

Contending Issues in Party and Electoral Politics and Consequences for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria: A Historical and Comparative Appraisal

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Abstract:-This article focused on some contending issues in Nigeria's party and electoral politics and its consequences for sustainable democracy in the country. Based on historical and comparative analysis, and drawing from the experiences of party and electoral politics in Nigeria's Second and Fourth Republics, the paper substantiated the fact that electoral and party politics have impacted negatively on the country's body politics as no elections conducted in the country within these epochs have been adjudged as credible, free and fair. The paper noted factors such as intra-party squabbles, inter-party violence, negative role of the security agents during election, the bias nature of electoral commission, godfatherism and money politics are germane to the problematic nature of party and electoral politics in Nigeria. On the strength of the debased nature of Nigeria's party and electoral politics, it was recommended among others, that the political parties should be reorganized on the principle of all-inclusiveness rather than exclusion and reoriented from being mere platforms for acquisition of political power to effective institutions that are capable of promoting internal democracy and engendering sustainable democracy in Nigeria's political landscape.

Keywords: Electoral politics, godfatherism, political power, money politics, inter-party violence

I. INTRODUCTION

Political parties, in a sense, may be regarded as organizations whose members have values, ideals and aspirations in common and at least participate in an organized contest and struggle for political power. But political parties are much more than organizations for seeking and controlling political power. Political parties in contemporary period are the livewires of modern day democracy considering their significant roles in the present day political system. In effect, no democratic system can function effectively without political parties.

In Nigeria, however, the history of democratic experiment through party and electoral politics has been replete with chaos, fraud, rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices and thuggery, which give such elections, and in fact the democratic process a banal character. In effect, the nature and character of electoral politics vis-a-vis its firmness could be seen as a manifestation of the level of democracy operating in such a society. It is in line with the above negative traits that this paper sought to examine some

contending issues in party and electoral politics and its consequences on sustainable democracy in Nigeria's Second Republic and its reminiscences in the Fourth Republic.

The paper, which is historical and comparative in approach, assumed that Nigeria is faced with the problem of conducting free, fair and credible elections. Thus, democracy which is based on the principles of accountability, political equality and representation has not been fully nurtured and entrenched in Nigeria because of selfish party leaders who have been devising means of subverting the democratic struggles and the aspirations of the people for their selfish ambition, hence, the frequency of intra and inter-party conflicts, votes buying, bribing of security agents and officials of electoral commission to perpetuate electoral malpractices in their favour in order to maintain their grip on political power. These issues and other related matters are addressed in succeeding sections of this paper beginning with the conceptualization of political party.

II. UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL PARTY

Like some other concepts in Political Science, political party have been enmeshed in a plethora of definitions as there are authors from different academic persuasions. In a classical sense, Sartori (1976) provided one of the widely cited definitions of political parties. For him, a political party is any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public offices. Coleman and Roseberg (1970) defined political parties as associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and to some extent maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition or electoral competition with other associations over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or perspective sovereign state. This conception aligns with that of Epstein's (1967) view of political parties groups of people acting together to achieve some political goals, which usually is aimed at controlling the machinery of government. Put differently, political parties are simply organized or loosely organized groups under a recognized label with sole intent of controlling power through elections. Shale and Maltosa (2008) conceived political party as an organised group of people with at least roughly similar

political aims and opinions that seek to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public office. This definition captures the very essence of many political parties unlike other interest groups in a country like Nigeria where the primary aim is to capture political power and assume the position of authority to steer and manage policy decision-making process defined within the ambit of law and constitution of the country.

More critically, Ikelegbe (2013) opined that a political party is an organization for expressing and harmonizing interests, and that intermediates between the citizens and political society, government and state. Although, the most prominent feature of defining political party remains the capturing of political power and the control of policy decision process, the functions that political parties perform in the political system are broader and sometimes even complex (Abbas, 2016). Hence, political parties exist to perform some functions that include mediating between citizens and state institutions; recruiting and preparing individuals for political leadership, organizing election campaigns, aggregating societal interests, providing a participatory, responsive relationship with the people, providing political education and leadership training, socialization, breeding consensus, providing alternative worldviews and political communication among others. These make political parties an essential and indispensable element of democracy.

III. HISTORICAL EXPLORATION OF NIGERIA'S PARTY AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Pre-independence Era and First Republic: The history of political parties in Nigeria can be traced to the early 1920s when the first political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed on 24 June 1923. This was made possible following the introduction of elective principle in 1922 and the establishment of the Nigerian Legislative Council which extended franchise to Lagos and Calabar under the Clifford Constitution (Ibuzute, 2003). The party was led by Herbert Macaulay, Adeniji Jones and others. This political party, though with a beautiful nationalistic name and may have had good vision for Nigeria, could not stand the test of time because the founders were mostly nationalists from one geographical area of Western Nigeria who concentrated their political activities within Lagos. The party's candidates were victorious in the Lagos seats in the Legislative Council elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933.

In 1933, Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) was formed by a group of nationalists which included Ernest Ikoli, Dr. J. C. Vaughan, Samuel Akinsanya and H. O. Davis. In 1936, the movement changed its name to Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). Although, both parties NNDP and NYM had aspirations which covered the whole Nigeria, their operations did not go beyond Lagos and Ibadan (Adebayo, 2006). However, serious groups, in the conventional sense, did not begin to emerge until after the World War II when Nigerian nationalists commenced their crusade for independence. An

important party that surfaced at this time was the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) which later metamorphosed into the National Council of Nigerian Citizens in 1957 following the desire of Southern Cameroon to excise themselves from Nigeria. It was first formed on 26 August 1944 and was the first political party that aspired to spread over the whole country. This party was led at inception by freedom fighters like Herbert Macaulay and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. It was a mass party with membership opened to everybody; though, it later degenerated into a party that was identified mostly with Dr Azikiwe's Igbo of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria (Ubani, Ehiodo and Nwaorgu, 2013).

