

AN ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Democratic values and practices are crucial for democratic institutionalization and the development of party strength. However, the history of Nigeria's democratic experiments demonstrates that elections and electoral politics have generated so much animosity which has, in some cases, threatened the corporate existence of the country. In this essay, the critical nature of Nigerian political parties in the Fourth Republic will be explored to ascertain their contributions to the achievement of democratic consolidation in the country. Based on empirical evidence gathered from the activities of political parties of this dispensation, the essay attempts to provide answers to questions like: what specific contributions have political parties in Nigeria made towards the achievement of a lasting democracy? Is democratic competition (a major tenet of democratic consolidation) at play in Nigeria? What factors must be injected into the current practice to make it a system that will engender a permanent, stable democratic order for the Nigerian State?

Keywords: Political Parties, Democracy, Consolidation.

INTRODUCTION

What is meant by democracy and democratic consolidation? Questioning the sufficiency of electoral democracy, democracy entails not only contestation and participation but also the establishment of various sites for maintaining accountability, popular expression, collective action, and a wide range of civil and political freedoms (Diamond, 1996:3). In other words, the substantive conception of democracy depicts better what is meant by democracy in this chapter than the formal or procedural conception of democracy. Whilst the procedural democracy which has been advocated by Schumpeter refers to the establishment of rules, procedures and institutions for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a struggle for the people's vote (Schumpeter, 1947:269); substantive conception of democracy questions the sufficiency of formal democracy and asks for greater opportunities for people to affect debates about important decisions that shape their society (Kaldor and Vejvoda, 1997:62). According to Pridham (2000:5) while the idea of formal democracy is related more to the process of regime transition, the shift in democratization studies to concentrating on regime consolidation has moved to discussion that goes well into areas of substantive democracy.

Consolidating Nigerian democracy through the conduct of credible elections has remained an albatross. The history of Nigeria's democratic experiments demonstrates that elections and electoral politics have generated so much animosity which has, in some cases, threatened the corporate existence of the country (such as happened after the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election) and in other cases instigated military incursion in to political governance, most notably in 1966 and 1983. At the heart of electoral crisis in Nigeria is the lack of credibility for the official results of elections leading to the rejection of such results by a sizeable portion of the Nigerian voting public. Since the 1964 general election, the first to

be conducted by the post-colonial Nigerian government, elections in Nigeria have consistently been characterized by the contestation of results and organized violence. While there is a plethora of factors that account for electoral crisis in Nigeria, the institutional factor (designing a credible electoral system) appears to be the most salient. In addition, the process of implementing such an efficient electoral regime is challenged by sociological variables such as the pluralist character of the Nigerian nation, underdeveloped political culture and irrational elite behaviour.

A party's commitment to democratic values will be reflected in its internal organizational structure. For example, a party's local organizers and members should have the right - indeed, be encouraged to develop programs that they deem appropriate, such as public forums and membership recruitment campaigns. These local initiatives, however, should be consistent with basic party policy. Local leaders and organizers have a responsibility to contribute to the greater good of the national party and to communicate information about local activities to the national office. At each level, leaders, organizers and individual members should be accountable for fulfilling clearly defined responsibilities (NDI, 2001:10). Political parties should be organized and managed no differently than other successful organizations. At the most basic level, this means that a successful party will have a clear internal management and communication structure that is well known and understood by its members.

Political parties are interested in achieving electoral and political gains. These can only be accomplished to satisfaction through the effective deployment of the parties' organizational resources at the local, intermediate and national levels. In this sense, we are interested in ascertaining and being able to use the material capacity as well as the human and financial resources that a party has, including the skills and the personnel with which these are managed. A party that has been able to clearly identify its resources may be able to expand them and deploy them effectively (IMD, 2004:11).

Accordingly, one of the most cited definitions of consolidated democracy is "a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules and patterned incentives has become, in a phrase, the only game in town, behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally" (Linz and Stepan, 1996:15). Behaviourally, a regime is consolidated when the significant actors do not resort to violent or non-democratic methods to reach their objectives. Attitudinally, it is consolidated when the majority of public opinion, even when there is a major crisis, conceive democratic procedures and institutions as the most appropriate way of overcoming the problems; and constitutionally, when both "governmental and nongovernmental forces alike become subject to, as well as habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the bounds of specific laws and procedures, and institutions that are sanctioned by the new democratic process".(Linz and Stepan, 1996:15). Diamond (1999) also asserts that consolidation happens when democratic norms and behaviours become institutionalized on three levels: the elite level of top decision-makers, organizational leaders, political activists and opinion shapers; the intermediate level of parties, organizations and movements; and the level of mass public.

In Nigeria, even though the political space has been marginally liberalized since May 29 1999 after a prolonged period of military rule, the Nigerian state has remained predatory, repressive and totalitarian. Politics is still zero-sum and brutish. The antecedents of the current state such as repression, predatory political behaviour and parasitism remain in place. Rather than democratize the polity and promote inclusive politics amid a complex plurality, the state continues to exclude more and more people from the political and development

processes. The massively rigged general elections held in April 2007, with the attendant nullification of gubernatorial and parliamentary results by the election petition tribunals and the appellate courts, was indicative of the inability of the state to conduct credible elections after 55 years of political independence. It also gave useful insights into the depth of political decay in the country (Omoweh, 2012:43).

