

Themes and Research Perspectives in the Study of Nigeria's Political Parties and Party System

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Abstract

The paper highlights some of the major findings from past and recent studies of Nigeria's political parties and party system. The aim is to building a unique set of data on party organization relevant to the understanding of the Nigeria situation. Recent advancement notwithstanding, research into Nigerian political parties and party system is still very inadequate. Nigerian military's extended rule has stunted the institutional development of this very important raw material that is very essential to the conduct of democratic politics. Political parties are crucial institutional device not only for representation but for conflict management in a democracy. They are central to the longevity and vitality of democracy. Their ability to organize within set limit are what determine the extent and contours of accountability in public life, including access to and use of power, as well as political performance. Special attention was paid to normative as well as empirical models of political parties and party systems.

Keywords: Stasiology, political power, accountability, recruitment, leadership, democratic consolidation

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are generally acknowledged as strategically critical and distinct phenomenon for studying power configuration in societies. For students of comparative politics, political parties are crucial to any meaningful understanding of the political process. They are significant factors for understanding the dynamics of political life. Political scientists have commonly associated them with democracy itself (Orji, 2013:1). Political parties, as "makers" of democracy, 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 perhaps most appropriate as noted by Yagboyaju, (2012:54) to liken the relationship between political parties and the sustenance of democratic rule in a particular society to that which exists between the umbilical cord and the fetus. Well-functioning political parties are essential for the success of electoral democracy and overall political development of any nation-state including Nigeria (Adetula & Adeyi, 2013:3). Indeed, democracy is unthinkable in the absence of viable political parties. The character and tendencies exhibited by political parties has implications for democratic sustenance in a country (Pogoson, 2013: 5). The political party is a critical, formal, institutional, organizational and mobilizational player in the political process particularly in relation to power, democracy, governance, governments and economy (Ikelegbe, 2013:4). The nature of political parties and the nature of party politics have consequences for the nature of governance (democratic consolidation), integration, stability and security. Political parties are critical to 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 such as Nigeria (Omotola, 2010:125).

Political party in a democracy constitutes a crucial institutional device not only for representation but for conflict management. They are central to the longevity and vitality of democracy, and their ability to aggregate freely, articulate, represent, and organize within set limits are what determines the extent and contours of accountability in public life, including access to and use of power, as well as political performance. The performance of political parties in terms of articulation, aggregation, representation and organization are critical to political accountability, communication, democratic consolidation and political stability (Ikelegbe, 2013:4). Anchoring on platforms offered by political parties, citizens make demands on the state, support specific policy positions, and participate in public policy making and implementation. Political parties therefore provide the vital linkage between citizens and the state, governors and the governed, and elites and the masses (Lawson, 1980). Competitive party and electoral politics is expected to deepen and consolidate the democratic transition, which Nigeria as a country embarked upon in May 1999 (Jinadu, 2013:2). Curiously however, political parties have relatively not featured prominently in political theory and until very recently, even behavioural scholars that have concerned themselves with political behaviour gave rather very little attention to political parties, more so, in Africa. Indeed, the empirical analysis of political party organization was for a very long time one of the least developed sub-fields of study in comparative politics. The status quo has however, changed. In the present day, "Stasiology", the study of political parties and party systems (Duverger, 1964:422) constitutes one of the

largest and most active subfields within comparative politics. Despite the increased focus on political parties especially in western democracies, we still know remarkably little about what goes on inside political parties especially in Africa.

The contemporary analysis of politics in African countries began as part of the studies on “political development” that thrived during the 1950s and, especially, the 1960s. Despite the fact that such studies often moderated the role of political institutions, political parties were hastily acknowledged imperative roles, both as indexes and mechanisms of political development. Thus, numerous collective and individual works were produced on the subject (Carbone, 2007). In a review into processes of political change in developing countries, for example, Huntington underscored the role political parties could play in integrating the varied and newly-mobilized sectors of society: “in a modernizing society ‘building the state’ means in part the creation of an effective bureaucracy, but, more importantly, the establishment of an effective party system capable of structuring the participation of new groups in politics” (Huntington 1968:401).

