

Party Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria (1999 - 2007)

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Abstract

In every democracy the world over, political parties are seen as the instruments of democratic process. Hence, their relevance in establishing a stable democratic order cannot be overemphasized. But since the inception of the present democratic rule in Nigeria, political parties have failed to perform their fundamental responsibilities for a number of reasons which include fragile party relations, uncoordinated party system, inter and intra-party squabbles, among others. Notably, party crises have remained common features of politics in the country. But, like previous experiences where inter-party crises were the order of the day, the current democratic exercise has witnessed a predominance of intra-party conflicts, to the extent that the big parties including AD, ANPP, APGA and PDF have had and are still having their own fair share, the magnitude of which is based on the size and strength of the party. These crises had intensified unhealthy competition among the political parties and by implication, affected their functions. This study examines the implications of inter and intra-party conflicts for democratic consolidation. While the thesis recognizes that effective political parties are essential for a nascent democracy, stable inter and intra party relations are sine qua non in consolidating democratic rule in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Political parties are constitutionally formed to facilitate the establishment and sustenance of democratic rule. They are the instruments through which democratic process evolves. Their primary responsibilities are to, among other things, recruit and prepare candidates for elections. They check the excesses of government policies and programmes by serving as opposition to a ruling party. And importantly, they are involved in political education of the citizenry, especially in developing countries (Abdullahi, 2007:35).

However, since the inception of the present democratic rule in 1999, political party organizations were transformed into a battle field characterized by hatred, enmity, victimization and suspicion resulting from bitter struggles among party members in their quest to achieve public and/or personal interests. The inordinate ambition of some of the party stalwarts has created political problems in the polity. According to Elaigwu cited in Albert (2003:26) many of the politicians had neither understood the "rules of the game" nor had they accepted them. For many of them, politics was not a game, it was a "battle". As the rules were blatantly violated, party politics became a dangerous "game" for the atmosphere and the political arena became so polluted that in the absence of any form of ventilation, it endangered the lives of the players as well as spectators. Yet, Nigeria had political parties (in fact, many of them) but lacked the values which would make them operate in a democratic setting.

The parties that were established came into being through a rushed process in order to get the military to hand over power. The strong urge to get the soldiers out of governance took the priority position and there was little time to form parties that were genuinely democratic (IDEA, 2000:120). The parties reflected a combination of different tendencies with little or no shared ideological commitments. What is perhaps worthy of note is that these parties are essentially composed of strange bedfellows, relations are mostly informed by self-interest of the amalgamating associations, hence a weak internal cohesion (Muhammad, 2006:204).

The Nigerian situation, exhibiting a dearth of ideology especially following the recognition of a harvest of parties, and close to the 2003 elections saw aspirants carpet crossing from one party to another for the flimsy and often selfish reasons to satisfy their ambitions. This led to a situation where even last minute joiners became party presidential and gubernatorial flag bearers (Okoosi -Simbine, 2004:95) Nigerian politicians are yet to cultivate the politics of accommodation that is partially practiced in the developed Western democracies.

Poverty is a disease that breeds an acute sense of insecurity, and Nigerian political elites perceive political appointment as its antidote, which explains why they approach election as if it were a do or die affair (Ogunba, 1997:396). The ulterior motive for contesting elections is primarily self-aggrandizement. Politicians sought office more for ambition and selfish interest than to serve the people.

Be that as it may, political violence is almost importantly a product of a struggle for power among various group within the society. In Nigeria, the possession of political power leads directly to economic power, hence power seekers can do anything to achieve political power basically to improve their economic status and well-being (Joseph, 1999). Those who hold position in the power structure determine the location and distribution of scarce resources. Exclusion from this power position is hence very costly. Dudley cited in Azeez (2005:21) aptly explained why this is so:

... the shortest cut to affluence and influence is through politics. Politics means money and money means politics. To get politics, there is always a price ... To be a member of the government party means an open avenue to government patronage, contract deals and the like.

He goes on:

But once, having known the probability of having power, the party (and the individual members) naturally uses the same governmental machinery to stay in power. The leadership becomes a self-recruiting oligarchy and no self-recruiting oligarchy has been known to tolerate opposition to itself (Dudley 1973).

More importantly, when the individuals and groups could not achieve their objectives through the normal democratic political processes of voting, parties or machine politics, and given the stifling of electoral competition and the forced entrenchment of the ruling elites in power, the prospects of realizing their goals and aspirations through non-violent tactics must have seemed increasingly dim. As a result, violence emerged as the ultimate alternative for those concerned. To Anifowoshe (1982:21), political violence is often a natural concomitant of the political process, particularly where there is a fierce competition over the sharing of power.

Many people have seen democratization as a major cause of political violence, holding that "the opening of democratic space throws up many groups pulling in different directions, that it causes demand overload, systemic breakdown and even violent conflict' (Bastian and Luckham, 2003:38). Political contestation organized around non-negotiable identity claims poses severe difficulties for democracy. And by helping politicize these claims, democracy can contribute to political polarization and ultimately violence. "To be sure, democratic states suffer from party conflicts just as others do" (IDEA, 1998:13). Because of the cleavages caused by the struggle for power at the various defined levels.

Awosika brilliantly argued:

Party politics is poisonous. It is the politics of war not of peace; of acrimony and hatred and mudslinging not of love and brotherhood, of anarchy and discord not of orderliness and concord; it is politics of cleavages, divisions and disunity and not of cooperation, consensus and unity ... it is the politics of rascality, not of maturity, of blackmail and near gansterism not of constructive and honest contribution (Political Bureau 1987).

On several occasions, political godfathers and their proteges engaged in undemocratic ways to win election so as to gain political power by using youths as political thugs foment troubles in their respective domain. The youths that were used as canon fodder in most of the party conflicts in the country are frustrated young school leavers who feel let down by their leaders (Albert, op. cit). The youths thus see violent conflicts as an economically beneficial enterprise that can cater for their immediate and secondary needs. The craze for power made party leaders and members to become less concerned and ideology-weary having no regard for those principles that set them and their parties apart. This situation has further worsened in the Fourth Republic; where majority of political parties have assumed similar characteristics. Party leaders are more concerned about elite interest, thus transforming government to an elitist affair without much regard for populist welfare (Zakari, 2006:152).

The pattern of party politics between 1999 and 2007 indicates the nature and the character of inter and intra-party relations among the registered political parties in the country. As at last count, 30 political parties were recognized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to contest elections into various political posts. In order not to overstretch the limits of this thesis, the parties can be grouped into major and minor parties.

With regard to party crises, while the APGA, AD and ANPP, are experiencing low-level crises, the PDP, which is the ruling party, tends to be having the most threatening spates of fragmentation both at the state and national levels. How else can one explain the crisis within the Anambra State PDP in July 2003, where factions have resorted to using all means possible including the abduction of the state governor, destruction of property and using the instrumentality of police? "This is even worsened by the inability of the Nigerian State to deploy its coercive power to restore normalcy in that state" (Muharnmed, op. cit). Just as the PDF reels from one crisis to another, same applies to other parties as the ANPP, AD and APGA have at various times been engulfed by series of crises which, in some cases, resulted in the defection of some of their members to other parties. As regards inter-party relations, there is no denying the fact that (they are) more of a cat-and-mouse game. While the ruling PDP is wary and critical of any move or opinion by other parties, so are other parties at every available opportunity raining invectives on the PDP-led government. (The Punch, October 9, 2003). It needs be noted that those parties (AD, APGA and ANPP) together with minor parties such as (NCP, MDJ, JP and PAC) formed an umbrella association called, Congress of all Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) which serves as a platform for opposing policies and programmes of the ruling party which they consider inimical to good governance.

While politics of opposition parties is part and parcel of the political process in a democracy, in Nigeria this has continued to be played along a dangerous path even to the point of constituting a threat to the democratic project. Even at the state level, the situation is not in any way different and is at times worse than what obtains at the national level. This is because, inter-party relations in some states often take the form of violent confrontations among party faithful, leading to the destruction of lives and property of citizens. That was the case in states such as Lagos, Kwara, Borno, Ekiti, Rivers and Edo, among others, prior to the 2003 general elections and even after the elections (Lawal, 2005). These situations, are unhealthy in a context where parties are expected to assist in integrating a fragmented society, engender political communication and be in the vanguard for the realization of the much-desired dividends of democracy by the citizens. It is in view of the foregoing that this present study intends to examine party conflicts in Nigeria and their implications towards democratic consolidation using the events between 1999 and 2007 as a focal point of analysis.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

Political Party

A political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices (Agbaje, 1999:195). In other words, a political party is a group that seeks to elect candidates to public office by supplying them with a label - a "party identification" - by which they are known to the electorate. Therefore, it is a collection of people in a democratic setting with the unique objective of seeking control of government through nominating its candidates and presenting its programmes for endorsement via the electoral process in competition with other parties (Ibid).