Thus, in this essay, the critical nature of Nigerian political parties in the Fourth Republic will be explored to ascertain their contributions to the achievement of democratic consolidation in the country. Based on empirical evidence gathered from the activities of political parties of this dispensation, I intend to attempt answers to questions like: what specific contributions have political parties in Nigeria made towards the achievement of a lasting democracy? Is democratic competition (a major tenet of democratic consolidation) at play in Nigeria? What factors must be injected into the current practice to make it a system that will engender a permanent, stable democratic order for the Nigerian State?

Intra-Party Democracy and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Democratic values and practices are crucial for democratic institutionalization and the development of party strength. It makes no sense to stand for a democratic polity and yet not practice democracy within one's party. Voters readily perceive the contradiction and a party that does not practice what it preaches is unlikely to be favoured at election time.

Generally, no political party will declare that it is undemocratic. Democracy has become such a compelling idea that even military rulers and civilian dictators are eager to proclaim their devotion to democratic norms. In a political party, however, democracy will not flourish merely because it is proclaimed. In fact, internal party democracy can be compromised by such factors as: insular management and communication structures; a lack of leadership change; and marginalized party members. Sometimes these factors create a situation in which a few individuals dominate party affairs without proper regard for the membership at-large. Such a situation precludes inclusiveness and the opportunity for members to shape a party's policies (NDI, 2001:6).

Intra-party democracy of political parties has a significant impact on democratic consolidation and representation. Internal party organisational issues such as membership, recruitment, socialisation, training, discipline and resources of the party have profound influence on the outcome. Internal organisational factors (recruitment strategies, centralisation, party discipline, norms of co-operation, and political skills) are responsible for responding to the powerful environmental factors. Without political parties or in situations where parties are weak and ineffective, politics is reduced to unbridled opportunism and the overt self-serving interest of individual politicians who may derail the nation-building process and the democracy project.

Internal party democracy means that a political party has impersonal rules and procedures to avoid the arbitrary control of internal elections and party functioning by individual leaders or cliques. Such rules must also be put into practice; otherwise a party is neither institutionalized nor truly democratic. Internal party democracy means that all party components and functionaries follow due process and are accountable to the rank-and-file and to the lawful organs established in the statutes (IMD 2004:11).

While the process of forming and registering political parties has remained relatively open since 1999, the internal governance of the parties has hardly been liberalized. In fact, a few rich politicians have captured and privatized the political parties to meet their narrow ends, thereby re-orienting the parties away from their basic functions of interest articulation, aggregation and political education. As a result, political parties have become vehicles for power acquisition and surplus extraction. This has had dire consequences for internal democratic practices within the parties (Omoweh, 2012:43-44). Buttressing this point, Mbah (2011:15) contends that since 1999, political parties have faced the problem of non-democratic practices. The expectation generally is that since the country has embraced democracy, its political parties must be democratic not only externally, in their goals but also democratic internally in their organizational practices and behaviour. However, lack of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties has become a persistent threat to the country's nascent democracy. Party primaries throughout the country clearly show that Nigeria political parties are not operating within norms of democratic principles. Various political parties have failed to adopt the provisions of the party's constitutions to all party members who are eligible and want to run for office in their party primaries. Some candidates were imposed on the party without election and due process. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2006:7 cited in Omilusi, 2013:132), in a report, submits that:

At the party congresses, leaders are elected and candidates are nominated for elective positions. The elections, however, are usually pre-determined and party bosses tend to have the final say in the selection of leaders. This process leads to the continual internal party crisis that the country has experienced. Party bosses or godfathers are unwilling to allow internal party democracy, a circumstance that leads to frequent conflicts and constrains the development of parties as popular organizations. Indeed, over the years these party bosses have developed comprehensive techniques for eliminating popular aspirants from party posts and for preventing them from being nominated for elective positions.

According to the IDEA's Report, Nigerian parties have a wide range of techniques to eliminate people from party primaries, including:

- A declaration by powerful 'party owners', party barons, state governors, godfathers and so on that those entitled to vote must support one candidate and other aspirants must withdraw. Since these people are very powerful and feared in their communities, their declarations carry much weight.
- Zoning and other forms of administrative fiat are used to exclude unwanted aspirants simply by taking the party zone out of the seat or position in question to an area where the aspirant being excluded is not indigenous.
- Aspirants who oppose the godfathers' candidates are often subject to violence by thugs or security personnel.
- Money, a significant factor in party primaries, is used to bribe officials and to induce voters to support particular candidates. Since the godfather generally has more money than the 'independent' aspirants trying to gain access, many are eliminated because they simply cannot match their opponents' spending.
- One disturbing technique is what Nigerians call 'results by declaration', whereby an aspirant wins a nomination or election, but polling officials simply disregard the results and declare the loser as the winner.

