

**PARTY POLITICS, ELECTORAL PROCESS AND TRANSITIONAL DEMOCRACY:  
A COMPRATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND GHANA UNDER FOURTH REPUBLIC**

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**Abstract**

*Ghana and Nigeria are two countries in the West African sub-region that share significant historical similarities like British colonialism, nationalism, economic crisis, prolonged military rule, multi-party democracy and are in their fourth republics. With the global democratization process, Ghana and Nigeria successfully made the transition to civil rule in 1992 and 1999 respectively and are rated differently on the democratization scale. While the former is rated high, the latter is rated low in comparative ranking within the same period of democratization. This paper sets out to assess party politics and electoral processes in transitional democracies: A comparative study of Nigeria and Ghana under fourth republic. The paper adopts secondary source and adopts structural functional theory for its analysis. Also, the paper finds that in Ghana the virtue of the Electoral Commission Act of 1992, the chairman and members of the Commission are appointed by the president but are accountable to the parliament, whereas in Nigeria chief Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman is also appointed by the president subject to senate approval but the ruling party and the president have great influence on the chairman as well as the conduct of the elections. The paper recommends that efforts should be made as much as practicable to make elections less hostile and crisis prone. It is absolutely necessary for the government to ensure that political leaders emerge through democratic procedures in every round of elections.*

**Keyword: Party Politics, Electoral Process, Transitional Democracy, Nigeria, Ghana**

**Introduction**

Contemporary literature on emerging democracies and party politics identify the arts of elections as ultimate measures for democratic credentials in a country. If free and fair elections are held regularly within a constitutionally stipulated time frame and in particular, where regime change occurs through such elections, it is enough reasons for a country to be branded democratic. Recent studies conducted by Ghanaian and Nigerian Universities on Ghana and Nigeria elections since 1996 tend to affirm this view. In contrast, other literature argues that merely conducting free and fair elections at regular intervals does not make a country democratic state. What is important is the quality of elections held and the meaning attached to them. Couple with the fact that, the paper argues that, for a state to be democratic, there are functions of enduring electoral body and sound party politics manifested in decent political behaviour which are enshrined in the basic tenets of political party systems in any given government. The descriptive and comparative critical method of analysis is adopted for examining the dynamics of party politics and electoral processes between Ghana and Nigeria with the view to determining their transitory democratic status. Ultimately, the study attempts to show how the various conceptions of party politics and electoral processes in these countries have drawn them either nearer or further away from achieving democratization.

Electoral competition has progressively occupied a central place in the political life of almost all the countries of the West African sub-region since the beginning of what has been called the third wave of democratization at the beginning of the 1990s. The direct consequence of this, according to Kambale (2011), has been the creation of Electoral Bodies (EBs) described as independent of the executive in almost all the countries of the sub-region. Hence, electoral bodies have become a keystone of the process of democratization in the countries of West Africa. Their composition,

mandate and activities have attracted increasing public attention. The role of Independent Electoral Bodies or Electoral Commissions is crucial to the outcome of an election as these electoral bodies derive their powers and mandate from the national constitutions. This, as remarked by Mapuva (2010), include administering and implementing laws regarding the registration of voters, overseeing the actual conduct of elections, supervising the ballot and the count, promoting transparency at all levels and being accountable to the public and parliament where one exists. But most important of all, the role of an EB is to ensure that elections are conducted in conformity with the laws of the country (Mapuva, 2010).

In West Africa, overwhelming evidence points to the fact that elections conducted by independent electoral bodies are more successful, and the results respected. In countries where election results have been respected, the state has ceded greater responsibility to the electoral administration body, such as the Electoral Commission in Mali, Ghana and Senegal. In the same way, where evidence indicate the absence of administrative clarity and the political will on the part of the Electoral Commission to enforce the rules, election results are always viewed with suspicion by the populace as is the case in Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. In such an atmosphere, groups who feel swindled and abandoned by the electoral process will resort to nondemocratic forms of protests (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

It is against the above background that this paper became imperative and set to examine party politics and electoral processes in Nigeria and Ghana under the Fourth Republic. The choice of Nigeria and Ghana was predicated on the premises that both countries share similar historical experiences. Both countries were victims of exploitative and dehumanizing British colonialism.

