

Full Length Research Paper

Political parties and the prospects of democratic consolidation in Nigeria: 1999 - 2006

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The existence of vibrant political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity. In Nigeria's First and Second Republics, political parties were regionally based, and their activities led to the collapse of those experiments. This paper explores an important aspect of Nigeria's Fourth Republic politics, which is about the role of the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) in general and President Olusegun Obasanjo in facilitating the consolidation of democracy in the country in particular. The study posits that there is a direct relationship between the character and conduct of a country's political parties and the degree of democratic consolidation in that country. The paper argues that seven years into this 'democratic' dispensation, Nigeria has not scored high when placed in the same matrix with countries that are heading towards stable democracy. In attempting a discourse of this issue, the democratic theory propounded by Joseph Schumpeter was adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. From this, some research questions were posed that state: is democratic competition fully at play in Nigeria's Fourth Republic? Are opposition parties alive to their political responsibilities in the country? It was argued that the opposition parties in Nigeria which ought to serve as alternative parties from which the electorate should choose if they so decide, have been strategically weakened through the overt and covert strategies of the ruling PDP and the lack of total commitment on the part of politicians to the national course. The paper further argues that more than 90% of the political parties in Nigeria are fragile entities, hence, have only developed shallow roots in the society, and concludes on the note that Nigerian political parties have failed in their democratic responsibilities of aggregating social interests, representing specific constituencies, and serving as intermediaries between state and society.

Key words: Democracy, consolidation, political parties, military dictatorship, cross-carpet.

INTRODUCTION

Seven years into Nigeria's Fourth Republic, majority of analysts find it difficult to score her high among nations heading towards democratic consolidation. By consolidation in this work, it means the political process of making a nation's democratic practices succeed on a continuous basis, without midway breakdowns occasioned by undemocratic incidents like *coup d'etat*. A good example of a post colonial state whose democracy has remained without any hitch from independence till date is India, which gained political independence from Britain in 1947. Such a democratic practice has been consolidated. Analysts rather find it more appropriate to describe Nigeria's democracy either as nascent or fledgling. This assessment calls for a major question: Is democratic consolidation in Nigeria an unattainable task, even with the exit of the military from the political scene? Or is it too

early to draw such a conclusion or observation after only seven years into this Republic, when some analysts have argued that it took stable democracies like the United States of America (USA), Britain, and Canada, among others, many decades to get their democracies consolidated? It is therefore, imperative to examine critically, this aspect of Nigerian politics, with particular emphasis on the role political parties are expected to play in the realization of a consolidated democracy in the country.

Thus, in the course of this paper, the critical nature of Nigerian political parties from the First Republic to the Fourth Republic to ascertain their contributions to the achievement of democratic consolidation in the country will be analyzed. Based on empirical evidence gathered from the activities of political parties of this dispensation,

the paper intend to attempt answers to questions like, what specific contributions have political parties in Nigeria made towards the achievement of a lasting democracy? Is Nigeria indeed sliding towards a one-party dictatorship under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo and his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), as is widely assumed by a number of analysts? Is Nigeria's experience in the Fourth Republic that of a multi-party system where all other parties have been rendered lame through the activities of the leadership of the PDP? Is democratic competition (a major tenet of democratic consolidation) at play in Nigeria? What factors must be injected into the current practice to make it a system that will engender a permanent, stable democratic order for the Nigerian State?

To seek answers to these questions, this paper looks critically at the caution and concern expressed by observers in the current debate on the activities of political parties' vis-à-vis democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Such analysts have argued that as African democratic practices pass from their transition phase:

It becomes crucial to build institutions likely, not only to support policies favorable to the reduction of poverty, but also to put an end to the dominance of the executive and the abuse of state authority. This is one of the most important reasons why viable political parties have to be built (Fambom, 2003).

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is predominantly based on information derived from secondary sources. Hence, much of the data was assessed through the review of relevant texts, journals, magazines, news-papers, official publications, historical documents and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the origins and development of political parties in Nigeria and their operational patterns and nature of impacts on democratic consolidation in the country. As participant observers, these data were further buttressed with information gathered through personal experience and through interaction with some key players in the Nigerian political system. Given the primary focus of this study, which is to examine the contributions of the about fifty existing political parties to the achievement of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, the democratic theory propounded by Joseph Schumpeter has been adopted as the framework of analysis. Schumpeter, through his "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy" (1954) has propounded a more modern theory of democracy based on what has been widely referred to as the liberal view of democracy (pluralist theory).

