

Political Party System in Nigeria and the Inherent Corrupt Practices: The Case of People's Democratic Party

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Abstract

The paper argues that there are inherent corrupt tendencies in all Nigerian political parties right from the first republic. It looks at the basic features and characteristics of party systems. The paper traces the evolution of political parties and party politics in Nigeria and establishes that the Macpherson constitution of 1951 was an important landmark in the political development of Nigeria, for it strengthened the political machinery through which Nigerians participated in the formation of political parties. It further argues that from the first political parties in pre-independence to all the republics, the parties have one characteristic-inherent corrupt practice. The paper argues that the People's Democratic Party in spite of being in power since the return of democracy in 1999, and in spite of its claim to rule Nigeria for the next 60 years, it does not exhibit any democratic credentials. The paper however concludes that, it is not the party per se that is bad but its principal leaders. Therefore, it suggests that the party works from within to cause a change in its character and modus operandi.

Introduction

The failure to establish a stable Democratic Party system in Post Independence Africa has brought to focus a rethinking on the nature of party systems in Africa and Nigeria in particular. In the quest to attain a democratic society, African countries have experimented with different types of party systems, which have not been able to ensure political stability. Currently, Africa is under pressure from the West to adopt a multi-party system as an essential ingredient of the ongoing democratization process. In spite of the current and past experiences the prospects for stability appear elusive and party systems are yet to have the guise of civilian democracy. Moreover, the role of elections in a democracy as means of articulating popular will, peaceful regime change and legitimacy are being questioned.

In this paper we look at Nigeria's experience with political party systems from pre and post independence periods. It will examine by conceptual analysis, the role and functions of political parties. It will also look at the evolution of political parties and politics in Nigeria. It will take an in-depth look at the formation of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and how it has led to the consolidation of democracy in the country. Finally, we shall attempt some recommendations.

Party System: A Conceptual Analysis

Political parties manifest in varying degrees. According to Chizea (2004), it is one aspect of western political history. In spite of the western origin, the form and structure which political parties assume in most developing countries are located in the peculiar and specific

historical factors that gave rise to them. Thus, in Africa and most developing societies, the party system was informed by the colonial state structures and the response of the indigenous social forces. Hence in Africa we have had caricatures of the metropolitan political party systems shaped substantially by post-colonial authoritarian states.

In some countries, the idea of the existence of political parties is yet to find practical expression in their political processes. Here organized parties and legally sanctioned opposition parties do not exist. Political leaders in such countries do not encourage the notion of popular participation as part of the process of governance.

Furthermore, authoritarian regimes employ political parties as tools for limiting and restraining political activities in a country. Neumann (1977) opines that, "political parties are the life line of modern politics," yet they are highly misconceived for most of the time as an organization for the professional politician. However, parties are of critical importance to any democratic process. For it is through the activities of political parties that the dynamic features of any political system can be understood.

Neumann (1977) defines political party as an articulate organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group(s) holding divergent views. Therefore, the party is seen as the great intermediary that links social forces and ideologies to official government institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community.

Regardless of the type of party that

exists or dominates, parties share similar features in respect of inducing participation in the decision making process and in mobilizing the people for political action. Parties do control and consciously influence social and political forces.

A party system indicates and describes the behavior of individual parties in their quest for control of political space and power. The party system also refers to how political parties in a country relate to the existing electoral laws in the struggle for political power. This also includes the nature of alliances or coalitions, their strength and weaknesses and nature of the electoral law. Party systems are generally the outcome of long drawn historical and political struggles among the various social groups in their quest for political and social dominance.

There are three major party systems-the one party, two party and the multi-party systems. The one party system is one in which a single party monopolizes the entire seats in the national legislature. An important aspect of the single party system lies in how it is created and sustained. In some countries there is the tolerance of opposition parties but such parties are unable to make their presence felt in terms of popular support. However, the most common feature of single party systems is characterized by the banning of opposition parties, coercing opponents to join the government party or enacting laws which forbid competition. In most one party systems a distinction can hardly be made between the party and the state.

One of the major justifications for the existence of the one party system is the unifying and stabilizing influence they exert. Loyalty to the nation is presented as

inseparable from the loyalty to the party. Any attempt at questioning the unity is threatened with reprisals from security agents of the state. The party is therefore employed as a potent instrument for propagating the ideology of national unity. According to Dudley (1973), any single party system that "reflects the structure of society" must meet the requirements of both horizontal and vertical competition.

