

The Role of Political Parties in Federal Societies: Assessment of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The role of political parties in a federal system of government was focused upon in this contribution. The paper argues that political party and democracy are twin concepts that draw on one another. Political parties rely on the institution of democracy in the selection of its flag bearers to make political representation democratic, transparent and accountable. Furthermore, the political parties in a federal setup may be abnormal when they are not democratic in purpose. The abnormalities in political parties particularly in Nigeria is the basis of pathologies, ideological emptiness, and lack of internal party democracy within and among them are the consequences of poor governance in the polity.

KEYWORDS: Political parties, Democracy, Federalism, Federal Society, Governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Globally, political parties have been the political institutions that aided governance. Their place has taken scholastic attention in terms of contributions to national development as well as instruments for furthering democracy vis-à-vis good governance (Randall & Svasand, 2001). In governance, they have built strong democratic traditions (Caton, 2007), and through alternative ideologies and programs, the opposition parties on many occasions have usurped the ruling parties (Animashaun, 2015; Katsina, 2016).

Political parties in liberal democracies ensure 'true' liberty for citizens to elect their representatives on the parties' platforms. The diversities of political systems allow differences in the form of government a polity chooses to ameliorate their peculiarities. The extent to which a polity allow democracy a form of government to operate, the better the operation of the party system and the sustenance of federalism. Multiparty system and democracy have remained the instruments of governance in federal societies. Wheare (1963: 47) alluded to this relationship that "party system" is an essential criterion in this respect. Sawyer went further to affirm that "federalism requires democracy" (quoted in Jinadu, 1979: 22). Omoruyi (2002: 1) argued "there is an assumption of what a political party is and what it is meant to do" in liberal democracies. This assumption has become a global issue among scholars that without political parties, democracy is unthinkable (Schattschneider, 1942: 1; Schumpeter, 1943: 2). There is also the belief that political parties are inevitable for a democracy to work (Huntington, 1968; Apter, 1967; Almond & Verba, 1963). Both concepts draw on one another. This suggests that a political party, democracy, and the federal system can only be made significant and meaningful in the body politics when these concepts are allowed to operate without constitutional or extra-constitutional limitations to the effect that attaining national unity, integration, and development in a heterogeneous society is not compromised.

The architects of federalism advocated layers of authorities through which citizens can express themselves, to form and join political parties of their choice, contest election/s in their respective political parties in order to represent their interests and interest of others, such as their constituencies and the larger polity. However, it should be noted that not all political associations' especially political parties in the federations are nationally spread enough to represent or aggregate the general interest within a polity. In some polities, political parties are formed to represent the local area/s and the trade interests (Ogunwa, 2009; 2013). Some political parties at the earliest stage are regionally based and later transform into a national party. A good example is the Action Congress Party and now All Progressives Congress in Nigeria. Federalism allows diversity. The diversity allows the proliferation of political parties to cater for local interests at first and national interest at large. The proliferation also promotes dissenting voices, ethnicity, hatred, and opposition. This at long run ushers in pathologies of federal systems (Watts, 2008).

The history of political parties in the country including the ongoing Fourth Republic has witnessed political intolerance between the nation's political gladiators (Omoruyi, 2002; Anifowose, 2006; Dudley, 1973; Joseph, 1999; Dudley, 1968; 1973). The politics of intolerance among the political class (politicians), politics of doing

or die, politics of winner-take-all syndrome, and the quest for political largesse is the order of the day. These crises, for instance, terminated the country's Three Republics between 1960 -1966; 1979 – 1983 even the aborted Third Republic, while the ongoing Fourth Republic is working precariously. Okereka (2015) adduced two reasons for these phenomena. One, the intense and ferocious struggle for power among the political parties; and second, regional hegemony by leaders of those political parties struggling to capture the center of gravity in the country. These two reasons alone had overbearing colossal consequences in the nation's quest for development since the politics of hegemony is a major interest of party formation and winning of the election in Nigeria. This has over-bearing political consequences resulting from over-centralization of power (Babawale, 2000; Amuwo, 1998; Asobie, 1998). The consequence of centralization of power, for instance, Nigeria politicians through their political parties' pursue political offices with intensity to win power at all cost when such political parties and their candidates are not even known at the local level.