To be sure, focus on political party continues to present an immensely varied landscape, ranging from works which explores the relationship of parties to the wider society, through works which are concerned with the role of parties in government, to works which often at a more theoretical level, deals with the interactions between parties and the dynamics of party systems. Indeed, it is impossible in a paper like this to provide a complete summary of developments in a field as vast as stasiology. Thus we have at best presented here a panoramic view of the nuances and issues of political parties and party systems vis-à-vis democracy with reference to Nigeria. Efforts were made to acknowledge distance predecessors and contemporary intellectual ideas.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Political Party

The meanings attached to the term political party in the literature are extremely varied. Those who have studied and written about political parties have regarded them in various ways. Thus the literature is filled with several combinations of definitions. All political parties however, begin with the same general purpose: pursuit and acquisition of the powers of government. They may differ in techniques, in programmes, even in who is to benefit with the use of those powers, but all parties do begin with the primary goal of being able to capture the agencies of government to their own ends. 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, and that intermediates between the citizens and political society, government and state (Ikelegbe, 2013:7). There are numerous types of political parties such as elite-based parties, mass-based parties, ethnic-based parties, electoralist parties and movement parties (Gunther and Diamond, 2003).

Political parties are all the otherwise varied groups that provide labels under which candidates seek election to governmental office (Greesteins & Polsby, 1975:230). Edmund Burke (1968) similarly defined a political party as group of men who had agreed upon a principle by which the national interest might be served. A political party is a political organization in a given country whose primary objective is to capture-public office usually in electoral competition with one or more other parties. From the above definitions, it is clear that a political party is a “power vehicle” that seeks to convey its passengers into the complex arena of government. Political parties recruits and campaigns for candidates seeking election and selection into public political office. The claim to govern by a political party is anchored on its ability to get the support of a majority of voters in free and fair elections. However, there are differing perspectives as to how political parties align themselves with the voters. While some assume that this process is largely driven by the voters themselves, with the ‘rational’ political party simply aligning itself with the preferences of majority of the voters (Downs, 1957), others consider the political party as the creator of the vision behind which it mobilizes the voters. The first perspective advocates that political parties are pragmatic entities whose overriding need for power compels them to adopt electoral platforms that mirror the positions of most voters.

The political party is a modern phenomenon. Before the emergence of political parties there were popular clubs, philosophical societies, cliques and parliamentary groups. Modern political parties are different from their predecessors (cliques, factions and clubs) which are typically temporary alliance of individuals, more concerned with their own personal advancement than that of the group to which they belong. Whereas the modern political party involves an active leadership group committed to goals that advance the party rather than individual personalities; clubs and cliques are only based on a narrow range of concern. Coherent programmes, or ideologies, flow from the structure and activities developed by modern political party as means of securing its continuity both in and out of government; while clubs rarely, if ever advance programs or statements of principle. Lastly, whereas factions or cliques as self-contained groups, show little concern for broad public support, modern political parties depending on-the support of the public to gain and remain in office, try to solicit and mould opinion among the public.

The development of political parties is bound up with the extension of popular suffrage. To be sure, many

of the classical writers on politics did not imagine that a day might come when powerful bodies would intervene between the wishes of the mass public and its elected representatives in government. Thus most failed to foresee and forestall the appearance of political parties. However, the extension of the right to vote resulted in the organization of the electors by committees capable of making the candidates known and canvassing for votes (Duverger, 1964).

The Party System

To understand the significance of political parties, we must go beyond examining them individually. Given that every party sets out to win power and as much as possible retain it, it is clear that it is only when parties compete that their importance comes out very clearly. When political parties in a polity are taken collectively, a derived concept of party system comes into focus. A party system is a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence the political process. It denotes the interaction between the significant political parties by which they influence the political process (Agbaje, 1999; Hague & Harrop, 2001).

The aggregate number of political parties in a political system constitutes the party system. However, the party system cannot simply be reduced to a “numbers game” (Ujoh, 2000; Agbaje, 1999). The mere presence of parties does not guarantee the existence of a party system. In assessing the existence of a party system even though the number of parties competing for power is important, it is their relative size, which can be measured in their electoral strength that really matters (Egwemi, 2010). What is vital, however, is to establish the ‘relevance’ of parties in relation to the formation of governments, and in particular whether their size gives them the prospect of winning or at least sharing power. Similarly pertinent is how these ‘relevant’ parties relate to one another. Is the party system characterized by cooperation and consensus, or by conflict and polarization? (Agbaje, 1999). The party system also implies the relationship between parties and within parties (Ujoh, 2000). Party systems shape the political process in several ways. They impact the range and nature of choice available to the electorate and affect the structure and stability of government. They regulate the relationship between the executive and the legislature. They likewise shape the character of the political culture.

