

Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Elite Theory Explanation

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Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to examine the impact of political parties on democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (2010 -2019). Political parties are the engine room of democratic societies and without them; there will be no genuine democracy. The Fourth Republic in Nigeria witnessed revitalized activities of political parties after military interregnum. Democratic consolidation largely depends on the character and conduct of the country's political parties, and the paper interrogates the extent to which they have shaped or stagnated democracy. This study adopts elite theory as framework, and was predicated on historical design. Data gathered were textually analyzed. With a reliance on secondary data such as books, journals and internet materials, the interplay between political parties and democratic consolidation was x-rayed. The challenges to democratic consolidation in the period of study (absence of well-institutionalized political parties, godfatherism, and lack of internal democracy) are observable. This research recommends the overhauling of political parties in order to correct the current state of party politics and democratic practice.

Keywords: political parties; democratic practice; internet materials

1. Introduction

Political parties are conventionally noteworthy organizations in democratic societies. Students of political science have usually associated them with democracy itself (Orji, 2013). Political parties, as 'makers' of democracy, have been so idealized that scholars claim that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without them (Omotola, 2009). In other words, the presence of active political parties

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is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any society (Dode, 2010). Well-functioning political parties are vital for the success of electoral democracy and political development in Nigeria (Adetula and Adeyi, 2013). Democracy along with its characteristics of freedom of expression, rule of law, accountability and elective representation has become the conventional system of government all over the world. Democracy as a system of government implies that the power of the political community hinges on popular sovereignty. Elected representatives, in contemporary times, refer to democracy as the means by which the political community expresses its general will.

Democracy in Nigeria has not really been what it is expected to be when compared to what is observable in other parts of the world. “The respect for human rights and the rule of law, which are the main characteristics of democracy, were not visible between 1999 and 2007; election rigging and gangsterism became the order of the day that one can hardly differentiate between democratic government and autocracy (Osabiya, 2015). Accordingly, this author corroborates that in contemporary civilizations, political parties are vital to the political process. Not only are political parties’ instruments for acquiring political power, they are also tools for interest aggregation and the fulfilment of those interests through government control.

Just before the close of the last century, Africa witnessed the “third wave of democratization” so did the rest of the world when authoritarian regimes and unilateral governments were replaced or displaced by civilian governments or administrations through elections. “Ette (2013) described Nigeria as one of the strongholds of dictatorship in Africa caught in the cumulative effect of the wave after years of military dictatorship. After several failed attempts by the past military regimes of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and Sani Abacha, democracy formally gained footing in Nigeria on 29 May 1999.”

The fundamentals of true democracy include good governance, fair and legitimate elections, equity, justice, transparency, accountable leadership, accountability, political education of the common people, respect for the rule of law and cooperation among different branches of government. It is pertinent to observe that the Nigerian media and general speeches of the state often focus on the assertion that Nigeria is “consolidating its democracy”. “According to Momoh (2013), the evidence on the ground, however, contradicts this claim. It is perhaps most appropriate to liken the relationship between political parties and the consolidation of democratic rule in a

particular society to that which exists between the umbilical cord and the foetus (Yagboyaju, 2012).

2. Methodology, Main Argument and Structure of the Paper

The paper adopts the qualitative approach anchored on historical design. Data were collected mainly through secondary sources. The textual analysis of data, major issues and themes of the paper was supplemented with Elite theory as (analytical) framework. These illuminated the discussions, findings and recommendations of the study.

The main argument of this paper is that the lack of robust political culture and poor institutionalizations of political activities/practices conjointly thwart feeble efforts by the political and governing elites at democratic consolidations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The manifestation of this state of affairs are presented in sections 5 and 6 of this paper. The suggestions proffered are capable of attenuating these challenges.

This paper is structured as follows: Abstract; Introduction; Methodology, Main Argument and Structure of the paper; Literature Review; Theoretical Framework and Application of the Theory; Discussion; Challenges to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; Conclusion and Recommendations.