Soon, political parties, which were clearly ethnic in origin, orientations and aspirations, began to spring up. These were the Action Group (AG) and Northern People's Congress (NPC). The Action Group was founded on 26 March 1951 as an offshoot of Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Association of the Children of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba) (Dudley, 1982). The AG was the most effectively organized party in Nigeria and epitomized the Yoruba cultural fashion, being a Yoruba based party. Moreover, it was essentially a caucus and welfarist party with no serious ideological commitment.

The third and perhaps the most influential party of the First Republic was the Northern People's Congress (NPC) which was founded about the same time with the Action Group and led by Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduna of Sokoto. The party was an offshoot of a pan Northern Nigerian Cultural Organization, the Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa (JMA) (the Association of People of the North) founded on 3 October 1948 (Dudley, 1982). Unlike AG and NCNC, membership of the NPC was restricted to the people of Northern Nigeria. In this respect, the party carried its ethnic and regional character far beyond those of the other parties. It never laid claim to being a national political party. In the words of Ige (1994:34) the party regarded other areas of Nigeria as areas inhabited by "pagans" and "unbelievers". In practical reality, NPC was the modern party of the era.

Aside from the three dominant parties, there was J.S.Tarka's United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), a party which spoke for the area from which it derived its name. Likewise, there was the United National Independent Party (UNIP) under the leadership of Chief Eyo Ita among several other ethnic based parties. The only party at the time that could be said to boast of a significant pan ideological orientation was Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) founded in August 1950 and dedicated to the "Talakawa" (commoners). Even so, it was still like the NPC - a Hausa-Fulani's party. Nevertheless, the "Big Three" - the NCNC, NPC and AG were the dominant political parties in the politics of the First Republic. These parties, however, became associated with the three ethnic groups: Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba and the three regions of the country: East, North and West. These greatly influenced ethnic struggle for political power in the pre and post-independence Nigeria until

the parties were decreed out of existence by the military government which came to power after the coup d'état of 15 January 1966.

Political Parties in Nigeria's Second Republic: The journey into the Second Republic began on 21 September 1978, when the then military government lifted ban on the formation of political parties and political activities in the country after thirteen (13) years of military interregnum. Fifty three (53) political associations emerged, out of which only five (5) were registered as political parties by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). These were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) (Ibezute, 2003).

The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) emergence was to all intents and purposes a reincarnation of the Action Group (AG); same founder, Obafemi Awolowo, same centre of power (the West), and almost identical ideology and organizational structure. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was almost a replica of the NPC too, except that its membership was by the old Northern aristocracy and the Southern bourgeoisie. The party was founded on the imperative of national unity anchored on the policy of zoning and rotation. The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) was NCNC re-incarnate with Igbo heartland as its base, but extended outside the Igbo enclave by capturing Plateau State. Nnamdi Azikiwe who led the NCNC also led the NPP. The Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) was formed out of the leadership tussle that struck the NPP. It was led by late Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) was NEPU sort-of. Its influence was restricted to Kano and Kaduna States. As NEPU of the First Republic, the PRP was led by late Amino Kano. Later in 1982, Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was formed and led by Tunji Braithwaite (Ademolekun, 1983).

The Second Republic parties did not do much better than those of the First Republic in terms of ethnic orientation, character and formation. The parties were formed and led by their leaders in the First Republic, except where the leader had been killed in the coup that terminated the First Republic. A modified, yet tripartite system of power sharing, with others hanging on, reappeared with the dominant party in the federation being strongest in the Northern States, second placed strongest party was located in the Yoruba axis, while the third placed strongest was in the Igbo areas. Others fell into the category of the minorities. These parties were once

again swept into oblivion by the military on 31 December 1983 through a bloodless coup d'état that terminated the Second Republic.

Political Parties in the Aborted Third Republic: The aborted third Republic in Nigeria refers to the period when Nigeria was the under military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha. On 3 May 1989, ban on political activities was lifted and partisan politics that had hitherto been conducted surreptitiously bloomed with vigour. The re-established National Electoral Commission received applications from and screened political associations that sought registration as political parties. Thirteen (13) out of the initial forty-nine (49) political associations were able to comply with the draconian requirements within the three months deadline given by the government. These were:

1. All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)
2. Liberal Convention (LC)
3. Ideal Peoples Party (IPP)
4. Nigerian Labour Party (NLP)
5. People's Front of Nigeria (PFN)
6. Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP)
7. Nigerian National Congress (NNC)
8. Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party (NPWP)
9. Peoples Patriotic Party (PPP)
10. Patriotic Nigerian's Party (PNP)
11. National Union Party (NUP)
12. Republican Party of Nigeria (RPN)
13. United Nigeria Democratic Party (UNDP)

Based on its formula for assessment, which among other conditions, included: number and spread of membership, number of verified members, personnel spread and articulation of issues, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) recommended six (6) associations, ranked in order of performance, to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) for registration as political parties. These were: (1) Peoples Solidarity Party, (2) Nigerian National Congress, (3) People's Front of Nigeria, (4) Liberal Convention, (5) Nigerian Labour Party, and (6) Republican Party of Nigeria. The table below shows the overall performance of these political associations in order of priority.