La Palombara & Weiner (1966) developed a typology of party systems starting from the distinction between “non-competitive party systems” and “competitive party systems”. The latter were in turn classified subject to whether rotation in power took place or, on the contrary, evidence of party hegemony occurred (La Palombara & Weiner 1966). The trend towards the establishment of one-party and one-party dominated African states was also observed by Coleman and Rosberg, who distinguished systems controlled by parties displaying a “revolutionary-centralizing” tendency from those with a more “pragmatic-pluralist” attitude (Coleman & Rosberg 1966:6).

Unlike Post and Vickers (1973) who adopted Duverger’s classification; Richard Sklar’s (1963) typology of Nigeria’s First Republic political parties was influenced by Sigmund Neumann (1956) classifications: “parties of social integration and “parties of individual representation”.

According to Akubo and Yakubu (2014), Nigeria’s party system since the coming into force of the 1979 Constitution, and even before it, shows strong deficit in the practice of competitive party and electoral politics. The persistent and apparently intractable deficits include: (i) the personalization of politics, and the prevalence of the God-father syndrome; (ii) the negative influence of money; (iii) lack of internal democracy, specifically the imposition of candidates; and (iv) election-related violent political conflict within and between political parties (Ibrahim, 2007; Ibrahim and Aturu, 2009: 34-46 cited in Jinadu, 2013: 5).

ANALYTICAL PARAMETERS

Studies of Africa’s party systems have generally followed diverse analytical routes, mostly based on theoretical and conceptual tools derived from Western political science. Unfortunately, the rational choice theory, which is generally employed for industrial democracies, remains essentially uncharted for studying Africa’s parties (Carbone, 2007:13-20). Located somewhere between the orderly realm of the state and the fluid and sometimes chaotic sphere of society, political parties are indeed curious objects of analysis. It has been observed that in their efforts to provide what is arguably the most important linkage between state and society, they extend into both arenas. At the same time, parties have substantial influence on the legal fabric to which they are part (Katz and Mair, 1994). Portraying parties as organizations, and attempting to identify the most important changes and continuities over time, therefore, confronts us with the problem of selecting the appropriate point of departure in this work.

Liberal students of politics usually base their analysis of political parties on the structure of the basic party organizations: their general structure, the character of their membership, and the method of selecting intra-party elites. From the Marxist point of view, the basic criterion that should be used for determining the nature of parties is their social and class essence, (ideology, programme and political goals). The analysis of political parties; organizational forms, selection of leadership, the place of party functionaries, the parties political and judicial status and so on will supplement and deepen the analysis of their class character. However, the desire for

an all-embracing analysis and understanding of modern political parties would seem to suggest the need to juxtapose both the liberal and the Marxist concerns.

One of the most obvious symptoms of the long-time neglect of political parties by comparative political scientists is that much of the thinking on the subject still remains caught within a set of terms of reference established almost a generation ago. For example, despite the occasional emphasis on more modern variants, much of the research remains predicated on the assumption of 'the mass party' model (Katz and Mair, 1994). To deal with this problem we tried in this work to present and analyse past and recent studies and reports on Nigerian political parties against cross national data covering the following areas: emergence, organizational structure; membership; nomination or recruitment of candidates and finance.

EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

La Palombara and Weiner (1966) link party origins to several broad pre-conditions and historical forces. They identified three promotional circumstances important for the development of parties: secularization, voluntary associations and communication. They argue that these three pre-conditions combine with such other features as historical crises: crisis in the legitimacy of the new social political order e.g. military in leadership position; crisis in the integration of the new order e.g. democratization' and crisis in participation by masses in the new order. Combined, they help to promote the emergence of modern political parties. The emergence of political parties in Nigeria can be traced to the Clifford constitution of 1922, which made provision for four elected members of the Legislative Council - three for Lagos and one for Calabar. This development directly led to the emergence of political parties in the two prominent cities of Nigeria then. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Herbert Macaulay was formed in Lagos while the Calabar Improvement League emerged in Calabar. The British had hoped that allowing Nigerians to choose their own leaders to represent them in the Legislative Council would help bring about faster political development in the colony. They were proved right because the election gave Nigerians their first great opportunity to take part in running the affairs of the country. Many Nigerians joined the various political parties which were formed to contest the elections and fill in the four seats.