A two party system is when only two political parties are allowed to operate in a country. However, there exist side by side fringe parties. For instance, in the United States, smaller parties exist alongside the Democratic and Republican Parties. The two party system can be understood from the point of view that political choices are made between two alternatives. In this sense one can speak of the existence of a "dealing of tendencies" rather than a "duality of parties".

In a Liberal democratic setting, a two party system requires the tolerance of the opposition and an acceptance of the rules of the game. The success of a democratic two party system depends on the mutual acceptance by the actors of the fundamental principles of society. Therefore, the two party system rests on consensus building; it places less emphasis on ideology and emphasises a system of concessions and patronage.

Multi-party system on the other hand means more than two political parties existing in a country. Multi-party system manifests in several of ways, in form and numbers. There is no limit to the number of parties in a multi-party system. Multi-partism is an indication that no one party can dominate parliament or obtain a majority of seats in the legislature. It is thus argued by Chizea (2004) that, multiparty systems are an expression of

fundamental, cultural and ideological divisions within society. Where these divisive factors exist, the necessary consensus for bringing about a stable system would become elusive.

Lipset (1968) argues that there is a corresponding relationship between a stable democracy and the level of economic development. In the sense that in developed economies the pattern of resources allocation creates "a relative large middle class" and therefore studies class consciousness. Therefore, in developed democracies, party systems that have merged are in response to the extent to which the various segments of society have come to accept prevailing values. The size and number of parties in a multiparty system and the aversion to compromise tend to exacerbate the ideological aspect of the conflict. Thus, multiparty system may give rise to a relatively stable coalition, which represents the major groupings of society and leads to peaceful change of government.

Functions of Political Parties

The basic function of political parties is to galvanize public opinion. They are brokers of ideas, constantly clarifying, systematizing and expounding the party's doctrine. They represent social groups, narrowing the gap between individuals and the community. By educating the voters, parties help to create opportunities for free choice, especially in a competitive party system. A political party thus is seen as the major instrument for facilitating competition.

Political parties also play integrative roles. They integrate the individual into the community. Parties ensure that the individual remains within

the bonds of group or community interest. For most of the times, parties extract loyalties from the individual bearing in mind the survival of the whole democratic system. Thus, parties represent the connecting link between government and public opinion. It is a vital element of the party's responsibility to keep open the channel of communication between the leaders and followers.

Another important function of a political party is the selection of leaders. The process of choosing a leader is informed by the need to choose between alternatives. Thus, democracy implies the presence or existence of an informed electorate and an enabling environment for these democratic principles to thrive.

Furthermore, all political parties play the role of guaranteeing and protecting a given political and legal order. How this political function is effected depends on the means and procedures it employs in carrying it out. The means and procedures can be intended for reactionary or progressive ends. For according to Gramsci (1977), the policing function of a party can be progressive when it tends to keep the dispossessed reactionary forces within the bounds of legality, and to raise the backward masses to the level of the new legality.

Gramsci further argues that a party which is progressive in the function is democratic in nature and operates on the basis of democratic centralism. While the regressive party functions bureaucratically and operates on the principles of bureaucratic centralism. At times social groups employ the political party as a vehicle for the expression of their ideological dominance over society. Parties are also the tools for performing similar functions within the state and over

a wider political terrain. It brings together various tendencies within the party into a united front.

Also, political parties mobilize the electorates to queue behind candidates for the purpose of elections. This may be categorized as the aggregation and articulation of public interests. Political parties thus epitomize or reflect the socio-political characteristics of the polity.

Again, parties serve as institutions for obtaining and retaining political order. Except in an exceptional situation of a coup d'etat or revolution, it is usually inconceivable for an individual or a group of people to acquire political power or ascend to political office without going through the conventional democratic situation of being nominated or sponsored by a political party.

Another very important function of a political party is serving as an agent of enlightenment to all populace. They interpret political issues and programmes to their supporters. They simplify the intricate and complex policies of the state for the benefit of the electorate (Dumoye, 1980).