Federalism has provided segments of powers in which political parties can seek relevance in party politics. The goals of a political party may be achieved at the local, state, regional and at the general levels (Wheare (1963: 10). A politician ascribing to national level must start at the lower level of politics through the Ward of a political party before attaining national recognition, either the Senate, the House of Representatives or presidency. In a federal polity, not all political parties would naturally spread enough to attaining or winning the highest seat of power. A political party may likely operate base on its organization/ structure, spread/ strength, resources, ideology, manifesto, and membership. These factors make a political party be relevant either at the local or national level. Anticipated achievement/s is tied to these factors. It is important to mention here that winning to rule may not be the intention of all political parties. Some political parties assume the responsibility to serve as a watchdog of the ruling party in other to criticize and offer useful advises to a ruling party government. An example is the Green Party in the United States of America. Notwithstanding, any position a political party or parties may take, political parties in federal societies must be seen to integrate the populace through their programs/ manifestoes, organizations, ideologies, etc to be desired.

In Nigeria, the formation of political parties has been to protect sectional and individual interests of the party founders. The founders have not to use the parties' platforms to propagate the quest for national unity. This explains the several challenges militating the polity in the area of national integration, infrastructural deficiencies, ideology emptiness and the call for the pathology of the Nigerian state. The rest of the paper is spread into four areas, viz: conceptual clarification; Nigerian political parties; challenges of the party system in Nigeria; panaceas for political parties and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

Political party

There are many definitions of a political party. These definitions have the same common denominator. A political party as an agent of the people is meant to represent them in public offices either at the local, state and general level. In his definition Epstein (1993:9) “any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect governmental

office holders under a given label. Having a label (which may or may not be on the ballot) rather than an organization is the crucial defining element". This definition links parties as intermediary between society and government, and that democracy is best served by the majoritarian principle which in the words of Epstein (1993) more than one-half of a community's electorate may be mobilized to support a policy or set of policies, and the majority thus mobilized ought to have the means to enact its policy. The means are to be provided by an organized political party. There is a general agreement that political parties as articulators of demands, aggregators of interests and educators of electorates. The main objective for responsible party is the implementation of clearly defined policies, with elections as the only means to this end.

Neumann (1963: 352) defines political parties as an institution that articulates organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views. Political parties are the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community. There is a partnership of individuals in a particular organization. The individuals are involved in electoral contests and participate in the decision-making process. This, Neumann (1963) observes that makes them political parties in a genuine sense, for only in their fight for control and in their conscious influence on political forces, do parties gain meaning and importance. Parties, therefore, openly link the general public to political power through the placement of the representatives of their organizations in positions where they may exercise that power on behalf of that public. Lawson (1980: 3) **"parties are seen, both by their members and by others, as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy-makers"**. Eldersveld (1964: 5) opines political parties as "a structural system seeking to translate or convert (or to be converted by) social and economic interests into political power directly". Power, Eldersveld (1964: 9) observes is a "reciprocal deference structure" based on the need of a party to "cope with the widely varying local milieu of opinion, tradition and social structure ... (that) encourages the recognition and acceptance of local leadership, local strategy (and) local power". A political party exists to represent multiple social interests for the achievements of direct control over the government. Put differently, the political party as a 'social group', is "a system of interdependent activities characterized by a high degree of rational direction of behavior towards ends that are objects of common acknowledgment and expectation" (Simon, 1962:130). Political parties are different from other social groups, such as labour unions and other associations because of the unique functions they perform in a political system. This is in line with the position of Mathisen and Svasand (2002:4) that political parties as complex organizations have multiple levels (i.e. national, regional, and local) and multiple units (i.e. central, youth and women branches, etc). In this regard, Sartori (1976:64) defines a political party as a group that "represents at elections and is capable of placing, through elections, candidates for public office". Sartori is of the opinion that the electoral process wherein party competes under its official label is what distinguishes between parties and interests group. It is at the point of an election that differentiates between a single party from those political groups that do not have recourse to "electoral rituals".

In liberal democracies, political parties create a mechanism that serves as a bridge for connection between the party system and government, and between government and society; promote vital competition on policy and ideological alternatives; and plays essential roles in a representative democracy; serve as channels for citizen's participation in government decision-making processes; and are significant conducts and interpreters of information about a government (Salih, 2003). They are necessary to train, select and recruit candidates for governmental and parliamentary positions; to formulate government policies and programmes; to gather and implement demands from a society; and to supervise and check a government (Caton, 2007:7).