3. Literature Review

The concepts of democracy; political party and democratic consolidation are explained in this section. Other issues discussed include: nexus between political parties and democratic consolidation; activities of political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and relevant empirical literature.

3.1. The Concept of Democracy”

Differing views exist when attempting to define Democracy. This stems from the fact that, there has been no universally accepted definition of the term. Various characteristics rather than definition are mentioned in the discourse on democracy. According to Erunke (2012), democracy is a fluid concept that resulted in several definitions by scholars either in the classical political studies or in the contemporary world of scholarship. “Democracy is a system of government in which the citizens

have the power and choice of either exercising such power directly or elect persons who will represent them or to come together and form a governing body.” It is also known as or referred to as the rule of the majority. Okoli and Gusau (2013) describe democracy as rule by the citizens or citizen’s rule. They view democracy as one of the surviving legacies of the ancient Greek civilization. This is however, not without any partiality to the belief that comparable practices of democracy grew well in other places, even in Africa prior to recorded history. “Huntington (1991) posits that democracy survives where the principal leaders (of a form) of government are chosen through a competitive election during which the majority of the population are enabled to participate. Inherent in this definition is the notion of election as a fundamental element of democracy. It equates democracy to election and therefore the electoral processes during which the making of decision and selection are with the people.” Democracy, to Huntington, revolves around selective procedures, which leaders go through to power. In contemporary times, democracy is perceived to be the most desirable form of government and man’s best idea for governance. Under democratic government, authority is entrenched in the populace.

3.2. The Concept of Political Party

This term has no generally agreed definition. However, political parties are groups organized, with the main intention of contesting, winning elections and taking control of government. To take control of state power is the primary reason for the existence of any political party. A political party is an organized group of people with a minimum of approximately similar political goals and views who aim to influence the general public policy by electing their candidates to position (Likoti, 2005). According to Neumann (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013), “Political party is an organization of the society with active political agents who compete for popular support with another group or persons holding diverse views”. A school of thought sees political party as an “instrument for catching power”. Essentially, a political party is a platform, or apparatus for taking part in the tussle for power, thus “a political party is an agency to mobilize people’s support at the time of elections; it is a tool for aggregation of interests that demand strident articulation” (Johari, 2008).

In addition, Heywood (2002) holds the opinion that a political party is a group of people that is structured solely for the purpose of holding elections or using other means to claim government power. He taxonomizes the characteristics and

functions, and makes a distinction between political parties and other groups. To him, political parties

- are organized bodies with formal card-carrying membership;
- win political offices with the aim of exercising government power by doing so;
- usually takes on a large focus issue, addressing each of the major government policy areas; and
- holds similar political preferences and a broad ideological identity, making them united to some extent.

However, political parties are not subject to only these functions, “they perform other functions that include mediating between citizens and state institutions; recruiting and preparing individuals for political leadership; organizing election campaigns; aggregating societal interests, and providing a participatory, responsive relationship with the people; political recruitment and training; education, socialization, building consensus, providing alternative world views and political communication among others (Pogoson, 2013, p. 4).”

3.3. The Concept of Democratic Consolidation

According to Ademola (2011), for democracy to consolidate, it involves a process of alteration from totalitarian systems to a democratic system, which is vital for a lasting democracy and stable institutions to be established. This author implies that; democratic consolidation is a change from authoritarian system of government to a democratic system of government. However, this view appears shallow, because majority of nations in the world have adopted democracy as a system of government, but can we say that their democracies are consolidated? If citizens cannot enjoy the dividends of democracy, how can we then say that there is consolidation of democracy? The transition from authoritarian regimes should rather be the first step towards consolidation of democracy. Ovwasa and Abdullahi, (2017) argue that democratic consolidation transcends just the shift from totalitarian regime to democratic system, to encompassing that elections be credible, free and fair and to make sure that incumbent political leaders accept the verdict of elections and hand over power to the opposition without violence, when they lose elections.