### **Conceptualizing Transitional Democracy**

Democratic Transition is a process of Democratization where a state undergoes regime change away from a particular type of authoritarianism to a more liberal and/or democratic one (Huntington, 1991). Transitional or imperfect democracy is characterized by the fragility of its institutions and the dissatisfaction of the people with the democratic procedures for the emergence of their political leaders.

Transitional Democracies are about developing states that are aspiring to become a more democratic political regime including substantive political changes moving in a democratic direction. It can equally go with the scenario where people govern themselves by regular elections through which their political leaders are periodically determined or policies governing them are chosen so as to attain maturity in democracy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted the structural functional theory as its theoretical base. Propounded by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell (1966), the structural functional theory underscores the role of structures and functions in understanding party politics and electoral processes in transitory democracy and the conditions under which the structures can perform its functions effectively.

**The basic assumption of the structural-functional theory** is that all systems have structures, which can be identified, and those structures perform specific set of tasks if they are to remain in existence. All political systems are involved in the activities of the State, while the latter works towards the interests of the former (Johari, 2011). Consequently, the structural-functional analysis enables us to establish the relevance of the structures created by government to conduct elections and whether these structures have played any significant role in the consolidation of democracy in the countries under study: Nigeria and Ghana. The theory further helps us to understand the level of participation of the citizens in the electoral process in these countries (Johari, 2011).

In pragmatic terms, Electoral Bodies (EB) as structures are seen as a key democratic institutions with explicit functions. In most Sub-Saharan African countries, these commissions are established to oversee the conduct of public elections. To this end, the independence and credibility of the body is

fundamental to the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral process. Therefore, the conduct and fairness of the commission is important. Obviously, the conduct of the Electoral Bodies is a decisive factor in the determination of electoral outcomes, and their acceptability by the political actors. This implies that election of public officials is an important aspect of the electoral process, and for election to be free and fair, the citizens must have confident or agree with the outcome of the election. Hence, the institution that performs the conduct of election is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the case of Nigeria and the Electoral Commission (EC), in the case of Ghana (Aiyede, 2007).

And so, there is a set of functional requirements, and operational conditions that must be satisfied if the structures, INEC and EC are to continue to exist. Failure of these institutions to function in its primary assignment, will lead to malfunctioning of the whole system, and this will hamper democratic consolidation and consequently leads to structural decay. For example, in Nigeria, widespread electoral malpractices perpetuated by the Independent National Electoral Commission in 2007 provoked post-election violence which compelled President Yar'Adua (late) to promise in his inaugural speech to create an Electoral Reform Committee to review and overhaul the electoral process to save the system from decay (Onwudiwe, 2010).

It is within this framework that this paper assesses the party politics and electoral processes in Nigeria and Ghana under the fourth democratic republics.

#### **Method of Data Collection**

The research relies on secondary sources where books, journals, magazine and online materials are consulted.

#### **Political Parties and Party Politics in Ghana**

Dahl (1967) wrote that the “presence or absence of competing political parties can be used as a litmus paper test for...democracy in a country. No full-fledged modern democracy lacks parties that compete for votes and offices in national elections”. Unfortunately, while competitive parties are considered indispensable for democratic consolidation, the numerous military interventions in post-independence Ghana adversely affected the development of multi-party systems in the country. Indeed, by 1962, only five years after independence in 1957, Ghana was a *de facto* single-party state, which was legalized in 1964. The period 1966 - 1992 saw the rise and fall of many political parties, as Ghana entered and exited from a succession of military regimes. Needless to say that the decade-long (1982-1992) ban on political parties under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), significantly undermined the development of the party system in Ghana.

