

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN A DEMOCRACY: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The paper examines political party as a platform through which people choose their representatives into various political positions and provides administrative training for political class. The paper adopts the elitist theory of democracy as its theoretical base in order to have an insight into the nature and character of political class and party politics in Nigeria. But political parties in Nigeria from independence till date have not performed up to expectations due to lack of ideology, militarization, monetization of politics, politics of impositions and godfatherism. Therefore, the paper recommends that Political parties in Nigeria should be ideologically based. Also, political parties should encourage internal democracy where party candidates are selected based on formal processes or procedures provided in the party constitution to avoid unnecessary litigations and confusions.

Introduction

Political party is one of the major ingredients of democracy. It provides a platform through which people choose their leaders into various political offices. Therefore, government is formed through a political party; and political party charts a roadmap for the country through its manifesto which translates into government policies. A party manifesto reflects different programmes to aggregate and articulate the interests of the people so as to win the sympathy of the public (Ali, 2017).

The idea of having political party in Nigeria was accomplished in 1922 with the enactment of the Clifford constitution which introduced elective principle. Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed in 1922 by Late Herbert Macaulay, and this was followed by other parties like Calabar Improvement League (CIL), Lagos Youth Movement (LYM), and Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM), National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Action Group (AG), Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) etc. In the 2nd republic, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), UPN (Unity Party of Nigeria), People Redemption Party (PRP), Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), and later National Advance Party (NAP) participated in the political process in the country. The aborted 3rd republic saw the emergence of Social Democratic Party (SDP), and National Republican Convention (NRC) that took part in the political process in Nigeria.

During Gen. Sani Abacha military administration, five political parties emerged and they are: Committee for National Consensus (CNC), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) and Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM); and Abacha's death on 8th May, 1998 brought to power Gen. Abdulsalami Alhaji Abubakar as the new Head of State, who ushered in the current 4th Republic on May 29th 1999, which is predominated with a lot of political parties and they are: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People Party (APP) (later changed to All Nigeria People Party (ANPP)) and People Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress (AC), (later Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Progressive Congress (APC), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) Labour Party (LP), Green Nigeria Party (GNP) among others. Political parties play significant role in the nation's efforts at instituting and consolidating democracy; they suppose to provide direction to the nation in terms of good governance, national solidarity and cohesion however, the reverse has been the case in Nigeria; instead parties represent and play regional/ethnic sentiments from independence till date.

In this paper attempt has been made to examine political parties and political participation in Nigeria; challenges of political parties, and way forward.

Clarification of Concepts

i. Political Party

Political party is defined in different ways by different people. It is viewed as a group of people with similar ideas, beliefs, and principles that come together to take over the machinery of government through election. Ranny (1976) clarifies that political parties are autonomous organized group that makes nomination and contests elections in the hope of eventually gaining and exercising control of the personnel and policies of the government. Nwankwo (2003) defines a political party as an organized group of individuals seeking to seize power of government in order to enjoy the benefit derived from such control (Nwankwo, 2003).

In other words, a political party is an organized group of people who share similar principles, ideas and beliefs with the sole aim of gaining political power through constitutional means.

Political parties are the conglomeration or association of men and women with broad, common interest who want to influence or control decision making in government by electing political candidates to public office (Adedeji, 2013). Examples of political parties in Nigeria are: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressives Congress (APC), Labour Party (LP), and so on.

Political parties are registered by the Electoral body. In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission registers all political parties after satisfying certain conditions prescribed by law. They have their constitutions that regulate the conduct of their activities in the society. Political parties are made up of people who share similar principles, interest, deals and beliefs whose primary target is to control the machinery of government in the state. The primary objective of the political parties is to take over the machinery of government through election. Political parties express their views on every subject and issue that affects the society and also criticize the policies of the government. Political parties aggregate and articulate the collective interests of the prospective voters to win their minds and eventually hung onto power.

ii. Democracy

Democracy is a system of government in which the exercise of political power and authority is vested in the people through their elected representatives (Adedeji, 2013). The term democracy is derived from the Greek word “demo” means people and “kratia” means government. Democracy means government by the consent of the people where the majority rules while the minorities are protected. Democracy is either direct or indirect; the former is where people come together to discuss their common problems or welfare while the latter is where people elect their representatives to act on their behalf. Democracy is generally attributed to the concept of rule of law, constitutionalism, separation of power, checks and balances, periodic election, the presence of opposition and public opinion.