Table 1: Overall performances of political associations in order of priority

Pol. Asso.	Membership		Adm. org.		Manifesto	Total	Ranking
	Size 25%	Spread 25%	Staff 15%	Spread 15%			
PSP	8.70	5.30	9.30	8.10	12.50	43.90	1 st
NNC	4.30	7.80	9.70	8.50	12.30	42.60	2 nd

PFN	5.20	5.20	9.40	7.90	13.50	41.20	3 rd
LC	2.50	5.10	9.00	7.20	10.20	34.00	4 th
NLP	0.10	0.90	4.20	3.60	9.10	17.90	5 th
RPN	0.50	2.10	3.10	2.90	8.40	17.00	6 th
ANPP	0.70	0.30	2.10	1.50	7.80	11.77	7 th
IPP	0.03	0.14	0.94	0.77	7.60	9.48	8 th
UNDP	0.03	0.17	1.68	1.39	5.80	9.08	9 th
NUP	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02	7.88	7.93	10 th
PPP	0.03	0.02	1.10	0.90	4.60	6.93	11 th
PNP	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.07	3.30	3.46	12 th
NPWP	0.00	0.02	0.24	0.17	0.00	0.44	13 th

Source: Newswatch, October 23, 1989

The government, however, did not authorize the registration of the six recommended associations. According to Chizea (2004) the government was of the view that the new associations were all very closely related to the banned political parties and politicians of the First and Second Republics, and this was bound to be deleterious to the envisaged new political order.

Consequently, the government set aside the recommended six political associations and opted to establish two centrists' political parties, namely: The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) whose ideological leanings or dispositions were "a little to the left of the centre and a little to the right of the centre" respectively (Ofudile, 1996:3). Thus, between 1990 and 1993, SDP and NRC were the only political parties allowed to contest elections in Nigeria. Notably, the SDP was seen as the Southern Party while NRC was seen as the Northern Party. With this dichotomy between the South and North, ethnic manipulation was very visible and it culminated in the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election believed by many to have been won by Chief M. K. O. Abiola from the South. Hence, the Third Republic was botched and bereaved of hope even as huge financial and material resources were wasted in the course of the disabled transition programme.

IV. AN X-RAY OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

Following the collapse of the Third Republic and the emergence of Abacha's military regime on 17 November 1993, the nation was returned to a multi-party system. Consequently ban on political activities was lifted on 1 October 1995 and approval was given for the formation of political parties. This action eventually produced fifteen (15) political associations out of which five got registered as political parties, namely: United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), Congress for National Consensus (CNC) and Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM). These five political parties contested elections that were held in 1997

and 1998 to the various Local Government Councils, States Houses of Assemblies, and the National Assembly (i.e. House of Representatives and the Senate) (Oyediran, 1998). While those of the Governors and the Presidential elections were pending, great turmoil underlined the presidential candidature, thus resulting in fears, suspicions and doubts about the reality of the transition. The cause was the insistence of the transition boss, General Sani Abacha and his cohorts to succeed himself in power. The plot gained greater accentuations when in absolute violation of the coded rules of party politics and democratic norms, all the five political parties unanimously endorsed General Sani Abacha as their presidential candidate (Okibe, 2000).

However, following the mysterious death of General Abacha on 8 June 1998, General Abdusalami Abubakar took over power. After few weeks of studying the transition programme of Abacha's government, the new leader cancelled the whole exercise and initiated a 'revised' transition programme which terminated on 29 May 1999. In the revised transition programme, Nigeria's electoral body was renamed Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The commission set up its programmes and gave Nigerians the go-ahead on the formation of political parties. According to Ibezute (2003), twenty-five (25) political associations applied for registration with the electoral body out of which under-listed nine (9) were given provisional registration:

1. All Peoples Party (APP)
2. Nigerian Solidarity Movement (NSM)
3. Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ)
4. United Peoples Party (UPP)
5. Alliance for Democracy (AD)
6. Democratic Alliance Movement (DAM)
7. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
8. United Democratic Party (UDP)

9. Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)

The formation of the above political parties gave a new hope for a durable democracy and people's franchise. Nonetheless, the local government election which was held nation-wide on 5 December 1998 flung most of the political parties out of place. Only three of the nine political parties - PDP, APP and AD were able to meet INEC's registration guidelines and were subsequently fully registered by the electoral body. These parties presented candidates for election during the 1999 general elections. Observably, Ibezute (2003:107) argued that "the PDP took a cue from NCNC, NPN, SDP and NRC in its national spread and outlook. It was followed by APP (later ANPP) in this geographical spread while AD which was third in the contest followed the tradition of AG and UPN as it rooted its existence in only Yoruba-speaking states".

During the 2003 general elections the number of political parties rose from the initial three in 1999 to 30 political parties. By 2007, when the next general elections were conducted, the number of political parties had risen to 50 as registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). By April 2011, Nigeria's political space witnessed an unprecedented opening as thirteen new political parties had joined the then existing 50 between 2007 and early 2011. Prominent among the new parties were: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and, People's Progressive Alliance (PPA). Out of these, only twenty (20) were able to field Presidential candidates. Save the PDP, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the rest of the political parties performed abysmally in the Presidential election.

Consequent upon their dismal electoral fortunes and their inability to operate properly, the INEC decided to deregister some of the unviable political parties. In August 2011, six (6) of the parties were deregistered; by December 2012, additional 32 political parties were deregistered. This was anchored on two factors: first, the inability of the parties to win any national or state assembly seats in the April, 2011 general elections as required by section 78(7) (ii) of the Electoral Amendment Act, 2010; second, the inability of the parties to hold their conventions as scheduled, or have their national officers elected as required by the 1999 Constitution as amended in Section 233.

During the 2015 general elections, there were 26 political parties in Nigeria, out of which 11 participated actively in the elections. As general elections are held every four years in Nigeria, and true to the antics of Nigerian politicians, the preparation for the 2019 has commenced. As in the past, the political landscape has begun to be awash with political realignment, merger and formation of more new political parties. Presently, (2018) there are 48 registered political parties in Nigeria; many more are at the planning and formation stages.