Democracy

Appadorai (2003: 137) opines that democracy is "a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves". This definition linked the citizenry to the institution of government in a country which they (citizens) actively decide who rules them through election periodically. For Shively (2008), the elected representatives determine the "common good". In other words, the peoples' representatives have the full responsibility to "promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number". The election is a trusted position. Elected representatives must see their elections as the responsibility for holding a brief for the people who entrusted their 'partial' sovereignty for a particular period of time as may be determined by the constitutional provisions of a country concerned (Ogunwa, forthcoming). Political accountability expected from the elected representatives largely means that the electors must participate in the election of those coming into the public office, "the election of representatives to a representative body also serves, in a party system, to determine the political control of that body" (Richards, 2001:3). The election is the recruitment of representatives through the choice of the eligible voters. Voter eligibility refers to those factors which a citizen must have before becoming a voter. The election is the essential component of a democracy and this distinguishes democratic government from non-democratic systems of government. It confers legitimacy on the government and the representatives - the authority in the form of a democratic mandate.

In a 'true' democratic system, the election process is the opportunity to make democracy work. It is the process when all citizens of a country or locality have an equal say over who their representatives in government should be. In the words of Richard (Richards, 2001:3) "the vote of an Internet millionaire counts the same as a Big Issue seller. It is the moment when the governed can change their governments when politicians can be held to account when the people – the demos – speak". Thus, elections have been described as "the feat of democracy". An election is free if the electorates are allowed to make their choice without being intimidated or victimized. The election is fair if the procedures for conducting the elections are made public and applied equally to all the parties without fear or favor, is based on secret voting and whose rules are known and uniformly applied to all the parties (Akinbade, 2008: 174). Besides, the features of free and fair elections are: existence of electoral law; establishment of electoral commission; secrecy of voting; absence of violence, intimidation and victimization; date of election; location of polling stations; availability of information on location of polling stations; availability of up-to-date voters register; non-restriction of candidates for election; access of parties to the media; frequency of elections; impartiality of law enforcement agents; and enforcement of electoral laws. Thus,

democratic "participation denotes the active involvement of individuals and groups in the governmental processes affecting their lives" (Gaub, 2011: 499).

Group Theory

The group theory is traced to Bentley (1908), who argued against the institutional approach in the political analysis since these institutions are formal and static as against politics; which is dynamic and full of activities day-in and day-out. For him, politics is a group affair; and, each group is competing against the other for honour and power. The group, according to Bentley, is a pattern of processing that involves the mass of activities; and not a collection of individuals. He emphasized that a group emerges from frequent interactions among its members, which is directed by their shared interests. However, conflict among groups necessitated the role of government, as a mediator or arbiter between the groups; and to serve as a source of law and order, to contain or restrain conflict. "Government functions are to establish and maintain a measure of order, in the relationship among groups" (Truman, 1964). Furthermore, conflict resolution, between the groups, can only be possible (or permissible) in a liberal society, where there are mechanisms for conflict resolution. These mechanisms have been institutionalized and regulated, to ensure justice, and fairness to all and sundry.

Group theorists like Truman (1953), Dahl (1961), McConnell (1966), Lewi (1971), among others, took the position of Bentley; and argued that, power is diffused among many interest groups, in a society; each competing against the other. For instance, Latham (1953) described a political system as a single universe of groups, which combine, break, and form coalitions and castellations of power, in a restless alteration. The theory has been criticized. Mills (1976) argued that the leaders of business, academic, military and government comprise a small cadre of power elites, and dominate decision-making processes in their various specializations.

These groups do not compete for power with one another, as the group theorists have argued, but instead pursue and protect their area of interest ideologically and politically. Schattschneider (1942) observed that not every group (or every set of interests) has the same chance to influence every policy that the more moneyed ones have. This suggests that some interest groups that favour business, industry, etc are well organized. In a political system, for instance, government officials do favour some interests' groups; and, go against the other. This, indeed, undermine the contention of the group theory. Indeed, the group theory identifies political parties as groups that continue to compete for power in all political systems. The theory emphasizes economic interests and political power, for political parties as rewards for political patronage. The theory neglected national interests for personal interests of group members or politicians. Generally, not all interests are represented by the theory; and finally, not all groups in political systems are represented in national politics. The main thrust of the group theory, as envisioned by Bentley, is that political power should be dispersed, and not to be concentrated in a particular hand; and group theory, as a pluralistic approach to politics, advocates for the balance of power (Chukwuemeka, 2011: 228).

