

PARTY SYSTEM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: MULTIPARTYISM OR TWO-PARTY SYSTEM.

OJO Olusola Matthew^{1*}

¹Department of Development, Peace, and Conflict Studies, Kampala International University, Uganda.

* Corresponding email: mathew.ojo@kiu.ac.ug

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's political terrain has been characteristically beclouded by political instability with the devastating consequences on national integration and inter-group tolerance. A plethora of factors have been advanced in extant scholarship in an attempt to provide explanation for this obnoxious development. Given the heterogeneous and historical complexity of Nigeria, the debate about either multipartyism or two-party system would be more appropriate towards ensuring democratic consolidation has remained a subject of interest in scholarly academic debate. This analysis evaluates the process and practice of political party system on Nigeria's democratic environment, in view of the implications for national integration. Findings reveal that neither multiparty or two-party system is antithesis to democratic process in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria. However, neither of the experimented political party system in Nigeria has yielded the desired fruitions towards enhancing the democratic process in the country because the political elite have deliberately manipulated the institution of party system to accomplish selfish goals as against national interests. The study further contends that formation of political parties by stakeholders without clear-cut political ideology informs the retardation of democratic process, which has remained a major cog in the wheel of political stability. The study concludes that the sustenance of democratic culture in Nigeria is critical to national integration and sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, there is need for attitudinal revolution on the part of the political elite and other stakeholders towards embracing the supremacy of ideological-inclined political party institution within the spectrum of the country's heterogeneous complexity.

INTRODUCTION

Party system and political parties have constituted essential institutions in any contemporary democracy in time perspective (Akindele, 2004). Given the dynamic and complex nature of modern societies, the process and practice of democracy revolves

around election (Heyword, 1999). The vantage role of elections in the democratic process invariably explains the relevance of political parties in the consolidation of democratic culture and institution in most democratic societies.

The foregoing simply suggests that the subsistence of democracy and democratic practice in most societies revolves around political parties which represents an organized institution for the articulation of aspirations and canvassing for votes (Adebayo, 2006). Hence, political parties provide the link between the electorate and the elected in the process of political participation whereby the legitimacy of leadership is determined.

In Nigeria, the role of political parties in the democratic process as enshrined in the constitution can be appreciated considering the fact that aspiration for elected offices at local, state and federal levels must be channeled through registered and accredited political parties.

However, the much-desired fruitions expected of any productive political party system have yet to materialized in Nigeria partly because party system has always been frustrated by the political elite such that national interests and common good are sacrificed at the altar of individual interests. Thus, incongruous party system and poorly organized political parties have contributed significantly to the manifestation of internal conflicts that had ravaged the country at one time or the other. In other words, politicians have always displayed parochial sentiments in the formation, development and performance of political parties. As aptly captured by Arthur Nwankwo (2005), the reason for this is that as they interact within the political arena, different ethnic nationalities have always demonstrated undue affinities to their historical, linguistic and cultural identities.

The thrust of this discourse is to take a critical appraisal on the problems and prospects of multi-party and two-party systems within the spectrum of Nigeria's heterogeneous composition in view of the implications for national integration and sustainable

development. The pertinent question is that considering the characteristic of modern Nigeria as a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society, which option between multi-party and two-party systems could be more rewarding for democratic entrenchment in the interest of national integration and political stability? Attempt to address this poser reveals that since human resources are the central determinants of either the success or failure of any form of democracy, the most challenging issue with Nigeria's democratic consolidation does not unilaterally lie in choice of multi-party or two-party system but in the mindset of stakeholders in the management of democratic system. Extant political analysis has established that any multi-ethnic society such as Nigeria that erects its democratic edifice on a compromised constitutional architecture can hardly experience stable polity and steady growth (See Yusuf, 2012).