Political parties have abandoned their traditional roles in a democracy, thereby constituting more of a clog in the wheel of this system of government. According to Momoh (2010), there is no more political education, consistent and sustained financial membership, regular grassroots meetings, except when elections are at hand. As such, party executives are imposed by one tendency against another tendency in the interplay of internal contestation for the soul and heart of the party. The dominant tendency does not wish to have a few positions, they prefer to take all, if not the strategic positions, viz-Party Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. They can choose to trade Vice Chairman, Publicity Secretary, and Women Leader to other tendencies. When democracy and contest for power is designed in such absolutist winner-takes all spirit, it spells doom for democracy, as this behaviour is again brought into the arena of national politics.

Nigerian democracy has confronted series of challenges with the return to civil rule in 1999 among which include the imposition of candidates, godfatherism, money politics, injustice, lack of party manifestoes and ideology, party indiscipline and so on. The absence of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties constitutes a major threat to democratic consolidation in the country. This problem, which has led to party defection, otherwise known as cross- carpeting, party witching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping and party jumping has remained a permanent feature in the Nigerian democracy (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012:46).

It should be noted however, that there has been much less agreement about whether it is necessary for parties to organize themselves in internally democratic ways in order to promote the democratic functioning of the political systems in which they compete. But even if views still differ on the absolute necessity of intra- party democracy, most agree that there are often sound and even self-interested reasons for parties to adopt more open decision-making processes. Such procedures may help parties win elections, recruit and select good candidates, and retain popular support.

Given the central functions that parties are supposed to play in a democracy, the weak party structures in many developing and post-communist countries is a serious problem for democratization. Above all, the shaky state of parties contributes significantly to the inadequate aggregation and representation of interests which is such a debilitating problem in so many new and struggling democracies. Large sectors of the citizenry often feel that their political system, though nominally democratic, is uninterested in and unresponsive to their needs. Troubled parties also fail to socialize citizens into the democratic process, not creating links with citizens beyond the appeal for votes every few years when an election takes place. Furthermore, problematic parties, when called upon to take part in legislatures or help fill executive positions and govern, import their internal problems, ranging from corruption and infighting to rigid internal hierarchies and unqualified persons-into the state apparatus (Carothers, 2004:4).

Godfatherism, Political Party Financing and the Character of the Nigerian State

The role of money in politics is a major concern for any nation that adheres to democratic tenets. This raises concern because wealth creates unequal opportunity for participation. The source of funding itself is also a vexing issue, given that corporate funding of the political process generally increases non-participation in self-governance; it can be said to have the perverse effect of minimising democracy and promoting the inevitable elite plutocracy. However although it is evident that the cost of elections is high, there is lack of

comprehensive data showing, on the one hand, what the political parties and their candidates spend in any given election, and on the other hand, what state organs responsible for the management of elections spend.

Parties are reluctant to expose their expenditure data, whether it is for presidential, parliamentary or sub-territorial elections. Since the process of electioneering is a multi-activity undertaken by political parties, it requires heavy financing which in turn influences electoral competitions and outcomes. However, if only certain groups donate and only a select few receive money, then the electoral marketplace becomes limited to only those with means to gain entry. In addition, the buying of votes as well as unethical receipt and expenditure of funds, can have a corrupting influence in the governing process. The end result is that under such circumstances money can lead to negative consequences such as decreased competitiveness and corruption.

Political financing, broadly defined, includes finance of party activities in elections and during nonelection periods. It can also be described as the funds received and spent by political parties and candidates in election campaigns. Such campaign as envisaged in this definition includes both party and individual campaigns since both need resources. Political finance is therefore both the object and result of political processes. The funding of parties and campaigns is determined by policy decisions of politicians. In new democracies, it must not be treated solely as a problem but a means to create a basis for democratic government. The challenge therefore is to find the best way of matching the need for sustainable financial base for the parties with the wider public interest of curbing or curtailing corruption and avoiding undue influence in politics. Political financing is one form of political participation. But for such participation to meet the tenets of a democratic government, it not only has to accommodate the general claim to participate but also the actual variation in degrees of participation caused by economic inequality and the voluntary nature of that participation.

It has been observed that elections provide a theatre of power politics amongst elites in Africa. Such moments lay bare the desperation of the elites to hang on to or achieve power, depending on if they are incumbents or marginal elites. For incumbents, state resources and other privileges associated with state power are invested in retaining power. And for those wanting to gain power, personal wealth and those of “power brokers” are patronised to fight their way into power (Tarl and Shettima, 2010).

In Nigeria’s fourth republic which was inaugurated on May 29, 1999 there has been an observable deviation from the conventional pattern of electoral politics. Individuals, rather than political parties are the driving force of electoral politics in the current dispensation. Some individuals with questionable money and other influences have eclipsed parties in the determination of choice of candidates for election into public offices. These individuals of questionable means and character have robbed political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions. Godfatherism in this sense means the practice of political office seekers getting connected to an individual who is believed to have the ability to deliver desired outcome in an electoral contest (Gambo, 2006 : 88-90).