Okeke (2015) contends that democracy consolidates when it defends people’s rights and the sanctity of ballot. “Democracy is therefore, a system of government and a

system of defense. It is a system for defending the powers of the people against seizure by political thugs. Democracy defends the hopes of a people against onslaught by sundry intruders. Hence, in the context of developing democracies, the stronger the defense mechanisms of democracy, the nearer the tendencies of the system toward democratic consolidation.” In other words, democratic consolidation occurs when people’s desires, choices, aspirations and decisions are well guided, defended, promoted and executed. “

The above explanations on democratic consolidation seem quite elaborate, detailing that democratic consolidation is beyond just political stabilization, and entails economic, social and political life also. Nonetheless, the challenge here is on how to enforce these preconditions in Nigeria where the struggle for power (acquisition) seems to be the major drive and not the consolidation of democracy. Leaders in Nigeria device any means to remain in power, including the manipulation of the populace to believe their lies and fables.

Democratic consolidation ought to constitute a tangible hallmark where the masses are well acquainted with political procedures and norms. This implies that citizens routinise, internalize and habituate these procedures and norms, and these norms must be legitimized by the people. Therefore, democratic consolidation is possible only when the populace is acquainted with political procedures and they must go beyond that into internalizing these processes of democratic values.

3.4. Nexus between Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation

The importance of political parties in a democratic setting cannot be overestimated, they are so important “that neither government nor society can exist without them” (Omotola, 2009, p. 1). However, as important as these political parties are to democracy, Michael (2013, p. 286) opines that for political parties to consolidate democracy, they must strive to be democratic in their operations internally. This is because they are the key instruments for communicating an integral aspect of democratic process and by implication, the fate of democracy and essence of the political system itself lies in the political party’s health and resilience. Democracy relies on political parties to survive; this is because political parties choose, from popular participation of citizens to selection of candidates and the staging of competitive political programmes and the structuring of elections. It is assumed, that

the growth of effective party system is the cornerstone of every government within a democratic setting.

Adejumobi and Kehinde (2007) document some features that political parties must manifest in relation to the consolidation of democracy, namely: be composed of people who are likeminded and share similar world views, must promote set of packages or programmes that represent the vision, mission and manifestoes of the party and are designed to meet the needs of the public; must be mass-based (this helps to legitimize them); must evolve steadily over time, with identifiable leaders who constitute rallying points and they must show some characteristics of intraparty activities in their operations. The democratization procedure can be considered as consolidated when these political parties have established these characteristics for a considerable period.”

3.5. Activities of Political Parties in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic, formation of political parties comprised people from diverse origins and people with diverse opinions. Beginning from the first three political parties of the Fourth Republic, the ruling PDP was described as mixed bag of persons with different ideologies, namely the conservatives, the radicals and the progressives; who not only have a misunderstanding between themselves but also, are engaged in regular quarrels or conflict. The AD was a Yoruba-based party, which was formed to ensure that power returned to the south-west. The composition of APP (later ANPP) are the set of politicians who supported or served under Abacha regime (Adebayo, 2008).

Some members of these political parties often try to display themselves as organizers of the party due to their fame and accumulated wealth; this is because these members want to assume the power and control the party’s machinery. Simbine (2004) postulated that such members “who own” or play vital roles in establishing parties often end up dictating the activities of the party (being dictatorial). For example, in PDP, the former PDP chairman bemoaned some individuals who did not consider themselves as members of the party, but instead wanted to own a part of the party and control the party.

As a result, “the crisis that manifested in the PDP led Simbine (2004) to argue that the party is run as cliques and assemblies with many influential persons posing as members of Board of Trustees and others as elders and leaders of the party. The

coming together of this group of influential persons resulted in the frequent change of leadership of the party. Since the inception of the party to date. From 1998 to 2019, the party has had fourteen different chairmen and at least six of them did not complete their tenures. Besides, the former President Obasanjo and his then deputy (Atiku) had an internal dispute on the issue of zoning and this nearly tore the party to shreds.”