In his own view, Nnoli defines political party as a group of people who share a common ideology and conception of how and why state power should be organized and used. It differs from amorphous organizations by the fact that a party not only seeks to influence government policy but also undertake responsibilities for actually formulating and implementing the policy (Nnoli, 2000). This willingness to take governmental functions sets political party apart from trade unions and interest groups. To Ayoade (2000), political parties, arguably, are symptomatic of a competitive political system. Their primary goal is the conquest of power or a share in its exercise as each party nominates candidates for elections, tries to win seats in parliament and forms a government if it wins an overall majority.

According to Yaqub (2002), political party, in liberal conception, has been conceived as an instrument for contesting elections. It is expected to educate, articulate and aggregate issues that it feels the public is not well informed about; recruit and train political leaders and reduce the salience and potency of ethnic chauvinism, bigotry and other manifestation of intolerance particularly in ethnically and culturally diverse countries. An ideal political party is therefore an organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political questions and national issues in the state, and seek to obtain control of governance (Appadorai cited in Banjoko, 2004).

Similarly, a political party is a network organized and steered by politically ambitious people who share similar ideologies and try to enlist people interested in politics in order to extend their influence and strengthen their drive for public positions. In essence, parties are the most efficient and effective organizational means for politicians to win power. There is a general agreement that an organization requires the following to qualify as a political party: continuity in organization; manifest and permanent organisation at the local level; self-conscious determination of leaders to capture and to hold the power of decision making alone or in coalition with others; and seeking followers at the polls or in some manner striving for popular support (Oyediran 1999:141).

Parties are implements through which contending forces struggle for power. Put differently, they are organized group with a clearly defined policy whose main aim is to win or retain political power. They are essential features of a democratic arrangement. As such, parties aggregate and articulate the disparate views of a country's population for effective political actions, as they are important to the vitality and viability of the democratic forms of governance. In democracies therefore, a political party is a more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments, and representing such interests in government. It is thus a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governance (Agbaje, op. cit). Political parties in democracies constitute a crucial institutional device not only for representation but for conflict management. They help to organize public opinion, facilitate communication between government and the governed, articulate the feeling of community and help in political recruitment.

From the foregoing, parties are by definition, a special form of organization. Based on this, party organization refers generally to the internal structure of political parties that involves the consideration of a number of original variables which include the composition and powers of party decision-making bodies; the extent to which authority is centralized or decentralized; the nature and functions of local units etc (Sartori, 1976). In organizing a party, the issues of party membership and the nature of leadership within the party cannot be ignored. Though they differ in structure, size and ideologies, all political parties require some degree of organization in order to perform their basic functions.

Besides, in a multi-party democracy, a minimal degree of organisation is necessary in order to contest elections, and to retain that capability from one election to another, because without continuity the party risks falling apart. For this particular reason, the running of a party is always delegated to some representatives or full-time officials. This as a consequence, informed Michel's belief that intra-party democracy would always succumb to the power of party elites making Ostrogorski argues that the development of party machine and the party caucus is inimical to the representation of individual interest (ibid).

Significantly, a democratic political system cannot exist without political parties. In his own perspective, Price (1975) noted that without parties, an electorate would either be impotent or destructive by embarking on impossible policies that would only wreck the political machine. Therefore, political parties are necessary for a stable polity. Simply put, party system is fundamental to the proper working of political stability in any political system. A party system, as described by Agbaje is a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence the political process. The way to distinguish between different types of party system is the reference to number of parties competing for power. Based on this, Duverger made a distinction between "one-party" and "multi-party" system. In a "one-party" arrangement, a "ruling" party functions as a government whereas power to rule alternates between two "major" parties in a "two-party" system. Like the situation in a one-party system, dominant - party system presents a situation where a single "major" party retains power for a prolonged period. However, no party is large enough to exercise power in a multi-party system leading to the formation of coalition government.

The above does not suggest that party system could be reduced to a game of numbers. The mere presence of parties does not guarantee the existence of a party system. The relative sizes of the parties as reflected in their electoral and legislative strength is also as important as the number of parties competing for power. Aside from number and size, Sartori pointed out that what is vital is to establish the 'relevance' of parties in relation to the formation of governments, and in particular whether their size give them the prospect of winning, or at least sharing governmental power. Equally important is how these "relevant" parties relate to one another. Is the party system characterized by cooperation and consensus, or by conflict or polarization? (Sartori, 1987). The pattern of relationships among parties only constitute a system if it is characterized by stability and a degree of orderliness. Where neither stability nor order exists, a party system may be in the process of emerging, or a transition from one party system to another may be occurring.

It needs be emphasized that party systems shape the broader process in various ways. They influence the range and nature of choice available to the electorate, and affect the cohesion and stability of government. They structure the relationship between executive and the legislature, and also influence the general character of the political culture.

3. Conflict

According to Weber (1971), conflict is any action oriented intentionally to carry out actor's own will against the resistance of the other party or parties. He further asserts that conflict is an everyday normal on-going for institutionalized process that is natural of social reality. For Coser (1966), social conflict is a struggle over status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the group in conflict are not only to gain the desired value but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals. Generally speaking, conflicts entail struggle and rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach values. These objects can either be material (scarce resources, land, employment, promotion in public service, creation of new state or locality), or non-material (culture, language and religion) though to Osaghae (2001:30) these tend to be mixed. In view of this, political violence is informed by political conflict. At the extreme, it involves the use of machetes, rifles, clubs and guns to cause destruction.

Duverger (1980:179) observes that in political struggle, when men and organizations are in conflict they tend to employ different kinds of weapons. But the instruments they employ is absolutely influenced by the type of society, the type of government, the composition of groups in conflict as well as the period of history. He further stresses that, although politics is a conflict, yet it is a limitation to conflict. That is, when in politics, individuals confront each other with rifles, matchetes and fists then, we are outside the boundary of politics. Once conflict turns violent, it becomes detrimental to the growth and stability of the system. In tandem with this, Azeez (2005:20) argues that violent conflict is a particular kind of interaction marked by efforts at hindering rivals. Therefore, violence (whether politically, religiously or ethnically motivated) are means of identifying the imperfection of a plural society and of suggesting remedies to remove or solve the problems of inequality, marginalization, exploitation, misuse of majoritarian democracy and national government in a prejudicial manner (Osaghae, op cit).

For Waltz (1971), one may see conflict absolutely everywhere depending on perspective and definition. He submitted that at the level of event when those who featured in an event exhibit incompatibility as they interact, then, obviously, the parties could be said to be in conflict. Speaking further, Waltz noted that the term "conflict" may be applied to struggles of wider effects, that is, struggles that have important consequences for some larger organizations (ibid). To him, conflicts that promise damage, not only to the contenders but also to the system are most terrible. Conflict or strife of this nature may contribute to the creation and maintenance of an order or become the means of its destruction. In a democratic set up, conflict among competitive parties may turn into political violence involving the use of illegitimate means to achieve a desired political goal.

As a corollary, party clashes as forms of political violence usually involve the destruction of lives and property of members of or supporters of political parties. It has to do with individual or group violence against party leadership or officials, supporters and possessions. Albeit, party conflicts are low-intensity political violence which include intra and inter-party clashes (Alanamu, 2005:12). Meanwhile, political violence as conceptualized by Anifowose (1982:4) is:

The use of threat or physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals, and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property; and whose objective, choice of target or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation, and effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

As a consequence, political violence may emanate from unhealthy party feuds and intense struggle to capture power at all cost leading to undemocratic culture of intolerance, political assassination, thuggery, arson, kidnapping and electoral violence. Within the context of party politics therefore, inter and intra-party squabbles often engender hatred and division among people and undermine the legacies of long term stability, cohesion and unity in a political system.

4. Democracy

Scholars have argued that democracy goes alongside development, economic growth, human rights etc. Therefore, for a better understanding of democratic consolidation, conceptualization of democracy becomes imperative. A meaningful conceptualization of democracy cannot be done in isolation of its elements oppositions (organized contestation through free and fair elections and participation (the right of virtually all adults to vote and contest for office) in a free and fair election

As Schumpeter argues, democracy is an institutional arrangement for arriving at a political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's vote. Therefore, it is not surprising that a political system is democratic to the extent in which the collective decision makers are elected through fair, honest and periodic elections based on universal adult suffrage and where candidates freely compete for votes (Schumpeter, 1990).

Also, Obadan equates democracy with:

Free and fair elections through which the people may hold their representatives accountable for their actions or inactions; the rule of law which acts as a protective shield for citizens and guarantees their access to the judiciary; human rights which entail the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association; separation of powers between the three branches of government namely executive, legislature and judiciary; majority rule which is critical to the long term consolidation of democratic rule and institutionalization of democracy as a sustainable system of governance; and discussion and compromise as a means of conflict resolution (Obadan, 1999:3).