Succinctly, therefore, political parties simplify political issues and often proffer alternatives, recruit political leadership, moderate and compromise political conflicts, organize the machinery of government, and promote political legitimacy. Above all, a dynamic political party with articulate leadership can give the necessary ideological direction to people through its programmes, the caliber of its officials and its performance, either in or out of government (Amdi, and Hinjan, 1990).

Evolution of Political Parties and Party Politics in Nigeria

The Macpherson constitution of

1951 was an important landmark in the political development of Nigeria for it strengthened the political machinery through which Nigerians participated in the management of their own affairs. The constitution ushered in an era of party organizations (Price, 1967). However, before the Macpherson constitution, there were ethnic cultural associations, which were formed to articulate parochial tribal interests. When it was time for the British to encourage political participation, then, these tribal associations were converted into political parties.

Thus, the Action Group (AG) was an off-shoot of "Ogbe Ome Oduduwa" the association of the descendants of Oduduwa founded in 1947 by Chief Obamemi Awolowo (Dudley, 1982). The main objective of the party was to promote the interests of the Yorubas, and to seek control of the Western Nigeria regional government. It was similar to the Northern People's Congress (NPC) also an off shoot of "Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa"-the association of people of the North formed in 1948 by A.T. Balewa, to protect the interest of the North against the fast changing political scene in Nigeria. No wonder, the motto of the party was "one North, one people".

The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944 by Herbert Macaulay together with his nationalist friends. It was a nationalistic and mass based party composed of trade unions, ethnic associations and youth movements. After the death of Herbert Macaulay in 1947, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe took over the leadership of the party. However, the pan-Nigerian character of the party was compromised with the formation of the Ibo State Trade Union, an Igbo Federation which soon

took over control of the NCNC. (Amdi, 1990:88)

From this point, the tripartite model of the politics of Nigeria was established, each giving allegiance to their parties and regions, thereby throwing Nigeria into dysfunctional socio-political variables with dirty politics and tribalism (Richard, 1992).

Political Parties in the Second Republic

When the ban on politics was lifted in 1977, over forty political associations were formed. But only five of these associations were registered. Attempts were made to ensure stability despite the preference of the state for polipartism. However, political parties that emerged were reincarnations of the pre-1966 ones. For examples:

1. National Party of Nigeria (NPN)=Northern People's Congress (NPC)
2. Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)=Action Group (AG)
3. Nigerian People's Party (NPP)=National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon
4. Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)=Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)

Therefore, ethnic and religious sentiments were exploited to canvass support to the extent that the parties eventually won in their various regions. For instance, the UPN won exclusively in Yoruba land, NPP in Ibo land, NPN in Hausa states, GNPP in former Gongola and Bornu States (Kanuri area) and PRP mainly in Kano State.

As the built up for the 1983 elections drew near, class contradictions

had deepened to the extent of an alignment and realignment of forces for the control of access to state power and national revenue. Hence, there was a lot of cross carpeting from one party to another. This period witnessed expulsions for undermining and jeopardizing party interests.

As a result of the general crisis of the economy, the contradiction within and between the ruling groups and that between the masses of the people and the state deepened. The struggle for political power heightened and became ferocious. The country was on the brink of a fascist dictatorship as exhibited by the blatant disregard for civilized political and economic conduct on the part of the ruling political parties in their domain (Moti, 2008).

Political Parties in the Third Republic

Following the lifting of the ban on political activities in 1989, about fifty political associations emerged, but only thirteen were able to apply for registration because of very stringent NEC conditions. Of these, the People's Solidarity Party (PSP), scored 43.9%; Nigeria National Congress (NNC), 42.6% and People's Front of Nigeria (PFN), 41.2% by the conditions set for registration. (Ikelegbe, 1995)

However, rather than register two of the political associations as required, the government decided to establish two new parties, gave them names, wrote their constitutions and programmes, designed their structures and deployed civil servants to organize them. The two parties were: Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC).

In spite of this arrangement, the

two parties still toed the line of the first and second republic parties. For instance, the SDP comprised a large chunk of the defunct UPN, GNPP, NPP PRP and the alliances of UPGA and PPA, while the NRC seemed to have been contrived even by name and composition from the Nigerian National Congress, Liberal Convention and Republic party associations which were not registered in 1989. The party also comprised a sizeable number of the NPN, NNDP, NPC and NNA parties and alliances (Moti, 2008).

