nothing has actually changed with regards to violence in the general elections of 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 respectfully (Bamgbose, 2012)

It is unfortunate that the political violence and irregularities that many expected to stop after transition elections still reared their ugly head in subsequent Nigerian elections. In the 2007 Nigerian general elections, Collier and Vicente (2014) reported that within two days of the elections, over three hundred (300) people were killed as a result of electoral violence.

Lewis (2011) adjudges Nigeria’s political history to be a failure. This is due to ethnic polarization, violence and electoral misconduct in the First Republic; massive corruption, factionalism, and flawed elections in the Second Republic; and the toppling of an elected civilian government in the aborted Third Republic. Voting was marred by disorganization, misconduct, fraud and violence in the 2011 elections witnessed ‘divisive communal politics’ with ‘corrosive violence’ in some polling stations, all these pose challenges to the Fourth Republic of Nigerian democracy (Lewis, 2011).

Re-counting the state of democracy in some countries, including Nigeria, Diamond, (2008) argued that countries such as Nigeria occupy an ambiguous or disputed space between democracy and overt authoritarianism. They have a multiparty electoral system, with significant opposition. They have some space for civil society and intellectual dissent. However, individual and associational freedoms are under such mounting pressure, or elections are so riddled with fraud, or the arenas of political opposition and competition are so constrained and intimidated by the domineering power of the incumbent, that it is difficult to call the systems democratic, even in the minimal sense.

The political elites are yet to accept the rules. Elections, which are seen by some scholars and many Africans as one of the essentials of democracy, have lost their substance in Nigeria. Civil society groups in Nigeria are yet to assume their primary function of regulating the activities of the ruling elites, because in some cases they are not given the needed freedom to operate.

With regards to elections, Gyimah-Boadi (2015) notes that the use of a ballot box, which has been generally accepted as the only means through which a political power gets its legitimacy, has been severely weakened by ‘violence and conflict that so often accompany the electoral process’ and that political elites, in most cases, see elections as door-die affairs, campaigns are often hostile and fierce.

Omotola, (2010) asserted that the post-independence African nationalists have engaged in all forms of electoral violence, like “assassinations, attempted assassinations, confinement, battering, arson, looting, political thuggery, destruction and damage of property. In most of these elections, other stake holders have suffered from unnecessary stuffy from the ruling elites. Therefore, as some of these elections were organized by leaders who reluctantly did not want to leave office, one would expect that these elites might sabotage the process. Of course, when an incumbent organizes election where he is one of the contestants, the chances of the process going in his favour could increase and this has been a case in most African countries.

Scholars such as Brown (2005), Joseph (1997) and Carothers (1997), posited that ruling elites agreed to: give opposition parties a chance for competition, but did not allow them to win; gave the independent press freedom to work, but not actively; gave its civil society groups the right to function, but not successfully; accepted that elections be conducted, but did not provide the opportunity to dislodge the ruling political party. On the other hand, political elites who participate in malicious displays with impunity have not been restrained by democratic constitutions, and in many parts of Africa, the media and civil society operate under the constant threat of closure or severe restriction.

It is against this background that this paper attempted to examine United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and electoral supports to elections in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015 general elections. In order to address the nitty-gritty of this paper, the researchers segmented the paper into seven subtitles to include: introduction, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, methodology, discussions of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The study on assessing international donor agencies and election supports in Nigeria examines the nexus between donor agencies and electioneering supports to Nigeria from 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 respectfully. Scholars in field of political in general and international relations to be specific have aired their thoughtful and dispassionate pieces about international donor agencies across most parts of the world. Yet, none from the researchers’ investigation has taken cognisance of the role of international donor agencies and electioneering supports in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. This gap identified in extant literature has greatly constituted a problematique that inform this
research. The paper examines the nexus between United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and electioneering supports to elections in Nigeria from 1999-2015.

The rebirth of democratic dispensation in Nigeria came into effect in 1999 leading to the emergence of the fourth republic. This came after a long time of despotic and obnoxious military rule in the country. Democracy was highly embraced by all with the expectations of delivering on the mandates of democratic dividends and socio-economic development of the entire country. Nevertheless, not too far into the fourth republic, the body polity became overheated by lots of challenges namely: overt corruption, electoral abnormalities, the politics of godfatherism, incessant poverty reinforced by mass unemployment, security question etc. These challenges no doubt constitute a quagmire to democratic stability and consolidation despite the role of international donor agencies. The system today lacks an agenda for the masses and their rights terribly suppressed. Instead of peace, stability, development and an egalitarian society, the nation is now characterized and marred by political instability.