Where these pillars of democracy are firmly in place, they should, other things being equal, lead to the institutionalization of a good government. Essentially, democracy is a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people collectively and is administered by them or by officers appointed by them. It is a state of society characterized by recognition of equality of rights and privilege for all people: political, social and legal equality. Hence, democracy is a system of government by all the people of a country, usually through representatives whom they elect. It embodies fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, political participation etc. As such, democracy is a political system that operates on the basis of popularly elected or appointed representatives to run the affairs of the state. To Oddih (2005), it is premised on effective representation and participation, adding that while the specificity of democracy differs cross-culturally, there are still basic underlying features that are common and genuine to all democratic processes.

Taking a critical look at the concept, Osaghae sees democracy as: According to him, democracy is seen as:

Pluralism and multipartyism including free and fair competitive politics in which opposition parties have a realistic chance of coming to power, ... popular participation in the political process including universal suffrage and free choice by the people of those to govern them, provided those elected remain accountable, and can be voted out if they no longer enjoy the people's support ... and respect for human rights, equality of access to all citizens and groups to state power and resources, and respect for the "rules of the game" ... (Osaghae, 1999).

To be consolidated and sustained, democracy must become internalized in the society manifesting itself at all levels of the social and political systems with shared values.

Also writing along this perspective of democracy is Gidado Idris who defines the concept "as the free expression and determination by the people of a polity, of how their society should be governed. The translation of this expression into action through appropriate policies and programmes is the function and indeed the purpose of government (Idris, 1998:8). Thus, democracy is the essence of social contract between the people and the government. Not only do democracies have a great advantage of providing moderate change and better political framework for national development, inherent in democracies are values that promote good governance. Therefore, the systems must be encouraged to work well and create strong incentives for accountability and governance (ibid, p. 4). He further asserts that participatory democracy on an agreed social contract where all participants and stakeholders are able to play their roles unhindered, is the ideal environment for political development (ibid, p. 5).

In an attempt to avoid problems which the concept (democracy) engendered, Robert Dahl (1998:37) used the term "polyarchy" which he defined as having three important attributes: competing for public office by individuals and organized groups (political parties) at periodic interval without the use of force; an inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies; and a level of civil and political liberties sufficient to guarantee the integrity of political competition". He highlights the merits of democracy thus:

- i. Democracy helps to prevent government by cruel and vicious aristocrats,
- ii. It avoids tyranny, promotes general freedom and self-determination; and
- iii. It produces peacekeeping and posterity (ibid)

Writing on consociation democracy, Lijphart cited in Oddih (2005) believes that a prerequisite for durable and stable democracy rests on the ability of elites in plural societies to co-operate, and achieve social homogeneity and political consensus. By so doing, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in plural societies are mitigated and counteracted. Eziokwu (1998) in line with the Report of the Political Bureau (1987) highlights some basic constituents and elements for sustaining democracy in Nigeria, these according to him include:

- i. The institutions and processes of effective electoral agencies, political parties and their formation, administration and funding,
 - ii. Conduct of free and fair periodic elections,
 - iii. Broad based participation by the electorate,
 - iv. Observance of rule of law,
 - v. Protection of Fundamental Human Rights,
 - vi. A free and unfettered press,
 - vii. A healthy civil society, and
 - viii. Government based on the consent of the people.
- (Eziokwu, 1998:16)

For a political system to be democratic, it must meet three (3) basic requirements. These are periodic competition among individuals and organized groups for effective government positions; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the process of leadership selection through the electoral process such that no major social group is excluded; and democratization.

According to Omoweh (2000:23) democratization refers to a process of creating an enabling environment in both the polity and economy that allows people at all levels to exercise control and authority over their own affairs and improve their existence without the intrusion of the state, terror and counterproductive policies. Democratization, as conceptualized by Garreton, is a process of establishing, strengthening or extending the principles, mechanisms and institutions that define a democratic regime (Garreton, 1995). It is summarized to be a political movement from less accountable to more accountable government, from authoritarian to a stable democracy, from less competitive method of succession (coups) to a more competitive free and fair elections (Potter, 2000; Oshagae, 1995).

5. Democratic Consolidation

The concept can be seen as an identifiable phase in the process of transition from authoritarian to democratic system that is critical to the establishment of a stable, institutionalized and lasting democracy. According to Linz and Stepan (1996), it is a political regime in which democracy, as a complex system of institution, rules and patterned incentives and discentives has become "the only game in town". Hence, a democratic regime is regarded as consolidated when no significant factor (national, social, political, economic and institutional) will attempt to achieve its objectives either through the creation of a non-democratic regime or by a way of succession. Or when the overwhelming majority of public opinion is consistently supportive of democratic procedures, processes and institutions as being the only appropriate method of conducting governance and public affairs (Oche, 2002).

In constitutional terms, a democracy can be said to be consolidated when government and non-government actors become subject to, and habituated to the resolution of conflict within the bounds of the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process (Linz and Stepan, op. cit).

A more incisive definition was given by Beetham (1994), who argues that democratic consolidation is meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure; of extending their life expectancy beyond the short-term; of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian repression and of building dams against eventual reverse waves. The list of conditions for democratic consolidation has also included such divergent items as popular legitimization, the diffusion of democratic values, party building, stabilisation of electoral rules and routinisation of politics (Schedler, 1998:91).

To Diamond (1987), it involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainties. This normalization requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic culture and political institutionalization. It is equally seen to be a process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is unlikely to break down (*ibid*, p. 16). This is exactly what Whitehead (1989) was saying when he argued that democracy can best be consolidated only when there is a good reason to believe that it is capable of withstanding pressure or shocks without abandoning the electoral process or the political freedom on which it depends, including those of dissent and opposition. That is, when the major political players recognize sufficient common interests in establishing electoral procedures and subsequently see that their interest in keeping to the rules of the game outweighs the costs to them to their being underpinned rather than out of any principal commitment to democratic norms and canons (Przeworski, 1991).

In another development, Oshagae (1995) also argues that democratic consolidation does not simply mean the defeat of supposedly undemocratic rulers or the putting in place of democratic institutions, notably multi-party system, and free and fair elections. Rather, its survival would depend on its consequences for the people; how much it is able to better their material conditions in terms of literacy, security of life and property, and rural development as well as to ensure political stability and thereby save the people from the scourge of war and other violent conflicts.

Consolidating democracy as described by Alex Thompson is "ensuring that the democratic process endures beyond the first multi-party elections. This will be assisted by favourable political culture, a strong civil society and a supportive economy" (Thompson, 2000:239). The establishment of stable and sustainable democracy requires substantial changes in the forms of accumulation; the promotion of an acceptable level of welfare that will allow the majority of people to have confidence in the capacity of democratic institutions to manage economic, social and political conflicts; and the resolution of the contradictions between authoritarian relations that are dominant in the society (Bangura, 1999).

As a concept, democratic consolidation is essentially about regime maintenance, preventing its potential breakdown. Scholars tend to associate the phenomenon with regime legitimation and absence of attitudinal and behavioural challenges capable of ruining the life of the democratic regime. It is about regarding the "key political institution as the only legitimate framework for political contestation, and adherence to the democratic rules of the game" (Umar, 2002). Thus, consolidation is the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels believe that the democratic system is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine (Diamond, *op. cit*).

Besides, democratic consolidation is the deep, unquestioned, routinised commitment to democracy and its procedures. One of the hallowed "procedures" of democracy is the electoral contest to determine who will be allowed to hold public offices at all levels. An important ingredient of which is the strict compliance with the rules of the electoral system. The implication is that adherence to the laid-down rules and procedures which makes acceptance of electoral outcomes less problematic, according to Diamond, is more crucial to democratic consolidation than the actual outcomes of elections (*ibid*). Fairness and objectivity are irreducible prerequisites for democratic consolidation. For any society to adhere strictly to the rules of the political game demands a critical attitudinal overhaul on the part of both the elites and the masses, the development of the attitude that the outcomes of any election would be judged to be acceptable so long as the rules and procedures of fair contests have been observed. It is such an acceptance that allows losers to accept their fate gallantly and for their supporters to refrain from political violence. Since this has to do with the cultivation of an attitudinal disposition that is necessary for enhancing the survival and thriving of democratic governance, a "stable democracy" also requires a belief in the legitimacy of democracy (Fawole, 2005).

In a nutshell, consolidation requires that habituation to the norms and procedures of democratic conflict-regulation be developed. A high degree of institutional routinization is key to such a process. With consolidation, democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life as well as in political calculations for achieving goals. Ultimately, consolidation depends upon a complexity of factors and tasks which elected political leaders must apprehend and tackle. They must build, reform and if necessary, dissolve institutions in order to strengthen democracy. Political leaders need to build the legitimacy of democracy as an essential basis for its consolidation.