Significantly, both the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) emphasize their commitment to democratic values though with differing interpretations. In ideological terms, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which is typically regarded as a pro-market, pro-business party, professes 'Property Owning Democracy' – the right of every citizen to have the opportunity to own property (NPP Manifesto, 2004). On the other hand, the NDC, which began as a revolutionary, Populist Party professes 'social democracy' – the protection of the rights of socially disadvantaged groups within a multiparty environment. (Akinduro, 2011).

However, it is also worth emphasizing that much as the NPP and the NDC identify themselves with different ideologies, in practice, these parties are more distinguishable by ethnic affiliations than ideological orientations, with (Gyimah-Boadi and Asante 2006) rightly noting that “the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), are largely perceived as Ewe- and Ashanti/Akan-based respectively” (GH PC, 2000). This is in spite of the fact that the 1992 Constitution requires every political party in Ghana to “have a national character” by *inter alia*, ensuring that its membership is “not based on ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional divisions” (Ghanaian Constitution, 2009).

### **Political Parties and Party Politics in Nigeria**

What we have since 1999 in Nigeria as political parties include: The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples' Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) have nothing in common with the political parties of the first or second or third republic. Now we have the ACN as another South Western Party that has evolved to consolidate the ethnic and tribal agenda of Yoruba politicians. Manner of origin of these political parties does not fit into what we know from literature. Their composition is fluid and unstable; they can be viewed as instrument of transition from military to civilian rule and form the future with the prospect of more parties. By 2011, the number of political parties has risen to at least 64 (Appiah, 2012). The evolution of these parties with each coming election year raises more questions than answers to the lingering problems of political behaviour and party politics in Nigeria. This probably explains why they resort to primordial sentiments attached to religion, ethnicity and regionalism. Corroborates this point when he noted that: "The PDP has never really come out with any clear cut agenda to define its vision for Nigeria" From a pan Nigerian perspective, contends that the country's politics is bereft of "concert issues, ideology, principles or a clear national vision" such that politics is a high stake contest for raw power and resources". From another perspective (Mapuva, 2010), some have argued that for the PDP, ideologies are lacking and political formations are bereft of identity- as in Nigeria's 4<sup>th</sup> Republic- we are confronted with the efflorescence of several look alike political parties differentiated only by the fatness of the purpose of their main sponsors and the unique mannerism and idiosyncrasies of their leaders.

From the comparative studies done so far in this paper, it is clear that *Party Politics* is conceived as political acts and principles directed toward the interests of one political party or its members without reference to the common good. Party politics is therefore mainly for the benefit of the party members. This is even more so where corruption and nepotism are the motivating factors for forming such political alliances and seeking elective offices. Now, after almost over fifty-three years of independence for both countries (Ghana and Nigeria), we will be making a biased judgment if we give a pass mark to both countries with regards to measuring up with the tenets of democratic standards when measured from the standard highlighted above, in the light of the nature of party politics practiced in the countries under review. While we may decide to cut the Ghanaian system and government some slacks for the efforts they have made towards entrenching an enduring institution of democracy, the same cannot be said of her counterpart Nigeria (Appiah, 2012).

### **Institutional Structures and Election Administration in Transitional Democracies Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the primary responsibility of electoral administration rests with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The Commission consists of the chairman, who is the chief electoral commissioner, and 12 national electoral commissioners of two from each of the six geo-political zones of the country appointed by the President. The commission has offices in the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory as well as maintains offices in all the 774 Local Government Areas. Each state office of the commission including the FCT is headed by a Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), appointed by the President from each state of the federation, and who upon confirmation by the Senate, are deployed to the commission's offices outside their states of origin while the local government area offices are headed by Electoral Officers who are staff of the Commission, and they report to the RECs. The secretary of the commission is the head of the commission secretariat and head of administration. The Members of the commission and the RECs are appointed to serve a five-year term, which is renewable (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

INEC is the second-largest government agency in terms of staff strength with approximately 14,000 full time staff members across the country. The commission also appoints ad hoc staff for election duty. For the purpose of efficiency, the commission's administrative structure has been restructured several times since 1999 in line with the leadership policy at different times. At its

inception in 1999, the Commission had eight departments and three units (INEC, 1999). At some point, the leadership decided to streamline the number of departments to six departments, three directorates and three units (INEC, 2003). After the 2003 elections it was restructured to create more departments and a longer reporting chain. Following a change of leadership in 2010, the commission was reorganized and it had 16 departments and an Electoral Institute that comprised four departments. Following another restructuring in April 2013, the commission currently has 20 departments and an Electoral Institute with three departments (Jega, 2012).