‘Godfathers’ are not mere financiers of political campaigns. Rather they are individuals whose power stems not just from wealth but from their ability to deploy violence and corruption to manipulate national, state or local political systems in support of the politicians they sponsor. In return, they demand a substantial degree of control over the governments they help bring into being, not in order to shape government policy, but to exact direct

financial “returns” in the form of government resources stolen by their protégés or lucrative government contracts awarded to them as further opportunities for graft. Godfathers also require their sponsored politicians to use government institutions to generate patronage for other protégés (HRW 2007:33).

Many Nigerians did not believe that the regime of General Abubakar was truly committed to returning power to civilians in 1999. They therefore maintained a safe distance from the political transition programme. This was how the godfathers took over power. They have been consolidating their grip on power since then. By the 2003, there were more political godfathers in many parts of Nigeria than those interested in vying for public offices. The 2003 elections thus took off with the godfathers fighting it out at party conventions: it was a 'Naira for Naira fight; Dollars for Dollars; Pounds for Pounds'. Most of those who lost their chance of nomination at the party conventions did so not because they were not qualified but simply because their godfathers were not strong enough (Albert, 2005:95).

The ordinary Nigerians had no voice whatsoever in all the fights; they watched from far off. The media plays important roles in the making of most of the godfathers in the country. The trick is evinced in the popular adage: 'a lie when told over and over again soon becomes a fact'. Godfathers pay media men to report their activities over and over again. They are granted regular interviews and in some cases deliberate efforts are made by the media to help launder the image of these godfathers. There are also situations where the godfathers pay their followers to place congratulatory messages about them in the media. Such messages are usually concluded with statements on how valuable the godfathers are for advancing the interests of the down-trodden in Nigerian society. In the process, all these godfathers are better known to members of the public and this enhances their public image.

As aptly noted by Albert (2005:81), political godfathers use their influence to block the participation of others in Nigerian politics. They are political gatekeepers: they dictate who participates in politics and under what conditions. This kind of situation promotes mediocrity and financial corruption as 'the incumbent godson is at pains to satisfy the whims and caprices of the godfather among other competing demands on the scarce resources of the government. Thus, the interest of the larger number is savagely undermined'. Any godson who fails to cooperate with the godfather is subjected to all forms of humiliation and political violence, as discussed above. *Godfatherism* is one of the most important factors responsible for electoral malpractices in Nigeria. We should not be surprised about this fact given the assurance that godfathers give to their clients on winning elections when reaching agreements with them. The seriousness of the problem here is better appreciated when the fact is faced that there are many godfathers contesting for recognition at every election.

The point was made earlier that the relationship between the godfather and godson is symbiotic: the godfather assures the latter of electoral success and the godson uses his political power after winning the election to advance the social, economic and political influence of his mentor. This explains why elections in Nigeria are usually a contest of power between godfathers. They come out with all the tricks that could help to give their candidates victory. The tricks include multiple voting, exchanging official ballot boxes with unofficial ones already filled with voting papers, stealing electoral boxes, chasing voters away from constituencies where their candidates are likely to have few votes, killing and wounding political opponents, etc. Such activities help to produce counter-violence during elections.

In its Country Report, the Centre for Democracy and Development, CDD (2006:10) submits that Nigerian political parties were conceived to be cohesive, national bourgeois parties. Nonetheless, the aim or political project of most Nigerian parties has been the development of a national system for sharing out the 'national cake' as a system of patronage. This is why the parties are established as coalitions of various factions of regional and economic rent-seekers. Most party leaders see their political party activity as a means to further their business interests.

In a sense, Nigerian political parties are the highest form of development of this process. Nigerian political parties face two challenges. First, an extremely high level of corruption has made politics a competitive business. Second, the regulatory framework for the establishment of parties should be changed so that new parties do not have to forge coalitions of the wealthy as a basis for their registration (ibid).

Agbaje and Adejumobi (2006: 40) contend that the immediate consequence of a monetised electoral politics is the emergence of 'political barons' - political entrepreneurs, who invest in election candidates for higher financial and political returns. Political barons hold neither elective political offices nor party positions. They often constitute informal leaders, who are more powerful than the party chiefs and formal office holders. They sponsor candidates, control the internal party nomination process, finance electoral campaigns, rig elections on behalf of their candidates, corrupt election officials, and sometimes change the names of candidates after elections have been concluded. They are virtual kingmakers.

The crisis of the electoral system and the challenge of *godfatherism* in Nigeria will be better understood if situated within the context of the nature of the political economy of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian state plays a dominant role in the national economy in the face of the underdevelopment of private capitalist enterprise. This throws up the state as a primary instrument of accumulation. As a facilitator of the capitalist development process, the Nigerian state is a major owner of the means of production. Buoyed by the expanded oil revenues of the early 1970s, the state effectively dominated all aspects of the national political economy (Jega, 2000:30). This made the state not only the biggest spender of resources but also the largest employer of labor.

As noted by Joseph (1991:56), the expansion of petroleum production and the resultant increased revenues heightened "the centrality of the state as the locus of the struggle for resources for personal advancement and group security." Under this circumstance, access to the state becomes a platform for primitive accumulation. Ake (1996:23) captures the immensity and the ubiquity of state power under this situation when he observes that "the state is everywhere and its power appears boundless. There is hardly any aspect of life in which the state does not exercise power and control. That makes the capture of state power singularly important."