Situated in the context of Nigeria, group theory prevailed in the formation of political parties in Nigeria, along with different nationalities and religious groups, from pre to post-independence Nigerian state. The PDP was

only fortunate to have emerged victoriously, among the competing parties for power at the centre between 1999 to 2015. However, as the theory emphasized, the anti-democratic behavior in PDP manifested in forms of assassination, lawlessness, oppression, rigging, manipulation, ethnic politics, godfatherism, marginalization, personalization, indiscipline, an internal crisis, and defection within the rank-and-file of PDP as a ruling party, and as a political party. These crises undermined participation, institutionalization, and inclusiveness in the operation of PDP government for (sixteen) 16 years. The inability of the party to close its ranks, allowed the party to be polluted and hijacked by a few party individuals which became the party 'machine'. Their intrusion into the party significantly influenced the internal democracy of the party. They are modulators and the epicenter of political infighting and struggle for power in the party. The influence of these individuals has shaped the nature of PDP internally and externally with heavy consequences on party politics and governance in Nigeria.

Nigerian Party System

Party system in Nigeria like in other ecologies usually reflects the background, experience, influence history of the country concerned. No doubt, Nigeria nation has its own history, background, experience as far as party formation, operation, the organization is concerned. For instance, the experience of colonialism, military rule, and political violence have mitigated and structured towards party formation and operation in the country. The experience of Nigerian politicians under the military rule cannot be swept away have all influenced party system. There was no party system in pre-colonial Nigeria state. The government was run through theocracy, kingship, and clans. There was no contestation for power in this period except wars between one community and another. The Jihad wars, Yoruba wars were typical examples.

In Nigeria, for instance, “for a number of reasons, including pressure, a new Legislative Council was established in 1922” (Oyediran, 2006:7). The Colonial reforms in 1922 ensured the possibility and inclusion “for the first time in Nigeria, Lagos and Calabar were granted the right to vote in an election to the Legislative Council”. This allowed the formation of political parties, to contest elections at least in Lagos and Calabar for

Nigerians to elect their representatives to represent them in the colonial government. This gave birth to the first political party in Nigeria known as the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP). The party also dominated the polity in 1923, 1928 and 1933. The activity of the party was confined to Lagos environment “unfortunately NNDP did not emerge as truly national parties for all its activities were concentrated in Lagos and on Lagos affairs”.

Another party that came on board in 1934 was the Lagos Youth Movement. The name of the party was later changed to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) two years after its existence. The third political party that emerged during the colonial era was the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC). The country witnessed multiparty systems from the 1950s when tribal associations became political parties. Two of such associations that metamorphosed into parties were the "Egbe Omooduduwa" into Action Group (AG), and the "Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa" into the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) (Coleman, 1958). The three major

parties NCNC, NPC, and AG marshaled the country into political independence in 1960 and as well into the First Republic which was terminated in 1966. The reason is that the party system was ethnically based.

The NPN from the North, UPN from the Southwest, and the NPP from the Southeast (Aina, 2004). The minorities in these regions, however, formed their own political parties to protect their political interests. The political parties: the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and the United National Independent Party (UNIP) were formed in 1953 (Coleman, 1958). In 1955, both the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Dynamic Party (DP) came into being. Equally emerged was the Niger Delta Congress (NDC), among others. The parties fused into the dominant political parties during elections.

The country changed from the Westminster model to the presidential system of government in its march to the Second Republic in 1979 with a multiparty system. The parties were: National Party of Nigeria (NPN); Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); Nigerian People Party (NPP); the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP); the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) (Joseph, 1999; Mundt, Aborisade, & LeVan, 2008; Bamgbose, 2006). The activities of these parties especially the party government collapsed the Second Republic because “the political class failed to meet its hopes and aspirations. The Shagari regime was deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption, property, mismanagement, and squandermania. It also became a victim of massive electoral malpractices...” (Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015:268).

The attempt by General Ibrahim Babangida to return the country to part of the democratic system was characterized by banning and unbanning politicians to take part in unfolding transition programs. As a result thirteen political parties hurriedly put together by politicians, viz: All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP); The Ideal Peoples Party (IPP); The Nigerian National Congress (NNC); Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party (NPWP); The National Union Party (NUP); Peoples' Front of Nigeria (PFN); Patriotic Nigerians Party (PNP); Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP); Republican Party of Nigeria (RPN); United National Democratic Party (UNDP); Peoples Patriotic Party (PPP); The Liberal Convention (LC); and The Nigerian Labour Party (NLP). Out of these parties, only 6 parties were 'temporarily' approved by the administration (Aina, 2004). The gesture given to these 6 parties was only momentary because in its broadcast the nation, the regime announced the formation of two parties namely: Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC). The two parties lasted for two and a half years because the presidential election in 1993 was annulled in the same year.