The history of African and indeed, Nigerian political parties may appear to be a rather "long" one if we look at the origins of the first Political party on the continent (the True Whig Party, set up in Liberia in 1860; or in the case of Nigeria, the Nigeria National Democratic Party in 1923). By 1945, however, in a region that was still generally under colonial rule, less than a dozen parties had been "established by small groups of African elites as the organized expression of their political demands for reforming the colonial system, gaining access to colonial governments and influencing colonial policy" (Mozaffar 2005: 225-256). It was only with the independence of African states, and during the period that immediately preceded it, that parties began to proliferate in the Sub-Saharan context.

Duverger (1964) identified two major origins of political parties: parliamentary origin (parties that developed historically from within the legislature) and extra-parliamentary origin (parties that developed from organizations that are anti-establishment). Cadre and caucus - based political parties tend to develop historically from within the legislature. They have parliamentary origin; a feature which explains their limited membership. It usually takes the form of first the creation, of parliamentary groups, then the appearance of electoral committees and finally the establishment of a permanent relationship between the two groups. The branch and/or cell based mass parties on the other hand usually originate outside the legislature. They have extra-parliamentary origin.

Utilizing these two basic types; as distinguished by Duverger (1964) for analysis, the three main political parties (the Nigeria People's Congress (NPC), National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and Action Group (AG)) during Nigeria's First Republic (1960-66) can be classified as parties with extra-parliamentary origin. They were all anti-establishment (colonial rule). Unfortunately, they were seriously afflicted by ethnicity and were regionally based, being more popular and obtaining their support from and dispensing patronage to people of the North, East and West respectively. Party Politics during that era has been correctly described as one that was largely based on a tripod, (Omoruyi, 2000) which eventually constituted one of the major reasons for the collapse of that republic through the first Nigerian military coup of January 15, 1966 (Olagunju, 1992). It was in response to the problem of ethnicity as a major contributor to the collapse of the party system and the First Republic, that subsequent regimes in Nigeria have tried to put in place, policies that will re-position political parties for national integration (Simbine, 2013:2).

ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES AND INTERNAL PROCESS OF NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

Among the several distinctive and innovative features of modern political parties, the scope and vitality of their organization, has received the most attention from political and sociological analysts. Two of the most persuasive analysts were Moise Ostrogorski (1902) and Robert Michels (1959). Ostrogorski pointed out the ways in which the organizational strength of Democrats in the United States and the Liberals in England enabled their

leaders to manipulate the sentiments of the electorates and dominate the public representatives in the legislature. In his work, "Political parties: A sociological study of the oligarchic tendencies of modern democracy". Michels demonstrated why and how political parties which should be embodiment of democracy become transformed into highly authoritarian structures with members robbed of rights to participate in decisions and leaders granted inordinate powers.

Duverger (1964) gave further evidence to support Michels 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'. After reviewing several political parties especially Communist parties in Europe he came to the conclusion that the principle of electing party leaders which should prevent the formation of an oligarchy, seem rather to favour it. If oligarchy is the concentration of power at the top of the party organization, then majority of Nigeria's past and present political parties can be said to be characterized by oligarchic tendencies. Their rank and file membership lack considerable power. The innovative process of primaries for nominating candidates for the very important public offices such as those of president, governors and council chairmen etc though designed to ensure the participation of the rank and file members has not been properly operated. It is patently ironic that Nigeria political parties largely pursue (and profess) democracy outside the gates and resist it within the gates (Ibeanu, 2013:1). 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 (Ibeanu, 2013: 1).

In Duverger's deduction, one will be better able to understand the nature and relative effectiveness of parties by examining the structure and the activities of their units: the caucus, the branch, the cell and the militia. The caucus, whether direct or indirect is a limited body consisting of a small number of members and seeks no expansion. Their activities are seasonal, reaching its peak at election times and considerably reduced in the interval between polls. Membership of caucus is not open. It is achieved by a kind of tacit co-option or by formal nomination. They normally function in a rather large geographical area, usually corresponding to the major electoral divisions. Their strength does not depend on the membership number, but on their quality. Though a major characteristic of the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States of America; Nigerian political parties have since adopted the caucus idea as a model for organizing themselves. Across parties in Nigeria today party caucuses are called before major decisions are taken by the parties. Members of such caucuses are granted inordinate powers and they are usually the ones controlling activities; called and treated as party leaders even though they do not occupy any party offices.