This character of the Nigerian state encourages *clientele* politics which, according to Huntington, (1997:378) exists "where the state controls opportunities for commerce and a wide range of jobs in the academic, administrative and legal fields." Within this context, politics means more than competition for political power but assumes the character of a desperate struggle "for positions in the bureaucracy or for access to those who have influence over government decisions." (Leeds, 1981:353) Issuing from the profitability of state power for primitive accumulation, the struggle for state power is reduced to warfare by factions of

the governing elite. In this struggle, commitment to public service and ethics of governance becomes secondary. (Egwu, 2003). Thus, political (state) power does not only represent the license to wealth, it is also “the means to security and the only guarantor of general well-being” (Ake, 2001:7). It is within this context of the dominant role of the state in the political economy that one can explain the desperation of Nigeria’s governing elite for state power as evident in the brazen manipulation of the electoral process.

It is advocated that public funding of political parties should be restored. However, stringent conditions must be set for political parties to access this fund. Political parties could be asked to write a funding proposal to INEC stating what they intend to do with the required fund. This proposal could be assessed by a select committee of internal and external assessors to be appointed by the Commission. The disbursement could be in tranches to be released upon satisfactory performances and achievement of certain benchmarks or milestones. This will ensure that there is value for money remitted to these political parties. Nigerian law should capture third party spending. It has been discovered that high profile candidates use third parties such as Committees of Friends or other pseudo non-governmental organisations to spend above the permissible limits. In the recently concluded election in Edo State, a TV advert was said to have been sponsored by members of one of the parties contesting the elections who are based in Dublin, Ireland. Not only does the Constitution in Section 225(3) prohibit possession of foreign funding, the monies spent by third parties are difficult to track and pin on the contestants (Ojo, 2012:6).

For effective enforcement, Nigerian political parties will need to introduce internal control mechanisms in the form of financial agents and managers, code of conduct, accounting procedures, financial checks and balances and ethical committees to help oversee financial management and fundraising activities. Electoral law can be amended to make this mandatory for all registered political parties. Political parties should outlaw separate campaign office by aspirants and candidates. Such practice usually weakens party supremacy, and promotes corruption. Moreover, Nigeria should borrow a leaf from the Liberian example where all party candidates are made to publicly declare their assets before they can be issued a nomination form by their parties. Besides, anyone who wins an election without a financial report will not be sworn in.

The Impact of Political Parties and Party Systems on Democratic Consolidation

There is a general agreement among political analysts that democratic consolidation would be impossible without the effective participation of political parties. Political parties are the sole means of translating electoral outcomes into effective action, and they are a major component in legitimising control of political office. The literature on new democracies emphasises the organisational and structural obstacles faced by political parties in the process of democratic consolidation (Olaleye, 2003).

In his writing about democratic consolidation, Przeworski (1991:10) argues thus: “In a democracy, multiple political forces compete inside an institutional framework”, and contends that “Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions ... [and] ... democracy is consolidated when compliance – acting within the institutional framework – constitutes the equilibrium of the decentralised strategies of all the relevant political forces.” This approach has the following implications:

- Political engagement is democratic only when it takes place within an institutional setting.
- Non-compliance occurs not only when party-political actors in the formal institutional setting break the rules of the institutional game, but also when political engagement happens outside a prescribed party-political institutional framework.
- The approach creates a dynamic of exclusion which disqualifies non-party-political actors and is, therefore, elitist to the extent that it limits conceptions of ‘democratic consolidation’ to the institutional rules agreed upon by the elites.
- It potentially criminalises the actions of political forces such as social movements.
- It ignores the possibility that the democratic experience of citizens can be enhanced through an interaction between institutional and non-institutional players in the political game.
- Perhaps the biggest weakness is that it excludes the non-formal and non-institutional terrain as a site of political opposition.

It is, however, possible that these arguments apply in general to the body of scholarship which reduces democratic consolidation to the alternation of governing parties but, in Przeworski’s case, may or may not be going beyond the meaning he intends. Democratic procedures need to be built into the very first level of political organisation for a fully integrated democracy to occur, and that means at the very branch level of political parties. Again, a series of questions can help structure evaluations of the relative democratic nature of local political organizations. The purpose of the questions is not to suggest that there is only one recipe for internal party organisation, but rather to suggest the central issues that need to be discussed within an organisation as it seeks to improve its practical, internal democratic procedures.

Since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic, a pattern is already emerging which points to the fact that political elites have not learnt much from the mistakes of the past. The various crises plaguing the major parties and emerging ones and the various inter-party crisis of the defections in the National Assembly, cross carpeting of governors among others are vivid instances of this tendency. Lack of party discipline continues to feature prominently in all the major parties. One of the fallouts of lack of party discipline among party men is factionalisation within the parties. The registration of new parties in preparation of 2007 has raised the phenomenon of carpet crossing and decamping. This tendency has further oiled “the zero-sum game” of the Nigerian political landscape. This action ends up heating up the polity; a situation that portends dangers to democratic consolidation. This danger has resulted to the high level of political abduction, harassment, arson, and assassinations, withdrawal of credible and qualified professionals in the race (Eme and Anyadike, 2011:49).