It is noteworthy to stress that country wishing to deepen and consolidate democracy must seriously contend with institutional weaknesses, undemocratic and illiberal behaviour of elites and their political parties as well as the overbearing nature of the state in the realm of governance. As Diamond (1994:7) contends

Consolidation is obstructed or destroyed causally by the effects of institutional shallowness and decay. If they are to become consolidated therefore, electoral democracies must become deeper and more liberal. This will require greater executive accountability to both the law and the scrutiny of other branches of government, as well as the public, the reduction of barriers to political participation and mobilization by marginalized groups, and more effective protection for the political and civil rights of all citizens. Deepening will also be facilitated by the institutionalization of a political party system that stimulates mass participation, incorporate marginalized groups and forges vibrant linkages with civil society organizations and party branches and officials at the local level.

Conclusively, this thesis has come out to define democratic consolidation as the capacity of the polity to nurture and sustain democratic values over a very long time with little or no threat of abortion to the democratic experiment in all ramifications and in our local context, with visible dividends of democracy within which they attain a status of democratic maturity such that it can no longer be threatened or truncated by reactionary forces -internal or external. The inference from this varying conceptualization of democratic consolidation connotes "a transition from an unpopular and illegitimate regime to a stable, egalitarian democratic system to the extent that reverse is not possible". (Azeez, 2002).

6. Party Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation

The Development of Party Politics in Nigeria

Generally, the formation of political parties and indeed, party politics began in Nigeria as far back as 1922 when Clifford constitution recognized and provided for elective principle to Lagos and Calabar following series of agitation for participation meted upon the colonial government by the nationalists. With granting of elective principle, party activities commenced with the formation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1922 and 1936 respectively. Although, the constitution made a significant landmark in party politics in Nigeria, yet in the words of Nnoli (cited in Abdullahi, 2007:35), it did not adequately represents the yearnings of the Nigerian people. Thus, it led to further agitation for political reforms which subsequently, resulted in the emergence of Richards constitution. With the advent of the constitution, election as a means of choosing representatives was extended to cover other parts of Nigeria and that eventually led to the formation of National Council of Nigerians and Cameroons (NCNC) in 1946, the Action Group (AG) in 1948, and Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in 1951.

The formation of these parties and the relationship that had existed among them was informed by two reasons: the desire for political independence and to promote, uphold and preserve the cultural values of the diverse ethnic groups across the country. This could further be attested to by the nature and philosophy of the parties most of which were offshoots of cultural associations (Nwosu, et al, 1998). It therefore, marked the genesis of ethnic politics in Nigeria and ever since, ethnic factor had featured prominently in Nigerian politics. This trend created had hostile inter and intra-party relations characterized by suspicion, hatred and enmity among the various ethnic based parties. The political class became more apologetic to ethnic aspirations. As Ashafa (2002:17) contends:

They mobilize their followers by creating the impression that other parties were champions of the interest of their various tribes and regions, and that the struggles of these parties represented the struggles of those ethnic groups for political ascendancy in the polity. In their competition for the limited political offices and associated resources, the parties generated antagonism and hostility among ethnic groups and regions.

The attempted alliances made up of the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) comprising the NPC and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) on the one hand, and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) comprising the AG and the NCNC on the other, ended rancorously. The alliances, as modest attempts at inter party arrangements of some sorts, deployed crude tactics to wrest power and defeat the opposition, principally with ethnic agenda as the major point of departure in mobilizing the electorate.

The intensity of inter and intra-party conflicts at that point in time confirmed the unwillingness of the system and the political elites to take the nation to the promised land. More importantly, the crisis within the AG which spread to other areas of the political geography of the Western region and the whole country culminated in the inglorious "Wild-wild West" in the First Republic, the consequence of which was the first military incursion into Nigerian politics in 1966 (Nwosu, et al, op.cit) After 15 years of military interregnum, a new transition programme was designed to end by October 1979. Prior to the handing over date, a ban on political activities was lifted and about nineteen political associations submitted their application for registration (Aderibigbe, 2001:288). Five political parties were eventually registered including the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) headed by late Awolowo, the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) whose flag bearer was late Azikiwe, the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) under the leadership of late Aminu Kano, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led by Shehu Shagari and the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) with late Waziri Ibrahim as the leader. Although, the 1979 constitution provided for parties that are national in outlook, yet most of them were mere extension of the first republic parties. The pattern of party politics in the second republic started with a request from the ruling party, (NPN) demanding for an accord to have a working majority in the legislature. Unfortunately, all political parties except the NPP rejected the offer. Shortly after, disagreement over ministerial nominations and the appointment of president liaison officers between the ruling party and its partners brought an end to the accord. After the breakup of the accord, the leadership of UPN, PRP, GNPP and NPP formed a progressive alliance against NPN in order to foster harmonious party relations. But the alliance could not last long due to frictions and suspicions among the members of the alliance.

The scenario was further compounded by hostile intra-party leadership crises between Waziri Ibrahim and GNPP senators over the removal of Alhaji Kadi as the party's leader; the resignation of Chief Moshood Abiola from NPN following the re-nomination of Shehu Shagari by NPN special convention; the wrangling within the PRP between party leadership and the two PRP Governors over refusal to refrain from attending the meeting of the nine governors under the auspices of Progressive Party Alliance (PPA). All these added to the skirmishes that generated a lot of tension which later paved way for a return of another military rule in December, 1983 (Abdullahi,op.cit.) The military Government was first headed by General Buhari and later taken over by General Babangida who initiated the transition to the third republic. A transition timetable was published and guidelines for the registration of parties issued and 13 political associations submitted their applications for registration (Yahaya, 2003:15). Subsequently, the associations were denied registration, instead, the government created Social Democratic party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) to avoid ethnic based and prebendal politics of the previous republics. However, many pitfalls accompanied the programme including inconsistencies in government policy pronouncements, fluid political engineering and fragile political foundation upon which the political parties were built. These concerns were justified following the annulment of the presidential election by the government and the subsequent emergence of an interim government, which later paved way for another military rule headed by late General Sani Abacha.

Expectedly, General Abacha also designed another transition programme and registered five political parties, namely; the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), the Congress for National Consensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) and the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM) (Ujo, 2000:12). Worthy of note is that there was a paradigm shift engendered in self-succession transition popularly known as "tazance". Series of strategies were designed to ensure that General Abacha succeeded himself, some of which include; the endorsement of the General by all political parties as their presidential flag bearer, the two million man march, brutal killings and unwarranted arrests of members of the opposition. These negatively affected the transition programme and almost transformed Nigeria into a pariah state. The death of Abacha in 1998 put abrupt end to the transition programme.

Hence, a number of factors accounted for the hostile and violent nature of party politics in Nigeria, some of which are traceable to party rivalries and squabbles over access to state power and resources since the control of power in Nigeria has become a means to amass wealth, to achieve prosperity and popularity. These conflicts had in many ways contributed to the failure of harmonious and stable party relations in particular and democratic consolidation in general.

7. Party Politics in the Fourth Republic

Reflecting their lack of capacity to sustain democratic practices, many political parties in Nigeria have exhibited serious anti-democratic features in the conduct of their internal affairs and in relation to the society as a whole. To be sure, Nigeria has 30 political parties but only four are prominent both at the national and local stages. The most significant ones were AD, ANPP, APGA and PDP (The Punch, January 27, 2005). The PDP which was the ruling party at the federal level had at its top hierarchy, retired military and para-military men. The party which was used as a platform to legitimize the pacted Abubakar transition in the 1998/99 transition underwent a process of reform between 2003 and 2006, mainly characterized by a tighter hold on the party structure by the retired military men and the increasing marginalization of certain members. (The Guardian, February 4, 2005). This has led not only to factionalization within the rank of party men but also the formation of Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) by some of the aggrieved members. The development has also led to two parallel party structures in the AD and ANPP with a faction of the latter transforming into Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) (Ibid)

Closely connected to the above was the monetization of the political playing process. Excessive use of money was prevalent as the political parties existed to protect the interests of their patrons at the expense of the people. Genuine party members were seen as those who have contributed financially to the cause of the party. Party nominations go to the highest bidders while "monetization" of politics motivates office holders to further the interests of the business community. The table below shows donations of influential people to the Obasanjo/Atiku campaign in 2003.