Theoretical Framework

The paper uses elitist theory of democracy as its theoretical base. The elite theorists like Pareto, Mosca, Michels, C. Wright Mills and Haorid Lasswell emphasize that what is known as the rule of the people, in a practical sense, it is the rule of the elites. At the centre of power there is a social elite which wields much or greatest influence in deciding who gets 'what', 'when' and 'how', and form a government that pleases his personal interest not minding the interest of the generality of the people. According to elite theorists, a revolutionist movement should be started so that democratic theory may be reformulated in tune with the reality of an empirical analysis. The fact stands out that every political system is divided into two groups= the elite or the political entrepreneurs who have ideological commitments and manipulative skill, and the citizens at large, the masses or the apolitical clay of the system, a much large class of passive, inert followers who have little knowledge of public affairs and even less interest'. Every elite is formed around a leader, the credit or discredit for all acts of triumph or disaster is given to him (Johari, 2014).

However, elite theory of democracy rejects normative opinions such as 'voice of the people' or 'rule of the general will' and instead stands for the 'rule of the chosen few' with the consent or acquiescence of the many. It follows that classical affirmations highlighting the fact of 'power with the people' have a normative or idealistic connotation. In terms of practice, it is the body of the very few that takes all important decisions and plays its part in the political process of the country. The people may think they may participate in the political process, but in reality, so the argument runs, their influence is largely confined to elections (Johari, 2014).

The fact that people participate in the electoral process makes the government democratic, but in the true sense of the word, it is the government of the elite with the consent of many. It is the few elite which sprung from the many that controls the machinery of government in the state. Therefore, it is imperative to say that the elite theory of democracy is a combination of the classical theories of democracy and aristocracy. Its democratic texture lies on the premise that power resides with the people; and its aristocratic texture lies on the fact that only a few exercises power. Also while the classical theories of democracy acknowledges the increasing role of the people in the political process, the elite theory of democracy restricts power in the hands of the few, who are "most influential, most intelligent, most shrewd, most cunning, and most competent people".

According to Ray (2018), "Democracy is however, endangered where the citizens are not vigilant and a few elites hijack the political process and impose their will against the will of the majority of the voting population as is often the case in most African countries. Nothing represents this ugly trend like what played out in the recent primaries of the political parties where there were huge allegations of imposition of candidates against the will of the majority of the party members...These clique of dictators are found in the party headquarters where the issue orders that favour their preferred candidates, while others are in various Government Houses, where the state governors determine who gets nominated for elective positions".

Thus, the idea of the classical theories of democracy seems to suggest mass involvement of people in the political process, which the theorists believe will increase political socialization of the people; avoid concentration of power in the hands of few, which may result to dictatorship or absolutism and promote good governance. The elitist theory of democracy disagrees with such idealistic postulations of the classical democratic theories on the grounds that “the involvement of as many people in the decision making process as possible would be dangerously naïve in view of the fact that it would create demagogic leadership, mass psychology, rise of sycophancy, group coercion, and the influence of those who control concentrated economic power”. The elitist theory of democracy believes that the postulations of the classical democratic theory does not reflect the objective realities of governance, that governance is a minority activity, the few dictating for the many. This position is in tandem with Johari (2014) who argues that the elitists discarded the notion of ‘political groups’ as a variation of the transitional doctrine of consensus and instead call a consensus of elites, a determination on the part of the leaders, political parties, labour unions, trade associations, and other voluntary organizations to defend the fundamental procedures of democracy in order to protect their positions and the basic structure of the society itself from the threat of an irresponsible demagogue. He goes further to say that elite politics is never open politics, and yet it requires a democratic system that is invariably an open system.

The ideological undertone of the elitist theory of democracy reflects clearly the nature and character of political class and party politics in Nigeria. Political parties, party activities, and electoral behaviours in the country are built around primordial sentiments like ethnicity, religion, region; parties lack ideology, and our democratic system is predominated by the politics of imposition of candidates usually orchestrated by the political godfathers, patrons, money bags or political gladiators who hold firm onto the activities of the political parties and governance in Nigeria. This few determine who will become the governor, senator, house of representative member, and even the president!

Political godfathers or patrons use their political godsons to extend their hold on power, money and influence; they will give the anointed or godsons the political appointees and determining what happens in the country or their states. By this, government becomes a minority activity, the few (godfathers) dictate the sphere of the political system in their favour; and the ‘will of the people’ will be replaced by the will of the elite.