V. CONTENDING ISSUES IN NIGERIA'S PARTY AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Intra-Party Squabbles: During the politics of the Second Republic, there were severe intra-party conflicts which led to splits and instability in the parties, as well as creating problems in many state executives, which in turn resulted into political crises for the country. In some cases, it resulted into decamping and cross carpeting of various groups and individuals from one party to another. For instance, the Mallam Aminu Kano led Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) split into two factions; the first group led by Chief Michael Imoudu and the two PRP governors of Kaduna and Kano States, Abubakar Rimi and Balara be Musa wanted to maintain its opposition to the NPN led federal government and retained its radical socialist platform while the second group led by the presidential candidate of the party, Aminu Kano, was a more moderate faction willing to co-operate with the conservative NPN at the centre. As Diamond (1983) put it, the crisis got to a point that the Imoudu's PRP, a faction of GNPP and the NPP fused together as Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) and sought registration from the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The commission refused to recognize the new party and this made the crisis to deepen within the PRP, and resulted in Alhaji Abubakar Rimi and his followers decamping to the NPP (Ubaniet *al.*, 2013).

Also, by the time of the 1983 elections in the words of Joseph (1991), the UPN found itself deeply divided in specific localities over rifts in ideological posture, or conflicting attitudes towards collaboration with the NPN. However, the most important aspect that tore apart some State branches of the party, namely; Oyo, Ondo and Kwara States was the disastrous battles over the party's nominations of candidates especially for the positions of states governors and senators. In the old Ondo State, for instance, the struggle over party's gubernatorial nominations pitched the incumbent governor, Michael Ajasin against Akin Omoboriowo, the deputy governor, who wanted to dethrone his boss. After failing to secure the gubernatorial ticket, Omoboriowo decamped to the ruling NPN where he was offered the party's ticket to run for office of the governor of the state. In the GNPP the desire by some members of the party to merge with other progressive elements in other parties brought about crisis. This shattered the party into different directions before the 1983 general elections. For example, the two governors of Borno and erstwhile Gongola States joined forces with other nine progressive governors that wanted a new platform of Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) or Progressive People Alliance (PPA); the party's federal legislators aligned with the ruling NPN, while its chairman and presidential candidate Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim had his own loyalties. So by the election time, the party was deeply divided. Also, within the ruling NPN there were conflicts in some States. For instance, in former Cross River State, the nomination of the party's governorship flag bearer in the state divided the party into the Clement Isong and Donald Etiebet factions, within the party.

In same vein, the pre-nomination campaign of who becomes the NPN presidential flag bearer in 1982 and interpretation and misgivings by the southern politicians over the party's zoning formula made Chief M. K. O. Abiola to defect from the party, accusing the party of being an exclusive preserve of a few members of the ruling clique, which have zoned leadership of the country for themselves.

In the present dispensation, the tussle for power and control of the parties machinery have become the order of the day, as some members parade themselves as founders of the parties. Simbine, (2004) posited that those who own or play major roles in the formation of the parties end up being dictatorial. In PDP for example, the former national chairman, Audu Ogbah (2004) lamented that there were individuals who did not see themselves as being members of the party, who rather sought to own the party or to own part of it and to dictate for the party. In similar vein, Simbine(2004) observed that the party was run as factions and caucuses with many bigwigs posing as members of Board of Trustees and others as elders and leaders of the party. The collision among these groups manifested in frequent changes of party leadership. For example, between 1998 and 2017, the PDP changed its national chairman twelve (12) times. It has been led by Alex Ekweme, Solomon Lar, Barnabas Gemade, Audu Ogbah, Ahmadu Ali, Vincent Ogbulafor, Okwesilize Nwodo, Haliru Muhammed Bello (acting national chairman), Kawa Baraje (acting chairman), Bamanga Mahmud Tukur, Adamu Mu'azu and Ali Modu Sheriff, out of which none of them successfully completed his tenure (Ita and Bassey, 2017).

Besides, the internal wrangling between former President Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice Atiku Abubakar, the issue of zoning within the party nearly broke the party into pieces. The PDP and Obasanjo sacked Abubakar as a member of the party and as Vice President respectively - a decision the VP contested in court challenging the powers of the President to sack him from his job. The seeming intractable crisis in the PDP from the year 2002 led many aggrieved members in collaboration with some members of AD, to form another political party – the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD). Sklar, Ebere and Kew (2006) argued that ACD, launched on 20 April 2006, consisted mainly of former PDP members who opposed the President and others from AD. Later, ACD went into alliance with factions of other parties like AD, APGA and others to transform into Action Congress (AC) (Shariff, 2006). The deepness of the crisis in the ruling party took yet another dimension when some members of the party, under the leadership of Chief Solomon Lar, the pioneer National Chairman of PDP, announced the formation of a parallel PDP. Since then the party has been in shambles and unable to put its house in order.

Similarly, the rift within APP (later ANPP) led to expulsion of twelve strong members in October 2002 while the crisis in Alliance for Democracy (AD) split the party into two camps and later led to the exit of prominent members of the party. The breakaway group in collaboration with factions

of other parties formed a new party, the Action Congress (AC) which later metamorphosed into the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (Ikechukwu, 2015).

The trend of internal crisis within the party since 1999 shows that parties in Nigeria spend more time on reconciliatory process, than on a programme that would benefit the electorates (IPU, 2006). It is equally deduced that the failure of political parties to embraced dialogue in resolving their internal crisis is antithetical to democratic consolidation. Since the principal tenet of democracy is the possibility it offers to resolve crisis through dialogue, without recourse to violence, even when they are irksome.

