

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Political parties are institutions that play crucial roles in bringing together diverse interests, recruit and present candidates for elective positions. They also develop competing policy proposals that provide people with choices during elections. In Nigeria, the return to democracy since 1999 has ushered in a renewed process of democratization and thus, heralded another opportunity for the country to launch a new strategy towards democracy, after many years of authoritarian rule and military intervention. This paper examines the nature and character of party politics in Nigeria and its impact on democratic consolidation. The paper relied heavily on secondary sources for data generation. The Elite theory by Vifredo, Mosca, and Roberto was used as a framework of analysis. The paper identified the challenges of political parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria to include god-fatherism, absence of internal democracy within the political parties, etc. The paper concluded that party system in Nigeria is still weak and vulnerable with no visible signs of adding value to the democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It is recommended that for political parties to achieve its role in consolidating democracy, it will imbibe and inculcate organizational capacity, effective leadership, internal democracy discipline, institutionalization and personalization, ideological platforms of mobilization and linkage to civil society.

Keywords: Political Parties, Democratic Consolidation, Electoral Process, Democracy, Politics.

INTRODUCTION

The survival of democracy in modern society rests partly on the ability of political parties to recruit people into party and elective offices, aggregate and articulate interests, politically educate, socialize and integrate the people. There is growing evidence of declining public confidence in parties the world over; political parties have deteriorated in membership, organization, and popular involvement and commitment

to democratic ideal. The Nigeria situation is not an exception. Since the Nigerian State returned to democratic governance in 1999, party activities especially in the areas of selection, election, accountability, discipline, etc appear to be far below democratic requirements such that Nigeria democratic project has been the subject of intense debate in many quarters. Besides, political parties were neck-dipped into all manners of antidemocratic activities including: electoral manipulations during primary and secondary elections, thuggery, hooliganism and vandalism during elections, party cross-carpeting, political assassination of political opponents, arising from unfair method of selecting party's flag bearers and generally lack of party's internal democracy (Dike 2003). Political parties, are seen by them as "makers" of democracy, this have been so romanticized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them (Omotola, 2009). In other words, the existence of vibrant political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity (Dode, 2010). It is patently ironic that political parties largely pursue (and profess) democracy outside the gates and resist it within the gates (Ibeanu, 2013). Competitive party and electoral politics is expected to deepen and consolidate the democratic transition, which the country embarked upon in May 1999 (Jinadu, 2013).

Dike (2003:3) opined that well-functioning political parties are essential for the success of electoral democracy and overall political development of Nigeria. Indeed, democracy is unthinkable in the absence of viable political parties. Parties are expected to participate in the political socialization of electorates, contribute to the accumulation of political power, facilitate recruitment of political leadership, and serve as a unifying force in a divided polity. Omotola, (2010:125) and Ibeanu, (2013:1) are of the view that the objectives which party regulation seeks to achieve, including the lingering question of internal party democracy, namely the push and pull of struggles to get political parties to respect their own rules and act in line with democratic principles in the conduct of their internal affairs, all remains central to the wider consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The character and tendencies exhibited by political parties has implications for democratic sustenance in the country. Ikelegbe (2013:4) argued that the performance of political parties in terms of articulation, aggregation, representation and organization are critical to political accountability, communication, democratic consolidation and political stability.

It is against this background that the paper examines the nature and character of party politics in Nigeria, its impacts on democratic consolidation, and the impediments to the success of political parties in Nigeria since independence, essentially from historical perspective.

Conceptual Review.