### **Ghana**

The Electoral Commission of Ghana is simply known as the Electoral Commission (EC). The Commission is composed of the seven (7) members; a Chairman who is the chief executive officer of the commission; two (2) Deputy Chairmen who are in charge of the two broad divisions of the Commission - Finance and Administration and the Operations divisions; and four other members, all appointed by the president after consulting the Council of State. The chairman and the two deputy chairmen of the commission have permanent tenure of office and enjoy the same conditions of service as Justices of the Supreme Court Functional Divisions: The Commission is organized into two (2) broad areas or functional divisions, namely; (a) Operations Division (b) Finance and Administration Division. Each functional Division is headed by a Deputy Chairman (Operations) and Deputy Chairman (Finance and Administration) led by a coordinating central director. Under the current structure, the Operations Division consists of three departments: The Elections Department, the Training Department and the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Department. The Division of Finance and Administration is composed of the Human Resources and General Services Department, the Finance Department and the Information Technology Department (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

**Head Office:** The Commission is located at the Head Office in Accra even though by law the Commission can meet anywhere in Ghana designated by the Chairman. The Commission is required to meet at least once in every two (2) months, that is, six (6) times a year. The seven (7) members of the Commission collectively constitute the policy-making and management body of the organization and exercise general supervision over the activities of its staff. There are seven (7) departments at the Head office, namely, Elections, Finance, Information Technology, Human Resource and General Services, Research and Monitoring, Training, and Public Affairs; each of headed by a Director. The permanent staff of the Commission are made up of two coordinating directors, for each division; 17 directors (seven at head office and ten in the regions); 138 district officers; 20 senior electoral officers at head office; and about 1010 other categories distributed among the regional and district offices (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

**Regional Offices:** A director, assisted by at least one deputy regional director, heads a regional office of the Commission. Unlike the head office, a regional office and its staff are not formally organized into functional divisions and departments. A Regional Director and his staff combine both Operations and Finance and Administration functions. As a result, a Regional Director reports to the Commission through the head Office Directors, as the case may be.

**District Offices:** A District Electoral Officer (DEO) reports directly to the Regional Director, and heads a District Office of the Commission. Like a Regional Office, a District Office has no functional divisions or departments.

**Election Officials:** During elections, the commission recruits numerous temporary staff in the categories of registration/returning officers, deputy registration/returning officers and presiding officers and polling assistants. They are not formally part of the Commission, but their services are so vital to the work of the Commission that they must be regarded as an informal part of the structure of the Electoral Commission. The District Electoral Officer (DEO) recruits and works closely with these officials. In this connection, the DEO is required to:

- (a) Recruit the best person available of the job at hand
- (b) Organize and supervise their proper training.
- (c) Instill in them the correct attitude towards electoral work (impartiality, probity, accountability, etc.) and to maintain the integrity of the Commission.
- (d) Co-ordinate their activities in the spirit of team work.
- (e) Accord them the importance, respect and dignity that they deserve (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

### **Powers and Functions of Electoral Management Bodies**

#### **Nigeria**

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria and the Electoral Act (2010) mandates and confers statutory functions on INEC to:

- (a) Organize, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President and Vice President, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a State and to the membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State of the Federation.
- (b) Register political parties in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and an Act of the National Assembly.
- (c) Monitor the organization and operation of political parties including their finances.
- (d) Arrange for an annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of the political parties and publish a report on such examination and audit for public information.
- (e) Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under the constitution.
- (f) Monitor political campaigns and provide rules and regulations which shall govern the political parties.
- (g) Ensure that all electoral commissioners, Electoral and Returning Officers take and subscribe to the oath of office prescribed by law.
- (h) Delimit constituencies for representation in the National Assembly according to the number of seats provided in the constitution.
- (i) Delegate any of its powers to any Resident Electoral Commissioner.
- (j) Carry out such other functions as may be conferred upon it by an Act of the National Assembly.