The registration of more parties which ordinarily should have led to increase in political participation and political competition, however, appears not to be meeting this goal. This is because rather than meeting this challenge, both the existing and newly registered ones are only interested in funds from INEC. Again, crash opportunism, lust for power and lack of trust among elites feature predominantly in the relationship between elective office holders and the various arms of government since the collapse of the third term. Animosity between governors and their deputies, godfathers and godsons, the legislature and the executive and the security apparatus and elected officials have increased. These animosities are the primary reasons for the various intra parties crisis among the parties.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of every democracy and the primary mechanism for exercising the principle of sovereignty of the people. Through such elections, citizens participate in the governance of their country by choosing those who govern in the quest for development. By their choices, the citizens confer legitimacy and authority on those who govern, making it easier for them to mobilise public support and cooperation for the implementation of development programmes. But political parties in Nigeria may not have practically subscribed to these objectives because they are not grassroots-based. According to Momoh (2010:13):

They are alienated from both members and the electorate at the grassroots. That is why, many people carry the cards of different parties, depending on how best their interest is served or could be served. That is nothing but crass opportunism which has become a common feature of our political practices. Many political rallies are based on “rent a crowd”. In the absence of jobs for youth, the most lucrative, but ad hoc business in town today is renting a crowd for political rallies. These crowds do not care about anything except their money. However, they are often short-changed at the end of the day. This had torn apart many campaign groups, as violent assault had been used to settle scores, in some cases. Hence the same youth can appear at four different rallies organised by four different political parties. This is because at the end they have to collect their fee for a professional job of a rented crowd. This is not healthy for the growth of democracy in Nigeria. This not only unethical but also dishonest

Although Nigeria has managed to transit from one administration to another, hardly any election conducted in the country has been completely free of charges of irregularities, electoral malpractices, violence and various degrees of disruptions. The factors responsible this state of affairs include among others, the character of the Nigerian state as the arena for electoral contests; the existence of weak democratic institutions and processes; negative political culture; weak legal/constitutional framework; and lack of independence and capacity of the Election Management Bodies (Attahiru Jega, 2010). In other words, Nigeria has experienced chronic electoral violence since its transition to democracy and civilian rule in 1999, including more than 15,700 election-related deaths (see Omotola, S, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2005). High stakes combine with readily available guns for hire in the form of organised crime gangs and a historic lack of prosecution of perpetrators to make electoral violence a relatively attractive tool of electoral competition— even within political parties. Contemporary political parties in Nigeria do not seem to belong to the people. They lack ideology and respect for and compliance to the party constitution; lack of transparency and accountability in the management of its funds, etc. Thus there is no internal democracy.

Although Nigerian democracy aims to ensure political stability and promote fundamental human rights, elections which should have been a prelude to achieving a stabilised government accompanied with people’s consent have contradicted these standards because of election rigging. This is a serious concern, because the stability and secured environment needed for the success of democracy have been severely jeopardised. Elections conducted since Nigeria’s independence have been played like *a do or die* affair and this has made the peace-loving Nigerians to be scared of exercising their voting rights hence the suicidal nature of the politics. Evidence has shown that the rate of citizen participation in elections these days has drastically reduced due to the limited choice or lack of qualified candidates. Lack of candidates with vision has made the electorates politically weak. Sometimes, the electorates are disenfranchised and the political barons employ the use of coercion to seize power.

According to Ihonvbere's (1989) portrayal of Africa's situation, rulership becomes permanent, and politics becomes Hobbesian in the sense that power by all means becomes the most important factor to politicians.

Adekanye (1990:2) observes that because of the history of electoral fraud, elections in the country have often been associated with political tension, crisis, and even violence. Actually, politics is seen as the only game in town, and it is played with deadly seriousness for the winner won everything and the loser lost everything. This quest to win election by all means has also claimed the lives of both the electorates and some popular candidates who are killed by some hoodlums who want to control the government by dubious means. As a result, those who have the interest of Nigerians at heart shun politics for fear of facing a sudden death in the process, and this has posed a serious threat to Nigerian democracy and its consolidation. Worse still, the electoral body which would have been neutral, and ensure a free and fair elections have been biased because in some cases, they are employed by some power brokers to serve as a rescue mission to some illegitimate candidates to the detriment of popular candidates and the Nigerian electorate. Godfathers see election rigging as a means of ensuring that their candidates emerge victorious in elections, even if it's against the general wish of the electorate.