Having a causal look at the elitist theory of democracy, it can be deduced that the theory contradicts a democratic system which recognizes the ‘will of the people’ as the bases of government. On the opposite, it assumes an oligarchical posture by rejecting in practice what is generally known as norms of democracy.

Political Parties in Nigeria

The Clifford Constitution of 1922 introduced elective principle. By this, the constitution gave Nigerians the opportunity to take active part in the political activities of their country. As a result Late Mr. Herbert Macaulay formed the first political party known as

Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1922; Mr. Ernest Ikoli founded the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) in 1935 (later changed to Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM)). NNDP took part in the Lagos Legislative Council election and won three seats while Calabar Improvement League (CIL) won the only seat for Calabar.

The Pre existing tribal or cultural organizations and trade Unions in Nigeria transformed into political parties: Jamiyyar Mutuani Arewa, a Northern cultural organization founded in 1941 and its leader Late Sir Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna Sokoto transformed into the Northern People Congress (NPC), Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba cultural group founded in 1945 by some Yoruba students studying in London, led by Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo Metamorphosed into Action Group (AG), Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) was formed in 1950 by Late Mallam Aminu Kano to liberate the poor and downtrodden in the North, United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) was formed in 1955, led by Late J.S. Tarka to fight for the course of the Middle Belt Region. Others were: Borno Youth Movement (BYM), Lagos United Front (LUF), Nigeria New Democratic Party (NNDP), United National Independent Party (NNIP), and Niger Delta Congress (NDC) among others.

The 1950 pre-independence elections were marked with multiple party arrangements where many political parties contested the election. Some of the parties that contested the elections were: Northern People Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Democratic Party of Nigeria and Cameroon (DPNC), United National independent party (UNIP) among others. Political parties at this period derived supports and recognitions from their region or ethnic boundaries: NPC for the North, AG for West and NCNC dominated the politics of the Eastern region of Nigeria. Late Sir Alhaji Ahmadu Bello led the NPC, Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo led the AG and Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe led the NCNC. Also Late Dr. Michael Okpara who was the premier of the Eastern region at Enugu took over the leadership of the NCNC when Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe became Governor – General of the Federation, Late Chief Samuel Akintola became the premier of the Western region when Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo assumed the position of the opposition leader at the Federal House of representatives, Late Sir, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello maintained the position of the premier of the Northern region while Late Sir Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the prime Minister of Nigeria.

It is pertinent to note that regional elections were held in the early 1960; the dominant political parties and by extension, the largest ethnic nationality in each region, reflected in the voting behavior of the electorates. The victorious party subdued the smaller minority parties within its region. The NPC dominated the politics of the Northern region despite the existence of NEPU, BYM and UMBC; AG was the leading party in the West despite the presence of NDC and other smaller parties; and NCNC was dominant in the East overcoming the UNIP and DPNC.

In a bid to be relevant at the centre, the NPC, the AG and the NCNC went into Alliance with the minority parties. As a result two party structures emerged during the 1964

General elections: Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). NNA was an amalgam of the NPC, NNDP led by Chief Samuel Akintola then the premier of Western region, Midwest Democratic Front (MDF) which was an offshoot of the Midwest People Congress (MPC), Dynamic Party (DP) led by Dr. Chike Obi, Republican Party (RP) led by Dr. J.O Okezie, Niger Delta Congress (NDC) and Lagos State United Front (LSUF); and UPGA was an amalgam of the following political Parties: National Convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) led by Dr. Michael Okpara, Premier of the Easter Region, Action Group (AG) led by Alhaji, Adegbero, Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Mallam Aminu Kano, United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Late Senator Chief J.S. Tarka, and Northern Progressive Front.

The 2nd Republic in Nigeria maintained a multi Party arrangement where five Political Parties participated in the 1979 General Elections: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria People Party (GNPP) and People Redemption Party (PRP). The Late Dr. Tunji Braithwaite's National Advance Party (NAP) was registered later to contest the 1983 elections. The 2nd Republic in Nigeria was dominated by three major Political Party; NPN, UPN and NPP. Other minority parties enjoyed minimal influence and they were: PRP which sponged from NEPU led by Mallam Aminu Kano, GNPP reincarnated from BYM led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim and later NAP led by Late Dr. Tunji Braithwaite.

In what looks like what happened in the First Republic, political party in the 2nd Republic reflected ethnic and regional colourations. NPN was dominant in the North, UPN dominated the West and NPP dominated the politics in the Eastern Igbo States. National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was led by Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Shagari, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was led by Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Nigeria People's Party (NPP) was led by Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. Other Minority parties like PRP held onto NEPU stronghold of Kano and Kaduna, GNPP was dominant in Borno and former Gongola State in the North East and NAP led by Tunji Braithwaite.