The reversal to the military rule in 1993, fifteen (15) political associations were submitted to the Provincial Ruling Council (Aina, 2004). The parties and their ratings were tabled below. United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP) 74.77%; Congress of National Consensus (CNC) 65.78%; National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) 63.32%; Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) 57.35%; Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM) 53.78%; All Nigeria Congress (ANC) 49.28%; Peoples Consensus Party (PCP) 48.85%; Social Progressive Party (SPP) 48.65%; Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) 43.71%; National Democratic Labour Party (NDLP) 30.87%; National Democratic Party (NDP) 26.56%; Solidarity Group of Nigeria (SGN) 21.01%; Progressive Party of Nigeria (PPN) 19.01%; Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) 16.45%; and National Solidarity Peoples Alliance (NSPA)

11.49% (Anchor Newspaper, March 19 – 25, 2001:19). Aina (2004:90) reports that only five out of fifteen political associations were finally approved as political parties: UNCP - 74.77%; CNC - 65.78%; NCPN - 63.32%; and DPN - 57.35%; GDM - 53.78%. The parties were described as “five leprosy fingers” and at the same time “bore the implicit stamp of military consent and cronyism” (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009:190).

None of these five political parties left out General Sani Abacha unadopted as its presidential candidates for the presidential election slated for August 1998 (Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015). These parties die along with the General in 1998.

The match toward the Fourth Republic goes along the three parties that were registered based on their performances in the 1998 local government elections because of the stringent nature of the guidelines. Other political associations merged while others disappeared because of provisions requiring associations to garner at least 10 percent of 36 states to qualify for permanent registration through the local government elections conducted in 1998 (Enefe, 2008). According to Anifowose (2004:62) “in the local government elections, the PDP won a total of 459 chairmanship seats and 4,650 councillorship seats. The APP won 188 chairmanship and 2,589 councillorships. The AD came third with 102 chairmanships and 1,071 councillorships”. Other political associations such as DAM, MDJ, NSM, PRP, UDP, and UPP which failed the registration criteria were advised to fuse into any of those three registered political parties (Nwankwo, 2005).

From the three parties in 1998, the number has continued to increase. According to Anifowose (2004) the constant recourse to courts in the country for associations to be recognized as political parties; the exodus of stalwarts defections to the ruling parties without a viable opposition posed to the party by the AD and APP despite their merger in 1999 and 2003; the constant intra-party conflict within the ruling parties; the local and international pressure on the ruling party to widen the political space for more party registrations and participation in the democratic process across the federation; the ambition and attitude of PDP and its government to turn the country into one-party state; the position of INEC to hold tenaciously to the oath of office and to apply all necessary democratic principles including extant laws; the resolve by political associations to mobilize resources to meet the requirements for registration and the court ruling on the party registration, put to rest the constitutional limitations “on the number of political parties that may come on board and contest elections” in Nigeria (Anifowose, 2004:63). For instance, in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 the number of political parties rose to 30; 50, 63; 26 respectively. At present, there are 89 political parties lined up for the 2019 general elections.

The history of political parties in the country from the First Republic to the present Republics, the parties lacked ideologies to groom members together nor have the chance to articulate and aggregate vision for national development. For Tyoden (2002) these parties lack required social and political foundations in a democratic setting. According to Omoruyi (2002) practically, the three parties that kicked started the Fourth Republic have nothing in common with the political parties of the previous Republic. The nature of these parties "is fluid and unstable". The reason for the instability of the parties is because they have little or no time for the politicians to

stay together and harmonize their differences, ideas, and thoughts on a number of issues before coming together as a political group. This by and largely created contradictions within the parties in the country.

Challenges of Party system in Nigeria

Since the colonial days, parties as institutions to galvanize governance are ethnically based (Jinadu, 2013). All the parties have one form of regionalization either at the state of origin and ownership. While party formation owed much to an individual or a group of individuals to challenge the status quo, improve what is on the ground or chart a new course for the polity. However, the configurations and characteristics of parties in their operations have severe implications for sustainability and stability (Pogoso, 2013). In less than two years of two decades of civil rule, parties have operated at both local, state and national levels. While few parties remained relevant in terms of winning, legislative or executive seats, others have remained a 'political' parties during the election period. They are not that significant in body politics. The majority of them, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), ACN, CPC, ANPP before becoming APC in 2013 have been deviled by political pathologies, fractionalization and factionalization, the intra and interparty crises. Accordingly, "these parties have abandoned their traditional role of membership recruitment and mobilization and political education" (Akubo & Yakubu, 2014:87). Furthermore, the functions of aggregation, political representation etc were largely ignored. What are the reasons or factors responsible for these lacunas? In another word, what are the challenges of confronting the political parties in Nigeria? What are the "isms" of political parties in Nigeria?