In similar vein, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) empowers federating states to constitute State Independent Electoral Commissions:

To organize, undertake and supervise all elections to Local Government councils within the State.

To render such advice as it may consider necessary to the Independent National Electoral Commission on the compilation register of voters in so far as that register is applicable to local government elections in that State (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

#### **Ghana**

The main functions of the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) as outlined in the 1992 Constitution, Act 451 of the Electoral Commission Act (1993), as amended by the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Act (2003) section 2 are:

- (a) To compile the register of voters and revise it at such periods as may be determined by law.

- (b) To demarcate the electoral boundaries of both national and local government elections.
  - (c) To conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda.
  - (d) Create new regions or merge the existing regions.
  - (e) To keep proper books of accounts and the necessary records to be audited annually by the Auditor General.
  - (f) To educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose.
  - (g) To undertake programmes for the expansion of the registration of voters.
  - (h) To perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law (Elklit, 2002).
- (a) In addition, the Commission is assigned other statutory functions of conducting and supervising elections for various bodies in the country such as: The election of five (5) members of each Regional House of Chiefs to the National House of Chiefs.
- (b) The election of the President and Vice-President of the National House of Chiefs, as well as each Regional House of Chiefs.
  - (c) The election of the executive officers of the Ghana Medical and Dental Association, the Veterans Association of Ghana (VAG) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC).
  - (d) The election of the Presiding Member of a District Assembly.
- (e) The Electoral Commission is often called upon to provide services, which it is not required by any law to provide. The major service in this regard is organizing, supervising or conducting elections for various organizations to select their executive officers. The Commission readily performs these services in the belief that such elections constitute a learning process for the members of the organization and that this in turn facilitates its work during general elections.
- (f) The Commission is also sometimes called upon to issue identity cards to members of an organization (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

### **ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA FROM 1999 TO 2019**

Civil rule returned in Nigeria on May 29th 1999 led by a retired military man and former Head of State Olusegun Obasanjo. The elections of 1999 saw three political parties winning elections at the state and national levels, with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) producing the President of Nigeria; so arranged to assuage the ill-feelings generated by June 12 annulment and crises (Smith, 2011). In 2003, the PDP federal government supervised one of the worst elections in the history of Nigeria in a bid to “win everywhere”. That election was massively rigged by the PDP and tended to destroy the growth and emergence of opposition parties in Nigeria's democracy. The champions of that era however, never enjoyed the four-year controversial mandate as it was a period of free for all fight in the presidency (Smith, 2011).

Nigeria was the loser 2007 elections were also massively rigged as it was dubbed “do or die” by President Olusegun Obasanjo. In a hasty bid to checkmate then Vice President Atiku Abubakar's quest to succeed his principal, President Obasanjo in 2007, the PDP and Obasanjo foisted Governor Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on the country as President. The election was so badly and violently rigged under the chairmanship of Professor Maurice Iwu's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), that the European Election Observer Mission in Nigeria reported that “Nigerian leaders had deceived their people”. This drew the anger of Obasanjo's government which asked the foreign election observers to leave Nigeria (Erdman, 2017).