In the aborted 3th Republic, two political Parties such as Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) were created by the Babangida administration. General Ibrahim Babangida described the Nigerian Political class as 'equal founder and joinder' of the two political parties, which were 'a little to the left' and 'a little to the right'. The SDP and the NRC participated in the local Governments, State Governments, National Assembly and Presidential elections. But the presidential elections which pitched the SDP's MKO Abiola against Usman Bashir Tofa of the NRC with Abiola leading where declared inconclusive by the Babangida Administration and later annulled the election. Babangida constituted an Interim National Government (ING) under the leadership of Chief Earnest Shonekan in 1993.

The sack or overthrow of the Shonekan's Interim National Government saw the emergence of General Sani Abacha as the Head of State. To return the country to democratic rule, five political parties were formed: Committee for National Consensus (CNC), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), United Nigeria

Congress Party (UNCP) and Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM). The death of General Sani Abacha on 8th May, 1998 brought to power General Abdulsalam Abubakar as a new Head of State, who ushered in the 4th Republic where three political parties emerged. The parties were: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People Party (APP) (later changed to All Nigeria People Party (ANPP)) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which emanated from G-13, a group that fought against the self succession bid by General Sani Abacha. The three political participated in the 1999 general elections at the local, state and national levels; and the presidential election saw the alliance between AD/APP's Chief Olu Falae pitched against Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP with Obasanjo winning the election.

In an effort to capture political power at the centre, the major opposition parties in Nigeria, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) which is an offshoot of Alliance for Democracy (AD), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria People Party (ANPP), some fractions of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and All Progressive Grant Alliance (APGA) merged together to form All Progressive Congress (APC) and ended the sixteen years of PDP government in the 2015 general elections, defeating the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan with General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC winning the presidential election.

Political Parties and Popular Participation: An Overview

The development of political parties is a critical indicator of the dividend of democracy, where the democratic process permits the systematic growth of the parties (Henry, 2008). It involves mass participation of the citizens in the political process of their country; political parties educate the citizens about their manifestoes, candidates, policies, and provide viable political climate for political activities to be carried out.

Political parties select candidates that stand for election in the country. They organize primary election to select party candidate that will contest at the general elections. It behoves on the political party to select a credible candidate that will stand for her at election and the selection process should be based on the party constitution. However, political parties in Nigeria select their candidates through direct and indirect primaries. The National Working Committee (NWC) of the ruling political party in Nigeria, All Progressive Congress (APC) adopts direct primary for selection of it presidential candidate and the state chapters of the party direct, indirect, or consensus. The Nasarawa State Chapter of the All Progressive Congress, (APC) adopts the indirect primaries for the selection of it gubernatorial, National Assembly, and State Assembly candidates. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) adopts indirect primaries for the selection of it presidential, gubernatorial, National Assembly, and State Assembly candidates.

Political parties engage in political education and socialization through debates, campaigns and electoral competition. They engage in extensive publicity or campaign through the television, radio, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, internet and social media. Political parties educate the people on their candidates, programmes, and even government policies.

Political parties stimulate and arouse the interests of the electorates in an election through voting. They arouse the interests of electorates through rallies, symposiums, display of posters, billboards, and gifts like shirts, caps, key holders, hand kerchiefs, and educate the public on voting for their candidates. Political parties organize public functions; display posters, and putting billboards all over places to sensitize and arouse the interests of the people who are likely to vote for them during elections.

Political parties aggregate the needs and aspirations of the people by trying to know which needs are to be satisfied first. They study carefully and with keen interests the needs of the electorates at different places and the relationships between or among these needs and know which need is to be met first. Also political parties articulate the interest of the people by making sure that they fulfill their campaign promises.

Political parties provide training ground for politicians, equipped them with skills, and knowledge in the field of administration and governance.

Challenges of Political Parties in Nigeria

The major challenges of political parties in Nigeria are:

Political parties polarize the people of Nigeria and make them think along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. Political parties right from independence to date have not been nationalistic in nature and character. Political parties represent regional, ethnic/tribal and cultural sentiments; and governments are formed on the bases of these primordial foundations. The nation is bound to be facing the crises of identity and division if political parties upon which governments are formed project and promote regional and tribal agendas.