Suffice it to say that the entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria is dependent upon the evolution of home-grown party system that is sensitive to the peculiarities of Nigeria's historical experience and cultural diversity. The clamour for restructuring the Nigeria's political architecture has always constituted an integral part of the debate about the national question (Balewa, 1994; Anyaoku, 1999; Nwankwo, 2005). However, whatever political structure adopted may remain an exercise in futility at the expense of the underpinnings of party system ideology. An axiomatic exploration of the foregoing is that the failure of political parties in Nigeria over the years is not necessarily on account of multipartyism or two-party system, but because the political parties and politicians alike have refused to embrace the ideals of political ideology, and applaud selfish interests such as ethnicity, ineptitude and ethnoreligious sentiments in the process of political participation.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE: UNDERSTANDING MULTI-PARTY AND TWO-PARTY SYSTEMS.

A system is a constituent of synergy between or among complementary parts of a whole, thereby enabling them to function as a coherent entity. The parts of a party system are political parties, comprising certain complex specifications of functional relationships (Lane and Ersson, 1999). Thus, a party system consists of a set of political parties operating within a democratic society in an organized pattern with a view to ensuring measurable party system properties including stability, dynamism and continuity.

In the contemporary age, the politics of representation, which is the fulcrum of participatory and representative democracy is basically a function of political parties (Johnson, 2002). One of the earliest definitions of political party was postulated by Edmund Burke (1729-1797) as “a body of men, united, for promoting by their endeavours, the national interest upon some particular principles in which they all agreed (Adebayo, 2006:64). It has been argued further that for any association to assume the status of a political party, it must have a clearly defined ideology, be it capitalism, socialism, welfarism, among others on which its policies and programmes will be built upon formation of government if elected.

Analyzing the relevance of political parties in the context of party system, Heywood (1999) submits that political parties are important not only because of the range of functions they tend to perform, which include representation, elite recruitment aggregation of interests, but also because the complex interrelationships between and among parties are sensitive to determining how political systems work in practice. This network of relationship is called a party system. The most familiar way of distinguishing between different types of party system relates to the number of parties recognized by the constitution to contest for elected offices at the public space including one-party; two-party and multi-party systems. Sartori (1976) goes beyond the standard criteria of number of parties as conceptualized by Duverger and advances an articulate typology combining number of parties (fragmentation) with the extent of ideological distance

between the parties in the party system (polarization). Sartori posits that it is the combination of polarization and fragmentation that distinguishes various party systems and plays a critical role when accounting for political stability. In the same vein, Heywood (1999) argues that although identifying parties along numbers is commonly used, party systems cannot simply be reduced to a 'number games' (Heywood, 1999).

From that standpoint, Heywood postulates that relative size of political parties as reflected in their electoral and legislative strength is equally important. What this suggests is that party system is characterized by a number of features which distinguishes it from other institutions of society, and within which context its democratic functions are determined. These features include numbers, respective size, alliances, geographical localization, and political distribution, among other factors.

In this discourse, emphasis shall be laid on two-party system, and multi-party system considering the fact that Nigeria, which is the focus of analysis has not at any point in time in its political history, embraced or practiced a one-party system.

A multi-party system is a party system in which the effective number of parties is greater than two. In some democracies, maximum number of five political parties are allowed, while in some, the constitutions are silent about the maximum number of parties that can evolve. In a multi-party system, the parties can control government either as separate entities or through coalition, which is a rarity in a two-party system. Many democratic societies practice multi-party system. Examples are India, Canada, Brazil, Sweden, Spain, Israel, Norway, France, Germany, Mexico, Pakistan, Indonesia, Ireland and Denmark, Nigeria, among others.

A two-party system is a party system where two major political parties exert domineering influence in the political terrain. In a two-party system, the winning party forms government and referred to as the ruling party, while the other party that loses to the ruling party during election is referred to as the opposition party.

At the legislature, the ruling party usually has the majority of members of the parliament and referred to as the majority party, while the opposition party is referred to as the minority party. In advanced, democracy, the role of the opposition party in the scheme of governance is to provide checks on the excesses of the ruling party through constructive criticism of its policies, programmes and agenda in the interest of the citizenry. The opposition party also provides alternative government to the ruling party in subsequent elections in case the ruling party fails the electorate.