Kurfi (2005:101) opines that rigging is almost synonymous with Nigerian elections. The main aim of election rigging or malpractice is to frustrate the democratic aspirations of citizens who have voted or would have voted into office someone instead of the victor. In fact, the elections conducted in Nigeria have been cruelly contested such that the success of the democratic order has been compromised. This ugly electoral malpractice and rigging have a negative effect on Nigeria's democratic future because the trend is increasing instead of reducing. These trends have actually undermined the chances of successful elections and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Expected Values from the Nigerian Political Parties

Political parties benefit from having clearly defined goals and procedures, because citizens are becoming increasingly wary of parties that do not practice what they preach. As a result, parties that hope to win elections and to strengthen democratic institutions within their countries may help themselves as well as their societies if their actions and internal culture conform to the democratic ideals they espouse. And indeed, democratic political parties have both a right and a responsibility to aspire to the twin goals of promoting their own electoral success as well as promoting the long-term welfare of their societies.

As noted by the Institute for Multiparty Democracy (2004:12), there are specific indicators that help us pinpoint the degree of internal party democracy. The more of these that exist or are applied, the greater the institutionalisation and strength of a democratic party:

Transparency can be achieved through the open access to information and publication of all records; Explicit statement, in the party's constitution, of essential democratic values such as pluralism, tolerance, inclusiveness, gender equality and accountability; Internal practice of the above stated values, demonstrating a commitment to internal democracy by party officials to ensure a high level of congruence between values and practices; Existence of internal mechanisms for the democratic resolution of conflicts and potential conflicts (such as, may emerge regarding the performance of duties and responsibilities during a campaign). Here it becomes important that the

appropriate application of party statutes and by-laws have been democratically adopted; Frequent and scrupulous organization of internal elections and open selection procedures for party officials and candidates for elective public office; Basing advancement through leadership ranks and appointments on rational rules and merit as opposed to favouritism and patronage. A fair number of party congresses and significant levels of participation; An ability of the rank-and-file to set and influence the party programme; A significant degree of decentralization of party organs; Little overlap or accumulation of political positions by the party leadership; The rotation and time limitation of leadership positions in the party.

The issue of legal regulation on the activities of Political Parties and its finance-related aspects often in most cases do not receive adequate attention in the first phase of political transition as we have witnessed in Nigeria in the period between 1999 and 2003. But as the Nigerian political transition progresses towards the consolidation of the foundation for democracy, the need for a clear set of rules and strict control over political funds cannot be over-emphasised. The objectives of regulations concerning political money can vary considerably, depending on the stage of democratic transition. In the particular case of Nigeria, the aims of legislation on party finance should target the following: (i) controlling fraud and political finance related corruption; (ii) promoting active and efficient political parties; and (iii) ensuring openness and transparency in the electoral process. Based on what exists on ground in Nigeria, the above can be translated to reviewing the existing legislation to accommodate regulation of sources of income of candidates and parties (including foreign funding, subsidies-in-kind, and political expenditure) and paying more attention to implementation through sanctions (INEC, 2005).

Also regulation to promote financial transparency and accountability in the activities and operations of political parties should be encouraged. Therefore, the introduction of verifiable disclosure and procedures and enforceable ceilings for all finances, whether for the party or the candidate's is hereby recommended. Easy accessibility to basic information as who gives to whom and for what should be guaranteed. There is also the need to draw the line on the limits of contributions as well as decide whether it is more prudent to contribute to the party, and not candidates. For this to be achieved there is need to strengthen the capacity of INEC to deal with the problem of party finance. The Civil Society and the Political Parties are critical stakeholders in the Nigerian Electoral Process. Both have the responsibility to promote civic and voter education on the negative consequence of irregular party financing on democracy. The Political Parties have responsibility to promote transparency and accountability in their operations. To be able to do this effectively they need assistance such as this manual provides. Many prescriptions have also been made on how real democracy can be built and strengthened. These prescriptions and associated issues have been widely debated and discussed. The major prescription, according to Prasai (2006:2):

includes transparency, accountability, inclusion, strengthening of civil society etc. But we have several good reasons to contend that inner party democracy is of the supreme importance for our project of building and strengthening democracy.

First, in multi party competitive political system, parties are key to and major actor of political power. All political activities, from attainment of power to exercise of power, in which parties are involved as actors, must be adequately democratic in their content, process and objective. The political process of making and running the government can be democratic

only when the parties as actor are internally adequately democratic. Only those parties and leaders can give democratic character to the content and process of the state which practice practicing democracy in the entire process of all their party affairs and business. History of some countries provide us evidence that some parties and leaders attained political power in democratic system through democratic method but exercised it in authoritarian and totalitarian manner, to a lesser or greater extent, and adversely affected the development of democracy. The fundamental reason behind this was that these parties and their leaders were not committed to the fundamental principle, method and ideals of democracy and hardly practice these in their inner party business creating political culture of authoritarianism (Chawla, 2004:32).

Second, political parties are the primary structure and forum for the formation of political will of citizens and mobilisation of their political actions. The process of formation of will and carrying out of action, in democracy, must be sufficiently democratic. In order to ensure democratic method of will formation and mobilization of action, the parties which initiate, coordinate, synthesise and conduct them must follow and practice fundamental principles of democracy in conducting all their internal business. The use of undemocratic method for these purposes, which may give some short-run advantages to the party, establishes a political culture of militancy and authoritarianism and slows down or even retards the process of democratisation of state and society at large.