Lack of internal democracy is another challenge of political parties and party system in Nigeria. Political parties lack internal mechanism to regulate and control their members and their activities. Sometimes parties find it difficult to initiate a formal process to produce credible candidates that will stand for her at the general election. And the inability of the political parties to settle intra party disputes compel some party members to drag themselves to court over who is the authentic candidate of the party. This act is very disastrous to internal democracy, as party members are likely to be sworn enemies and can disorder, and anarchy within the party in particular and Nigeria at large.

Political parties make members of the legislature to vote according to the party directives not their wishes. This is one problem that is confronting the nation's democracy; members of the legislature are representatives of the people and not their parties. Their decisions ought to reflect the interests of the people whom they represent, and not the party. Political parties are platforms through which people choose their leaders to represent them at the legislative and executive levels and should not direct the elected government representatives to act according to party directives.

Lack of ideology and believe system is affecting the viability of political parties in Nigeria. The growth and development of political parties are suppose to be organic, where ideas, interests and membership are allowed to flourish in order to arrive at an ideology that guides the growth of the party from the local level to the national level. On the contrary, the Nigerian political parties are inorganic in growth and development, regional in outlook, hijacked by ethnic hegemons and manipulated by party patrons. The party ideology reflects the wishes of a few cabals who handpicked clients for the various elective positions (Henry, 2008). The Nigerian politicians are highly inconsistent; they jump from one political party to another either in search of greener pasture or looking for a platform to contest election. The Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki, defected from the All Progressive Congress (APC), to People's Democratic Party, (PDP), Senate Minority Leader, Senator Godswill Akpabio defected from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to the All Progressive Congress, (APC), The Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Yakubu Dogara defected from the All Progressive Congress (APC), to the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), The Governor of Sokoto State, Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal defected from the All Progressive Congress (APC), to the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso defected from the All Progressive Congress (APC), to People's Democratic Party, (PDP) among others.

Closely related to lack of ideology is the politics of imposition of candidates usually orchestrated by the political godfathers or patrons. Godfathers are the money bags or political gladiators who hold firm onto the activities of the political parties; they determine who will become the governor, senator, house of representative member, and even the president of Nigeria. According to Afara (2018)

“Godfatherism is alive at the federal, state and local government level of our politics. But it is more prevalent in our states. In most instances, the political godfathers use their political godsons to extend their hold on power, money and influence. When the godsons wan to assert themselves, the levers of powers are withdrawn and things will fall apart...the godfathers watch the activities of godsons, given them political appointees and determining what happens in their states.”

The patrons of our politics has made nonsense of the nation's political system since independence and made it worse between 1999 to date. They impose candidate to satisfy their selfish interest of primitive accumulation and hold firmly onto power. This is politics of prebendalism; and with prebendal politics, the nation is bound to face backwardness and general underdevelopment.

One other challenge of political parties in Nigeria is the militarization of politics. The country political system is harsh and unfriendly owing to the kind of people that are running the affairs of the state. This situation has been attributed to the long term of military rule, as Galadma (2001) puts it ‘militarism, no doubt, destroyed the political elites in the country rendered some of them corrupt, confused, and unprincipled. Many political elites in Nigeria have served at various times and at various capacities under military. Indeed quite a number of them also are retired military officers. These political

elites, having been thoroughly schooled and oriented in the values of militarism over the years, still exhibit militaristic attitude even in this democratic dispensation. Some retired military generals and other senior military officers who have held public offices like Obasanjo, Buhari, Babangida, Nyako, Ali Gusau, David Mark, and T.Y. Danjuma among others are the protagonists of the current democratic dispensation that was ushered in 1999. Their presence in the polity has done a lot of damage to the political psyche of average Nigerian citizens and made the citizens politically despondent owing to the kind of political attitude they exhibited because of their military training which was based on command structure'. Some retired military generals and other senior military officers who have held public offices like Obasanjo, Buhari, Babangida, Nyako, Ali Gusau, David Mark, and T.Y. Danjuma among others are the protagonists of the current democratic dispensation that was ushered in 1999. Their presence in the polity has done a lot of damage to the political psyche of average Nigerian citizens and made the citizens politically despondent owing to the kind of political attitude they exhibited because of their military training which is based on command structure. And many Nigerian civilian politicians who have served under the military regimes, exhibit autocratic attitude making Nigerian politics a do or die affairs.