The rate of election petitions and litigation that followed the 2007 elections was of monumental proportion among the three major political parties and their candidates then, both at the national and state level elections – Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), and Action Congress (AC) with Umaru Musa-Yar'Adua, General Muhammadu Buhari and then Vice

President Atiku Abubakar respectively. President Umaru Musa-Yar'Adua in his inauguration speech, acknowledged the fraudulent nature of the election that brought him to office to the admiration of the whole world and his countrymen. He went on to set up a high-powered Electoral Reforms Committee which was chaired by Justice Mohammed Uwais. The Committee made far-reaching submissions in their report which was applauded by the nation, but which late President Yar'Adua and President Goodluck Jonathan implemented in a half-measured and perfunctory manner leaving Nigeria's electoral process still in limbo of malpractices, rigging, ballot snatching, violence, fraud and evil manipulations which still haunt us till date (Ola, 2016).

Neither President Yar'Adua nor the Nigerian people enjoyed this mandate that was fraudulently given as the President was in and out of hospital in and out of the country till his death in office leaving behind controversies and unnecessary crises that almost brought the nation to a halt. Since independence, the outcomes of fraudulent elections have always threatened national peace and security; continually questioning the existence of Nigeria and bringing its economy to its knees; creating an ugly image of Nigeria as a nation that takes one step forward, while taking several steps backwards in its march to nationhood and economic development (Erdman, 2017).

The 2011 and 2015 elections under the supervision of Professor Attahiru Jega's INEC and under the superintending influence of President Goodluck Jonathan saw to the decrease in tensions in our body polity as it relates to elections and its associated crises in Nigeria. The litigations also reduced and opposition politics improved in Nigeria, strengthening our democracy. The only ugly side of this electoral period was General Muhammadu Buhari's aspirations and utterances. He had registered a political party called Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), which statements and body language during campaigns in the northern part of Nigeria triggered electoral violence, when he lost in 2011 to President Jonathan. Several people, among who were Nigerian youths on national service lost their lives in the northern part of the country, while working as ad-hoc staff of electoral INEC (Ola, 2016).

In 2015, Goodluck Jonathan lost to General Muhammadu Buhari who had become a candidate of a new alliance called the All Progressives Congress (APC). Jonathan congratulated Buhari even before the results were fully announced. Neither Jonathan nor the PDP went to court to challenge the outcome of the elections and these had a trickle-down effect on other candidates. President Buhari's electoral history has been a chequered one that if subjected to forensic examination may turn out to be one that has claimed many innocent lives, due to the violence, it has generated. So, with General Muhammadu Buhari's victory Nigerians heaved a sigh of relief. Now that someone whose supporters are fanatical, a champion of anti-corruption and good governance and credible and transparent elections, Nigerians looked forward to a peaceful country that will be characterized by successful fight against corruption, good and transparent governance, and most importantly credible elections. These were the reasons Nigerians celebrated the victory of President Buhari and his inauguration as Nigeria's leader (Erdman, 2017).

However, four years after, most Nigerians' expectations and the promises of government have been met in half measures. The last straw in the network of failures is the inability of the Nigerian people to witness a free and fair election in the February and March 2019 elections which claimed several lives, several inconclusive and rigged elections as if we have returned to the sad years of 2003 and 2007 "do or die" era. We thank God for the peaceful way those who feel aggrieved at the elections results have gone to the Election Petitions Tribunals. At the last official count, 736 election petition cases have been filed in courts. A situation that make Professor Maurice Iwu and Professor Mahmood Yakubu, and Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari two sides of one coin. These four men have one thing in common – supervisors of the worst elections in Nigeria's history (Erdman, 2017).



**ELECTIONS IN GHANA FROM 1992 TO 2016**

After more than a decade in office of the J.J Rawlings led Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) military regime, a consensus was reached to send Ghana back to a multi-party constitutional rule in 1992. According to Frempong (2017), three major steps were followed in 1992 to return Ghana to a constitutional rule; namely, The April 1992 referendum held to adopt a new constitution. It is record that, the PNDC tasked an established National Commission on Democracy (NCD) to collate public opinion across the ten regions of Ghana. These views were referred to the consultative assembly and was subsequently upheld to lift the ban on the formation of political parties and to pave way for the presidential and parliamentary elections in November and December 1992 respectively (Frempong, 2017:139-140). This led to the proliferation of some political parties like the National Democratic Congress (NDC) metamorphosed PNDC led by JJ Rawlings, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by a University professor and historian Professor Albert AduBoahen. Other contesting political parties included Peoples National Convention (PNC), National Independence Party (NIP), People's Heritage Party (PHP) and other minor parties like the EGLE and NCP which later formed a coalition with the NDC ahead of the polls (Frempong,2017).