Democratic Consolidation

Linz (1978: 158) asserts that a consolidated democracy is one in which "none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces or institutions consider (s) that there is any alternative to the democratic process to gain power and that no political institutions or groups has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. To put it simply democracy must be seen as the only game in town.' Democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and about regarding the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game". More explicitly, Gunther, Diamand and Puhle (1995:90) contend that the democratization process has three phases: the fall of the authoritarian regime, consolidation, and enduring democracy. Democratic consolidation should therefore connote a consistent and sustained practice of democratic principle. Lastly, Asiwaju, (2000:86) contends that democratic consolidation "implies the internationalization of democratic culture and the institutionalization of democratic practices" by a polity that has successfully embarked on a democratic transition"

Political Parties

Ikelegbe, (2013:7) asserts that a political party is much more than an organization for seeking and controlling political power, more critically, it is an organization for expressing and harmonizing interests, which mediates between the citizens and political society, government and state. Political parties have been defined in different ways. Nnoli (2003:87) defines a political party as a group of people who share a common conception of how and why state power should be organized and used. Political parties have also been conceived as an instrument for contesting elections for the purpose of selecting candidates and parties to exercise political power. Yaqub (2002:122) sees political party as simply a body of organized individuals whose ultimate aim and goal is to contest for governmental power through the - instrumentalities of elections. While it should not be mistaken that the mere existence of political parties presupposes that a society is democratic or otherwise, however, competitive and periodic elections have come to at least define the character of liberal democracy. Momoh, (2013:23) also asserts that political parties perform functions that include; mediating between citizens and state institutions; recruiting and preparing individuals for political leadership; organizing election campaigns; aggregating societal interests, and providing a participatory, responsive relationship with the

people; political recruitment and training; education, socialization, breeding consensus, - providing alternative world views and political communication among others.

Background to the Development of Party Politics in Nigeria

The development of political parties in Nigeria must be understood against the wider context of how the political system has developed since independence, as well as in relation to the sense of deterioration of the institutions of governance since the return to democracy in 1999. Nigeria is governed by a presidential system. However, as political power has been concentrated in the centre and in the hands of the executive branch, an intricate body of informal rules of political interaction has also evolved, including through the experience of civil war (the Biafra war) and military rule, by which power is brokered in a way that achieves a sense of stability — at least among elites. (Domingo and Nwankwo, 2010).

At the inception of party politics in 1923, precisely 24 June, 1923, following the introduction of the elective principle by the Clifford constitution, Nigerian parties had very limited and self-serving objectives. The main objective was perhaps, that of buying legitimacy for the colonial government through very limited franchise restricted to Lagos and Calabar. Richard Sklar, in his seminar work, "Nigerian Political Parties", clearly demonstrated how the emergence of political associations such as the People's Union, was only in response to the prevailing realities of colonial administration (Sklar, 1963; Coleman, 1958 cited in Omotola, 2009:620). Little wonder, when the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) emerged in 1923, under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay, its activities were restricted to contesting elections into the Lagos city council. For years, the NNDP was hegemonic in its dominance in electoral politics in the country. This was to be challenged by the Lagos Youth Movement - later Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) which was formed in 1934 and which defeated the NNDP in the elections for the three seats allocated to Lagos that year. By 1944, the increasing tempo of nationalist agitation had resulted in the formation of another political party — the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (CNCN), under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay and later Nnamdi Azikwe (see, Sklar, 1968: 46-50 cited in Omotola, 2009:620). This was followed, in quick succession, by the transformation of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba socio-cultural organization, into a political party, the Action Group (AG) in 1950 under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern People Congress (NPC) in 1959 with dominance in the northern region. By

1951, a breakaway faction of the NPC consisting mainly of radical youths based in Kano formed the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). These parties dominated the political landscape of the country particularly in their respective regions in the march towards independence and in the First Republic.

Historically, Nigeria's political party formations have been characterized by mobilization leaders, who as founder-leaders exercised tremendous influence. Notable examples of such leaders were Obafemi Awolowo of the AG and UPN, and Nnamdi Azikwe of the NCNC and NPP in the first and second republics (1960-1966, and 1979-1988), respectively. In addition, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa were the icons of the NPC in the first republic, who though not alive by the second republic, nonetheless commanded a mythical presence and inspiration within the NPN in the second republic. Such leaders influenced party nominations and other internal party processes to the extent of compromising internal party democracy. (Dike, 2003)