Additionally, the acts of god father that exists in these political parties emasculates them. Such godfather’s activities have negative impact on democracy by limiting the participation of people as electors or candidates. Ogundiya (2009:286) describes god fatherism as “an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest”. The intervention of godfathers in political parties has practically obstructed the party system as a medium for aggregating local or constituent interests.

The constant intra-party wranglings that occurred from 1999 show to an extent, that parties in Nigeria most likely spend more time settling disputes and reconciling feuding members rather than creating programmes that would actually benefit the electorates. Likewise, it is evident that these parties have failed in the use of negotiations in solving their internal crisis and it is therefore antithetical to democratic consolidation. It is not surprising that none of the parties has been able to hold together without severe conflicts that often threaten their very existence (Simbine, 2013, p. 18).”

On the matter of ideology, the argument is that in Nigeria, political parties possess none. “All the sixty-three parties ranging from the party in power presently (APC) to the outermost (party with no single elective seat) failed to identify with one ideology. On this issue of ideological emptiness, Simbine (2005) averred that most of these parties were only seeking cheap publicity, and come up with the ambition to satisfy those not accommodated in the older parties.” However, fifteen years after Simbine’s postulation, the situation remains the same, as more parties that are formed do not operate on convincing ideologies and as such, just occupy space in the political arena.

This issue of non-existent party ideology can be explained by looking at the relations between the executive and the legislature. “Even though, the PDP dominated the National Assembly between 1999 and 2015(before this present administration under Buhari from another party), the executive often found it difficult to get enough

support that would result in the smooth passage of bills. This state of affairs between the executive and legislature, was due to the feebleness of the political party and this subsequently fuelled the impeachment saga in the Fourth Republic. For instance, in less than a year, the first senate president and the speaker of the House of Representatives were removed from their posts.” The wind of impeachment even occurred at the executive and legislative levels of governments. In Abia state, for example, the period between August 1999 and June 2000 saw the speakers of state assembly replaced twice (Omotola, 2008). Adejumobi and Kehinde (2007) capture the implications of the frequent impeachment thus: “firstly, it diverted the attention and energies of the main players within the parties, shifting their focus from the desperately needed internal party organization and election preparation. Secondly, this highlighted the non-adherence to due process and the rule of law. Thirdly, in the political climate, it generated uncertainty, anxiety and stress and slowed preparations for the elections. Fourthly, it created an uneven playing field between and within political parties for actors.”

Currently, the main opposition party in Nigeria lacks the courage to stick to its positions on certain pending political issues because it concerns the citizenry. Several of these parties’ goals are politically motivated. Opposition parties in Nigerian democracy remained ineffective due to their inability to form coalitions that would give the ruling party a strong opposition and make them follow the rule of the game for citizens to enjoy the benefits of democracy. Scholars stressed the need for alternative policies in Nigeria, stressing that if the politicians are failing the people, it is the responsibility of the opposition to step in, in a credible, robust, articulate, clear and coherent manner, to provide alternative policy options on how to deal with the challenges that confronts the country and majority of Nigerians (Isakpa, 2008, p. 37).”

Political parties due to their various undemocratic activities witnessed unhealthy intra-party competition during the election process, the venue of party primaries was often turned into violent gatherings. For instance, in Benue state, fighting erupted in Aliade town, on 9 December 2006, after PDP allegedly reversed the results of the state assembly primary, replacing the winner - Tsetim Ayarger with Ashema Chado (Echem, 2014).”