S/N	SOURCE	AMOUNT (N)
1	Friends of Atiku	₦ 1 billion
2	Aliko Dangote	₦ 250million
3	Sir Emeka Offor	₦ N200 million
4	2 1 PDF Governors	₦ 210 million
5	Friends of Obasanjo/ Atiku (Europe)	₦ 144 million
6	Friends of Obasanjo /Atiku (Rivers)	₦ 150 million
7	Grand Alliance	Boeing 727 & 2 buses
8	Construction companies in Nigeria	₦ 200 million
9	Dr. Uche (businessman)	₦ 50 million
10	PDF caucus in Senate	₦ 12 million
11	Principal Staff, Aso Rock	₦ 10.6 million
12	AVM Shekari	₦ 10 million
13	First Atlantic Bank	₦ 10 million
14	Ministers	₦ 10 million
15	Otunba Fasawe	₦ 6.5 million
16	50 Parastatals	₦ 5 million
17	PDF National Working Committee	₦ 3.6 million
18	Ngozi Anyacgbulam	₦ 500,000
19	Gamaliel Onosode	₦ 100,000
20	Corporate Nigeria	₦ 2 billion

Source: Echichoya Ezomon (2003): "Campaign Finance: Donations or Buying up the Democratic process?" in the Guardian, January, 24

In Nigeria, politics is conceived as a big investment to be pursued with deadly seriousness. The dearth of party ideology facilitated the decampment of "professional" politicians from one party to another in a desperate bid to win through any means available.

To them, the seat of power is regarded as the magnetic centre of gravity. To this end, disgruntled elements often seek refuge in newer parties to thwart from within the party, the ambitions of their hitherto party members (Okoosi-Simbine, 2004:95). Worrisome in the political scene was the violence and intimidation exhibited by political thugs whose activities involved destruction of lives and properties during and after elections. Civilian politics since 1999 were characterized by acid attacks and politically motivated assassinations with the authorities seemingly incapable of bringing the culprits to book. Emphatically, the zero-sum, winner-takes-all approach to competitive electoral politics was largely responsible for high scale violence in party politics in Nigeria (ibid). The situation was however made worse by political godfathers who turned party primaries into robbery-like events, and brazenly stage-managed appointments for public offices and selection of party candidates for personal gains. Concrete evidence of godfatherism and the sponsorship of stooges were the political logjam in Anambra between Chris Uba and Chris Ngige in 2003.

Therefore, the electoral behaviour in Nigeria's fourth republic was not guided by coherent party ideology, party programmes or the merits of those standing to be elected, but by a political calculus based on ethnic geopolitics, the means to assume power will-nilly, either singly or by a fluid conglomeration of small power blocks around a big power block for the purpose of fighting the war with which to win the right to rule and share the anticipated booty (Ogundiya, 2003:59). On this note, we shall examine the nature of inter-party conflicts in Nigeria.

8. Inter-Party Conflicts

Political parties are the institutional representations of the struggle for power between aggregations of the prevalent interest in the society. The quest and struggle for the capture and control of political power are in fact the *raison d'être* for the formation of parties (Tyoden, 1994:119). As a result, each party perceives any other party as a competitor and an opponent. The decision to ally with one party or the other, or to carry out an independent struggle during an election, or to be part of a broad-based coalition all depend on the extent to which a party's success to power is advanced by each of these political strategies. The intensity of the struggle for power which depends on the centrality of political power relative to other sources of power in the society, also define the nature of inter-party relationship. This situation best accounts for inter-party conflicts in Nigeria where political power determines the ebbs and flows of social, economic and political processes thereby making the contest for control of such power intense and ferocious (ibid)

Since the inception of the present democratic experiment, there had been series of inter-party relations in their quest to retain power and allow democracy to flourish. Regrettably, this type of relationship ended up leading to discontent and uncertainties. A good illustration was the PDF and ANPP power struggle in Kwara State in the run up to 2003 election involving Dr. Olusola Saraki, the godfather and the then State Governor, Muhammed lawal over the control of the State Government after the 1999 election. So bad was the situation that the "State of Harmony" was turned into a "State of Violence" (Alanamu, 2005). Both men were always surrounded by militant supporters paving way for restiveness and political instability in the state. The attack was later extended to AD in the state where Lai Mohammed, gubernatonal candidate reported that ANPP supporters attacked his convoy in 2002 (ibid). The same applied to Ekiti State where, in 2003, PDF used rented crowd to harass AD supporters in the bye-election so as to secure victory at the polls (Abdullahi, op. cit). The suspension of senatorial bye-election in Kebbi State by INEC through a PDF Minister for fear of defeat; the inter-party clash between ANPP and PDF supporters in Rivers State in 2001; the frictional fighting among AD, PDF and ANPP supporters in Ondo State in 2003 are few out of many crises that impinged upon the quality and sustainability of democracy across the nation (ibid)

At the national level, many see party pluralism and election as the opportunity to a richly deserved but long denied access to power. In the contest for power, bizarre political events that increasingly send jitters down the spines of the electorate continued to unfold with dizzying ferocity (TELL, March 26,2007). Power sharing is so important that every politician wants to be in the corridors of power. No thanks to the constitution that over-centralized so much power in the Presidency thus making the struggle for this office to be intense and prone to lawlessness. As noted earlier, the three prominent parties, AD, ANPP and POP embarked on undemocratic culture of intolerance, abuses and assassination in a desperate attempt to occupy Aso Rock Villa, the seat of government.

The ruling party, PDP dangled carrots of juicy appointments to both ANPP and AD prominent members in order to cause disintegration within those parties so as to maintain firm grip on power. Where this proved abortive, opposition parties were weakened and influential members sent to their untimely grave (The Punch August 7, 2002). The unwarranted and senseless assassinations of Chief Bola Ige, former Attorney General of the Federation, and the ANPP chieftain Dr. Marshall Harry provide good example. (Arowosegbe, 2005). Therefore, one of things that aggravates inter-party conflicts is the perception of governance by many aspirants to power. According to Ogunsanwo (1994:141), where governance is perceived as the chance to plunder with reckless abandon and without accountability, the willingness to give up power in a free and fair election will naturally be absent. In the same manner, those wishing to unseat incumbent elected governments would not hesitate to use fair or foul means to attain their objectives including election rigging.

In a plural or segmented society like Nigeria, political parties tend to reflect the sectoral cleavages in the country. The level of conflict therefore corresponds to the degree of conflict that characterize the various groups in the society (Tyoden, op. cit). Little wonder why AD, APGA and ANPP drew their members largely from the Yoruba in the West, Ibo in the East and Hausa - Fulani in the North of the country respectively. This accounted majorly for the ethnicisation of inter-party rivalries in the fourth republic especially as contained in the calls for North versus East ticket, Igbo Presidency and the like. (Okoosi-Simbine, op. cit). Indeed, this social division that crept into inter-party affairs impeded democratic progress as it renewed the age-long politics of elitism (Zakari, 2006). So far, what is assumed to be multiparty democracy and by extension party politics revolves largely around the political class, who subordinate and subvert the Nigerian State (Oyediran, 2002:155). Accordingly, any political faction in power usually captures and dominates the state, and employs all the instruments of the state to enforce factional interests. This is exactly what the PDF has been doing in recent years. The interests include winning elections, making key appointments and enjoying political patronage. This form of multiparty competition produced power elites with their highly divisive tendencies in any transition. Unfortunately, the scenario is further compounded by the high premium placed on political power and public office (Obi and Abutudu, 1999:285). Ensuring free and fair elections constituted a stumbling block to the Fourth Republic as the party in power and the opposition sought to manipulate institutional levers in their own favour and pre-empt the outcome of the electoral contest. On the part of PDF, the instruments of state power no longer played their mediatory role and settled disputes among the members of ruling class or civil society. Instead, those in control of government used state machinery and apparatus to advance their own interests and advantages in party organizations, campaigns and elections. Such power of incumbency was alleged to have worked in favour of the PDF in the April 2003 polls as the party captured twenty-eight states while ANPP secured seven and AD, one (Alabi, 2004:122).

The "landslide" victory of PDP in elections characterized by the political use of the military for elections, widespread irregularities and institutional weaknesses made the ANPP and APGA presidential candidates, General Muhammadu Buhari and Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu respectively, to protest the results in court (Omotola, 2004:128). These circumstances gravely escalated the already volatile inter-party squabbles among parties throughout the second term of the Obasanjo government which was believed to have emerged through a designed rather than fair process. The actions, reactions and interactions of each political party portrayed Nigeria as a country sitting on a keg of gunpowder waiting to explode.

9. Intra-Party Conflicts

Personality rivalries between factions and members of leadership of the parties exert a great influence on intra-party relationship in the fourth republic. Thus, the relationship depends on the origin of a party, the dominant interests within it, the interactions between its leading personalities, and the ideological cohesiveness of the party (Tyoden, op. cit). In Nigerian context, party leaders are those who had resources to organize and form parties. In return for their investments, these leaders had controlling powers in the activities of the parties. They decided who got what in terms of party and government offices. As a result party members who lacked the resources to obtain political power often looked for sponsors, otherwise known as godfathers. The latter often reached a compromise with their godsons on how state funds should be shared once they got into power. However, this type of relationship often ended up in acrimony.