The branch as a basic unit of party organization, is a socialist invention. The choice of the branch by socialist parties according to Duverger (1964) was effortlessly normal. They were the first to try and organize the masses to give them political education and to recruit from them the working class elites. The masses however, did not all accept socialism, consequently, various middle-class parties tried to attract them in their direction by the very methods that were making the working class parties so successful. The branch corresponds to the requirements of political democracy because it is open to all and the leaders are elected by members. The branch in contrast to the caucus is extensive and tries to enroll members to multiply membership and increase its total strength. In practice you only need to wish to belong to be able to do so.

Nigerian political parties have usually adopted the branch as their basic unit of organization. Members of the party within the branch constitute the branch unit which elects its own officers. This would seem to be the basic unit of organization of most Nigerian political parties since independence. Nigeria political parties structure reflect the basic hierarchical political organization of a federal republic with the ward organization at the base, leading into the local government area level of organization which in turn projects into the state level of party organization ending finally at the national level of party organization. At each of these four formal levels of party organization there is a functioning party secretariat. The caucus is a very active part in all the branches.

The cell, as opposed to branch has an occupational basis. In terms of size, it is much smaller than the branch. Consequently, it has a much greater hold on its members than has the branch, especially because it is normally set up at the very place where the party members meet daily in their work. Duverger(1964) linked the invention of cell to the Russian Communist Party. He also noted that the cell has not been the subject of imitation by non-communist parties. That explains why political parties in Nigeria do not organize along that line.

The militia has qualities suggested by the name. As a basic unit of party organization, their existence is based upon the notion that it is possible to distinguish between quasi legitimate violence and legal coercion on one hand and on the other hand naked or raw violence. The militia type unit finds its main use in practicing a kind of a quasi - legitimate violence in pursuit of its members or leaders purposes. There is no political party in Nigeria that has openly associated exclusively with any militia (i.e. a kind of private army) although most are in the habit of hiring trained militia for different activities organized for electoral victory.

PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Another means of understanding the differences among modern political parties is through their membership.

Studies have revealed that there are different kinds of members within parties and that cadre and mass parties handle membership issue differently. The difference according Duverger (1964) "is not one of size but of structure". Cadre parties tend to restrict membership to a very few important and well known faces. They are usually loosely knit in terms of organization.

Mass parties on the other hand are interested in getting as many converts to their position in addition to generating votes at the polls. To achieve this, they tend to create sophisticated machinery for recruitment and enrolment of large number of due paying members. Duverger was able to link the difference between cadre and mass parties to the difference arising from type of party organization. Cadre parties correspond to the caucus dominated parties - decentralized and weakly knit. Mass parties on the other hand correspond to parties based on branches more centralized and more firmly knit. One can talk of affiliated members and individual members.

Analysis of party memberships would seem to have moved away from the conception of a political party as a unitary actor, and especially to have moved away from the almost exclusive concern with the relationships between parties and civil society, by disaggregating party organizations into at least three different faces each of which interacts with the others. The first of these faces is the party in public office, that is, the party organization in government and in parliament. The second is the party on the ground that is the membership organization and also potentially the loyal party voters. The third face is the party in central office which is organizationally distinct from the party in public office and which at least in the traditional mass-party model organizes and is usually representative of the party on the ground (Katz and Mair, 1994).

It seems as pointed out by Duverger (1964) that: The expression party members, does not mean the same thing to all political parties. For American parties, it even has no meaning at all: one can only enumerate the militants who are part of the 'machine', the supporters who reinforce it during election campaigns; the people who take part in 'primaries' and the citizens who vote for the party's candidates at elections. Similarly, David E. Apter (1963) noted that American political parties are not centres of compassion. He observed that they are part-time organizations kept alive between special elections by patronage, and by some spoils.

In contemporary Nigeria, the concept of party membership is very clear. Members are those who have registered their names with the party and are paying their dues regularly. The rule is individual membership. Membership by affiliation is not allowed.

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

In most contemporary democracies, political parties enjoy a legal monopoly over putting up candidates for elections. They alone can propose candidates. Nobody can face the electorates without them. In such countries (Nigeria is a good example), it could be said that the act of election has been changed by the development of political parties. There is no longer dialogue between the electorates and their representatives. The party has come between them radically modifying the nature of their relationship. Before being chosen by the electorates the candidate is first chosen by the party. The electorate only ratifies the choice. In performing this task, parties have adopted different methods. There are countries where party leaders holding public and party offices solely determine nomination issues. Others have adopted the practice of primaries. Under this system the rank and file party members participate directly in the nomination process. However, while some primaries are closed, others are open.