Third, democracy does not function automatically, neither do the principles and ideals laid down in the constitution and document of political parties come into action spontaneously. Democracy and constitution provide us opportunities and framework. Everything depends on overall competence of citizens, in general, and of political parties in particular. The future of multi party democracy depends not on charisma, wisdom and commitment occasionally shown by a few leaders but primarily on qualities such as skill, knowledge and virtue that political parties and their members possess, demonstrate and use. This being the case, in what kind of party does presence and development of such qualities become essential as well as possible? In what kind of party can members have adequate opportunities to develop these qualities and demonstrate them? The answer is: in the party which internally practices the fundamental principle, method and ideals of democracy.

Leaders and supporters of political parties have a critical role to play in a successful transition to democracy. To promote democracy in their country, however, political parties must be democratic themselves. If parties do not practice and honor democratic values in their internal affairs, then they are unlikely to do so when they win elections and begin to govern. As a party activist from Zimbabwe stated: "How do you reconcile wanting to limit leadership succession within the nation, when you don't limit it within the party? Parties must learn to accept limited terms of party leadership, then they can inculcate these expectations for the national leadership" (NDI, 2001). Political parties whether in power or in opposition have a duty to support and protect democratic values and human rights within their own organisations.

Finally, democracy is not just about periodically electing leaders and public office-bearers. It is a set of social norms that govern our conduct and behavior. Therefore, fundamental principles, method and ideals of democracy must be practiced, without exception, in all social and public life which alone can contribute to democratisation of society, state and public institutions. In democracy, political parties are the chief agent and practitioner of such principles and method. Only the leader and members of parties trained and socialised in

democratic political culture can make some contribution to this end (Prasai, 2006:2). Therefore, there are good reasons to justify the assertion that inner party democracy is of utmost importance for building a democratic society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As noted in this essay, the relationship between money and politics is a powerful one with implications for democracy, especially in new democracies. Political party finance has been identified as a source of corruption in several countries. Political finance laws and regulation, through which political parties and candidates for political office declare their funding sources, are among the main instruments for regulating finance. Recent history has witnessed the pooling together of resources all over the world into a network of global awareness against unregulated use of money in politics. The critical forces in this consciousness mobilisation include mass mobilisation on global scale, capacity building for civil society organisations and support for electoral reform programs by bilateral and multilateral donors and development partners. As Nigeria derives more strength from the global current and the new policy consciousness against corruption is institutionalised via the creation of agencies and commissions, more attention needs to be paid to how to regulate political party funding. The links between party financing and corruption are so important that to ignore party financing is simply to open wide the door for corruption. Looking into Nigerian political history one realises that there is much that needs to be done in this regard.

Multiparty democracy in Nigeria has been for the affluent and the powerful. It has been more a game of musical chairs in which various individual members of the political elite take their turns at the seat of power, but do not change the music. As the majority of the people sink into further poverty, or are caught in the spiral of conflicts in the country, they are priced out of politics, becoming mere spectators, or even worse, victims. This empties politics of its democratic content, even while preserving the appearance of representativeness and accountability. Thus further endangering the few democratic gains, and raising the prospects for a democratic regression that would compound the crisis of development in which the country is already immersed (Obi, 2008).

The issue of the participation of the people in politics, and the social changes they have the power to make are fundamental to the relevance and survival of democracy in the country now, and in the years ahead. A democracy that is inclusive of the people in a genuinely participatory sense is critical to a country's unity and development. Democracy is a consensual system. Its legitimacy comes from an acceptance of the fairness and transparency of its procedures for elections to state offices and policy-making. The sustainability of democracy depends on the maintenance of public confidence, as well as the confidence of political groups in the fairness of these procedures. If a group considers that rules and procedures have been designed or manipulated to its disadvantage, it would withdraw its loyalty to the constitutional and political system, regarding itself justified in ignoring or breaking the law in promoting its interests. Elections are the most striking manifestation of the sovereignty of the people, who would feel cheated if the value of their vote were distorted or negated by an unfair electoral system (IDEA, 2001).

Nigeria's democracy is not consolidating as fast as necessary because democratic competition is not yet in place. The consequence of all these anomalies is that the peoples' interests are abandoned for the achievement of the selfish interest of a few political elite within the ruling party. Nigerian democracy is indeed endangered by the undemocratic activities of these party

leaders. When the principles of equity, equality and fair play are absent in any system, such a democracy cannot be said to have consolidated. What exist under such a system is to a large extent, civil rule, not democracy. Urgent steps must be taken to reverse this negative trend and turn parties into instruments of democratic consolidation.

While yet another end to military rule was widely celebrated on 29 May 1999, the conventional wisdom is that this did not mark a transition to the democratic state. Nigeria's experience over the years underscores the salience of the state in the perpetuation of undemocratic rule. This leads to the conclusion that any move toward democracy and its consolidation must involve an initial and crucial step of reconstructing the state itself. Because of the unfolding nature of the politics of the fourth republic, further research should be encouraged in this area of study. Such assessments will give future analysts ample data as to whether or not Nigerian political parties are contributing to the consolidation of the nation's democracy.

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