There are variations in the way two-party system is practiced across the globe. For example, in two-party democracies such as the United States, Jamaica, and Malta, election outcomes always favour one of the two major parties, and third parties rarely win any seats in the legislature. However, in countries such as Britain, the strong influence of the two major parties does not prevent other lesser parties from excreting some measures of representation and influence. Hence, despite the strong influence of the two major parties, a multitude of minor parties exist, which exert varying degrees of influence particularly through alternative opinions in governance process, and their representation in legislative procedure. In other words, while winner-take-all syndrome is not highly pronounced in some two-party democracies such as Britain, it is well founded in others such as the United States.

HISTORIZING POLITICAL PARTIES' FORMATION IN NIGERIA.

The centrality of political party and party system in the political process of any democracy cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, the origin of political parties at various times, has provided sensitive responses to the political development in the country (Omoruyi, 1989: 188). Two forms of party system have been experimented. They are multi-party system and two-party system. Except during the short-lived and premature third republic when two-party system was experimented, multi-party system has been practiced in Nigeria, precisely during the colonial era, during the first republic between 1963 and 1966, during

the second republic between 1979 and 1983 as well as in the subsisting fourth republic that began in 1999.

The historical development of constitutional democracy in Nigeria began during the colonial era. This resulted into the evolution of the first political party known as Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded by Herbert Macaulay, a quantity surveyor, on June 24, 1923 (Ogunsanwo & Otunla, 2018). The emergence of this political association in Nigeria was informed by the growth of national consciousness and sentiments, and the nationalist movements, in an attempt to provide sound footing for self-government (Agbebaku, 2005). The objectives of NNDP epitomizes its motive for self-government as follows:

Securing the safety and welfare of the colony and the protectorate of Nigeria as an integral part of the British imperial commonwealth, and to carry the banner of "Right, Truth, Liberty and Justice" to the empyrean of democracy until the realisation of its ambitious goal of government of the people by the people and for the people

As constitutional development continued to influence government of inclusion through democratic process, more political parties continued to evolve in Nigeria's political space, which marked the evolution of multi-party system in Nigeria. For instance, the extension of franchise beyond Lagos to other parts of the country led to the formation of more political parties. These included the Nigerians Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936; the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944, which was later known as the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC); the Action Group (AG) in 1951 and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) also in 1951. Others were the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU); United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC); Nigerian Socialist Workers and Farmers Party (SWFP); Republican Dynamic Party (RDP); among others.

Be that as it may, majority of these parties struggled to survive the harsh political temperature in the course of the first republic until 1966 when the military intervened in

partisan politics. This act of the military crippled the nascent democratic tradition the country was nurturing in the process of national integration and self-reliance. It is worthy of note that political misconduct was among the factors that induced the military into partisan politics, which eventually crumbled the first republic in 1966.

During the second republic, multi-party system was still recognized as enshrined in the constitution. However, like the experience of the first republic, some of these parties were not anchored on ideological clarity. Within the context of multi-party system, five political parties were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in 1978 in preparation for the 1979 general elections. They were: The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); National Party of Nigeria (NPN); Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP); and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) (Adebayo, 2006). The number rose to six in 1983 following the registration of Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP).

One common characteristic of these parties was lack of ideological underpinnings, coupled with parochial group identity based on ethnicity, regional and religious inclination rather than national outlook. Thus, the political atmosphere in the country was heated up as a result ethnically-inspired sentiments that provoked widespread intra- and inter-party violence before, during and after elections.

Nevertheless, the second republic could not survive two uninterrupted consecutive terms of four years each. This is because the military struck again barely three months after the second four-year term in the second republic was inaugurated. Thus, for the second time in Nigeria's post-colonial history, the military disrupted the democratic process in December 1983 by toppling the Shehu Shagari-led NPN civilian government, thereby resulting in the demise of the second republic.