After the second interregnum of military rule (1983—1999), the nature and texture of party politics changed. Political parties were no longer guided by an ideology or specific focus; they were not led by mobilization leader who could drive and guide their actions and policies, and inspire internal cohesion and discipline. Political parties assumed the character of electoral machines, whose sole aim was to win political power through the ballot. Aspirants were mostly individual actors sponsored by some powerful individuals; because the cost of electioneering had now become astronomical. Over three decades, military rule distorted social values and undermined democratic institutions in Nigeria, political parties and civil society inclusive. It was worse for the development of the country's party system. The political parties were in complete limbo, and almost near extinction, courtesy of the numerous military coups and counter-coups that punctuated Nigeria's political history. The rise and fall of the Nigerian military is well documented in the literature on politics and development in Nigeria. Suffice to say, however, that the military held all democratic institutions captive between 1966 (when they first struck) and 1999 (when they retreated in humiliation), except for their occasional ceremonious "stepping aside." Weak structures and ineffective operations of political parties made things worse for the electoral environment in the country. Well functioning political parties are essential for the success of democracy. However, in the particular case of Nigeria, there are limited opportunities for the development of political parties. Political party activities resumed in Nigeria towards the end of 1998 after a long period of military rule during which party activities were banned.

Functions of Political Party

A political party fulfills certain necessary functions, so necessary, indeed, that many political scientists consider them essential to the working of modern liberal democracy. Some of these functions generally identified include:

- i. **Unite, Simplify and Stabilize the Political Process:** Political parties bring together divergent sectional interests particularly in countries with multi-ethnic groups and regional interests, narrow the geographical gap and in most cases provide coherence to government that is federal in nature. The parties therefore tend to provide common denominator for convenient and smooth operation of government.
- ii. **Recruitment of Political Leaders.** People in authority who are occupying various political offices are recruited by political parties. The President, Governors, Parliamentarians, Council Chairmen and a number of political appointees are all recruited by political parties, though in the case of Nigeria with a system that is characterized by weak and ill-organized political parties, power remains in the hands of the elites, traditional groups and military oligarchies. But in liberal democratic countries with competitive party system, recruitments are made from different political parties.
- iii. **Struggle for Capturing Power.** They -strive to win elections and form governments by means of forming order out of chaos.
- iv. **Linkage between Government and Citizens.** Parties seek to educate and sensitize electorates. They mobilize, socialize and interact in forms of rallies, campaign uniforms and other display of unity identifying individuals with a particular political party.
- v. **Presentation of Issues.** Political parties set value goals for the society by ways of manifesto and philosophical bases as is the case with All Progressive Congress (APC) that proclaims socioeconomic improvement of the masses, and an all inclusive government.
- vi. **Interest Aggregations.** The parties do bring together issues raised during campaigns; select those that are of urgent and paramount national interest and focus attention them.
- vii. **Political Mobilization and Social Welfare.** In developing nations of the world where political habits and traditions are yet to grow, parties does or do the job of

political modernization and at the same time work for the alleviation of the sufferings of the people during periods of disaster, etc. In view of the above functions, political parties in Nigeria instead of pursuing these goals are rather engaged in internal wrangling and forming elite's caucus that is bent on looting public funds and marginalizing the common man at the grassroots.

Challenges of Political Parties in the Democratic Consolidation of Democratic Process in Nigeria

Political parties are vital organizations in a democracy. To effectively contribute to the deepening of democratic process, parties need to possess certain characteristics of political parties such as high level of institutionalization, a localized level of candidate nomination, high level of women working at internal party offices and the presence of formal rules designed to increase the number of women in elected offices are vital for the deepening and sustenance of democracy. The absence of these attributes in the Nigeria political culture constitutes a major challenge to political parties in consolidating democracy in the country as events in the fourth Republic suggests. Consequently, the challenges of political parties in the consolidation of democratic process in Nigeria include the following:

i. Lack of Institutionalization and Personalization of Political Parties

Parties in Nigeria have not been able to attain the expected degree of institutionalization especially in the areas of internal cohesion and discipline. This deficiency has also contributed to the decline of their conflict management capacities at both intra and inter-party relations levels. The level of crisis at both levels of party relations is worrisome. It is such that none of the parties have been able to hold together without severe conflict that most times threaten their very hearts (Simbine, 2013:18). Party and party system institutionalization is measured by the internal and external activities of parties. Internal refers to all those factors that are only internal to party organization, such as internal democracy, complexities, finance, adaptability, etc., and external refers to the relationship of parties with their external environment (Kura, 2011:270). The internal characteristics and power configurations of the political parties have manifested in huge organizational weaknesses and internal conflicts. The parties have particularly been plagued by suspensions and expulsions of party members, cross carpeting particularly prior to elections and deep divisions and factions that have manifested sometimes in violent clashes (Ikelegbe, 2013: 18). Intra-party violent conflicts have been particularly heightened during election periods because of the imposition of favored and dubious consensus candidates, and the

swapping of nominated candidates by party chieftains. The absence of equalitarian platforms and the subversion of the will of ordinary party members and delegates in party primaries, have grieved several party leaders and members and underlined numerous defections and cross carpeting (Ikelegbe, 2013: 18-19).

Mote empirically, whether parties in a particular polity are able to effectively perform these functions is a matter of the degree of party and party system institutionalization (Kura, 2008). Another problem associated with lack of institutionalization is the fact that a few prominent, powerful and influential individuals have completely hijacked the party machinery. While Obasanjo has total control of the PDP, it is well known that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu determines what happens in the ACN. Similarly, Rtd General Buhari is Alfa and Omega in Congress for Positive Change (CPC), and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) is controlled by the duo of Kano State Governor Shekarau and Ali Modu Sheriff (Simbine, 2013:18). In Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), the only authority that mattered was Oloye Olusola Saraki (now late), while Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu (also now late) and Governor Peter Obi of Anambra state control the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) (Simbine, 2013:18). The dominant figures in APC are Buhari and Tinubu. There is something common to the two of them; they are both dictators and ideologically they are two poles apart.

Un-institutionalized parties will always find it difficult to develop deep roots in the society in which they operate. This factor has led to a low rate of party identification among voters, which also leads to high electoral volatility (Simbine, 2013:18). When parties generally lack strong institutionalization; they showcase a low level of organization and become even more available to be hijacked by a few party leaders who dictate to the majority.

ii. God-Fatherism

God-fatherism has become a dominant feature of the party system in Nigeria today. Ayoade (2008: 85) states that godfather is "a benign political accretion of the position of either political notables or dreaded political rascals who are recalcitrant to the deterrence of the legal regime". God-fatherism has been described as "an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest" (Ogundiya, 2009: 286). To Ayoade (2006:56), god-fatherism is not philanthropy, it is often marked by devious and undemocratic acts such as

violence, bribery and corruption all for the sake of perpetuating the wishes of the Godfather. There is a symbiotic relationship between the Godfather and the God-Son: the Godfather "invests" his resources in the Godson and the Godson must, or at least should, on getting into office reciprocate by reimbursing his Godfather in kind and keeping absolute loyalty to the Godfather in all respects, including decision making whilst in public office. The key goal of all Godfathers is rule by proxy or rule through protégés (Ojo and Lawal, 2013). Godfather politics typically ensures that results are declared even when there is no evidence that voting actually took place. It typically plays electoral politics with little or no respect for the established rules of conduct governing the process, and does not display any sense of moral restraint in its appreciation of what constitutes appropriate behavior in democratic political order. It is not surprising therefore those elections results, whether at the intra-party -level or at the level of general elections is always disputed by those who are declared losers. In fact, all three presidential elections since 1999 have been the subject of judicial intervention (Abutudu, 2013:10-11).