3.6. Empirical Review on Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation

Dode's (2010) thesis presents a vital dimension of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, which is about the role of the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) in general and former President Olusegun Obasanjo in promoting the country's restoration of democracy in particular. It is observable that there is a clear connection between the character and actions of the political parties of a nation and the degree of stability of democracy in that country." Also, there are claims that Nigeria has not ranked strong several years after the 'democratic' dispensation when put in the same matrix as countries moving to stable democracy. "The democratic theory propounded by Joseph Schumpeter was adopted as the study's theoretical basis in attempting a discussion on this topic. From that study, some research questions were raised thus: is Nigeria's Fourth Republic full of political rivalry? Are opposition parties alive to their political responsibilities in the country? Dode (2010) further argues that more than ninety percent of Nigeria's political parties are weak institutions and have thus, established only superficial roots in society, concluding that Nigerian political parties have failed in their civic duties of aggregating common interests, serving communities and functioning as intermediaries between the state and community; which are the tenets of democracy consolidation."

Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) captures the elements that decided party candidates' emergence and the effect of the intra-party dispute on Nigeria's political consolidation. From independence in 1960, this area of political process has been a clog on the wheel of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Most studies stress the theories of democracy and political parties, with little or no consideration given to party politics (intra-politics) with regards to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. "Nonetheless, the study results found that 95 percent of respondents accepted that wealth and class were the main factors that undermined or decided the candidates' position in Nigerian elections, although 90 percent of respondents also accepted that, the influence of incumbency and godfatherism significantly influenced the candidates' emergence. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents accepted that tribalism, nepotism and sectionalism were major factors affecting the intra-party conflicts in Nigeria. He however concluded that party politics has negative consequences on political stability in Nigeria. This author argues, among other issues, that intra-party rivalry among political parties constitute serious impediment to deepening democracy. Political parties were regionally based in the First and Second Republics of Nigeria and their practices then contributed to the breakdown

of democratic practice. The existence of vibrant political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity (Dode, 2010).”

Akubo and Yakubu (2014) affirm that the roles played by political parties are vital in every nation’s democratization. The cardinal and strategic roles of this essential and fundamental institution of democratization which is germane to its growth are central to the achievements and failures of democratic politics. “The study carefully looked at the relationship between political parties in the democratic consolidation of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, with heavy reliance on secondary data supported by the analytical approach. The culmination of the study are the problems that have threatened the consolidation of democracy since the beginning of the fourth republic, namely the lack of institutionalization and personalization of political parties; godfatherism; intra-party conflict within political parties and ongoing party/political abuse.” Nigeria’s party system is already fragile and unstable, with no clear signs of benefit to consolidating democracy. It was recommended that questions of organizational capability, efficient leadership, intra-party conflict, accountability, institutionalization and personalization, political mobilization mechanisms, and linkages to the common people and civil society be discussed, and solutions proffered.

4. Theoretical Framework and Application of Theory

The elite theory has various versions and has been popularized by different scholars starting from that formulated by Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto to those of Wright Mills, Raymond Aron, Roberto Michels and Floyd Hunter. These different versions will however be combined in a bid to serve as framework of analysis. Two Italian sociologists first developed this theory, namely: Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. The earlier versions of the theory emphasized personal attributes of leaders, which aided their hold or dominance in power positions. Later versions dwelt more on the institutional framework of society. (Haralambos & Heald, 1999, p. 107).”

According to Pareto, elite means the small number of individuals who, in each sphere of activity, have succeeded and have arrived at a higher stratum in the professional hierarchy. He further divides the elite class into two: a governing elite and Non-governing elite.

Pareto’s focus of inquiry was on the ruling elite, which, he believed, rules by a mixture of force and cunningness (Varma, 2006). This position exposes the

characteristics of some Nigerian leaders, particularly the retired military generals and top government officials who have joined the political scene. This typifies Roberto Michels "Iron Rule of Oligarchy." Using their Party as well as the role of a 'General' to bully others, these persons were on top of their careers from all possible signs but always cling very closely to the country's rulership. The argument here is that political parties are no longer working as planned, precisely because the few makes decisions and distribute resources. This has also hindered the development of the country's democratic process. "According to Roberto Michels (cited in Varma 2006), every institution, whatever its original intentions, is inevitably reduced to 'oligarchy,' that is, the law of the few chosen. Michels maintained that most human beings are apathetic, indolent, and slavish. They are ineligible for self-government. Therefore, they have to rely on their members to achieve their social goals. The platforms for this representation are labour unions, political parties and other organizations. According to the elite theorists, these oppressive strategies of the bourgeoisie by the democratic elites exist as the elites are more organized and have class-consciousness.