The evolution of the third republic brought about a different and somewhat new party system in Nigeria's history as the country witnessed the experimentation of two-party

system. Although, politicians attempted to retain multi-party system occasioned by the emergence of thirteen political associations (Adebayo, 2006), but the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) under the watch of General Ibrahim Badamonsi Babangida (IBB) ultimately refuted the idea and foisted two-party system on the country.

In the course of the transition to civil rule, the military administration of IBB announced the set up a 17-member political Bureau in 1986. The bureau was saddled with the responsibility to formulate a practicable blueprint for the transition. Based on the opinions of the citizenry arising from a nationwide debate, the bureau made a number of recommendations considered as pivotal for the thriving of democracy and national integration in the third republic. The bureau recommended that:

- i. introduction of a socialist ideology through a process of social mobilization;
- ii. Strengthening of local government for effective grassroots governance and people-centered bottom-top development; and
- iii. Adoption of a two-party system for the evolution of political parties with national outlook.

Among all the recommendations, advocacy for two-party system was the most novel in Nigeria's political history because it marked a radical departure and paradigm shift from the erstwhile multi-party system during the previous two republics, thereby reconstructing the formation and implementation of party system in Nigeria's political topography and democratic experimentation. The argument of the military regime for introducing two-party system in the country was to strengthen political affiliation across ethnic, religious and regional sentiments, thereby entrenching national unity within the spectrum of Nigeria's heterogenous composition. The whole idea was that with only two parties in the democratic space, the ethnic majority/minority dichotomy that characterized the erstwhile multi-party system in the previous republics would be de-

emphasized in favor of nationalistic agglomeration. It was further stressed that two-party system would entrench national unity within the spectrum of Nigeria's pluralist composition as against ethnic colouration with which multi-party system in previous republics was characterized. It was also argued that the financing of the two political parties should be the responsibility of the state with a view to downplaying money politics, thereby preventing undue domination of political parties by ideologically bereft politicians and moneybags.

The endorsement of that novel initiative in the history of party system resulted in the evolution of two parties in the democratic process in Nigeria. The two parties are the center-left progressive Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the center-right conservative National Republican Convention (NRC). Each of the parties had the mandate to express national outlook by drawing membership from across the country irrespective of ethnic-communal inclination, religious sentiment or regional affiliation.

Apart from conducting the election through two party system, another peculiar characteristic of the election process introduced by NEC was the adoption of open ballot. In the political calendar of the transition to civil rule, gubernatorial and state legislative elections were conducted in December 1991. This led to assumption of office in January, 1992 by the civilian governors and houses of assembly in all the states of the federation.

Pockets of post-election crises arising from the elections into offices at the state level was used as an excuse for postponing the presidential election from 1992 to June 1993 by the Ibrahim Babangida-led military government. Chief Moshhod Kasimawo Olawale Abiola popularly known as MKO Abiola, a business Mongol of Yoruba extraction emerged as the presidential candidate under the umbrella of SDP, while Alhaji Bashir Tofa, also a businessman in the Diaspora emerged as the presidential standard bearer of the National Republican Convention (NRC). Results from the election conducted by National Electoral

Commission (NEC) under the chairmanship of Professor Humphrey Nwosu indicated that MKO Abiola of SDP defeated Bashir Tofa, his NRC opponent.

The election was adjudged as the freest, fairest and most credible in the political chronicles of Nigeria. Chief MKO Abiola, the SDP standard bearer was widely acclaimed to have won the election having acquired higher number of votes compared to Alhaji Basir Tofa's of the NRC (See Yusuf, 2012). Unfortunately, on 23 June 1993, The IBB-led military regime abruptly announced the annulment of the presidential election without convincing explanation to citizenry. By that singular act on the part of military government, the implication was that the military regime masterminded the demise of the novel two-party system it initiated and introduced to the country's political terrain in the third republic. This provoked the citizenry to chaotic civil unrest that eventually brought the third republic a dead end.