Inter-Party Violence: The most decried action of the political parties in the second republic was their involvement in inter-party violence especially during the 1983 general elections. The desire by the NPN to move from being a ruling party whose strength exceeded that of other parties, to one, which enjoy a monopoly of power within the political system, brought about resistance from other parties. During the 1983 elections in Oyo State, there were inter-party conflicts where Bola Ige of the UPN and Omololu Olunloyo of the NPN were engaged in a bloodbath exercise over who control the Agodi state house in Ibadan. Also in Ondo State, the campaign strategists of both UPN and NPN over which of their candidates would win the gubernatorial election led to uncontrollable electoral frauds and violence in the state. Both Akin Omoboriowo, former deputy governor under Ajasin's administration and the NPN's governorship candidate in the 1983 elections and Governor Ajasin of the UPN engaged in inter-party rivalry. The rivalry contest between Omoboriowo and Ajasin set the stage for political violence in Ondo State. However, it was the declaration of Chief Akin Omoboriowo of the NPN as the winner of the election that resulted to widespread violence such as arson, looting and murder in the state (Ubani *et al.*, 2013). Party loyalists and demonstrators immediately blocked all access roads to the state capital. For two days, the state capital Akure was in a state of turmoil as governmental and commercial activities were paralyzed, thus supporting the already held view that most of the crisis that threatened to tear the nation apart after political independence often began in the western region after elections.

Since the inauguration of Fourth Republic in 1999, a pattern also emerged which indicates that Nigerian political class did not learn from their previous mistakes, as heading to 2003 elections added impetus to the nation's party conflicts (Omotola, 2009). For instance, ANPP, a major opposition party with General Mohammadu Buhari as its leader, witnessed series of clashes among party supporters with PDP especially across northern region. The nation also witnessed conflicts among party supporters of PDP and AD in South West as both were trying to either maintain or take over power position (Abbas, 2016). In Ekiti State, there was a confrontation between the PDP and Action Congress supporters and election results were blatantly falsified in many areas. Violence was equally reported in the northern

state of Katsina, where opposition supporters burnt down government buildings in protest against the announcement that the PDP had swept the state's gubernatorial polls. In Oyo state, opposition party officials were beaten up by PDP thugs and hijacked ballot boxes. In Akwa-Ibom State, political campaign took a destructive dimension when both Ikot Ekpene and Uyo were turned into theatres of political war following a face-off between loyalists of the PDP and ACN. The ACN had its gubernatorial campaign rally at Ikot Ekpene while the PDP had its own in Mkpato Enin and Abak Local Councils. Different versions of the cases of the quarrel were advanced, but, it was certain that the quarrel took place between the supporters of ACN and those of the PDP which resulted into the death of many while several others were wounded. The presidential campaign office of Goodluck Jonathan/Namadi Sambo situated along Abak Road (opposite the State Civil Service Secretariat) was set ablaze. Some 127 Peugeot 307 Salon Cars and 157 Keke NAPEP tricycles belonging to the state government were burnt. About 20 other vehicles belonging to well-meaning Nigerians were equally burnt at different locations. About 51 suspects were arrested in connection to the political violence at Uyo (Akan-Nsoh, 2011; Bamgbose, 2012). These are just a few cases of electoral violence as many others were reported across the six geopolitical zones of the country.

The Role of Security Agents: The essence of the police in any civilized prismatic society is to provide and maintain public safety and public order. But in Nigeria, during the second republic, the police force became a source of destabilizing agent. The force image was highly a politicized public agency that provided the necessary coercive support to the NPN led federal government during and after elections. Political thugs of the ruling party were aided and protected by the law by the police personnel where as the homes and offices of political opponents were raided. The police refused to grant licence for political rallies, meetings of political opponents, as evidenced in the cases of Nnamdi Azikiwe in Borno State and Governor Bisi Onabanjo of Ogun State. In Ogun, Borno, Kano, Kaduna, Oyo and all those States not controlled by the NPN, the police authority virtually assumed control in some respects; especially when the president had constitutional control over the police. They defied the orders of the state governors of the opposition parties, who were in fact the chief security officers of their states. The police also refused to implement politically unfavourable judgments against the ruling party NPN. In almost, all non-NPN states, the relations between governors and police commissioners which ought to be cordial, rather became terribly soared because of the latter's interest to the ruling party at the federal level. This brought alienation and desperation on the part of the non-NPN controlled states. In their effort to salvage these predicaments, most of the opposition governors called for the formal establishment of the state police force.

Also, in the Fourth Republic it had been a bitter experience conducting elections under the security watch of

the Nigeria Police and other security outfits. It is also evident that the scale of the deployment has increased with each successive election. Obviously, since May 2011 deployments of security personnel took different shapes during elections in Edo and Ondo States in 2012; Anambra in 2013; and Ekiti and Osun in 2014. In Osun State for instance, over 70,000 security operatives, including 15,000 soldiers, 30,000 policemen, 8,000 operatives of the Department of State Security Service, and 20,000 civil defence officers were deployed in the state just for the governorship election. And one hundred trained dogs were also deployed in the state. Fifteen of the dogs were imported from the United States, where they were trained to detect Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

In response to the legality of massive security deployment that has been tag as militarisation by the public, Professor Attahiru Jega, the INEC chairman and some political observers argued that the presence of military personnel was indeed necessary, considering the cases of violence that characterised the pre-election campaigns by the three main political parties vying for the election in Ekiti State and the ugly incident of past elections in the country. Conversely others held the view that it was a tactic by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led Federal Government to intimidate the incumbent governor, Kayode Fayemi of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and in turn pave way for its candidate and eventual winner, Ayodele Fayose, to emerge victorious in Ekiti Election (Badejo and Obah-Akpogowhaha, 2015).