Political parties in Nigeria have accepted closed primaries in contrast to the America system of open primaries. In Nigeria only party members can vote during their party primaries. Every willing voter in America is allowed to vote during primaries. It is unimportant whether they are party members or not. Both the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Republican National Committee (RNC) have a hand in establishing the basic guidelines under which presidential nominations are contested, but their role is defined by the national convention. Party National Committees' recommendations are subject to convention approval. The rules governing Democratic presidential nominations are more extensive than those governing Republican presidential nominations, but the state committees of both parties have substantial leeway in supplying the details of their delegate — selection processes. Neither the DNC nor the RNC expresses a preference for candidates during presidential nominations. This behaviour is understandable. It would be disastrous if a candidate backed by a national committee is defeated, knowing that the successful (unsupported) candidate would become the head of the party's ticket as well as its titular leader. Accordingly, candidates for the nomination assemble their own campaign staff and compete independently of the party apparatus. Candidates arrive at the national convention with seasoned campaign organizations composed of experienced political operatives.

The national party organizations, however, may get involved in selected nominating contests for House, Senate, and state - level offices. They actively recruit some candidates to enter primary contests and just as actively discourage others from doing likewise. Most candidate recruitment efforts are concentrated in competitive districts, but party officials will sometimes encourage a candidate to enter a primary in a district that is safe for the opposite party so that the general election will be uncontested. National party staff in Washington

and regional coordinators in the field meet with state and local party leaders to identify potential candidates and encourage them to enter primaries. Party staff uses polls, the promise of party campaign money and assistance, and the persuasive talents of party leaders, members of congress, and even presidents to influence the decisions of potential candidates (Hermson, 1990).

Nothing in government occurs in a vacuum. In fact, government is a great social mirror. What happens there usually reflects what is happening elsewhere in society. That is certainly true of the changes that have taken place in the appointment process in Nigeria. In Nigeria today, political parties are gradually losing ground in the appointment of leaders. The influence of political parties has diminished in the appointment process because their influence has also diminished elsewhere. Parties could claim a potent role in presidential appointment decisions only so long as they are able to exert influence elsewhere in politics, that is, by controlling the candidate nomination process, delivering votes, and maintaining their hegemony over critical political skills. But that role is changing as the Most candidates for elective office in Nigeria are self-recruited and conduct their own nominating campaigns. Consequently political parties have lost their primacy as organizers of political life in Nigeria. Candidates are expected to devise ways to raise their own money, build their own organizations and do their own advertising. They hire political consultants to provide the kinds of skills that parties had traditionally provided. The long-term impact of all these is that parties have fewer debts to call due in the appointment process. Presidents have less and less reason to feel obligated to their party workers for their own elections and hence, less incentive to appoint those workers, to federal offices to meet such obligations. Once parties began to lose control of the electoral process, they also lose control of the appointment process as well.

PARTY FINANCE

Political party organization and election campaigns cost money. Political parties therefore need funds to execute them. Such funds are normally needed to pay for the cost of running the administrative organs of the party; campaign expenses and supporting candidates' election expenses. Consequently, the sources of party fronds have been a subject of investigation by stasiologist.

Duverger (1964) for example, made the distinction between "Capitalists" and "Democratic" financing. The first describes a situation very common in Nigeria where parties rely largely on funds from few wealthy members. The second describes the mass funding method where parties depend more on dues from their often very large and active members.

Some scholars have analysed the implications of these different methods of funding. Others have concerned themselves with how to control associated abuses in party finance, the impact of the various regulative laws etc. In all, party finance, is one area that deserve special attention, especially in a society like Nigeria where sponsorship of political parties and their candidates is effectively a business investment which the investor must recoup the moment the candidate and or party gets, into public office.

There are three main sources of funding political parties in Nigeria: Statutory allocation, membership fees, subscription and donations. Electoral Laws in Nigeria makes provision for the disbursement of grants to political parties that are contesting elections. It provides for 30% of the grant to be distributed equally among the political parties before the election and the remaining 70% to be shared among the political parties after the result of the election has been known, in proportion to the number of seats won by each party in the National Assembly. Only political parties that won a minimum of 10 percent of the total votes cast in the local government areas in at least two- thirds of the sates of the federation shall be eligible to receive a grant. Nigerian political parties also get indirect government funding through such means as free broadcasting time; use of government facilities and personnel; etc.