Unable to contain the crisis, the military government under the watch of IBB was compelled to bow to public pressure. Thus, IBB declared his intention to "step aside" on August 23, 1993. Following his forced resignation from office, IBB introduced Interim National Government (ING) and foisted it on Nigeria and Nigerians. He appointed Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba businessman from Ogun State as Chairman (See Yusuf, 2010).

Chief Ernest Shonekan was unable to manage the political turmoil ravaging the country beyond three months. Thus, on 17 November, 1993, Ernest Shonekan-led ING was quietly removed from office by through palace coup led by General Sani Abacha, erstwhile Minister of Defence,. Although the prospect of two-party system was difficult to determine in the history of Nigeria's political development, the high level of unity of purpose across ethnic, regional and religious boundary, and the degree of sanity experienced in the course of the election suggest that it was not an aberration in the country's complex ethno-religious composition.

In the course of his military regime, Abacha declared his intention to begin transition to civil rule. Following from that, he reverted to multi-party system. Five political parties were registered, namely: Congress of National Consensus (CNC); Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN); Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM); National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and the United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP).

These five political parties were referred to as “five fingers on a leprous hand” by Chief Bola Ige, considering the fact that Abacha imposed himself on all the registered parties as the sole presidential candidate for the election that was scheduled for August 1998. Had it been that Abacha was able to accomplish his self-succession attempt, it would have introduced another dimension of fraudulent manipulation into the multi-party system in the history of Nigeria because Sani Abacha would have emerged as the sole standard bearer of all the five registered parties, thereby technically preventing inter-party contestation for the office of the president of federal republic of Nigeria. Until his sudden death, all the political parties dramatically endorsed the candidacy of Sani Abacha even though he was not a registered member of any and did not make any public declaration to the effect of his ambition to participate in the electoral process apart from his body language that was obvious for everyone to perceive (Ogunsanwo & Otunla, 2018).

General Abdulsalami Abubakar assumed the office of Head of State following Abacha’s sudden death. The military government of General Abdulsalami Abubakar retained the multi-party system with the promise to relinquish power to democratically elected president in June, 1999. Nine political associations declared intention to register as political parties. However, only three were accredited by National Electoral Commission (NEC). They are Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); Alliance for Democracy (AD) and Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). These political parties also demonstrated the characteristics of the previous parties that had operated during the previous republics: ethnic inclination as

against national outlook; legitimacy deficit; political crisis; and the crisis of cross-regional participation.

A critical evaluation of political parties in Nigeria over the years shows that their manifestos have always clustered around leftist, rightist, centrist, conservative or progressive ideological spectrum. However, one common denominator is that the attitudes and characters of majority of the politicians have always defied the theory and practice of any known conventional party system. What this suggests, therefore, is that the problem with constitutional democracy in Nigeria is not basically about the adoption of either multi-party system or two-party system. Rather the problem with Nigeria dwells centrally on the political elite who place parochial sentiments above national interests. Suffice it to say that the heterogeneous composition of Nigeria is not hostile to either multi-party or two-party system, rather, it is the hostile dispositions of the political elite to the tenets and ideologies of multi-party or two-party system that have always jeopardized the country's democratic experimentation. Right from the outset, majority of political parties have neither demonstrated ideological clarity nor characterized by national outlook and identity within the context of the country's heterogeneous character.

Another basic characteristic of these ethnically-based political parties was indiscipline. Agbebaku (2005) posits that political thugs were organized within the parties for fighting electoral wars. Rather than being symbols of peace and national unity, political parties and their leaders were the inspiring forces of electoral violence in the country.

The study posits that it is of no political relevance for political elites to be myopically preoccupied by formulating political parties without having regards to the underlying rudiments and best practices of multi-party ideology.

EVALUATING MULTIPARTYISM AND TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION.