Furthermore, as a movement or party grows in size, more and more roles tend to be assigned to an inner circle of leaders and, over time, the organization's members are made less capable of guiding and managing them, as a result of which the officers achieve greater freedom of action and develop interest in their roles. They desperately cling to their current powers and privileges, and become nearly irremovable. "If laws are passed to control the dominion of leaders, it is the laws that weaken slowly, not the leaders" (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013a). It is important to note that elitist classifications are not mutually exclusive in the sense that an individual elite can fall into more than one class. Such grouping also sometimes differs. For example, the military elite may also qualify as political elite during a military regime, particularly when he is involved in the authoritative allocation of state resources (Varma, 2006). The implication of the above is that because elitist classifications are not mutually exclusive, it means that the political elites may easily rely on other elitist class to elicit support for the gaining power. In Nigeria, this is evident in the context of traditional rulers manipulating support for political candidates or bureaucratic leaders controlling the electoral process in order to retain their jobs." In addition, political elite aspiring to elective offices used money on many occasions to purchase votes and influence election results (Ayoade, 2008). "Partisan thugs and hooligans are often recruited to destroy and snatch ballot boxes to cause chaos during

elections. Dudley (cited in Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013a) views instability in Nigeria as a consequence of the elite's constitutional impropriety."

In Nigeria, the elite's actions and inputs are so pronounced that election results are decided before the conclusion of a recruitment process or election and if there is a contrary outcome on the proposed outcomes, the elites seek to use economic and political means to manipulate the outcomes. "This was quite widespread both at the state level and at national level during the elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007. One case in mind is the political dispute between the then Party Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Audu Ogbeh, and former President Olusegun Obasanjo, which resulted in the former Party Chairman being forcefully removed (cited in Aleyomi, 2013). This manifests in party cross-carpeting, factional executives that snowballed into dual or multiple executives within the same political party. Therefore, the inference is that the political elites are so powerful either as a way to reach out to the masses or by electoral manipulation to gain political power. This describes how political parties focus on the bourgeoisie in terms of articulation and accumulation of interest, to the detriment of the masses. From the foregoing theoretical exposition, Elite theory has proved relevant to explain the relationship between political parties and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

5. Discussion

5.1. Political Parties Internal Democracy and Democratic Consolidation

Amusan (2011) posits that principles such as inclusiveness, decentralization, commitment to rules and procedures of party operations if given due attention and properly adhered to by political parties will result in political sustainability, stability, foster deliberations, bring consensus among party leaders and cadres and will make organizational structure of the party more cohesive in the competition for power. The question then is: are political parties Nigeria ready to strive for democratic consolidation? Looking critically at Amusan's averments, it is the responsibility of political parties to provide avenues for democratic consolidation by adhering to these principles. Amusan (2011:61) buttresses that openness within the political party by political leaders through balanced representative system that cuts across various ethnic, religious and marginalized groups based on bottom-top system is what would entrench the activities of political party. He adds that the input and output functions

of a political party should not be controlled by a faction for their narrow-minded objectives which are designed mainly to perpetuate them in power. The critical question is, would Nigerian political leaders allow openness and transparency above their selfish ambitions, desires and interest?