As regards intra-party crises, each dominant political party had its dose of the bitterest pill of internal wrangling within its fold. For the purpose of this work they shall be looked into one after the other. To start with, the craze for power made some PDP members vulnerable to the control of godfathers. As noted earlier, there is bound to be a pact between the political mentors and their proteges. Violation of such an agreement usually deepens intra-party conflict. The case of Anambra State politics became handy here. From 1999 up to 2003, the relationship between the erstwhile governor, Dr. Mbadinuju and Emeka Offor, his estranged godfather turned sour. This resulted from unresolved fallout and political conflicts between the duo over the sharing of spoils of office, the allocation of political offices, portfolios, appointments and other forms of benefits within the state consequent upon the electoral victory of Dr Mbadinuju (Arowosegbe, 2005:259). In the ensuing struggle, all developmental initiatives meant for improving the state were stalled. Teachers could not be paid their salaries; primary and secondary schools in the state remained shut for a greater part of each school year while state owned tertiary institutions operated as mere glorified high schools due to poor funding. Above all, whatever may have been the good intentions of the governor throughout that period was thwarted, unrealized and openly frustrated because of the unlimited struggle by the Kingmaker for material recompense (Okeke, 2003:93).

As though what happened in Anambra in the first phase of the republic was a tip of the iceberg, a more worrisome situation was the Ngige - Uba imbroglio that re-awakened the demon of political unrest. The political crisis was the fallout of the electoral malpractices that characterized the 2003 general elections. With the support of his godfather, Chris Uba, Dr. Chris Ngige became Anambra governor in a massively rigged election (Atere and Akinwale, 2006:144). However, by Thursday July 10, 2003, the political gangsterism and absurdity that held sway in the state since 1999 assumed a bizarre dimension when the constitutionally elected and serving governor of the state, Dr. Ngige, was abducted by a heavy team of Mobile Policemen led by the Assistant Inspector - General of Police (AIG), Mr Raphael Ige who claimed to be acting on orders from above (Nna - Emeka, 2006:269). The action aimed at executing the content of a resignation letter purportedly issued by Ngige to the State House of Assembly, turned out to be the climax of the intrigues fuelled and nurtured by money politics and vaulting ambitions of some money bags who insisted on calling the shots politically in the state.

Commenting on the role of Governor Ngige, Chief Audu Ogbah regretted that;

Either by negligence or by careless unawareness of the enormity of his place and power as governor, he allowed himself to become a virtual slave at the hands of manipulators and a willing accomplice to evil happening, even when these were clearly detrimental to his own and his offices' well-being and indeed that of the state and the nation.

(This Day, August 19, 2003)

Between 10th and 12th of November, 2004, Anambra State was subjected to an orgy of political violence by political thugs believed to be working for Uba. No fewer than seven persons were reported dead while the State Secretariat Complex was razed down (Nna - Emeka, op. cit).

Another dimension of intra-party struggle within the fold of PDF in the fourth republic was recorded in Oyo State between the former governor Rashidi Ladoja and his political Kingmaker, Chief Lamidi Adedibu. Before Ladoja's emergence as the PDF gubernatorial candidate in 2003, it was common knowledge that the "powers that be" in the party did not feel quiet comfortable with his candidature (Sunday Tribune, January 15, 2006). But Adedibu stood his ground and managed to convince them including Chief Obasanjo that Ladoja be allowed to contest. During the election campaign, Adedibu impressed it on the people that he had total control of Ladoja. However, cracks began to show in their relationship after the election. What precipitated their face-off was the incessant demand made by Adedibu on the list of state executive nominees, members of state parastatals and security votes due to the state. This forced Ladoja to remark that "I see governance as service while he (Adedibu) sees it as business" (Ibid).

The crisis was later extended to the State House of Assembly which eventually impeached the governor. The impeachment of Ladoja by pro-Adedibu lawmakers became a clog in the wheel of progress and smooth governance in the state. In this case, the intra-party conflict that brought about the opposing camp led to a situation of an "unprecedented state of anarchy" in the state. Instead of development, the state witnessed destruction of lives and properties as a result of the unresolved disagreement within the party.

At the national level of the PDF, misunderstandings between the President of the country and all the national chairmen of the party from 1999 have led to the change of party leadership at each point the last of which was the resignation of Chief Audu Ogbah over the unconstitutional removal of Anambra State governor in 2003 and the political killing of former National Vice-chairman of the party, Chief Aminasoari Dikkibo in 2004 (Arowosegbe, op. cit).

Aside from that, intra-party rivalry was equally conspicuous in the AD. In fact, the internal wrangling and fractionalisation of the party was one of its fundamental problems (Alabi, op. cit). As incredible as it could sound, for months the AD had to contend with two national chairmen - Abdulkadir and Momoh - with each of them claiming to be authentic. Even after resigning from the chairmanship of the party (as a result of being appointed as the Presidential adviser on Industry), Abdulkadir's nominated successor, Micheal Koleoso, was not acceptable to the mainstream of the party in the South-West which then appointed Chief Bisi Akande as Abdulkadir's successor (Ibid). The genesis of the absence of internal cohesion and unity in the party was captured thus;

The beginning of the crisis in the AD, and by extension, Yorubaland was the process that led to the emergence of the gubernatorial candidates for the 1999 governorship election. Most of the candidates were handpicked by the leadership of Afenifere instead of the usual process of going through primaries. This resulted in a lot of rancour that could not be settled (The Punch, April 22, 2003).

Still on the issue of internal crisis is the Sola Ige's factor. After losing the party's presidential bid to Chief Olu Falae in 1998, he was reported to have accepted to be a cabinet minister in the PDF Federal Government without prior discussion with either the AD or the Afenifere. More bizarre was the active role Sola Ige was alleged to have played in the formation of the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE), a parallel organization to the Afenifere. Indeed, the ambivalent role of him did not advance the cause of the AD. The last straw was his assassination on December 23, 2001 which was a greater misfortune for the party thereby leaving the South-West zone bare for the PDF onslaught. (Alabi, op. cit).

ANPP as a political party in the fourth republic was not left out in the gale of intra-party feuds that was prevalent in the polity. The clash of interest between Mahmud Waziri and Olusola Saraki over the latter's bid to contest for presidency in 1999; the factional struggles between Donald Etiebet and Bafarawa/Jerry Usseni tussle in 2005 caused hostility within members of the ANPP.

At the state level, Borno State chapter of ANPP had two chairmen between 2001 and 2003. So serious was the misunderstanding and attendant rivalry that the then executive governor, Mala Kachalla crossed over from the party to the AD in 2002 when his ambition to contest for the same office in 2003 was under threat in the party (Zakari, 2006:165).

For many writers, intra-party squabbles pose obstacle to party politics in Nigeria, as every party member would want his/her ambitions realized. The slightest indication that they might not get it breeds frustration, dislocation and internal crisis which best explain the dysfunction of intra-party relation (Tribune, April 1, 2004).

To summarize this discussion, it is necessary to point out that the nature of party conflicts in Nigeria before, during and after elections was far from what was expected in a democratic system. The language of the campaigns (which centred mainly on mundane parochial and sentimental issues), the use of political thugs to assassinate and intimidate perceived opponents and the imposition of candidates on party members were clear manifestations of lack of proper political understanding on the part of party leaders and faithful in Nigeria. The significance of inter and intra-party crises is that, it did not only threaten the survival of democracy, but it questioned the role of multi-party election in sustaining democracy as the crises have exposed the ills of the phenomenon of political godfatherism which presently appears to be taking over the power of the electorates to choose their leaders.

10. Implications of Party Conflicts on Democratic Consolidation

There is no gainsaying the fact that the problem of party politics in Nigeria has devastating effects on the socio-political stability and economic development. The monumental level of destruction which party crises had caused were enormous and disheartening. The problem of the system is further compounded by the complacency of the elites who largely leave the control of the party in the grip of semi-educated but powerful individuals. This laissez-faire attitudes of the elites to party politics gave some morally bankrupt godfathers the right to ride roughshod over the peoples' choice employing means possible to deepen inter and intra-party squabbles across the nation.

Without being pessimistic, the dimension and ferocity of party conflicts are likely to increase in leaps and bounds. For the purpose of this thesis, below are some of the likely consequences of unhealthy party feuds in Nigeria.