It should be pointed out that, in assessing the nature of imposed social or political structures like a political party, evidence shows that such structures lack credibility and legitimacy. Their survival and acceptance will depend on the use of coercive forces. Thus, the entire notion of imposing political parties on society negates the very essence of political parties. Parties are supposed to be voluntary associations of groups with similar world views coming together for the purpose of contesting for power. But, when parties are imposed they undermine the principles of free association and expression of opinion, they become dysfunctional.

Therefore, certain curious developments began to manifest as the parties were preparing themselves for election. Members of the dissolved political associations began to infiltrate the two parties and their presence introduced again the known tensions and cleavages that attend party politics in Nigeria. Consequently, the old political vices of intolerance, intimidation, extensive violence and rigging became a prominent feature of both intra and inter-party elections of the two government parties.

Again, the political parties did not focus on real issues and policy. This was as a result of the bareness of ideas within the two political parties and the militaristic nature of the transition programme which made the candidates to be extremely careful of what may offend the Babangida regime. Most of the candidates acted as proxy for the banned politicians, the result was that the nature and character of political campaigns took the form of previous ones. Its characteristics according to Chizea (2004) were political thuggery, violence, the monetization of politics and the use of ethnicity and religion.

However, to be fair to the two political parties, the election results indicated that there was a new trend in the voting pattern in Nigeria. Both parties had national spread in terms of their performance and the results of the presidential election accepted by both parties.

Political Parties in the Fourth Republic

Following the collapsed of the Third Republic and the emergence of General Sanni Abacha's military regime in November 1993, the nation was returned to a multi-party system. The following parties were registered.

- The United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP)
- The Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN)
- The National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN)
- The Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM)
- The Congress for National Consensus (CNC)

Abacha's sudden death in June 1998 however, led to the dissolution of the five political parties. A new political transition programme was put in place by Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar scheduled to terminate in May 1999. A multi-party system of government was again endorsed. Three out of nine political associations that contested the local government elections in Dec. 1998 were finally registered as new political parties. These were: People's Democratic Party (PDP); All People's Party (APP); and Alliance for Democracy (AD).

The PDP comprises mainly old political parties within it. It contains NPC-NPN-NRC, NCNC-NPP, NEPU-PRP, BYM-GNPP, UMBC-UNDP, PF, SDP, NRC etc. The AG-UPN is the only party formation that is not in the PDP. The PDP emerged the dominant party in all the elections and the party controlled majority seats in Local Councils, States and National Assemblies. It won the presidential election and 21 state governorship elections. The other parties, APP and AD did not enjoy wide support. In particular, the AD's support was limited to the South-West where it won majority seats. Thus many people described it as a Yoruba party.

However, by August 2002 other three parties namely: United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP); National Democratic Party (NDP) and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) were registered. Again, in December, 2002, the number of registered parties rose to 30. As of now there are about 54 registered political parties in Nigeria.

It should be noted that the struggle against prolonged military rule led by pro-democracy activists culminated in the current civilian rule in Nigeria. The

transition to civil rule was a compacted one which regime change is effected through compromise and negotiation. Unfortunately, those who led the struggle against the dictatorship were excluded when the bastion was inaugurated. The beneficiaries of the bastion process were the most rabid and bankrupt politicians ever known to the country (Chizea, 2004).

Therefore, the negative and adventurist type of politics have come to substantially influence the nature and character of parties and the party system. The current party system negates the basis of the aggregative function of political parties. Nigerian current political parties, especially the leading ones are structures created by the ruling elite for reproducing exploitative social relations, advancing ethno-religious goals and neoliberal economic policies. The People's Democratic Party is a gathering of strange bed fellows without a (common) vision for the country.

People's Democratic Party in Nigeria's Democracy

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) is Nigeria's ruling party in the fourth republic. It was founded in 1998 by a group of Nigerians who were bonded by their conviction in the unity of Nigeria and the need for a broad-based platform, deriving its essence from a pan-Nigerian outlook. It is a centrist political party, which emerged from a process of resistance to the misrule of the late Gen. Sani Abacha. Abacha's attempt to install a so-called democracy by a careful self succession bid provided the impetus for consistent resentment from Nigerians.