Abutudu, (2013:12) observes Godfathers have significant influence on the internal workings of political parties; they are inadvertently or deliberately involved in the stability or otherwise of these parties. In other words, because they are the modulators and epicenter of political in-fighting and struggle for power and perquisites of office, they are one causative factor of members' defection.

iii. Absence of Internal Democracy within the Political Parties

Most political parties do not practice internal democracy because their leaders hardly emerged democratically hence the rising culture of political violence and assassinations especially in some Sections of the country. Internal (party) democracy could be defined as a democratic process which involves accountability and transparency in all party affairs more especially in selecting party leaders, flag bearer, executives and other party officials in a political party (Ukaeje, 2011:19). Internal democracy thus connotes political parties giving full expression and unfettered access to their members to participate in the decision making process. It also means running affairs transparently, in accordance with agreed rules, and in a manner that is fair and just. Internal party democracy in political parties also refer to the levels and methods of including party members in the decision making and deliberation within party structure (Kari and Uchenna, 2011:35-36).

The flagrant abuse of internal party democracy has been identified as the primogeniture of party wrangling or crisis either because of the wrangling it brings in the party affairs or the crisis it causes. Much of the internal party conflicts witnessed among political parties in Nigeria are either directly or indirectly linked to the problem of intraparty democracy, a development which has bedeviled the development of political parties and therefore a major impediment to the development of sustainable democratic governance (and consolidation) in our country (Ukaeje, 2011:23).

iv. Incessant Party / Political Violence

Ibeanu, (2013:13) observes that the most damning record of political parties on clean politics is the persistence of violence in our political system. Apart from elections conducted by the colonial government and the military, others particularly the 1964, 1983, 2003 and 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections were plagued by violence and crises. Elections in Nigeria since 2003 have been plagued with irregularities and violence (Nweke 2005). Prior to the 2007 elections, the spate of assassinations that hit politicians was simply unprecedented, including a Minister of Justice and a National Vice Chairman of the ruling People's Democratic Party (Ibeanu, 2013).

The 2007 elections was particularly plagued by incidents of violence that included theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of properties and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem and chaos. More specifically incidents of electoral violence have included assault on electoral officials and voters, hijack and seizure of election materials, attacks on security officials and violent clashes between rival thugs and sympathizers of political parties (Nweke 2005). Party politics is always being characterized by assassination, arson, intra and inter- party clashes and monumental political violence (Babatope, 2012). Rather than being a platform for reconciling and mediating conflicts and preventing violent eruptions through democratic procedures, the political parties in Nigeria have become a major institutional formation for the brewing and accentuation of conflicts. Party involvements in violence and violent conflicts have inflamed existing identity and communal conflicts over land, chieftaincy and community leadership the political parties' violence linkage has constructed a regime of public distrust, disgust, apathy and antipathy concerning the political process and political elite. Nigerians have become disillusioned and alienated from the political process.

Theoretical Framework

The Elite Theory as popularized by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Roberto Michels, Wright Mills, among others, no doubt obviously explicates the Nigeria political system considering the fact that most political parties that exist in the country either be classified as cadre or elite parties which manipulates the sentiments of the masses for the selfish objective of acquiring economic base (Vanna 2006). At this point what constitute political power varies from one society to the other but the difference may be minimal. In Nigeria, political power can be viewed from the perspective of those who have occupied one political office or the other, especially retired military and other public officials such as top civil servant, past ministers and so on. These are the group of persons that have been circulating themselves in governance since the country's independence in 1960 (Dike 2003). One of the advocates of elitism, Pareto (cit. Obah-Akpowoghaha 2013) believes that elite in different occupations and strata generally come from the same class: those who are wealthy are also intelligent; they have an aptitude for mathematics and moral character. To him, society, thus, consists of two classes:

(1) a higher stratum, the elites, which are divided into governing elite, and non-governing elite, (2) a lower stratum, the non-elite.