The paradox of international development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa is that assistance has been geared towards strengthening the institutions of accountability – the electoral channel, legislature, the judicial system, special institutions of constraint and local government. Nevertheless, to date, donor assistance and domestic constituencies have not been able to stem the continued and, in some instances, increasing executive dominance over political processes in sub-Saharan Africa’s new democracies. While donors are spending resources on creating political checks and balances, it appears that continued aid disbursements enable the same governments to maintain a strong degree of top-down control based on patronage politics. So, in a bit to address the problematique of the study, the following questions were raised by the researchers: What is the nature of election supports given to Nigeria by the USAID in the Fourth Republic? What is the role played by USAID in the successes of elections in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic? To what extent has the election supports by USAID impacted on Nigeria’s electoral progress in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic and of course, What are the challenges bedeviling the successes of elections/electoral processes in Nigeria despite supports by the USAID?

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Polyarchy theory of international democracy and democratization as advanced by Dahl and expanded by William. The concept of Polyarchy was developed by American Political Scientist Robert Dahl to express the proper acquisition and application of democratic institutions within a political system that leads to the involvement of plural actors in democratization process (Dahl, 2006).

Democracy is an electoral representation through a well-organized credible and accepted elections and representative government. Polyarchy developed an empirical definition of democratization and it has referred to a process by which a set of institutions that can be perceived as an ideal type of democratic governance are formed (Dahl, 1989). Therefore, public control of democracy is necessary and authority should be exercise by societal institutions, organizations and civil societies.

Dahl (2006) emphasized that the extent to which these societal actors mentioned above can operate autonomously and independently from the state enhances the democratic quality of a state. The theory was advanced by Robinson (2013) in what he termed promoting Polyarchy 20 years after Robert Dahl in his attempt to advance and promote the theory of its applicability at the international stage. He cited that he advanced the theory in 1996 to have included international Polyarchy principles of democracy and 20 years after that he still feels the need to re-assert the status (Robinson, 2013).

It is believed that the institutionalization of democratic institutions and processes is a pre-requisite for Polyarchy. These institutions according to Dahl (2006) include:

1. Universal suffrage and the right to run for public office;
2. Free and fair periodic elections for all eligible citizens;
3. Availability of freedom of speech and the guarantee of protection;
4. Existence and a free flow of information independent of government;
5. Right to establish formal and informal autonomous organisations;
6. Representative and responsible government and accountability of government.

The global Polyarchy is the process whereby US from 1980s continue with an attempt at democratization process globally. Internal political and electoral intervention has been perpetrated by US through international agencies for many decades in the name of democracy promotion (Robinson, 2013). As capitalist globalization advanced, global elites forged consensus around trans-national agenda of neo-liberalism and Polyarchy democracy. As countries and regions have integrated into global capitalism, they have seen the rise of new trans-nationally oriented elites organised in business associations, political parties, civil groups, the mass media and so on that are supported by United States and Western political intervention programmes conducted under the pretext of democracy promotion (Robinson, 2013). Thus, democracy promotion agenda seeks to recruit local elites that can conform to the international elite agenda of capitalist interest and
eliminate resistance from local elite that are against their interest.

They also seek to contain the masses and restrain them from becoming politicised and mobilised on their own independent of or in opposition to the trans-national elite interest by incorporating them unconsciously into the political order that these programmes seek to establish and to influence political institutions such as electoral body in determining the direction s of the emergence of ruling elite (Robinson, 2013).

The theory of Polyarchy as advocated by Dahl (2006) and further established by Robinson (2013) on democratic governance and institutionalisation of democracy through its promotion globally clearly explain the operations and activities of international donor agencies globally and in Nigeria specifically in electoral support. It can explain how the donor agencies promote the Western liberal electoral agenda and process in Nigeria despite the financial strengths of Nigeria to cater for her election appropriately without any need for intervention. The aim is suspicious by locals and even some INEC officials and policymakers. The purpose of the Western donor agencies is understood as expressed by Robinson (2013) to manipulate the local elites and the populace to cooperate with trans-national elites through determining who shall emerge as winner in the sponsored electoral process by the donors.