So, just as in the Second Republic the ruling party during the Fourth Republic have used the security agents as an effective instrument of state coercion against the opposition parties.

The Bias Nature of Electoral Commission: In the Second Republic the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), which ought to be an unbiased umpire in fact, became not only bias, but also a political player during the elections. The commission disenfranchised millions of Nigerians through the manipulation of the voters register, which was a negation of section 71(2) and 109(2) among other provisions of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that gave franchise to every citizen that has attained the age of eighteen years and who indeed registered for the election. The FEDECO rigged the 1983 elections for the ruling NPN, when it reversed the order of elections in 1983 with the presidential election coming first, so as to allow the party to have band wagon effect in the subsequent elections.

The FEDECO just like INEC officials during the elections collaborated with the security agents to alter election results. For instance, they used the security agents to chase away opposition party's agents to create a favourable atmosphere of secrecy for changing of poll results. In most strongholds of the opposition parties, they masterminded many irregularities and even more fraudulent practices unabated. For example, voting materials were either not supplied or not adequately supplied or voting would

commence late in those opponent areas. Similarly, President Obasanjo changed the order of the elections through the 2001 Electoral Bill. Whereas in 1999 elections proceeded from the lower to the higher levels – local, state, national assembly and presidential – the 2001 Bill specified that the presidential election would come first. This was interpreted by the opposition as a calculated step by the PDP to facilitate a bandwagon effect in subsequent elections should Obasanjo's PDP win the first elections.

From 1999 no election conducted by INEC can be said to be credible, as attested by reports of local and international observers including the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), the Carter Center, National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and the European Union. All reported wide spread irregularities, including a 'miraculous' 100 percent turnout of voters in Rivers State during the 2003 presidential election. Because the election was meant essentially to disengage the military from politics, not much attention was paid to its credibility (Oromareghake, 2013). Commenting on the election, Agbese (2005: xiii) drew a conclusion that:

Despite the fact that the elections and the entire transition program that ushered in the new civilian rulers were marred by irregularities and fraudulent practices, the general consensus in the country was that the imperfections were simply the price that Nigeria had to pay for putting an end to military dictatorship that had plagued the nation since the first military coup in January 1966.

Nevertheless, allegations of electoral corruption, with the active connivance of INEC officials and probably the transitional military regime, challenged the administration of the election and raised basic questions regarding INEC's independence, impartiality, and accountability. INEC as an agent of the presidency allegedly rigged the 1999 elections in favour of the ruling party and Obasanjo in demonstration of military solidarity. Kew (1999:31) aptly demonstrated the various forms of rigging perpetuated by INEC staffs during the 1999 elections and in subsequent elections. He noted that, in one instance, "the presiding officer and the two party agents – one from the APP – were busy thumb-printing as many PDP votes as they could stuff into the ballot box". Moreover, there was an unprecedented monetization of politics as "Moneybags" hijacked the electoral process and engaged seriously in vote buying (Ojo, 2006). The situation was allowed to deteriorate to this degree because of INEC's inability to enforce political finance regulations. The bias nature of INEC led to its offices in Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Nnewi South and a local government office in Awka North of Anambra State being burnt in protest.

Godfatherism, Money Politics and Electoral Frauds: The phenomenon of godfatherism and use of money at elections is not new in Nigeria's political landscape. They often combine to project certain people to political power. In the First and Second Republics, the political parties focused on credibility, manifestoes and programmes of the party. An aspirant needed not the services of financial godfathers to bankroll his political ambitions, but must belong to any of the political parties and must be of proven integrity before he could be considered for election of governorship status or other elective positions. This did not rule out the use of money during elections as parties of the Second Republic, mostly NPN, UPN and GNPP, lavished money in their campaign activities and visibly displayed affluence and used money to lure members.

Notably, the advent of the Fourth Republic witnessed the incursion of some wealthy individuals into the political scene, who with questionable money and other influences have eclipsed political parties in the determination of choice of candidates for elections into public offices. Thus, from the founding elections of 1999 in Nigeria the influence of godfathers and money politics has become so tremendous, albeit negatively, such that they have assumed a dominant position in the country's body politics. Though it could be said that the 1999 elections witness a low or minimal electoral malpractices, the magnitude of rigging in the 2003 elections which gave victory to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over its main rival, the All Nigerian People Party (ANPP) exceeded all previous records in the history of electoral malpractices in Nigeria (Chikendu, 2003). Regarding the elections Omelle (2005:4) remarked that:

Both the 1999, but more atrociously the 2003 and 2004 elections were 'carry go, no bus stop'. To call the 2003/2004 electoral motions 'elections' is to brutalize the English language. This brutalization of the white man's language is brought about by the brazen assaults on the basic principle of democratic process – the election.

These irregularities were made possible by the fact that the incumbents who were seeking second terms used their official positions to achieve their desires. They used public funds to run their campaigns; they made exclusive use of the publicly owned media to brow-beat their political opponents, leaving them without any 'last resort' save the so-called election tribunals where unnecessary delays and technicalities were bound to work to the disadvantage of the plaintiffs.

In view of the foregoing, one could begin by saying that the way elections were conducted showed that the political class had, 'learnt nothing and forgotten nothing' from their experience of yester-years. Their general behaviour

offended the sensibilities of all true democrats. All the tricks in the game of election rigging were fully employed. The rules of the game were brazenly flouted, party discipline was jettisoned and some primaries in most cases produced two or more candidates for a single seat on the platform of the same party. Fraudulent practices permeated the ranks of the electoral officers, the security agents and the law enforcement personnel. Voting exercise was made irrelevant by the fact that Returning Officers wrote election results without any reference to the actual votes cast at the polling booths.