Pareto's focus of inquiry was the governing elite which, he believed, rules by a mixture of force and cunning (Varma 2006). This last analysis unveils the traits of some Nigerian politicians; particularly the band of retired military Generals and top government officials that have entered the political scene. This is where Roberto Michels "Iron Law of Oligarchy" comes to play. From all available indications, these individuals have been on top of their professions but still cling very tight to the rulership of the country using their Party as well as the title of a 'General' for intimidating others. The point here is that political parties no longer functions as expected, precisely because decision and information are made and circulated by the few. This has really paralyzed the growth of the democratic process in the country. However, according Roberto Michels in relation to elitism, as a party grows in size, more and more functions have to be delegated to an inner circle of leaders, and, in course of time, the members of the organization are rendered less competent to direct and control them, as a result of which the officers acquire greater freedom of action and develop vested interest in their position. They cling desperately to their new powers and privileges, and become almost irremovable.

Once the leader reached the pinnacle of power, nothing could bring them down. "If laws are passed to control the dominion of leaders, it is the laws which gradually weaken and not the leaders". It is however important to emphasize the various forms of elite. These include: bureaucratic elites, religious elites, military elites, traditional elites; etc. It is also important to state that elitist classifications are not mutually exclusive in the sense that an individual elite can fall within more than a classification. Such classification also varies from time to time. For instance, the military elite during a military regime could also be qualifying as political elite, especially when he is involved in the authoritative allocation of state resources (Vanna, 2006). The implication of the above is that since elitist classifications are not mutually exclusive, it means that the political elites could easily depend on other elitist class for the manipulation of support for power acquisition.

This is quite visible in Nigeria in the form of traditional rulers influencing support for political candidates or bureaucratic elites in the civil service influencing the electoral process in order to keep their jobs. Besides, political elite aspiring for elective offices had on several occasions used the instrument of money to buy votes and manipulate electoral outcomes (Ayoade 2008). Also, political thugs and hooligans have been recruited to create instability during election by disrupting and snatching ballot boxes. Dudley (cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha 2013:98) sees instability in Nigeria as a result of the constitutional impropriety of the elite. As he puts it, "stability can only be maintained if the behavior of leadership and actors is consistent with rules of the game or if the boundary-determining rules are respected". However, in Nigeria, the activities and inputs of the elites is so pronounced that before the end of a recruitment process or election the results have been predetermined and if there is contrary outcome on the proposed results, the elites attempt to use economic and political means to influence the results. This was very rampant during 1999, 2003 and 2007 election at the state level as well as the national level. The above points buttress Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels theses on that "the elites possess economic power and control the political system".

According to the elitist theorist, the composition and consolidation of a democratic polity must entail serious thought and action concerning the development of a normatively positive appreciation of those core institutions of a democratic political society — political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, party alliances and legislature-by which society constitutes it politically, select and monitor democratic government.

Summary

Conclusively therefore, while political parties have made an important contribution as agents of democratization in Nigeria , with their numbers, roles and activities being enhanced yet their content and quality remain doubtful. These political parties are faced with organizational weaknesses, absence of internal democratic culture, poor financial resource mobilization and management and the lacked of articulate ideological views on development challenges that becomes a threat to the nascent democracy in the country .The discussion above therefore, has given insight into the fact that the genesis of regional political parties in Nigeria which is traceable to the primordial structures in the country, and served as centripetal forces, that balkanized the country than it was met in January 1900 when the British formally took over its administration, led to the ruling political parties dominating their opponents through the abuse of state funds and resources. This resulted in widespread corruption and financial recklessness coupled with lack of an ideological base for economic development. And as a result of this, the parties are fluid and politicians move from one camp to the other easily where by polluting the whole system because these parties and the so-called elites instead of educating Nigerians on the good ideals of democracy, are preaching divisive ideas and creating tensions amongst different ethnic groups in the country and instead of positively engaging the youth into a meaningful venture the opposite happens to be the case. Youth are being used as political thugs and tools for elections, the aftermath consequences are wide spread criminal activities all over the country making the political environment conducive for Military interventions due to series of crisis both inter and intra among the political parties that led to so many people losing their lives.