11. Political Intolerance

To Nigerian political elites, politics is a game that must be won at all cost (Anifowose, 1982). The First-Past-The-Post electoral system being practised in the country promotes negative tendencies such as not playing politics according to the rules of the game. Therefore, there is a tendency among losers, even in those elections that are widely seen as transparent, to reject the verdict of the ballot box. It is a belief that is reinforced by widely conception of politics as a zero-sum game in which the winner gets everything while the losers are denied not only access to state power and resources, but also their fundamental rights as human beings (Ogundiya, 2003). While the incumbent sees no life beyond the presidential villa, losers are so concerned about being vulnerable on so many fronts that they are uncomfortable with contemplating life after election.

In our own brand of party politics, political opponents are hacked down via assassination where intimidation and coercion have failed (The Punch, April 3, 2006). In spite of the politicians' utterances on the matter, the incidence of political assassination have become widespread. It casts a serious doubt to the future of political stability and economic development in the country. Acknowledging the threat posed by the scourge, the Director of State Security Service (SSS) Mr. Douglas Dogo attributed the spate of political killings in Nigeria to desperation among politicians to outwit one another for political relevance. (Adeyosoye, 2005:43) He further pointed out that the jostling for elective political offices remains a veritable threat to the survival of the system. Below is the table showing high profile politically motivated assassination in the fourth republic. They are not in any way exhaustive.

S/N	NAMES OF VICTIMS	DATES
1	Mr Odunayo Olagbaju, a Member of the Osun State House of Assembly.	Dec. 21, 2001
2	Chief Bola Ige, former Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Federation.	Dec. 23, 2001
3	Alhaji Ahmed Pategi, Chairman, PDF Kwara State Chapter.	August 15, 2002
4	Barrister Barnabas Igwe, Chairman, Nigerian bar Association, Anambra State Chapter, and Abigail Igwe.	Sept. 1, 2002
5	Mr Dele Arojo, a gubernatorial aspirant in PDF.	Nov. 25, 2002
6	Alhaji Isyaku Muhammed, National Vice-President UNPP, North-West.	Dec. 2002
7	Chief Ogbonnaya Uche, Senatorial candidate under the ANPP, Imo State.	February, 2003
8	Hon. Monday Ndor, a stalwart of ANPP, Rivers State.	Dec. 2003
9	Chief Emenike, a chieftain of the ANPP, Imo State	March, 2003
10	Mr Theodore Agwatu, Principal Secretary to the Imo State Governor.	Feb. 2003
11	Mrs Emily Omope, a former member of the AD.	March 3, 2003
12	Chief Marshall Harry, a chieftain of the ANPP.	March 5, 2003
13	Chief Bode Olanipekun, SAN	March, 2003
14	Chief Aminasoari Dikkibo, National Vice-chairman of PDF, South-South	Feb. 6, 2004
15	Engr. Funsho William, PDF gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos State.	June, 2006
16	Dr Ayo Daramola, PDF gubernatorial candidate in Ekiti State.	Sept. 2006

Source: The Guardian, Sunday March 9, 2003. The Vanguard, Sunday May 23, 2007.

It can be deduced from the table that party politics is a deadly game in Nigeria. It must be noted that as long as there is no level political playing field, political assassination will always rear its ugly head in our polity. (The Punch, August 7, 2002). Political assassination are murderous cancer that threaten both the vigour and life span of democratic experiment.

12. Electoral Violence

Party disagreements had resulted in election motivated crises employed to alter, change or influence by force or coercion, the electoral behaviour of electorates or voting pattern or possibly reverse the electoral decision in favour of a particular group or political party. The determination of a political party to capture power by all means has been a single most important factor that hinder free and fair election (Ogundiya, op. cit) and has produced grave consequences for the democratization project. The over-ambitious candidates that anticipated loss in a yet-to-be conducted election, and political party that felt cheated or deprived by the unfairness of the electoral process often engineered electoral violence. Quite unfortunately, these nefarious and undemocratic acts were perpetrated in the presence of the police. In the fourth republican elections, political thugs and law enforcement agents were actively involved in electoral malpractices as they caused mayhem in polling booths across the nation. The implication is that Nigerian election results are often predetermined long before the actual day of election. Whoever is against the perpetration of electoral violence in any polling unit often pay the supreme price

13. Political Apathy

Defined "as the voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and in the formation of public policy", (McClosky 1968) participation has not been allowed to take roots in Nigeria due to inter and intra-party conflicts occasioned by the personal aggrandizement of politicians (Okoosi - Simbine, 2004) It was made virtually impossible by the phenomenon of godfatherism in the polity. Godfathers create democratic setbacks by encouraging illegitimate means of seeking power that manifest in form of bribery and corruption, questionable fund-raising dinners, political thuggery and election rigging all of which hindered many citizens from participating actively in politics. Thus, the emerging political apathy can be understood in the light of the modus operandi of the political kingmakers whose firm control of political parties is to ensure the formation of government of the few, by the few and for the few. (Zakari, 2006:148) To actualize this, party politics is monetized as party nominations and political appointments are reserved for the highest bidder just as political arrangements are often stage-managed at the expense of the masses who have no means of getting to the reach of the political godfathers. Therefore, the peoples' feeling of apathy became evident at election as a result of hopelessness on account of electoral malpractices being perpetrated by pro-godfather political thugs. Not only were the citizens denied their voting rights, the emergence of female candidates for any political post is often frustrated by this factor. This as a result, makes electorates feel that their votes cannot determine the outcome of elections. To this end, they become disenchanting with the political process. A good illustration was the 2004 Local Council election when most eligible voters in virtually every state of federation refused to vote. (Kyari-Muhammed, 2005).

14. Proliferation of Weak Parties

The personalization of party structure and monopolization of nomination process coupled with the unfair conduct of party primaries nationwide by the incumbents created rift in many of the political parties which forced the aggrieved members and their followers to desert and form/join other political parties. The new parties so formed have not shown through their operations, actions and conduct that they are political parties in the true sense of word because they lack patriotic and nationalistic orientations. Thus, there is a tendency of having a sprawling party on the one hand, and "too-weak-to-constitute-opposition parties" on the other (Okoosi-Simbine, op. cit) which result in dictatorial situations that could end up being destabilizing.

For instance, the ruling PDF is gradually becoming an octopus, sending strong signal to the electorate that the crystallization of a one-party system is careering to a climax. The danger this poses for democratic development is that when opposition parties are weakened and destroyed, and the government in power has no check on its activities, we might just have begun the inexorable journey to political monolithism and ultimately dictatorship (The Nation, August 11, 2007).

15. Absence of Party Ideology

Party ideology refers to the moral values that constitute the political doctrine from which a programme of political action emanates. In Nigeria however, it does not look like parties operate at the level of any ideological framework. Right from the time of independence, the country has had political parties with ill-defined ideological bases, if any at all (Okoosi - Simbine, op. cit) It should have been expected that each party be inclined to work for goals which advanced the interests and welfare of the party organization, and which serve to strengthen its power position in the state politics and to oppose actions adverse to its interests and which would weaken its position. With the exception of the AD, the Nigerian fourth republic parties have hardly laid any claim to any ideological bent. Rather than improve on party structure and organization, the parties have continued to diminish in terms of philosophy, content and objectives. Little wonder why politicians move from one party to another to actualize their political ambition. The implication is that political parties are formed as agglomeration of individuals desperately seeking to capture power only to fizzle out the moment election is over.

16. Legitimacy Crisis

A government is said to be legitimate if the people to whom its orders are directed believe that the public officials or government leaders possess the right to make binding rules (Azeez, 2006). On the contrary, the shameless manipulations of the electoral process have produced government that fails to command the respect of the electorate across the geopolitical zones in the country. Simply put, the events surrounding elections into the fourth republic were antithetical to the framework that can establish a truly legitimate, free and fair elections which will eventually transit to a true democracy as what brought government into power were not actually reflective of the wishes and aspirations of the electorates as expressed through the ballot papers (Pam Sha, 2005).

As regards the 2003 elections, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) observed that the numerous irregularities noticed, "seriously compromised the integrity of the electoral process, particularly in areas where they occurred" and concluded that "if not rectified, public confidence in the country's overall political process will likely erode" (NDI, 2003:3) Even though it was vehemently disputed by the Federal Government, the European Union (EU) election monitors equally returned a verdict of large scale irregularities in the election. In fact, angered by the magnitude of the fraud, the ANPP Presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari vowed not to recognize the Obasanjo regime after May 29, 2003, and in concert with the APGA Presidential candidate, Odumegwu Ojukwu, Buhari threatened to call for mass action against the POP government (Ezeani, 2005).

In the same vein, many AD leaders strongly alleged that they were rigged out of power in the South-West by the PDP using the federal might, the police and the military to intimidate their supporters (Alabi, 2004). The impression such act of perfidy created was that the political institutions are inhabited by some people with stolen mandate. This situation ultimately has a devastating impact on the legitimacy of such public officers that are supposed to direct the course of democracy.