According to Schumpeter, the classical theory of democracy (in which it was stated that all adult males contributed to the making of public policy) was deficient to the point that it could not explain the concept of popular participation in modern terms. Schumpeter argues further that, at best, it was methodologically good for explaining behavior in small primitive communities, in which face-to-face relations prevail and political issues are simple (Lively, 1975). Others have argued that classical definitions of democracy are faulty because they picture conditions entirely absent in the real world (Lively, 1975). Going by Schumpeter's theory, for a system to be tagged "democratic", the rulers should be chosen by the ruled or their representatives. By this rule, one of the essential functions

expected of the electorate in a democracy is that of producing the government. Schumpeter argues further that once this has taken place, the democratic voter is expected to respect the political division of labor by leaving decisions or issues (in government) to the leaders whom they have elected (Schumpeter quoted by Lively, 1975). According to the latter, democracy is a mechanism by which the political system maintains its equilibrium. Another condition identified by him for the proper planting of representative democracy in any society is the one that states that there should be 'not only elections but periodic elections'. This is where political parties play important roles in the selection of candidates for such elections. Elections are expected to serve as instruments through which the electorate can exercise some control over the actions of governments (hence, the masses are said to be sovereign in a democracy; power belongs to the people). This brings to the fore the modern (representative) practice of democratic competition between candidates representing different political parties. Another aspect of Schumpeter's postulation, which has direct bearing with our work, is his submission that citizens should be free in a democracy to compete for leadership positions by presenting themselves as candidates. In addition to these, Schumpeter adds the democratic quality of accountability of rulers to the ruled or their representatives (Lively, 1975). As though he was predicting the nature of democratic practice, especially in former colonial States, Schumpeter argues that although a government may be sensitive to "the views of church leaders, industrialists...trade union officials", such does not make same "susceptible to popular control..." (Lively, 1975).

Schumpeter adds to these democratic qualities, the virtues of stability (consolidation), efficiency and tolerance that must be secured by institutional safeguards for a polity to be properly ascribed the prefix "democratic". This forms the point of departure in looking at democratic consolidation in Nigeria vis-à-vis the character and conduct of her political parties as they contribute to the stability of the state. The essence of Schumpeter's theory in a democracy therefore, is to show the existing levels of participation, representation and accountability that exist in a polity.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

By the term democratic consolidation, it means the deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is "so broadly and profoundly legitimatised among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" (Ouyang, <http://www.oycf.org/perspective/6-063000>). It means a democratic stay that cannot come to an end suddenly or abruptly through unconstitutional acts such as military coups or dictatorships. It implies established stability in governance. This consolidation of democracy involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty.

Originally, the term "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. 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.

Consolidation requires that habituation to the norms and procedures of democratic conflicts regulation will be

developed. A high degree of institutional routinization is the key to such a process.

Several authors have anchored the principal indicator of democratic consolidation on the percentage of voters in a country who consider democracy as an indispensable way of life and are willing to go all lengths to defend it. Nigeria, under the present regime would definitely not rank very high in this regard. For the performance of democracy, the quality of its practice has been measured from the following perspectives: Protection of human rights, defense of justice and equality, responsiveness and effectiveness of governance and nonviolent political expression. Do these characteristics exist in Nigeria's Fourth Republic? Judging from current literature on the subject matter, not many analysts will respond in the positive. Majority of ordinary Nigerians would not subscribe to the notion that since Nigeria is practicing democracy (civil rule), human rights are being protected. Such people argue among others that it is a high-risk in Nigeria to speak out against government misdeeds (freedom of speech), that government officials do not see accountability as a duty they owe the masses. In fact, seven years into the present practice, some analysts posit strongly that it is hard to state that democracy has been consolidated in Nigeria or is likely to be consolidated in the near future, if the available indices subsist.