Electoral Victories and Defeats in Ghana Since 1992 by Percentage

PARTY	YEAR	1992	1996	2000	2000	2004	2008	2008	2012	2016
NPP		30.4%	39.6%	48.2%	56.9%	52.5%	49.1%	49.8%	47.7%	53.9%
NDC		58.3%	57.4%	44.5%	43.1%	44.6%	47.9%	50.2%	50.7%	44.4%

Source:Frempong (2017) & Electoral commission of Ghana.

From table 1, the NDC led by J.J Rawlings is on record to have won the 1992 General elections with a huge percentage of (58.3%) to form government even though, there were series of agitations by the Opposition parties. The largest opposition then, New Patriotic Party accused the PNDC which later metamorphosed to NDC to have rigged the elections. Interestingly, the came out with a book “Stolen Verdict” which consisted of a compilation of alleged areas of electoral malfeasance in support of their claim and later went ahead to boycott the parliamentary elections which was held in December 1992. The NDC consolidated their victory to retain the seat of Government when the won the 1996 General elections recording (57.4%) as opposed to that of the NPP (39.6%) which was led by a new candidate John AgyekumKuffour (Ayee, 2008).

Interestingly, Ghana attained its first alternation in power in 2000 when the loosing candidate of the NPP in the 1996 election; John Agyekum Kuffour won the second round of the election with a whooping (56.9%) as opposed to (43.1%) from the incumbent NDC under the leadership of their vice president John Evans Atta Mills. The NPP also retained the seat when the incumbent president John AgyekumKuffour won the 2004 general elections. Amazingly, Ghana attained what Huntington has described as the “Two-turn-over-Test” in 2008 when there was peaceful alternation of power between the two major parties namely NDC &NPP. The NDC led by the same candidate from 2004 election won the run-off of the 2008 elections with a slim margin of (50.2%) as opposed to the incumbent's (49.8%) who were presented a new flagbearer in the person of Nana AddoDanquahAkuffoAddo who served as the Attorney General and Foreign Affairs Minister in the John Agyekum led government between (2000-2008). An incident that changed the electoral dynamics of Ghana occurred for the first time when the sitting president John Evan Atta Mills lost his life due to a short ailment in July 2012. The sitting vice president in the person of John DramaniMahama was subsequently sworn as a substantive President as the 1992 constitution of Ghana prescribes. The NDC retained John Mahama ahead of the 2012 general election to compete with an old face from the NPP Nana AkuffoAddo who was visiting “the shrine “for the second time. The NDC won the election by a slim margin of (50.7%) but decision as to who won was later tested at the Supreme Court of Ghana when the aggrieved NPP sort for justice in the famous

2012 election petition (Agomor, 2014).

The verdict of the court however affirmed the earlier declaration made by the Electoral Commission of Ghana that, Candidate John Dramani Mahama won the election. This according to some political pundits was a major step in consolidating democracy in Ghana largely because, the aggrieved party resorted to the use of the law court instead of violence. It is believed that, this major step by Nana Akufo Addo was lauded by both local and international actors and institutions as an excellent move. The NPP on this was noted to had a defeat with a taste of victory because, the turn of events at the court brought to bear some of the electoral anomalies and called for major electoral reforms the party was on the neck of the Electoral Commission in the heat up to the elections. The political capital the NPP made out of the landmark election petition case is believed to have aided the party to win the 2016 General elections. The NPP won with a whopping percentage of (53.9%). This according to some political pundit marked the biggest political defeat the NDC has ever experience with a loss margin of over 1 Million votes (Agomor, 2014).