Also, the position of Dahl (2006) of the fostering of democratic institutions and free and fair elections as one of the major assumptions of Polyarchy explains the way in which the donor electoral support fits in this work.

The theory is weak in its assumptions that all world democracies must be anchored along the line of Western democracies particularly American liberal style before it is considered a Polyarchy in principles. The theory also assumed that Polyarchy principles must be extended globally in which it will be cumbersome for the US and its allies to do so successfully owing to the dynamic nature of global politics. The notion of the theory also that, promotion of Polyarchy and democratic institutionalisation globally is all about the interest of trans-national elite is defective in the sense that some international donor agencies are independent of the state as proposed by Dahl in his earlier Polyarchy in their nature and international operations.

The theory above is justified in that, it can help examine analytically the challenges of elections and democratic consolidations in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic as it designs the systematic structure through which a democratic political system can effectively function. Polyarchy theory of democracy is quite fascinating to this paper in that its value lies in the fact that it exposes and explains the expectation of any political system, especially as it emphasizes the conduct of credible elections which is one of the factors responsible for consolidation in any democratic enterprises.

1.4 Methodology

The study relied on primary and secondary sources of the data collection. In this wise, interviews were used for the purpose of this study; the primary method of data collection is the interview method. This method helped the researcher in getting professional information from only qualified and persons working directly with the concern department/unit. The researchers make use of interviews because the study intends to get detailed and composite information from the respondents.

On secondary data collection utilized involves intense library search and internet browsing. Here, books and journal articles, unpublished theses, government publications, and all other processed data that were relevant to the topic of investigation were collected and analyzed so as to complement, validate, or reject certain claims in primary data and other literature.

Historical or documentary sources of data collection were also relied upon; data collection were sourced from text books, journals, monographs, newspapers and news magazines, published gazettes, unpublished theses and research projects. Documented data were also sourced from the study population for analysis. The internet was also maximized with online resources including journals and books articles that are accessible providing important data for this study.

The population of the study was drawn from the stakeholders and individuals who can give basic information on the topic of investigation. For this study, the target population falls under the following agencies: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Abuja, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIA), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The reason for this cross section is that the institutions are key to elections and democracy especially, when it comes to the topic of study but that they can provide useful insight as regards United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and electoral support in the Nigeria’s democracy between 1999-2015.
The essence of sampling is to reduce the population under study to a manageable size and to meet up with the stipulated research period/time. The researcher used purposive sampling technique. Hence, the purposive selection of the respondents in this study sample from the target population. In this study the sample was drawn to cover the views of some selected official representative that were identified through Random sampling technique. Through this technique, total of fifteen (15) respondents from each one (1) of the following were selected for interview from these organizations (United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Abuja, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIA) and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). These organizations are responsible for sourcing information on international donor agencies and electoral supports in Nigeria from 1999-2015. Those interviewed are senior staff in each of the organizations that have worked for ten years and above in-charge of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and electoral support in the Nigeria’s democracy from 1999-2015.

Those interviewed are senior staffs of the organizations above who occupies the position of Directors and Deputy Directors. The researcher used purposive sampling method as it is the best method that delimits the survey to cover only respondents that have the relevant information that the researcher needs to complete the research. Hence, the reason for selecting only some people with qualified information from the above listed institutions. The Sampling therefore helped to reduce the number to a more manageable size.

The methods that were used in this study are justifiable in that it simple analysis and presentation of data that are well understood. Moreover, the methods is suitable for carrying out large population of study as is the case with this.