THE PARTY SYSTEM

Party system refers to the relationship that exists between a country's constitution, the electoral laws, etc and the number of parties that may exist in that country. A political party on the other hand, refers to "any group of politically active persons outside a government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who thereby control the operations of government and determine its policies" (Lemay, 2001).

There are four major party systems from which states choose the one to adopt. These are the zero, one, two and multi-party systems. In a one-party state, only one party is legally permitted to exist (as was the case with the erstwhile USSR, that is, the defunct Communist Party of the Soviet Union, CPSU). In a two-party state, only two parties would be legally allowed to exist (Nigeria's aborted Third Republic). Some authors, for convenience sake equally refer to a two-party state as multi-party. Another more popular and acceptable variant of the definition of a two-party system is that, it is a system in which only two parties are important for the oscillation of power within the polity. Example is Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States of America. If one does not capture power, it is captured by the other almost *ad infinitum* – thus, blurring the reality that other small, insignificant parties exist (for example, Socialist, the

former Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the Progressive Party, etc who occasionally participate in electoral competition). For such countries, two parties are important in influencing the alternation of political power. A multi-party state on a general note refers to one where there is no legal restriction as to the number of parties that are permitted to exist. A multi-party system also permits independent candidates (where available) to canvass for the citizens' votes during elections. Apart from the Babangida's aborted Third Republic referred to above, Nigerian Republics have been multi-party in nature.

THE FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties perform a number of functions in any political system. Some will be mentioned here to buttress their expected contribution(s) to the achievement of a democratically stable polity. Political parties are principal instruments for contesting elections, the election being staged to select candidates as well as parties to exercise political power (authority) (Yaqub, 2002). Recall that in democratic theory analyzed in the body of this work, Schumpeter has stressed so much on this requirement for a system to be tagged truly democratic.

Parties are equally expected to serve as instruments of political education, interest aggregation, political socialization, and political recruitment. Parties are institutions that help organize, move or affect agenda of government, etc. At this juncture, the functions of parties that are in opposition (or those called third-parties in some countries) will be concentrated on. Their functions specifically include educating, articulating and aggregating issues that the parties feel the public is not well informed about or about which they want to make their position clear. In the words of Yaqub (2002): 'It is the basis of competently performing these roles that a political party can stand a good chance of displacing and, thereby, taking power from a political party currently in the saddle'.

In the course of preparing to capture state power and exercise authority in the future, the party must devote its attention to recruiting and training people to occupy political positions in the state. They thus, articulate alternative policies, while serving as legal opposition to the party in power. By performing these functions, it is expected that parties will reduce the incidents of anti-nation building factors like ethnic chauvinism, bigotry and other "communal and cultural intolerance, particularly in ethnically and culturally diverse countries like Nigeria" (Yaqub, 2002). Yaqub warns further that if such parties do not perform their democratic functions, it would not be possible, for instance, to recruit a broad section of the people of the country concerned into the party, nor, as a result, would it be capable of mobilizing and deploying resources to obtain majority votes in support of their programs.

NIGERIAN FIRST REPUBLIC POLITICAL PARTIES

Elsewhere, it has been observed that the bulk of the literature embodying the attempts to explain the character of politics in the Nigerian first republic and the causes of the eventual collapse of that republic has pointed strongly to the factor of ethnic politics, and particularly the nature of the political parties (Ibodje and Dode, 2005). This observation is correct because the political parties of that era were more or less regional political machines established by the then regional political elite to serve their narrow interests in the Nigerian tripod politics.

Hence, that period showcased a party system that projected the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) as the political vanguard of the North, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon later Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) as serving the same purpose for the East, while the Action Group (AG) was shown as fighting for the interest of the Western (Yoruba) people. This anti-democratic characteristic made several analysts to describe the politics of that era as one based on a tripod, which eventually constituted one of the major reasons for the sacking of that republic by the military in the first Nigerian coup of January 15, 1966. Parties thus, failed in their responsibility of contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria's first republic.