In addition to militarization of politics is the challenge of money politics or monetization of politics in Nigeria. It implies the presence of money as a determining factor in party politics and party supremacy. Political parties charge millions of naira for nomination and expression of interest forms. High nomination fee implies that good and honest party members who do not have access to money could be shut out of politics in the country, and this situation is likely to promote corruption and scuttle the nation's effort at democratic consolidation. Afara (2018) notes that "...Nigeria's multiparty democracy is indeed one of the highly monetized in Africa. Nothing demonstrates this more aptly than the expression of interest and nomination fees of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and perhaps some other political parties in the country...For one to nurse the ambition of being considered a presidential aspirant of APC, the person has to cough out a whopping N45 million even if he loses the party's primaries for expression of interest for fee and nomination fee...The party pegged the fees for governorship aspirants at N22. 5 million, senate N7 million, Reps N3.85, state assembly N850,000. The party added as a footnote that female and physically challenged aspirants will pay 50 percent of the prescribed fees for each position...The PDP pegged both expression of interest and nomination fee for the presidential bid at N12 million, governorship, 6N million, Reps N2. 5 million and State House of Assembly, N600,000'.

The high nomination and expression of interest fees will corrupt the politics and make politics a do or die exercise. The politicians particularly those of the two leading political parties, APC and PDP should have a second thought on the cost of domination fee to give many Nigerians, those who are not financially strong, youths and women who might be interested in contesting in one position and the other to do so. Monetization of our politics does not make any sense, more so that the country faced with the problem of

‘vote buying’ that rightly was noted during the recent gubernatorial election in Ekiti State. Thus, high cost of nomination fees by the political parties will only add more salt to the wound, the moneybags and godfathers are likely to hijack the political process and eventually the 2019 elections. To save our nascent democracy, Afara (2018) suggests that ‘political parties should be mass oriented and do things that will cater for the interest of the larger society and not for a few in the society... The two leading political parties are not exemplary in placing high price on nomination from fees. High nomination should be placed on the character of the aspirants instead of nomination form fees’.

Also of importance is fact that most political party if not all of them in Nigeria lack money to carry out their political activities effectively. Members of political parties could not pay their dues or contributions because of the harsh economic situation that the country is facing. The poor financial disposition of the parties made them vulnerable and creates opportunity for the moneybags to sponsor all political activities like providing party offices, stickers, billboards, T-shirts, caps; and sponsoring campaigns, rallies, conferences, symposiums among others. The moneybags take over the party structure, decide who get what, where and how, and even dictate the phase of government. This development is detrimental to democracy and democratization process in Nigeria.

Non tolerance of opposition is a big challenge of political parties in Nigeria. Political parties in powers are always accused of handling opposition with iron hands, denying the oppositions the opportunity to have a level play grounds in carrying out its activities like rallies, and campaign in government own media houses and newspapers; and at the same time using state agencies like Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Directorate of State Security Services (DSSS), police, and courts to clap down oppositions. Obasanjo’s PDP led government was accused of freezing Lagos local government accounts, which was an ACN state, Buhari’s APC led government was accused of organizing a raid against the National Assembly, whose leadership, Dr. Bukola Saraki, a PDP man. Some time political party in power uses violent means to intimidate opposition party. Popoola (2004) observes that there have been several instances in Nigeria where thugs were hired by desperate politicians with the main objective of bulldozing opponent into passivity. Also political party in power brings about underdevelopment in the country as it neglects areas or parts that fail to vote for her or fail to move with the party in power.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper concludes that though political party serves as a platform through which people choose their representatives into various political positions and provides administrative training for politicians, but political parties in Nigeria from independence till date has polarized the country along ethnic, religious, and regional lines. Political parties that are formed and structured along these primordial sentiments will not have the capacity to unite the people, and preach the ideas of nationalism, patriotism and national cohesion. Parties, party activities and membership, voting patterns/behaviours and political

appointments reflect all forms of primordial sentiments. In the light of these, the paper recommends that:

- i. Political parties in Nigeria should be ideologically based.
- ii. Political parties in Nigeria should have national outlook, regional or ethnic postures should be eschewed.
- iii. Appointments into public offices should reflect federal character.
- iv. Political parties should encourage internal democracy where party candidates are chosen based on formal processes or procedures provided in the party constitution to avoid unnecessary litigations and confusions.
- v. Political parties should encourage members in the course of carrying out their legislative duties vote according to national interest.
- vi. Once government is formed, political party should work in the interest of all and not neglect the areas that did not vote for her during election.
- vii. Political party that forms government should tolerate opposition parties and treat them as partners in progress.

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