17. Image Problem

Party crises as a form of political violence has forced some countries to issue travel warning advising their citizens not to travel to Nigeria because of volatile politics that could erupt during election (Alanamu, 2005). This problem also stereotypes the country in the international community. Worthy of note is that party conflicts have the potential of denting the image of the country in the global system. This becomes obvious when examined in the light of transformation, democratization and globalization in the New World Order which emphasize respect for human rights, that is an integral part of multi-party democracy.

As such, failure of Nigerian political leaders to effectively allow citizens to exercise their political freedom, and protect those rights may create another round of image problem for the country. As a consequence, this can be highly detrimental to stabilization of democracy considering the current wave of democratization across the globe.

18. Retardation of Growth and Development

Unnecessary and avoidable party crises tend to slow down the pace of development. Put differently, development can only take place under a peaceful atmosphere. As it would be difficult for a blind man to see even in a broad daylight, so it would be difficult for a nation to experience any form of growth or development where there is no relative peace (Arazeem, 2005:156). The Nigerian economy is bedeviled by incessant bastardization as a result of violent party clashes and social injustice.

Unfortunately, a good number of investors have deserted the country as they cannot risk wasting their assets in a conflict-ridden nation like ours. The social life of the citizenry is nil, while unemployment leading to hunger, disease, deprivation and insecurity has become the norm. Due to selfishness, greed and sheer irresponsibility of our leaders, many people went through "a hell of hard time" (Alabi, op. cit) The outcome of this is the mass exodus of unemployed graduates and jobless youths who regards politics as the only opportunity to survive in hard time. The stark precarious economic condition forced them to take solace in party politics, and surrender themselves to be hired as party thugs. The case of Adedibu and Chris Uba provides good example here. When these youths are not contented with token from party stalwart, they unleash terror on hapless and defenceless citizens on occasional basis.

19. Violation of Rule of Law

One of the basic tenets of democracy is the principle of rule of law that is based on the supremacy of law over and above everybody. Even though the judiciary was established to ensure respect for law, Nigerian politics is far from that as general elections are not only rigged, but the riggers also come forward to confess their exploits of subverting the will of the people (The Punch, April 3, 2006) Political gangsters, in connivance with the police authority, abducted a duly elected governor at will and install their surrogates; the state lawmakers impeached elected governors without recourse to due process of law; the prime suspect in high profile political assassination leapfrogged over the constitution and landed in the senate; and above all the executive whose constitutional duty is to maintain law and order, brazenly withheld Lagos State funds and disobeyed court orders with impunity. While ordinary citizens are severely dealt with for violating the rules and regulations, the elected public officials are treated as sacred cow who are seen as untouchable. This as a result make people lose confidence in government and its law enforcement agents who look the other way whenever a public official is found guilty of a crime. This is in line with George Orwell's phrase, that "some are more than the others".

20. Military Intervention

If past political experience in Nigeria is anything to go by, widespread party rivalries are capable of sending signal to the military incursion in democratic politics. Thus, it is pertinent to caution that the various spate of violence ranging from arson, destruction of properties, terrorism, maiming and political gangsterism can create "political earthquake" which may invite military takeover. Should this happen, it shows Nigerian politicians have not learnt their lesson on how best to play politics. As usual, the military will justify their action that they are out to restore political order and correct the vices the politicians perpetrated and to sanitize the whole system to ensure political stability. In essence, party conflicts are capable of creating institutional weaknesses and fragility in the polity which might be an indirect invitation of military in political system.

21. Conclusion

Rather than resolve unnecessary inter and intra party squabbles, the political elites aggravate them as political terrorism pervades the polity with rising wave of political assassination. Unfortunately, Nigeria through her political leaders is yet to negotiate the route towards consolidation. But consolidation is a possible scenario and its presence is evident when political elites increasingly demonstrate commitment towards creating a democratic regime and when they hold the belief in democratic procedures and institutions as the key in governing public life. For a sustained growth of the democratic experiment, the political parties must strive to practice internal democracies in such areas as party nomination, primaries and party organizations as well as abide by the rules of the game. This becomes imperative as no system will work in Nigeria unless the guiding rules of politics and of the age-long practice of democracy (justice, probity and fair play) are strictly adhered to by the political class.

22. Recommendations

Given the dismal performance of political parties in the Fourth Republic, it would be tragic if they are allowed to maintain fierce competition and continue to dominate the political scene. As we have seen, party conflicts in Nigerian politics have been incongruous to the consolidation of democracy. In view of this, the following suggestions are advanced as the way forward.

A restructuring of the polity for the realization of a healthy party relations which requires that the present importance placed on political power as financial investment be redressed by making the centre of power looks less attractive by way of a re-orientation of Nigerian politicians against the dangers of raising the political stakes to an unnecessary level. The manner in which political power is sought without restraint and exercised without restraint must be discouraged. In other words, the practising politicians must play the game of politics according to its constitutional and regulatory roles. Strict adherence to the wordings and spirit of the constitution leaves no room for options. Any violation of the constitution that is allowed to go unpunished is a potential danger to the survival of democracy in the country. If a genuine party struggle must be achieved and sustained in Nigeria, politicians must be prepared to accept that there is a limit to it, rather than politicians going after those that "threaten" their interests.

Closely connected to the above is the formation of parties. With regard to that, there could hardly be any gainsaying that a major restructuring needs to be carried out among these parties to bring sanity to the system. Proliferation of weak and sectional political parties has a tendency to promote primordial and ethnic politics reminiscent of the previous republics. Besides, they must come together to provide a formidable opposition to the ruling PDF which is gradually becoming an octopus with the concomitant likelihood of producing a one-party system. When formed, the parties must have a philosophical foundation and a clear ideological disposition which become imperative as the policies and actions of the PDF have revealed that it is in the extreme right. Therefore, the emergence of a leftist opposition party is highly desirable to provide a viable alternative to the pro-elite and non-egalitarian PDF.

The attitudinal behaviour towards party politics is equally suggested. Political parties and candidates need to imbibe the democratic culture and spirit of tolerance, accommodation, mutual respect and equality across class, gender and ethnic differences. They should discourage the use of violence by party supporters, and refrain from making unfounded accusations against political opponents whenever political associates are attacked or killed. To consolidate multi-party democracy, invoking religion and ethnicity by politicians to build political support that will erode opponents should be avoided also.

Relatedly, both political elites and masses must be sufficiently given political education by relevant bodies or government agencies on the values or virtues of restraint, civility, interpersonal trust and moderation. This is desirable in order to encourage a participant political culture, and to allow for political contest devoid of rancour and other manifestations of political instability that have dominated the country's political process and thus, impeded the consolidation of democratic project in Nigeria. Based on this, the usual caucus political hegemony and godfatherism must be stopped forthwith.

Additionally, to ensure free and fair election in our polity, INEC should be separated and insulated from the executive control. Until the appointment and funding of the commission are made independent of the executive body, the march towards the glorious dawn of democracy might be delayed indefinitely. To this end, the INEC must live up to its name by being truly independent. In view of this, its funding must be charged into the consolidated revenue funds and in which case executive control will be completely neutralized to allow the electoral body conduct a credible election.

Apart from that, provision of employment is an ingredient for democratic consolidation. An idle mind is the workshop of devil, as the saying goes. Considering the fact that most party clashes were carried out by the unemployed youths, it has become highly necessary to take proper care of them by providing for them jobs with attractive remuneration which they can live on. The political leaders must take this an important assignment so as to reduce constant occurrence of political violence in politics. Thus, the creation of National Directorate for Employment (NDE) was the right thing at the right direction, but more still need to be done in job creation for youth.

For democracy to be sustained in Nigeria, good governance, transparency and accountability should be instituted through people-oriented programmes. The so much orchestrated "dividends of democracy" for most Nigerians must be pursued with all vigour and seriousness. The onus therefore lies on all the political leaders irrespective of their ideological persuasions to put in place realistic and viable economic policies that will uplift the standard of living of the people. Hence, governance should eschew the syndrome of winner-takes-all, and all public office holders in the country should take social justice as their primary responsibility to foster a stable political system and meaningful socio-economic development.

In another perspective, the age-long utilitarian perception of politics as a means of appropriating state resources for personal benefits rather than a means of creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people should be abated.

Moreover, there should be constitutional review to limit the terms of office of Governors and President to a single tenure of five years instead of two terms of four years each as stipulated in the 1999 constitution Sections 137 and 182. This will discourage the tazarce syndrome whereby an incumbent President or Governor will devote most energy and resources campaigning for his second term during the first term in office to the detriment of good governance.

Finally, the development of a vibrant civil society is also necessary for the consolidation process. Because the character of Nigerian party politics is capable of alienating broad segments of the society, it is important to ensure as broad a form of participation as possible, which civil society provides. It is indisputable that civil society acts as check, oversee and help to guide the process of governance.

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