There is no gainsaying the obvious, at this juncture, that whichever strategy was adopted required excessive use of money. In fact, money was excessively and abusively used by the aspirants such that one could justifiably say that money power won the primaries and indeed the elections for the candidates. With reference to money politics, Mohammed (1991:5) argued that:

In Nigerian politics one with money is in the majority. Money in politics is particularly a strong aphrodisiac: it taunts the poor and intoxicates the rich. In their state of inebriation, caused by a high degree of intoxication, the rich begins to hallucinate. They begin to see vision; a vision of grandeur that leads them to conclude immodestly that with money there is nothing that they cannot buy.

In point of fact, money politics has become a recurring decimal during elections and mostly in the gubernatorial elections. Voters are often induced with money by the politicians and party agents to join their queues and vote for their candidates. This has led to voters searching for politicians with high offers. In past elections, the 'sandwich' strategy was widely adopted by politicians wishing to keep their voters on the queues while inducing opponents' supporters to decamp. Sometimes, voters and party agents bargained for a price before joining the queues. Candidly, monetary consideration was paramount in determining the electoral choice of voters. Thus as Davies (2005:5) rightly argued:

Paradoxically, money has become a dominant factor.... Money seems to have taken the centre stage in the political process in Nigerian politics; it is, sadly, now playing an increasingly critical role. It even appears to be so dominant in electoral process to such an extent that the word 'money politics' with a pejorative connotation, has crept into the country's political lexicon. It is now a critical

variable when assessing the level of political corruption in the country.

The situation above received impetus from the activities of godfathers in political parties who rendered the parties ineffective in the process of discharging their responsibilities. These godfathers impacted negatively on democracy by restricting citizens' participation as voters or candidates. Also in an undemocratic way, they imposed candidates' right from local level to national level, on agreement that they surrender the state treasury to them as was the case with Chris Uba and Chris Ngige, Bukola Saraki and Mohammed Lawal, Modu Sheriff and Mala Kachallah, Lamidi Adedibu and Rasheed Ladoja among others. These kinds of agreement explain why the dividend of democracy has become a mirage in our society. Thus, democracy has no meaning once it failed to improve on the life of citizens.

VI. FAILED PARTY AND ELECTORAL POLITICS: CONSEQUENCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

An election, according to Alapiki (2010), is the manner of choice agreed upon by a group of people, which enables them to select one or a few people out of many to occupy one or a number of positions of authority. This manner of choice usually involves rules and regulation designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. It is the most modern form of recruitment of personnel into public offices. It is therefore a procedure for choosing officers or making binding decisions concerning policy by the vote of those formally qualified to participate.

Put differently, election is fundamentally meant to give the electorate the opportunity to decide who should rule them, and what the rulers' policies and programmes should be. It entails the selection of few people by a large number to fill predetermined political vacancies; an element of choice in that the electors have option to select either from a number of individuals or programmes; and the fact that each elector exercises his or her right to choose independently of or without consultation with other electors. Unfortunately, these qualities and characteristics are absent in the Nigerian usage of the term and application in the political scene. This, as a consequence, impedes sustainable democracy in the country.

In its original sense, the term sustainable democracy or "democratic consolidation" was meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression (Schedler, 1998). Sustainable democracy is the deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is so broadly and profoundly legitimized among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down (Ouyang, 1994). It implies established stability in governance; it involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and

narrow its uncertainty. This normalization requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, the functioning of a mature civil society and political institutionalization.

Judging from the above, Nigeria even under the present democratic dispensation cannot be said to have achieved or attained sustainable democracy. Majority of Nigerians cannot subscribe to the notion that since the country is practicing democracy (civil rule), human rights and electoral procedures are being protected and sustained, cultivated and entrenched. In his broadcast to the nation, shortly before setting the democratic proceedings that led to the final rebirth of the Fourth Republic, General Abubakar (1998:2) acknowledged that:

In particular, democratization was marred by maneuvering and manipulation of political institutions, structures and actors. In the end, we have only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which a solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained.

As noted by Ikpe (2006), one cannot test for sustainable democracy or democratic consolidation without using election related factors such as institutionalization of election, electoral institutions and honesty of vote counting, and fairness and equal opportunities to all candidates and parties. By and large, Nigeria's democracy is far from being tagged consolidated or sustainable. Certain empirical factors are accountable to this democratic failure in Nigeria. To begin with, the rise of hegemonic parties, that is, party is that are dominant in the control of votes cast in elections in a state. Their dominance arises not so much from popular support, but, rather, from their control of the party and the machinery of election. The control of party hierarchy, electoral commission and security agencies ensure that this dominant party is constantly returned to power, while opposition is intimidated, stifled and emasculated. Thus, inability to hold free and fair election, intimidation of rival political parties and depriving them of opportunities to win power, progressively hinders the attainment of sustainable democracy in the country.

According to Ikpe (2006) the tendency for the ruling parties to become hegemonic in Nigeria has always been strong. The NPC attempted it in the First Republic; NPN also tried it in the Second Republic. In the current Fourth Republic, the PDP superbly rigged the elections to become a "leviathan". In 1999 the party won in 21 out of the 36 states of the federation and in 2003 elections it extended this lead to 28 states. This gave bit to the accusation that the party wants to be the only largest, strongest and viable political party in the country. This led many politicians from other political parties

to decamp to the PDP where the chances of partaking in the system of reward were more certain.