It can be deduced from the above that the Electoral Commission of Ghana has worked very hard

### **Discussion of Results**

Within the purview of the analysis in the paper, the following observations, which are of historical, theoretical, conceptual and above all comparative relevance became obvious;

1. In Ghana, by virtue of the Electoral Commission Act of 1992, the chairman and members of the Commission are appointed by the president but are accountable to the parliament, whereas in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman is often associated with the ruling party and the president. The constitutional provisions for the appointment of the INEC chairman and members are sometimes manipulated by the president, subject to confirmation by the Senate (according to section 153: i(f) and 154:1-3 of the 1999 Constitution) and the case of party politics both Nigeria and Ghana share intense rivalry among the political parties of People Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nigeria while in Ghana National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP).
2. Since Nigeria's returned to democracy in 1999, elections have been held under politically and logistically difficult circumstances that made them less free and fair. In Ghana however, credible elections have been conducted since the 1990s, most electoral contests in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999 have been controversial and substandard as indicated by (Amuwo, 2009).
3. Apart from the twin problems of electoral manipulation and violence, there is problem with electoral legitimacy, which again is more problematic of the Nigerian system: partisan and ineffective election management while Ghana has institutionalized modest rules and regulations of election management and administration, Nigeria has been less effective in terms of the most fundamental preparations for elections.
4. In Ghana, elections are more peaceful and less bitter whereas, 2015 general in Nigeria was conducted peacefully in the history of Nigeria as a result of conceding defeat by former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as the case of smooth transition of power from President Rawlings of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to President John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and then back to John Atta Mills of the NDC and again to Nana Akufo-Addo of NPP. One can argue that despite crucially similar presidential designs and almost the same military-civil rule path, prospects of sustaining democratic consolidation are brighter in Ghana because no single party dominates the system contrary to PDP ruled for sixteen years.
5. The Ghana's EC and Nigeria's INEC have done relatively well in that they have worked

with the political parties in the context of the IPAC to initiate many electoral reforms since 1996 in Ghana and 2011 in Nigeria. Electoral reforms such as the representation of the parties by agents at the polling stations, at the collation centres and at the headquarters of the Commission during compilations of election results have enhanced the transparency of the electoral process. With the introduction of the biometric verification registration machines during the 2012 and 2015 elections respectively, both Commissions detected and eliminated multiple registrations, thus enhancing the integrity of the voter's register.

6. The main problem of INEC include its usually poor preparations for the general elections, inadequate power to deal with Electoral Act offenders, failure to create a level playing field for all parties and candidates, among others. Political analysts attribute these problems to INEC's gross lack of independence, given its composition and funding by the presidency; the poor quality of its leadership and its corrupt dispositions unlike the EC in Ghana, which is subjected to the parliament and civil society organisations.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper posits that party politics and electoral processes in both countries (Ghana and Nigeria) practice in accordance with the major tenet and guidelines stipulated as basic reasons and conditions for setting up political parties. Politicians and party politics are therefore enjoined to seriously consider and insist that the purpose and functions for which political parties are instituted are practiced based on the idiosyncratic characters of the leaders of each country. These very salient steps, in the opinion of this paper, will seriously aid in enshrining lasting democratic systems in both countries and Nigeria in particular. The above no doubt confirms the position of this paper that the more an Electoral Management Body is independent, the more sound and healthy party politics and democracy will be strengthened. The paper therefore, recommends that:

1. The independence and credibility of electoral management bodies in Nigeria and Ghana should be guaranteed by modifying the procedure of appointing and composing its members.
2. The Independent National Electoral Commission should be re-strategized to make for transparency in the electoral management process and to practically address obvious defects of previous elections. On the other hand, the Electoral Commission of Ghana should continue to sustain its standards of professionalism in all areas of the electoral processes to consolidate transparency and consensus all the way through the electoral process – before, during and after elections.
3. Efforts should be made as much as practicable to make elections less hostile and crisis prone. It is absolutely necessary for the government to ensure the emergence of political leaders that reflects the choice of the electorates.

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