Membership fees and subscription are other sources of political party funds. The size of such funds is however, limited to the membership strength of the party. Income from subscription has become a manor constituent of party funds due to the fact that membership levels in most countries, have been falling. Membership subscription and fees can therefore, play only a limited role in present day party funding. Other sources of funding political parties relates to contributions from members and none members including, in- kind contributions from business corporations, interest groups etc. usually through fund raising activities. Unfortunately, the Companies and Allied Matters Act in Nigeria forbids corporate organizations from making political donations. Above all, the 1999 constitution in section 221 prohibits any association other than political parties from making political donations. Nigerian political parties are over regulated. The Nigeria 1999 Constitution as amended provides in (Section 225) as follows:

- (i) Every political party shall, at such times and in such manner as the Independent National Electoral Commission may require, submit to the Independent National Electoral Commission a statement of its assets and liabilities.
- (ii) Every political party shall submit to the Independent National Electoral Commission a detailed annual statement and analysis of its sources of funds and other assets together with similar statements of its expenditure in such form as the Commission may require.

- (iii) No political party shall (a) hold or possess any funds or other assets outside Nigeria; or (b) be entitled to retain any funds or other assets outside Nigeria.
- (iv) Any funds or other assets remitted or sent to a political party from outside Nigeria shall be paid over or transferred to the Commission within twenty - one days of its receipt with such information as the Commission may require.
- (v) The Commission shall have power to give directions to political parties regarding the books or records of financial transactions which they shall keep and, to examine the all such books and records.

The Electoral Commission is further empowered by section 226 of the 1999 Constitution to prepare and submit a report on the financial account of the political parties to the National assembly and is also authorized to have unlimited access to the records of the political parties. The National Assembly is empowered in section 228 of the same 1999 constitution to make laws for the punishment of any individual or party who falls foul of the above provisions.

CONCLUSION

The analysis was carried out to produce an inventory of elements which are useful for further theorizing about political parties, especially in the form of model-building. The highlighted issues and contentions should constitute preliminary starting point for understanding Nigeria political parties and party system. Studies of modern political parties cannot but take off from them. It would be very difficult if not impossible to have a general theory of political parties without comparative analyses of political parties. Such comparative analyses will help in isolating those major characteristics of parties found in different countries. Consequently, every search directed at codifying observed characteristics of political parties should be seen as a prelude to a general theory of political parties. Herein lay the significance of the survey and analysis carried out in this work.

In Nigeria in particular as indeed, the continent at large, the return to democratic civilian administration since the 1999 sparked a return to multi-partism in the nation's politics. The resurgence of political parties, in turn, generated a lot of interests not only in the nation's politics, but also in the study of it. A number of analyses of parties and party system were produced which contributed to the growing integration of the study of politics in Nigeria with mainstream political science. This paper, for example, shed light on themes such the role of ethnic identities and clientelist linkages as bases for party mobilization, the structural limitations parties encounter in developing effective organisations, the weak policy-making capacities of the Fourth Republic political parties, and the commonly low level of institutionalization of the country's party system. The stunted institutional development of political parties in Nigeria is majorly as a result of the Nigeria's military extended rule. All the military regimes that ruled the country effectively banned all forms of political party activities for the period that they held on to power.

Financing Political parties has been an important electoral reform issue since the last decade in Nigeria. The central thesis has been driven largely by a growing concern over the cost of election campaigns by political parties and candidates, and the fund raising activities of political parties and candidates. Underlying the push for reform has also been a desire to introduce some degrees of financial fairness among candidates and parties. The fundamental objective of regulating political party finance is to achieve probity and transparency in order to preserve voters' confidence that the system is free of corruption. Recent advancement notwithstanding, research into Nigerian party politics is still very inadequate. Neither side of the balance – the expansion of theoretical frameworks and the detail of empirical knowledge – has achieved sufficient levels of development as yet. Theoretical reasoning need to address the question of the scope to which existing political science models can be used for the analysis of Nigerian party politics as well as deepen our understanding of other specific issues, including the relationships between the ethnic, clientelist and personalist roots of political parties or the forms of transformation that Nigerian party system is going through. Conversely, empirical research must above all fill the gap of information on the actual functioning of individual political parties, their programmes and organizational development: an exceedingly demanding, but crucial task.