In 1998 when the ban on party activism was lifted by the Head of State, General Abdusalami Abubakar, the Nigerian politicians within a matter of weeks quickly organized themselves to form political associations that will launch them into the new Republic. These individuals who constituted into one or other parties are different in background, history, orientations, believes, ideas and ideologies. A stalwart of PDP and former national Speaker of Nigeria House of Representatives, Alhaji Ghali Na'Abba speaking in reference of his party, PDP, said that the PDP is a mixed bag of individuals with diverse political history with one and only one purpose. The party is meant to send a message to the military that the political class meant business with a mission to send the military back to the barracks. The PDP covered all political persuasions: conservatives, radicals, and progressives (The Guardian, April 6, 2001). Anifowose (2004:64) described the party as an amalgam representing contrasting political convictions from the ultra-left to the conservative right, the moderates and an omnibus of the so-called 'progressives'. This summation of PDP which ruled the country for 16 years is not different from other political parties. According to Anifowose (2004) in respect of these parties in Nigeria, "the PDP like the other political parties, lacks effective party organization" which ordinarily should be the centre of political ideology. These differences were not accommodated into an ideology, but the quest to capture political power was the pre-occupation. In other words, the isms of ideology did not feature nor guided the 'thinking' of these individual politicians at the formative stage neither did it help the later members. In a federal society like Nigeria, party ideologies are not intended to unite all various ethnic groups in the polity, these parties have further divided the country leading to the pathology of the federation.

Ideology is an instrument of political parties and it must guide them to explain and justify why they have alternative political order for a political system with a specific way of maintaining and helping to give meaning to public events, personalities and policies. Akindiyo and Siyaka (2014:3) see ideology as a collection of ideas.

Typically, "each ideology contains certain ideas on what it considers to be the best form of government (e.g. democracy, theocracy, caliphate, etc), and the economic system (e.g. capitalism, socialism, etc)". Theism of ideology in the party system is elusive, "in Nigeria today especially from 1999, are just political parties in the name. They are difficult to place in terms of origin, structure, organizations, and functions" (Omoruyi, 2002:2).

Undefined ideologies in the party system make the parties members be "fluid and unstable". They have not served as institutionalizing agencies for people to make an alternative choice of policies or programs for national development and good governance, "but associations, factions, cliques, and networks for power and resources struggle" (Akubo & Yakubu, 2014: 81). Omotola (2009: 612) observation is that the Nigerian parties are "Bereft of clear ideological identity and commitment and issue-based politics". Ikelegbe (2013:7) put this further that the nature, behavior, and performance of political parties in the last 18 years, consequentially affected the quest for national integration, stability, security, and good governance. While the liberal democracies center on multiparty democracy, however, it should be noted that it may be difficult to have a political party that will claim hegemonization of the polity as far as peculiarities are concerned. As such, the proliferation of the political parties since political independence only collapsed two Republic the country had witnessed.

Ideally, the purpose of a political party is to contest the election and if win to govern appropriately. However, before winning the election, a political party must settle for consensus party candidate that will represent the party in its entirety. Internal party democracy is the sine qua non of any political party aiming not only to win but integrate and internalize members, win governmental positions, and at the same to sustain and provide accountable government and proper representations. Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) opinion is that internal party democracy "it is believed that parties with a high degree of intraparty democracy are generally highly institutionalized because they need rules that define who is eligible to participate and what constitutes victory in the internal contest". Scarrow (2005) identify three variables central to internal party democracy, namely: equal participation, party inclusiveness; and party institutionalization. Accordingly, since a political party is "social groups" therefore, party members must be involved in the democratic process especially when the party is putting forward a candidate that would represent the party either at the local, state and federal levels.

All members or through their delegates must be involved in party activism and equal opportunity either to be selected or to make a selection. When party members are denied this core exercise, it is no longer participation but the party becomes electoral machines that impose unpopular candidates on the members even the polity at large. Salih (2006) has observed that democratic policy-making involves a participative process of policy development in debates, consultation meetings, and other platforms, and it decentralizes the mandate of decision-

making to the rank and file of political parties. A political party, is indeed, a political party when it allows its rank and file to participate in decision-making. The participation may be at the lower or higher level.