In point of fact, the weakening of opposition parties by the PDP led government was against the principle of democratic sustenance. Certainly, the PDP became egregiously dominant and thus tended to turn the country into a one-party system. But just like in any one-party dominant system, the PDP without effective opposition to provide alternative and represent the preferences of the people, has indeed hampered the growth of democracy to a sustainable status. In the democratic sense of it, when voters become frustrated with and alienated from the positions of the ruling party, they should have alternatives to switch to. This was an unfortunate case in Nigerian democratic experience until 2015 when All Progressive Congress (APC) took over the reins of governance at the centre.

Another issue that has worked against sustainable democracy in the country is the role of Electoral Commission in election related frauds. Observably, most of the ad-hoc staffs employed by INEC were party loyalists sponsored to participate, first in the registration of voters, and later, in the conduct of the elections as returning officers, presiding officers and polling clerks. This is the reason ballot boxes could disappear with relative ease to re-emerge with neatly stuffed ballot papers accompanied by other documents duly completed. Further to this, INEC officials allocated election materials in a discriminatory manner to polling centres and in the process deprived opposition strongholds of adequate materials as well as announcing overwhelming fictitious results where elections were not conducted. This, no doubt proves that no rigging strategy can succeed without the active connivance of INEC officials, permanent or ad-hoc.

Elections related violence is yet another issue that has impeded sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Violence initiated and sustained by political elites is a clear manifestation of unwillingness to submit to democratic due process, disregard for the rule of law and contempt for human rights. This simply means that political elites in Nigeria lack democratic minds. This could be exemplified in the election related violence and killings between 1999 and 2006. A few cases include the brutal murder of Mr. Odunayo Olagbaju - a member of the Osun State House of Assembly on 19 December 2001, Ahmed Pategi - the State Chairman of PDP in Kwara State on 15 August 2002, Chief Ogbonnaya Uche -ANPP senatorial candidate in Imo State on 7 February 2003, Dr Harry Marshal - National Vice-Chairman of the ANPP (South-South) on 5 March 2003, Dr Ayo Daramola - PDP governorship aspirant in Ekiti State on 14 August 2004, Mr. Jesse Aruku - a Plateau State governorship aspirant of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) on 30 June 2006 and Eng. Funsho Williams - PDP governorship aspirant in Lagos State on 27 July 2006, Chief Paul Inyang - Akwa Ibom PDP State chairmanship aspirant on 20 June 2010, Mr. Okon Uwah - former Deputy Speaker and APC House of Assembly candidate in Akwa Ibom State on 18 March 2015 among other politically

motivated killings (Ita and Bassey, 2017). All these were alleged to have been masterminded by incumbent governors and other members of the political elite class.

There is no gainsaying the obvious that sustainable democracy cannot be achieved where the practitioners themselves are undemocratic or anti-democratic. Indubitably, party and electoral politics has been bastardized in Nigeria, thus, making sustainable democracy in Nigeria a failure, though there is some democratic progress in Nigeria's political life.

VII. CONCLUSION

Party and electoral politics has suffered a chequered history in Nigeria. Right from the adoption of the Clifford Constitution of 1922, the Nigerian political space has been littered with the emergence of political parties in each of the epochs that have come up in the close to one hundred years of party politics in the country. Political parties, being central to democratic governance have come to occupy an important position in Nigeria's political process. With the establishment by Sir Herbert Macaulay of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) several political associations have explored the political/electoral space provided by democratic governance to express their freedom of association and desire to capture, organize and indeed exercise the political and governmental powers that control the Nigerian state.

Nigeria is presently forging ahead with the Fourth Republic, and there are over 40 political parties lining up for 2019 electoral contest. These notwithstanding, the nature and conception of political parties in Nigeria make them an inescapable fact of the Nigerian political life in view of the fact that, it is only through political parties that politics and the quest to control and exercise governmental powers find expression. Nigeria as of today has no provisions for independent candidacy; hence, the only acceptable way to play politics is to do so via a political party platform.

In fact, electoral and party politics in Nigeria have been a recurring source of disputes, strong-arm tactics, crises and conflicts. Electoral crises characterized by abuses of the electoral process by political parties, party stalwarts and the refusal to accept electoral verdicts have had deleterious effects on achieving sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The rule about sustainable democracy is that democracy must become 'the only game in town' and that 'no group within the polity should prefer any form of authoritarianism to democracy'. The ease with which these rules are flouted even by elite and political leaders suggests that sustainable democracy in Nigeria is still a desideratum.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the disastrous nature and consequences of party and electoral politics in Nigeria and the need to salvage the situation, the paper proffered the following suggestions:

- (i) The political parties should be reorganized on the principle of all-inclusiveness rather than exclusion and encouraged to practice internal democracy and reoriented from being mere platforms for acquisition of political power to effective institutions that are capable of promoting democratic ethos worthy of engendering democratic consolidation in Nigeria's political landscape.
- (ii) The number of political parties should be reduced and made to abide by their manifestoes and programmes which may aid them to win election at the pool so as to discourage the corruptive tendencies of the electoral process through the use of money to influence the electorate during elections. Again, the activities of political parties need to be properly regulated by relevant electoral laws and constitutional provisions with regards to peaceful conduct of elections.
- (iii) Corrupt officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security officials who take bribe and involve in any form electoral malpractices should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others in future elections.
- (iv) Electronic voting should be encouraged, maintained and strengthened to avoid rigging, manipulation and thuggery during elections. This will also help to reduce undue use of money by Godfathers to disrupt the electoral process as well as prove more effective in handling election results during and after elections.
- (v) Independent candidature should be introduced in all elections in the country to encourage right-hearted individuals with no godfathers to participate in the electoral process.
- (vi) The winner-take-all posture in Nigerian politics should be avoided so as to reduce the prize on political power. Hence, politicians should inculcate the habits of holding power in trust on the people's behalf and not to pursue selfish interests.

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