A critical evaluation of Nigeria's socio-political engineering clearly reflects that the national integration and sustainable development have been grossly undermined by political parties because they are not run-in tandem with any clear-cut system-oriented party ideology. Given Nigeria's ethnic heterogeneity and cultural pluralism, identity-related anxieties have always ignited mutual distrust among the constituent units (December and Green, 2003). As a conglomerate society of more than 250 ethnic nationalities, the political elite are fond of manipulating the Nigeria project with mutual suspicion and distrust along regional, religious and linguistic identities. Scant nationalistic mindset by the political elite is clearly expressed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo's perception about Nigeria and Nigerians:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (see Afigbo, 2003:48).

The foregoing confirms the argument that at an elevated level of reasoning, the problems of the Nigerian political process are reducible to the difficult relations between State and Society as a result of the attitudes of the political class (Ekeh et al, 1989). Arguably, the failure of British colonial overlords to build the structure of Nigeria's federalist structure on strong political pedestal has accounted for the challenges being faced in search of result-oriented party system in its post-colonial epoch. Thus, the structures and institutions that are fundamental to political stability in a democratic system has been grossly fraught with undue manipulation in favour of parochial sentiments at the detriment of national integration and equitable governance process. The hypothesis that cultural complexity and ethnic plurality are a potential lubricant of national integration (Young, 1976) has not been validated in Nigeria's political space.

The emphasis in this treatise is that Nigeria's heterogenous composition is strategically conducive for multi-party or two-party system. Hence, the choice of multi-party or two-party system is not an aberration. What is problematic is the anti-thesis disposition of the

political elite in terms of unduly indulging identity politics at the detriment of conventional guiding principles of party system. Over the years, political competition in Nigerian's democratic space has always placed ethnicity and other parochial group identities at the centre of public cognition of political struggle. Iwara (2004) has aptly argued that undue influence of identity politics on the socio-political engineering of contemporary Nigeria in all ramifications as hinderance to democratic consolidation. He posits that the prominence of identity politics in Nigeria's political process is so overwhelming that politicians canvassing for voters' supports have always placed ethnic, religious and social sentiments above the strength of ideas, arguments and programmes that emanate from party system-based conventional political ideology.

Thus, various groups across the country, particularly the so-called dominant ones— Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba— manipulate group interests to acquire political power through political parties without due regard for patriotism and national development (Ako-Nai, 2004).

Thus, Aina (2004:95) submits that:

-- the parties and leaders are subject to the control of ethno-religious associations and semi-federal platforms such as Afenifere and Yoruba Elders' Council (YCE) for geographical southwest; Ohaneze Ndigbo for the southeast and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) for the Hausa/Fulani dominated Northern Nigeria.

Suffice it, therefore, to say that the travails of democratic experimentation particularly during the first and second republics, were partially resulted from the domineering influence of ethnic-oriented political parties which did not give room for the nurturing of broad-based conventional political parties anchored on clear-cut ideological undercurrents.

Lack of ideological orientation among political parties further explains why the electoral process in Nigeria has always been inundated with violence. Political parties have always demonstrated intolerable tendency of winner takes all during elections. Accessing

ideological deficit in Nigeria's political parties, Ogunsanwo and Otunla (2018) liken political parties in Nigeria to organized gangs that deploy a wide range of fraudulence, corruption, vote rigging, vote buying, and thuggery papered by ethnicity and other subjective instruments to acquire political power for selfish motives. This development has had far-reaching negative impact on the democratic process as the incumbent party tends to retain power at all cost and opposition party tends to overtake by all means.

This has made periodic elections, which ought to be a medium of democratic consolidation moments of anxiety as the constituent units have experienced threats to break apart. The deduction from this analysis is that a common characteristic of the functionality of both multipartyism during the first two republics, and in the subsisting fourth republic on the one hand, and the attempted two-party system during the short-lived third republic is that political parties in Nigeria have not at any point in time performed effectively because they are not strategically built on structures that conform with minimum standards of party system.

A critical evaluation of the subsisting fourth republic has also revealed that group cleavage has remained a potential threat to democratic consolidation and political stability. It needs to be emphasized that the prospect for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria squarely rests on the emergence of a political party system that appreciates the heterogeneous composition and cultural diversity of the Nigerian society. It is when such a political party system is guaranteed that all the constituent groups can feel a mutual sense of belonging and have collective trust in the system. If the party system cannot secure this common sense of identity, the feasibility of stable polity in Nigeria's fourth Republic remains dicey.