Secondly, party inclusiveness is not that different from allowing the party members to have a say in the party matters. Scarrow (2005) views the inclusion of party members, even party supports as the opportunity given to party members to decide on important issues, such as the choices of party members who on behalf of others hold party offices and public offices. Party inclusiveness means open party system to all party faithful at all the level of party hierarchy to ensure their contributions not only on selection of party members but on the party implementation of its manifesto. Lastly, party institutionalization, according to Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011:28) "demonstrates the degree to which internal decisions and procedures are formalized, and the extent to which the party has coordinated structures throughout its target constituency". Therefore, party institutionalization makes a party to be engrossed and indoctrinated in the hearts of the party members, supports and sympathizers across the country. Its organizations cut across all the levels of the constituencies including governments. The party symbols or label is spread and known across the breadth and length of a polity. Each member performing one and another function. Milbrath (1970:18) categorizes these functions into three. First, gladiatorial which include: holding public and party office; being a candidate for office; soliciting political funds; attending a caucus or a strategy meeting; becoming an active member in a political party; and contributing time in a political campaign. Second, transitional functions are: making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate and contacting a public official or a political leader. And lastly, spectator functions – wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car; attempting to talk another into voting a certain way; initiating a political discussion; voting; and exposing oneself to political stimuli.

The country's party system lacks internal party democracy and undermined quality representation of party bearers in governance. Anyaoku (2010) observes that "to ascribe undue influence, especially self-serving influence to the parliamentary group of the party in the selection of candidates would seriously undermine the democratic process". From the ruling party, for instance, the APC and to the least registered parties, the party hierarchies have influenced the selection of individuals to represent the party members. Metuh (2010) in reference to the loss of the governorship election in Anambra state in 2011, stated that "internal party wrangling denied our great party the governorship set in the February 6 governorship election in Anambra state".

The politics of godfatherism in party system further weakened members' participation, inclusion, and institutionalization. However, the interest of godfathers in parties is not essentially to contribute to the development of parties, reshape its focus and mission in terms of candidate selection, party finances, building ideology, winning of election and instill participatory activities, but to hijack the party machineries from the original owners, decide the candidate selection and to maximize the advantage of national purse. Akubo and Yakubu (2014:97) put the phenomenon of godfathers this way "the hijack of political parties by godfathers has virtually choked off the party system as channels for the aggregation of local or constituency interests. The preferences expressed by the party typically turn out to be the personal interest of the godfather". In the area of electoral process, the godfathers have turned the tie to its favor in ensuring the political pendulum shift to its side

through manipulation of electoral results, thuggery, arson, and the criminalization of the state (Abutudu, 2013). The influence of godfathers makes them the modulators and epicenter of political infighting and struggle for power and perquisites of office, they are one causative factor in understanding political nomadism (Momoh, 2013). Lastly, the influence they exert in party politics since the beginning of the Fourth Republic has not only masterminded and reshaped the character, operation, decision and normal practice of party politics negatively, they largely underestimated the importance of internal party democracy and served as fuel in the parties and contributed to the problems of governance.

The phenomenon of godfatherism has led to party indiscipline within and among the existing political parties even the proliferation and pathologies of parties since 1999. The swelling of parties is not intended to bring about quality party democracy or correct indiscipline but to ensure political vengeance and at the same time for the party gladiators to have their own political platforms (political parties) as machinery to extract political bargaining from the dominant parties. Madunagu (2011) sees the proliferation of parties as “brief-cases” of the ruling party in the country. These parties, largely exist to support the perpetuation and domination of the ruling party, while creating crises within the opposition parties. Historically, the Fourth Republic started with three political parties in 1998. In 2003, the parties increased to 30, while only 27 featured in some of the elections conducted that year. By 2006, the number has swelled to 50, while only a few contested the election in 2007. In 2011, about 63 parties were registered and few contested and made it to the state and national levels. The 2015 general election witnessed the number of the parties drastically reduced. As at the last count, the number of parties is now 91. According to INEC (2018), only 20 parties are ready for the presidential election, 89 parties to participate in both the NASS election, while only 20 parties seem to stand for elections in one-quarter of the federation (Nigerian Tribune, Monday, November 5, 2018).

These parties are only alive during election times and fizzled away as soon as elections are completed. Put differently, the proliferation of parties have not galvanized governance. The none institutionalization of these parties in the polity put to rest their poor performance either in the area of opposition to serve as an alternative to the ruling party or government in waiting (Ogunwa, 2012; 2014). The ruling party in the absence of unstructured and none institutionalized parties largely to serve as an alternative to its policies and continuity in government. The various crises within parties buttress to the issue that parties are not rooted among the populace. They are not grassroots parties. They are parties meant to serve the interest of the elite. The attachment of the people is not really to the political parties but to godfathers who pay for their engagement. In other words, “adherence to political parties is very fluid and opportunistic” (Liebowitz&Ibrahim, 2013). This is where the politics of ethnicity dominated all the political parties. The factor of ethnic politics, Salawu, and Hassan (2011:29) observed "particularly obvious in areas like voting, distribution of political offices, employment and government general patron age of the citizens" (Salawu &Hassan, 2011: 29). This consequently influenced the party system. Osaghae (2001) opines that:

The pervasiveness of ethnic politics in the country is taken to be symptomatic of aggravated crisis of legitimacy that has engulfed the state, and is explained in terms of the proven efficacy of the ethnic strategy, the weakness

of alternative identities and political Ps units, the prevailing milieu of lawlessness that has enveloped the country's political landscape, and the inability of the state to act as an effective agency of distributive justice.