PARTIES IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC

It was in response to the problems, which led to the collapse of the party system and the first republic that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime decided to put policies in place that will re-position political parties for national integration. Hence, the military attempted to solve the problem of ethnicity in the formation and management of political parties. In the electoral provisions contained in the transition programme of that period, political parties that were to be registered, were required to have "national spread", to be national in outlook and programme, before being eligible for registration and subsequent participation in election (Ibodje and Dode, 2005). When the ban on partisan politics was lifted, associations cued up for registration as political parties. At the end, five political parties out of fifty political associations that applied for registration were given the nod to function as parties. These parties were the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN); the Nigerian People's Party (NPP); Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). As to the achievement of that departing military administration's objective in registering these parties, Yaqub has this to say: From a variety of analytical standpoints, it was generally accepted that with the exception of the GNPP all the other parties were, to a certain extent, reincarnations of political parties of the moribund first republic... to avoid the more deleterious

effects of the features of the First Republic political parties, the military authority insisted that, for the new parties to be registrable, must have offices in two-thirds of the then existing nineteen States (Yaqub, 2002).

The second republic once more collapsed on 31st December 1983 because of the anti-democratic practices of the party leaders (elites). These leaders used their positions to illegally acquire stupendous wealth through government contracts and other deals as well as massively rigged the 1983 general election, while looking down on the people's interests. The second republic "witnessed the most rapid politics of aggrandizement and open robbery of the treasury" (Yaqub, 2002).

FOURTH REPUBLIC POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

General Babangida who ousted the Buhari/Idiagbon regime on August 27, 1985 inaugurated his administration's forty-six member Political Bureau on September 7, 1987. Recall that the Buhari/Idiagbon coup terminated the Second Republic. The 1989 Constitution that was promulgated by Babangida merely modified most of the contents of the 1979 Constitution. In terms of party formation, the 1989 Constitution (which was never operationalized) and electoral laws differed from those of the second republic by making provision only for two political parties. This was after the disqualification of all the political associations that sought for registration as parties for allegedly being unable to meet the requirements spelt out. The National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) were finally imposed on Nigerians.

True to type, the Babangida regime proved to be what skeptics had always suspected; he developed a scheme aimed at perpetuating himself in office as president. When things got rough for that regime, Babangida was forced to "step aside" on August 20, 1993; after annulling the presidential election of June 12, 1993. The Ernest Shonekan led Interim National Government was replaced in less than six months after its inauguration by General Sani Abacha.

Abacha instituted a National Constitutional Conference Commission, which fashioned a new constitution for consideration by the Abacha junta. This (constitution) and many other political institutions established by that regime, events were to prove, were tailored towards the achievement of the Abacha self-succession bid ("hidden agenda"), like Babangida attempted before him. Under the Abacha's transition programme, eighteen political associations applied for registration as political parties, out of which five were registered, viz: The Congress for National Consensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP).

The anti-democratic, self-succession activities of Abacha were to later negatively impact upon the ability of those political institutions to perform their political functions in a democracy. One of the parties (UNCP) became the major vanguard through which Abacha's self-succession bid was to be realized. In the elections that were conducted from the local government to the national legislature, the UNCP swept more than 80% of the seats. Various analyses of that regime's activities point to the fact that Nigeria was gradually moving towards a one-party State, especially when all the parties finally adopted Abacha as their 'sole' presidential candidate. In the words of Yaqub (2002): For once in the political history of this country, there loomed large the frightening and fiendish prospects of turning Nigeria into a one-party state, given the predominant 'performance' of the UNCP in the largely discredited elections, held from the local government to the national assembly levels. Abacha died in June 1998, before the completion of the electoral process he had set in motion, which was to see him emerge as the sole presidential candidate for the presidential election of that era which ended another era of national deception. A point to note here is that without viable, democratically managed political parties, it will be impossible to have a 'lasting' democracy. Parties are supposed to be the strong pillars and instruments through which democracy can be cultivated and entrenched. While stressing this point, before setting the democratic proceedings that led to the fourth republic gained firm footing, General Abdulsalam Abubakar stated 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 (Gen. Abubakar, 1998)'.

It was in line with the above reasoning that Abubakar dissolved the five political parties registered by the Abacha's regime. He equally cancelled all the elections that were conducted. The Abubakar administration announced that it would not stay in office one day more than was necessary. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) it set up initially granted provisional registration to nine political parties, with the condition that after the local government elections of that year, those that had 10% votes and above in at least 24 states of the Federation would qualify to contest the subsequent State and Federal elections. Eventually, only the Alliance for Democracy, AD, All Peoples Party, APP, and Peoples Democratic Party, PDP were registered.