A PARTY SYSTEM FOR NIGERIA

In reaction to the controversy as to whether democratization and democratic consolidation in Africa's multi-ethnic societies is more likely under a multi-party system than in a two-party system, the Nigerian military in 1993 experimented with an imposed two-party system with the mandate that parties must demonstrate country-wide membership support. The imposed two-party system seriously reduced ethnic competition into an intra-party struggle rather than a battle between ethnic parties. In the right circumstances, two-party system incorporates ethnic competition into an intra-party struggle as we saw during the 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria. Without the imposed two-party system at that moment, it may have been hard to achieve the 1993 scenario where Nigerians voted for the late Moshood Kolawole Abiola strictly on personality and not on ground of religion and/or ethnicity. Unfortunately, the Nigerian military failed to accept the result of the 1993 presidential election conducted on that platform. Consequently, the imposed two-party system did not get the

deserved hearing elsewhere.

By 1999 when the country returned to party politics; the multi-party system was reintroduced with little hesitation. Three political parties PDP, APP and AD were initially registered to contest for various offices at the state and federal levels. However, by 2007 there were no less than 53 registered political parties in Nigeria. Curiously, all the elections up till the period leading to the 2015 elections witnessed a realignment of political forces resembling the old efforts at two party tendency. The latest being the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC) which emerged from the merger of three political parties: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) to challenge the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). In the past, the party system in Nigeria showed little propensity for evolving original or creative ideas about public policy. They have been rather sluggish in responding to such ideas in the public interest. They in fact reflect in an enlarged way those differences throughout the country which are expressed in the operation of the federal structure of government; and in all of them a considerable measure of irrationality manifests itself. The APC during the election was able to mobilize through the change mantra. At the end, the party won and history was made to the extent that an opposition party for the first time in Nigeria was able to defeat an incumbent in a presidential contest.

During Nigeria's First Republic, the then Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, observed that, in Nigeria, no party can agree to be in opposition for too long. A political opposition in the Western accepted sense was in his view a luxury Nigerian politicians cannot afford. It is therefore good news for democratization in Nigeria that today politicians and their parties can easily accept defeat and congratulate winners. On March 28, 2015, Muhammadu Buhari won the presidential election and was sworn in as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29, 2015. The outgoing President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan did not contest the outcome of the election and bowed out gracefully. His actions have been hailed by both Nigerians and the international community as one of the best things to have happened to Nigeria politics, especially in the light of the doomsday prophecy about the break-up of the country or expected bloodshed. At about 5.15pm on March 31, 2015, with the results of 35 states of the federation declared, remaining only the results from Borno state and Muhammadu Buhari of APC leading with over 2 million votes, the incumbent, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in a telephone call to Muhammadu Buhari, conceded defeat and congratulated him on his victory at the March 28, 2015 Presidential election. In the election, Muhammadu Buhari of APC scored 15,424,921; Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of PDP scored 12,853,162. APC got the highest votes in 21 states while PDP got the highest votes in 15 states. Buhari's victory heralds a new party system dominated by two main forces: the main opposition PDP and the ruling APC.

The two-party system is now generally seen to be in line with the expected final realization of political competition between the two traditional conservative and progressive tendencies in Nigeria. Under this interpretation, the current multi-party system in the country is seen to be problematic. Nigerian political parties need to become institutions that can stand the test of time by becoming potential government or opposition. The key parties in Nigeria have been quite similar in composition, policy positions, manifestoes, ideological leanings and strategies (Omotola 2009:622-626). Most of the 68 political parties in Nigeria today, are as correctly pointed out by Omotola (2009:612) 'Bereft of clear ideological identity and commitment, and issue based politics. To transform Nigeria political parties into organizational platforms for alternative views and programmes of governance and development will require in our view a realignment of political force through the inter play of political forces in the direction of two party tendency.

The institutionalization of the two political parties by the Babagida led military government (1989-1993) robbed them of the opportunity of evolving virile structures and processes required to weather the storms of partisan politics in the Nigeria type of political system with many lines of division. Further, because the parties behaved as if they were government parastatals, they were unable to acquire any independent character to enable them propose policies and platforms different from those canvassed by the military government. Hence there was absence of ideological positions from which issues, policies and programmes in their manifestoes could be addressed. Consequently, it can be argued that the stunted institutional development of political parties and the party system in Nigeria is majorly as a result of the Nigeria's military extended rule. All the military regimes that ruled the country effectively banned all forms of political party activities for the period that they held on to power.

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