The merger of political parties has put the country party system into chaos. Notwithstanding the political birth of ACN, CPC, ANPP, and APGA into the APC in 2013 (Nwankwo, 2015). Although the merger unseats the ruling party, PDP. The crisis of leadership in the eight assemblies indicated that politics of unholy alliance is for the politicians to attain s/he idiosyncratic interests.

The activities of political parties since 1999 especially the founders of these parties share nothing in common than intra-party crises. Their ideologies are neither the conservative, the radicals and the progressive. They are at loggerhead for power and control of the party machinery; change of party leadership was frequent; expulsion of members, the presence of godfathers rendered the parties ineffective. Parties spent more time to reconcile members; absence of ideology in the parties are noticeable; and the democratic ethos. Opposition parties in the country remained ineffective to challenge the ruling party (Lamidi and Bello (n.d). Similarly, democracy has become an illusion leading to voter apathy, lack foundation, and identity, electoral volatility, unrepresentative governance, and policy instability. In the words of Dode (2010:193);

It becomes difficult for political parties and the nation's democracy to be consolidated and stabilized. Without consolidated and stable parties, voters cannot enjoy effective representation, neither can they be properly organized or mobilized. ... Evidentially speaking, Nigeria's parties in the Fourth Republic are basically fractured and institutionalized (fragile entities) and have thus, failed in their democratic responsibilities of aggregating social interests, representing specific constituencies, structure votes during elections, and serving as intermediaries between state and society.

On a positive note, however, Jinadu (2013) opines that:

This is not to say that all has been bad or that all has not been well since May 1999. It is only to point to creeping and indeed deepening contradictions, which require urgent policy action. The action is urgent, if the considerable and obvious progress the country has made towards deepening democratic transition since 1999 in the following areas is not to turn into a fleeting mirage: (i) continuing commitment to federalism; (ii) the political succession, in line with constitutional fixed term limits and/or through democratic elections, at the federal and state level, even if still problematic and controversial in several respects; (iii) the ebb and flow in the watchdog role of the legislature and judiciary especially at the federal level, under the separation of powers; (iv) the apparent subordination of the military to civilian control; (v) the vibrancy of the civil society as democratic sentinel; and (vi) the limited, though not inconsequential, success of democracy-promoting institutions, such as the independent national electoral commission, the national human rights commission and the economic and financial crimes commission.

Panaceas and Conclusion

The PDP government (May 29, 1999, to May 29, 2015), and the APC government (May 29, 2015, to date) have kept the military out of politics in the country. While this is a great achievement when compared to the previous Republics (1963 and 1979). Notwithstanding this great feat by the party system, yet there are more things that our political parties should do to further entrench into democratic governance.

Democratic dividends of democracy are hardly on the peoples' tables including physical and tangible infrastructure and industrialization. The absence of this is responsible for the emptiness of party ideologies which should ordinarily guide the execution of party manifestoes. The present political parties particularly those who are nationally structured in the area of the organization from the Ward to the national levels, its ideology (if any) be disseminated to their members, followers, and sympathizers. This will allow these segments to know what a party stands for whether they be conservative-capitalism, democratic socialism or combine the elements of capitalism and socialism together. Besides, these parties should operate where they think they can win the election. In other words, if a political party feel it can only win in a Ward or Local

Government level, that party should develop an ideology which would make the party win the hearts of the people at the locality than pitching it tent at the State or Federal level. Such a political party will miss and loss in the mainstream politics since it lacks capacity, ideology, organization, and supporters to deliver for it the political mandate.

The present party system has suffered in the area of internal democracy. There is no way a party can survive without internally democratic in its organization/ or structure, candidate nomination. Also for a party to remain relevant and subsist, win the election and remain in government, internal party democracy is the key.

In our presence, a political party lost crucial elections as a result of a failure to uphold the party's position and members together. Finally, party politics will remain inasmuch political parties abide by the rule of democratic tenets laid down in the national laws and taking cognizance of the populace, party members in decision-making without neglecting participation, inclusion and institutionalization.

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