What this simply suggests is that the prospect of democratic oriented people-centered governance in Nigeria is not merely a function of multipartyism or two-party system, but a function of deliberate attempt to respect the ideological underpinnings that guide

whatever choice of party system adopted. For instance, India's commitment to the tenets of multi-party system has influenced credible electoral process, political cohesion and democratic consolidation in the country, which has technically made military intervention in partisan politics a non-existence (Kesselman, Krieger & Joseph, 2010).

Canada is another classical example of heterogeneous society with a multiparty system. Due to its compliance with the ideological base of multiparty system, Canadian democracy has remained progressively stable without any non-democratic interruption.

Nigerian political elite will continue to make mockery of party system, and at the expense of democratic consolidation as long as the veritable ideals of party system are undermined.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the problems and prospects of party system in Nigeria's democratic terrain with a view to determining the implication for national integration. Using multi-party and two-party system as the thrust of analysis, the discourse identifies failed party system as a critical factor undermining democratic consolidation and national integration in the country. The study argues further that failure of multi-party system to ensure political stability and productive governance process in Nigeria's democratic topography is not because it cannot thrive in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria.

Rather, the study argues that formation of political parties at the expense of clear-cut political ideology informs the retardation of democratic process, which has remained a major cog in the wheel of political stability. Suffice it, therefore, to submit that party system, has not influenced national integration in Nigeria because the political elite have undermined the conventional ideology and philosophy of either multi-party, or two-party system so far in the political annals of the Nigeria state.

The deduction here is that adopting either multi-party or two-party system is not the antidote to political instability, mutual distrust and civil unrest in Nigeria but attitudinal transformation that is sensitive to the tenets of whichever political party system the people agree to adopt and respect.

Unfortunately, neither multi-party nor two-party system has worked effectively in Nigeria's democratic experimentation because the political elite have defied party system principles and ideologies in the formulation and implementation of political parties. Lessons from the previous republics are indicative of the fact that the subsisting fourth republic is vulnerable to political uncertainty occasioned by political elite whose attitudes are antithesis to doctrines and ideology of multi-party system being currently embraced as enshrined in the constitution. The complexity of Nigeria's heterogeneous composition in terms of ethnic multiplicity, religious plurality and cultural diversity is conducive for the thriving of either multi-party or two-party system, which invariably has the prospect to positively impact on national integration. The missing link between party system and national integration change of narrative on the part of the political class by sacrificing parochial interest for national interest and common good. Politicians and other stakeholders should demonstrate attitudinal transformation and behavioral restructuring that promote nationalistic outlook in the formation and nurturing of political parties, thereby downplaying undue celebration of ethnic sentiments and other forms of parochial identities in the interest of the collective existence of Nigeria and entrenchment of participatory democracy.

Embracing the ideals of political party ideology will enable Nigerians to appreciate their diversity not from the angle of complex differentiation but from the lens of multiplicity of human capital endowment through which instrumentality they can overcome their common challenges as a people of common destiny. The implied deduction from the foregoing is that ideological based political party saddled with the vision to evolve an

egalitarian society by harnessing those unifying aspects of the people's cultural diversity to develop workable and sustainable political process.

For instance, values of traditional practices among the Igbo village democracy and the ideals of communalism inherent in cross-cultural extended family life among the Yoruba, Tiv, Nupe and Jukun, among others, could be extracted and incorporated into home-grown political party system to instill discipline, collective responsibility, integrity, accountability in governance and mutual respect, thereby promoting peaceful co-existence and tolerance in power struggle.

This explains the imperatives for an ideological-inclined party system that is sensitive to the heterogeneous composition of the Nigerian society, and conducive for the thriving of equity and equality, supremacy of the constitution, respect for the rule of law, and social justice among the citizenry.

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