Conclusion

Governance in Nigeria has been characterized by inefficient yet authoritarian centralization, a dearth of meaningful political representation, a culture of impunity, and a demoralizing climate of unaccountability drafting back to military rule. The combination of aggrieved injustice and the social misery of the majority, in turn, risks producing disillusionment with democracy, creates conditions igniting social conflicts and, most importantly, threatens the stability of Nigeria's political order. Many political elites, past and present, have accumulated personal fortunes through resilient, deeply rooted systems of political patronage that are wired into the booming oil industry in the south. Today, Nigeria is contending not only with a growing gap between its northern and southern halves but also with the polarization between

Nigeria's diverse population and an affluent minority that is seen — regardless of its ethnic or religious background — as becoming out of touch, self-serving and corrupt once launched into the wealth and comfort of the federal capital city of Abuja (Hoffmann, 2014).

Oil resources are distributed through informal networks of patronage brokered at the centre through the executive. The evolution of the oil economy and related incentive structures have contributed to the development of an intricate web of neo-patrimonial relations between elites (Sklar et al 2006). This has combined with the legacy of military rule that has led to the erosion of the original constitutional federal arrangement, and to a concentration of political and economic power in the centre. The Presidency is effectively able to "dispense patronage across the country, hijack the ruling party, subordinate the legislature and stifle the judiciary" (Egwu et al 2008). Both horizontal and vertical forms of accountability are fundamentally weak, the prospects for rule of law are weak, and there is a culture of impunity in public office. In this context, political parties are no less susceptible to capture by the personal interests of powerful elites, and consequently fail to fulfill the role of representation, and mediation of state society relations. To advance the democratic project, the Nigerian public needs to gain confidence in its institutions. The public needs to feel that there are organs of the political system that can guarantee fairness and Justice, and that are not undermined by wealth through corruption. Common citizens must have recourse to democratic institutions in order to express demands and resolve conflicts. At this point, the public has little or no confidence in turning to any branch of the government to help directly resolve problems without the benefit of wealth (USAID, 2006:15). A central concern for building democracy in Nigeria is thus to alter this relationship between the oligarchy and the citizenry, so as to reconnect the state to its citizens in a more responsible and responsive manner. Another emerging opportunity arises from the relations within the elite, where democratic institutions and practices are increasingly used for competition within the oligarchy. The starting point for democratization must thus include not only the formal democratic institutions that have been slowly progressing since 1999, but also the informal system of oligarchs and their subordinates which overlays the formal institutions of government.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are being advanced as likely solutions to avoid the past mistakes:

- i. Political parties in the country should henceforth focus their attentions on evolving an ideology for economic development of the country instead of attaching much importance to primordial issues;
- ii. The parties need to be internally democratic so that every member wishing to aspire for any position in the party or under the party will be allowed to exercise his civil rights. This will reduce the roles played by the political godfathers and may equally reduce internal squabbles;
- iii. Political parties should equally be compelled to keep financial records, and transparent in all dealings so that the institution serve as home for growing and producing prudent leaders;
- iv. Any political party that is engaging, recruiting or encouraging thuggery in the country is to be punished. This will help in reducing the rate of youth addicts and spades of crime in the country so that these youth will be of societal benefits and to contribute their quota in the development of the country;
- v. Corruption that is institutionalized in the country must be reduce to negligible level so that people will witness growth, and will yield the benefit of democracy, and this will further reduce the level of insecurity in the country that is associated with poverty.

However there is need to reform and overhaul the entire electoral processes, electoral officers especially those into the state and national assemblies, should be made part-time, while the monetary value attached to them be less attractive. This way, only those that are committed to national development would offer themselves for elections. Besides, thuggery and violence which always characterized past elections due to selfish desire to accumulate wealth through political power while in office would be reduced, if not curtailed. God-fatherism should be detested, and meritocracy and internal democracy being made the bench mark of all party activities. Transparency, accountability, consensus and consultation should be the guiding light of all political parties' activities in Nigeria. The political party to achieve its role in consolidating democracy, it ought to imbibe and inculcate organizational capacity, effective leadership, internal democracy, discipline, institutionalization and personalization, ideological platforms of mobilization and linkage to civil society.

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