The essence of internal party democracy, Momodu and Matudi (2013, p. 7) contend is basically to create level playing field for the active participation of every member in the party affairs and to build a cohesive party that is vibrant enough to win election and as such provide a strong government committed to quality service delivery that will meet the needs and yearnings of the citizens. Omotola (2010) affirms that political party's decision-making structures and processes should provide opportunities for individual citizens to influence the choices that parties offer to voters. This converges with the views of Momodu and Matudi (2013) on the potency and benefits of inclusive decision-making process in boosting party activities. Mike (2016) submits that internal democracy of political parties have significant impact on democratic consolidation and representation, because internal party organizational issues such as membership, recruitment, socialization, training, discipline and resources of the party have profound influence on electoral outcomes and where political parties are weak and ineffective, politics is reduced to free opportunism and open self-serving interest of individual politicians who may derail the nation-building process and the democratic project.

According to Awofeso, Obah-Akpowoghaha and Ogunmilade (2017), internal democracy involves party's selection of candidates, consultation, internal principles of party discipline and sanction, promotion of party's ideology and accountability. To Hallberg (2008) cited in (Babayo and Muhammad, 2019:118), two major methods of promoting internal democracy, are the advocacy and legal/regulatory measures which include selection of party leaders, party representative for election, collective decision making and peaceful negotiation. The second aspect which is the legal/regulatory entails the party's constitution, regulations, governing representation, minority consideration, negotiation and punishment for members. Babayo and Muhammad (2019:117) assert that for political parties to avoid and manage conflict in order to prevent subjective decision or imposition of candidates against the majority members wish, party members must work within the ambit of laid down procedures and principles of mutual decision. They further posit that internal democracy gives avenue for proper recruitment of members, political socialization, training, discipline, accountability and transparency, with ultimate effect of meeting the yearnings of the citizenry.

5.2. The Impact of Political Parties on Democratic Consolidation

There is a general agreement among political analysts that without the effective participation of political parties, democratic consolidation would be impossible. Political parties are major components in legitimizing control of political office and are the sole means of translating electoral outcomes into effective action. Przeworski (1991:10) argues thus: “In a democracy, multiple political forces compete inside an institutional framework”, and furthers thus: “Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions, a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions and democracy is consolidated with compliance – acting within the institutional framework – constitutes the equilibrium of the decentralized strategies of all the relevant political forces.” For a fully unified democracy to occur, democratic process need to be developed into the very first level of political organization and that includes the grassroots. “

A pattern has emerged since the commencement of the Fourth Republic that suggests that elites in the political scene have not learnt much from the mistakes of the past. The cross-carpeting of some governors and defections in the National Assembly which is part of the various crisis affecting the major parties are graphic instances of political elites having learnt nothing from their mistakes of the past. Another prominent feature in all the major parties is the lack of party discipline and fictionalization within the parties are the fallouts of indiscipline among party members (Mike, 2016). The phenomenon of carpet crossing and decamping has been aided by the registration of new parties. These actions portend dangers for democratic consolidation. These trends show how political parties through their internal and external conduct have impacted democratic consolidation. It is sad, however, that most of the impacts tend to be negative rather than positive and this hampers the chances of democratic consolidation.

6. Challenges to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

6.1 Lack of Institutionalization and Personalization of Political Parties

Parties in Nigeria have not been able to attain the expected degree of institutionalization especially in the areas of discipline and internal cohesion. This inadequacy has also diminished conflict management capacities at both inter and intra-party relations levels (Akubo & Yakubu, 2014). The level of crisis at both levels of party relations is worrisome. It is such that none of the parties have been able to hold together without severe conflict that most times threaten their very existence (Simbine, 2013:18). Party and party system institutionalization is measured by the internal and external activities of parties. Internal refers to all those factors that relates to party organization, such as internal democracy, adaptability, finance, complexities, and external refers to the relationship of parties with their external environment (Kura, 2011, p. 270).