Some months into the fourth republic, with Obasanjo as President, politicians began to clamour for the registration of more parties. The government refused to register more political parties; hence, unregistered associations went to court and won. Court judgment in favor of political associations thus, opened the floodgate for up to 30 parties by the time 2003 elections took place. The

number has since grown to 50 (2007). Irrespective of this multiplication of parties, the fact on ground shows a picture where apart from a few isolated States in the northern parts of the country, the PDP now controls more than 70% of the Nigerian political offices at the federal, state and local government levels. Kebbi and Jigawa state governors having been blackmailed with EFCC reports on them, have followed PDP advice and crossed carpet en mass with their legislators to the ruling party in preparation for the 2007 election. These data draw a line of similarity of purpose with the Abacha sponsored UNCP, which the people have already alluded to. The 2003 elections was characterized by large-scale electoral fraud on the part of the PDP- led Federal Government, thus, buttressing the accusation that their party wants to be the only political party in Nigeria. It was so bad in some states like Rivers state, which in its Presidential Election results (2003), recorded more votes cast for the Presidential aspirants than the number of registered voters for that State.

The opposition parties (ANPP, AD, APGA, etc) that ought to serve as alternative parties (or to represent "shadow cabinets") have been strategically weakened through the overt and covert activities of the Obasanjo-led PDP. Facts surrounding the recent attempt to get a third term for President Olusegun Obasanjo tended to lend credence to the argument that there is no vibrant opposition party in Nigeria. Like Babangida and Abacha before him, Obasanjo wanted to remain permanently in office by seeking subtly to amend the 1999 Constitution to let him have a third term in office. That attempt and strategy finally failed, but Nigerians should not be surprised at the unfolding of a "Plan B" in future – a projected plan to author pandemonium as an excuse for declaration of a state of emergency and, ultimately, tenure elongation which the third term bid failed legislatively and constitutionally, to achieve. As earlier noted, opposition parties are expected to function as barometers of change in the nation's political mood. When voters become frustrated with, and are alienated from the positions of the ruling party, they should have alternatives to switch to. It is unfortunate to state that in this dispensation (1999 - 2006), this vital democratic content is, to a large extent, lacking in the politics of contemporary Nigeria, although, the nation presently showcases well over forty opposition parties. The implication of these antidemocratic practices is that the likelihood of attaining democratic consolidation in Nigeria looks dim. This is a common characteristic of the present fragmented party system that the country showcases.

Fragmented party system in this work refers to one, which is made up of a large number of opposition parties that are largely divided. Because of these serious divisions, the power of the incumbent party is reinforced, while other parties offer no real opposition in the legislature. Analysts have argued variously from the political economy point of view that this nature of party politics

persists in Nigeria because of the economic weaknesses of the opposition parties (weak economic base). They buttress this argument with the fact that while the ruling PDP can pay generously for her expenses, the opposition are economically weak, hence, people decamp and cross-carpet easily.

What facts are responsible for Nigeria's failure to move towards democratic consolidation? From the analysis so far, these factors include, but are not restricted to, the nature of the present political elite, lack of political ideology, low level of politics of socialization, hangover or lingering effects of military dictatorship, politics of money, corruption, the underdeveloped nature of the legislature, foot-dragging by the judiciary, lack of a vibrant civil society (advocacy) groups, but the one that is of concern in this work; the weak, fractured and uninstitutionalized (fragile) political parties (especially of the opposition).