### 1.5 Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing discussion, the following findings were made;

- It was discovered that the USAID and multilateral donors like the EC have primarily supported the installation of the Euro-American version of liberal democracy, expressed overtly as support for rule of law, individual freedom and civil liberty, and free and fair elections. Regardless, USAID has made some contributions to democratic development, especially interventions that were targeted at civil society. These interventions have produced some desired results as well as unanticipated outcomes. This finding agrees with research question one that “USAID has been given both tangible and intangible supports to Nigeria during each election period in the Fourth Republic said 1999-2015.”
- The study also that the USAID played a significant role in the electoral support but to a lesser extent and they are yet to achieve their objectives as most of the informants responded negatively in terms of the needful of what USAID need to do to influence election and democratic governance in Nigeria. Although finding shows that USAID contributed to the process of elections in Nigeria through provisions of technical support to INEC staff, civil societies and weak groups but it was not adequate to ensure a transparent election in the country. Similarly, Adetula, Kew & Kwaja (2010); Abdullahi (2015); Bariledum, Godpower, & Tambari (2016) argued that the amount provided for technical support for the conduct of elections and training of electoral body officials as well as support to civil societies were not enough to influence the electoral process in Nigeria and foster democratic good governance because the country is self-sufficient financially in funding the entire electoral process independently without relying on external donors’ support unlike many other African countries. This made the objectives of USAID far from realized within the period of study 1999 to 2015. This means that the presentation of question three which posited that the “USAID has been playing the role of statesmanship and democratic guard in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic” is valid.
- Again, it was discovered that the US through USAID has been assisting Nigerian elections since 1999 with the commencement of the Fourth Republic up to 2015 General Elections. The electoral donor support amounted to millions of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organization</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Number of Sampled Population (Interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Abuja</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIA)</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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*Source: Field Survey, February 2022.*
dollars and billions of naira in the Fourth Republic. The assistance and electioneering supports in this category consist of technical assistance to electoral bodies to improve the administration of elections, supports for voters’ education and election monitoring by international observers. Therefore, the finding corroborate with research question three which states that “electoral supports given to Nigeria by USAID have to a greater extent impacted on the Nigeria’s democracy in the Fourth Republic”.

Finally, it was discovered that the major challenges faced by USAID include transportation into remote areas, language barrier in communication with the natives, corruption in the electoral system which impedes the conduct of smooth elections. The study also shows that insecurity and violence have negative effects on the performances of the international donor agencies. Research question four which states that “Corruption, persistent electoral violence and human rights abuse are the tentative challenges bedeviling the successes of elections in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic” is also valid.

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researchers are of the opinion that the rebirth of democracy and democratization process in Nigeria well was welcomed with high expectations and enthusiasm since it has the capacity of ensuring political stability and socio-economic development. Nevertheless, this hope was soon dashed as the political landscape of the nation was turn to a battle ground not for national survival but for extending self-centric and elitist agenda. The system today lacks an agenda for the masses and their rights terribly suppressed. Instead of peace, stability, development and an egalitarian society, the nation is now characterized and marred by political instability.

However, the international development agencies initiated development assistance towards improving democratic governance in Nigeria solely to assist and support new democracies to complete their unfinished transitions and progressively moved towards democratic consolidation. Some of the areas that benefitted from this development assistance include the public sector, election management and process, as well as manpower development. In addition, some of the major institutions that were targeted are the state and non-state actors including the civil service, election management bodies (INEC and ISEC), and civil society organizations (CSOs). Indeed, the logic for providing development support to both the state and non-state actors lies in the fact that both performances complement each other in the democratization process.

Due to its influence on credible election across the globe, democracy promotion is increasingly becoming an important foreign policy instruments employed by development agencies to influence their relations with the developing countries. Democracy promotion is somehow complex and confusing but involves establishment and/or restoration of democratic government through military and economic sanctions or providing financial and technical support to countries involve in democratization process. Arguably, promoting democracy implies preparing the ground for establishing a democratic government or rather, strengthening the existing democratic institutions leading to consolidation of democratic rule. This definition presupposes that there are different ways of promoting democracy depending on the situation or circumstances surrounding relations among countries of the world.

1.7 Recommendations

The study recommended that USAID should monitor the implementation and effective use of the electoral supports to avoid fungibility. Political parties should also be trained to be ideological and principled in nature instead of just ascending to power for personal benefit.

Again, the study recommended that USAID should provide a substantial amount of money for production of pamphlets and small books on local languages and lingua franca of each of the six geo-political zones on political awareness and electoral conduct.

The study as well recommended that USAID should transcend their Western interest and set the Nigerian agenda ahead by identifying culture and peculiarities of the politics by integrating them into their objectives. The Political culture of Nigeria should be studied and the donors should endeavor to drastically curb the influence of money politics.

Finally, the study recommended that USAID should hire local experts who will penetrate all nooks and crannies in the country for proper and intensive civic voter education and political awareness to the electorates at the grassroots level.

References