The way political parties operate internally and how power is configured led to huge organizational weaknesses and conflicts internally. The parties have, in particular, been blighted by expulsions and suspensions of party members, cross carpeting particularly prior to elections and deep divisions and factions that have resulted in violent clashes (Ikelegbe, 2013, p. 18). During elections, intra-party violent conflicts tend to rise particularly due to the favored candidates being imposed and party chieftains swapping nominated candidates dubiously." Ikelegbe (2013, pp. 18-19) posits that due to the absence of egalitarian platforms and the will of ordinary party members and delegates in party primaries being subverted, several party leaders and members have been grieved and this has led to many of them defecting and cross-carpeting. More empirically, the degree of party and party system institutionalization in a state shows whether political parties in that state are able to perform these functions effectively or not (Kura, 2008).

6.2. Godfatherism

Godfatherism has become a prevalent characteristic of the party system in Nigeria. Ayoade states that godfather is "a benign political accretion of the position of either political notables or dreaded political rascals who are recalcitrant to the deterrence of the legal regime" (2008: 85). Godfatherism has been described as "an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who

wins in an electoral contest” (Ogundiya, 2009, p. 286). “To Ayoade (2006), godfatherism is not an act of philanthropy; it is marked by undemocratic acts and devious acts such as bribery, violence and corruption, all for the sake of pursuing the interests of the political godfather. There is a relationship of dependence between the godfather and the godson: the godfather ‘invests’ his resources in the godson and the godson must, or at least should, on getting into office return the harvests of the godfather’s investments by reimbursing him in kind and staying loyal to the godfather in all respects, including his decision making while he remains in public office. The key goal of all godfathers is rule by proxy or rule through protégés (Ojo and Lawal, 2013, p. 187).

Godfather politics typically ensures that even when there is no evidence that voting actually took place, results are still declared. It plays electoral politics with little or no respect for the established rules of conduct that governs the procedure, and does not display any sense of moral restraint in its appreciation of what constitutes appropriate behavior in a democratic political order.” Whether at the level of general or at the intra-party elections, the declared losers always dispute the elections results and it is no longer surprising. This is visible with the fact that, the three presidential elections that took place between 1999 and 2011 have been the subject of judicial intervention (Abutudu, 2013, pp. 10-11). “

Political parties being the subject of hijacking by godfathers have suppressed the party system as a channel for the aggregation of constituency or local interests. These parties then operate based on the preferences or personal interests of the godfather. Therefore, because godfathers influence the internal workings of political parties significantly, they are involved in the stability or otherwise of these parties unknowingly or deliberately. Godfathers have influence and power and therefore continue to shape and reshape the nature of internal democracy within political parties and this continues to play a significant role in understanding the crises in political parties in Nigeria (Momoh, 2013, p. 16).” There are other challenges to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, which are; incessant political violence, poverty, corruption, insecurity, incumbency factor, electoral malpractice, voters’ apathy, gender issues among others

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the perspective of elite theory, it is observable that the mechanism for elite recruitment in Nigeria is exclusive of the input of the masses. This no doubt has led to the recycling of political actors, and when new elites emerge, they are merely representing the interest of the political elite through the maintenance of status-quo in social relations. Thus, this dysfunctional social relations in terms of governance could be checked if political elites are recruited through an open process that is inclusive of the masses, and positive efforts are required on the part of the political parties to ensure the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Adherence to the rule of law, protection of life and property and respect for fundamental human rights are major features of democracy. Therefore, for democracy and democratic consolidation to flourish in the country, the principles of democracy must be imbibed and deepened. The value orientation of the political elites in the country needs to be changed for democracy to be consolidated in the country. The ideological bases of political parties in the country that facilitates political wandering must be jettisoned. Also, the national assembly should consider enacting a law to reduce the frequency and the simplicity of carpet-crossing.

Political parties should practice internal democracy within their structure and how they function, especially when it comes to selecting candidates within the party and for elections. Members of political parties should subject themselves to their party's constitution. Personal interests of politicians should be subordinated to the larger interest of the political party, members of parties should be treated equally, and fairly in order to create a level playing field and encourage participation, in order to cultivate and entrench stable democratic culture that is predicated on constitutionalism and robust political institutionalization.

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