Contemporaneously, apart from the ruling PDP, no other party seems to have the prospect of winning especially the forthcoming presidential election in Nigeria. Atiku Abubarka and his AC have remained undaunted by Presidential vilification and suppression. Buhari and his ANPP hope to win or at least to profit from Atiku's disqualification. This is so, because of the enormous powers currently welded by Obasanjo who doubles as the national leader of the party (PDP) and the Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He thus, uses the powers and resources of the State at his disposal to protect and project the interest of the PDP above those of other parties and elites - another characteristic of a fragment party system. As a matter of fact, whoever will emerge, as the PDP presidential flag bearer would be rightly addressed as "His Excellency" or "President-in-the-waiting", even before the presidential election comes up in 2007. In 2003 at the Southwest for example, it was widely reported that Obasanjo promised the AD Governors of his support for them if they helped to see him through the presidential election for the second term, since it was his own constituency (Western Nigeria) that voted massively against him during the 1999 presidential election. As soon as that support was given and Obasanjo got re-elected as the President, he reneged on his promise and ensured (through the use of federal might, monetization, and massive rigging of the elections), that the governorship elections in the West (except Lagos) were rigged in favor of PDP candidates. This was achieved with the full support of the political elites and to some extent, the people who had benefited from the largesse of State extended to them by the Presidency. So, where lies democratic competition in Nigeria's Fourth Republic? Apart from the PDP, all the other parties are either in disarray, coma or narrow-based, thus making it difficult for them to resist narrow class or sectional interests. Recent events show that even the so-called majority party (PDP) has been hijacked to the point of projecting only the narrow interest of a clique of individuals, led by President Obasanjo.

Another problem associated with parties that are uninstitutionalized is the prevalence of voter apathy. Uninstitutionalized parties develop shallow roots in the society. This factor has led to a low rate of party identification (in Nigeria) among voters, which also leads to high electoral volatility. This leads to unrepresentative governance and major policy instability. Again, when parties are uninstitutionalized, voters vote according to personal perceptions or connections instead of along party lines. All these lead to the weakening of democratic accountability and violation of the laws by political leaders. When parties generally lack strong institutionalization, they showcase a low level of organization and get hijacked by a few party leaders who dictate for the majority. This is virtually the case with Nigeria's PDP under the leadership of Obasanjo. The PDP has become more or less a political institution controlled solely by Obasanjo and his clients.

With this trend, the result is that it becomes difficult for parties and the nation's democracy to be consolidated and stabilized. Without consolidated and stable parties, voters cannot enjoy effective representation; neither can they be properly organized or mobilized. Political participation can equally not be structured; the weak and mercurial parties (like the JP, APGA, AD, CP) cannot be expected to fulfill the functions of monitoring and checking those in government, how much more of providing alternative governments. Evidentially speaking, Nigeria's fourth republic parties are basically fractured and uninstitutionalized (fragile entities) and have thus, failed in their democratic responsibilities of aggregating social interests, representing specific constituencies, structure votes during elections, and serving as intermediaries between State and society.

Conclusion

From the work, it has come to a conclusion that scholars generally hold the view that a strong party system in a republic is essential for a strong, consolidated democracy. A nation's party system gives shape to citizen participation through the electoral process. It has been equally noted that the dynamics of the party system may either inhibit or exacerbate turmoil and violence in a polity. The nature of politics (of near one-party State), which President Obasanjo and the PDP hierarchy have come to foist on the Nigerian State, is most likely to serve as a clog in the wheel of democratic consolidation in the country.

It has been observed in this work that the nature of political parties of Nigeria's first and second republics led to the collapse of those administrations. Their defect was mostly anchored on the fact that they were ethnically based and ethnically focused in their formation and activities, while the political elite became massively corrupt. The same observation cannot however, be made

about the ruling PDP of the Fourth Republic, which has proved to be a party of strange bed fellows (in its formation) and with time Obasanjo has attained its leadership position, with majority of its founding members (31 out of 34) being systematically forced out of the party. Before they were expelled from the party, such members were charged with anti-party activities. This anti-party activity clause was frequently dangled around any member who challenged Obasanjo on any issue he had taken a position.

Nigeria's democracy is not consolidating as fast as necessary because democratic competition is not yet in place, as it ought to be. The consequence of all these anomalies is that the peoples' interests are abandoned for the achievement of the selfish interest of a few political elite within the ruling PDP. Nigerian democracy is indeed endangered by the undemocratic activities of these party leaders. The study contend that when the principles of equity, equality and fair play are absent in any system, such a democracy cannot be said to have consolidated. What exist under such a system is to a large extent, civil rule, not democracy. Urgent steps must be taken to reverse this negative trend and turn parties into instruments of democratic consolidation. Because of the unfolding nature of the politics of the fourth republic, further research should be encouraged in this area of study. Such assessments will give future analysts ample data as to whether or not Nigerian political parties are contributing to the consolidation of the nation's democracy.

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