The resistance to Abacha's misrule was articulated by a pressure group known as G-34, who stood up to challenge his

rule. The group was made up of diverse backgrounds and political inclinations. In fact, unlikely bedfellows like conservatives in the persons of former vice-president, Dr. Alex Ekwueme and late Chief Awoniyi; liberals like Prof. Jerry Gana, Progressives like Chief Solomon Lar, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi and the entire body of the reformist political movement created by the late Gen. Shehu Yar'Adua known as Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM). This group had Chief Tony Anenih and Alhaji Abubakar Atiku as leading figures.

The formation of PDP, albeit in a hurry, provided a platform and ambience for a series of elections that ushered in the fourth republic. The party offered the best platform for addressing Nigeria's deep seated national question. It was therefore formed to consummate the spirit and culture of federalism by ensuring fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, wealth and opportunities to conform to the principles of power-shift and power-sharing. Perhaps due to the haste with

which the party was formed and participated in elections, the party suffered from fundamental flaws. These challenges are leadership recruitment, party orientation, internal democracy, administration and bureaucratic organization, discipline, political accountability and policy articulation.

Even before the PDP marked its 10th anniversary in 2008, criticisms against its structure and methods had been trenchant. Many praying and prophesying to boot, that the party should collapse under the weight of its own excesses, or more optimistically, under the weight of strident verbal and electoral attacks and contradictions embedded in its operations. But rather than collapse the party has flourished from one election to another until it has now achieved near total dominance of the polity. For example, of the 109 senators in the upper legislative chamber today, the PDP has about 86, and of the 36 governors, it has some 28. For more details see the table below:

		1999	2003	2007
Governors	PDP	21	27	27
	APP/ANPP	9	7	5
	AD	6	1	(AC) 1
Senate	PDP	59	76	85
	APP/ANPP	29	27	14
	AD	20	6	(AC) 6
House of Reprs.	PDP	206	223	260
	ANPP	76	96	63
	AD	68	34	(AC) 30

Source: The Nation: Sunday, Nov. 2, 2008: BP

As the table above shows, the PDP has risen in status in inverse proportion to its qualifications and ability. Though it has continued to make electoral gains, it has

neither sustained this dominance with a corresponding innovativeness in hatching ideas, nor has it matched this dominance with the character of a great party, a great

institution or a great structure. Akinlotan (2005) best captured this dominance. "This dominance has been unproductive and even harmful to Nigeria's democratic experience, and it has been achieved in a questionable manner".

Ambivalence towards PDP

For all practical purposes, the PDP as born in 1998 is most certainly not the same with the one we have today. PDP was a combination of NPN, NPP, PRP, and GNPP, and to some extent NRC and SDP. In short, it was a salad of aromatic attraction encompassing almost all the diversities of the Nigerian character. Its solid pillars were the who is who of the nation's political moguls. It was indeed a great party.

From its 1999 glorious height, the party is currently down the ladder on the road to near irrelevance for reasons of tendentious misbehavior. The fact is that it is multi-fractured, severally insured, badly demented, undisputedly disgraced and above all a phenomenon of despise and ridicule (*Leadership*, Sept. 2006).

The criticisms against the PDP have centered on the suspected murderous tendency of some of its members, its huge appetite to steal votes, its lawlessness and disrespect for the constitution and its general indolence in implementing its programmes. On top of all these is the party's annoying incompetence in policy making and reaction to national, African and global issues. Some critics say the party is big for nothing.

Unfortunately, on the occasion of its anniversary, the party preferred to indulge in arrogant lubrication of its questionable future. The most memorable thing about the celebration, which took place in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State in 2008, was the pathetic boasts by its leaders that they would be in power for 60 years. To do

that, sneered Akinlotan (2008), "they would need to continue stealing votes, enacting violent measures against a spiteful electorate, corrupting the system and undermining the rule of law".

The PDP has ruled Nigeria for 11 years but is has rarely acted with the maturity expected of its age. The reasons are not far-fetched. Its size and dominance have not made it humble and more responsible but arrogant. Instead of using its dominance of the legislature and control of more than two-third of the states to push through far-reaching and revolutionary reforms in power sector, electoral system and fighting corruption, it has expended its numerical advantage on pillaging federal resources and subverting the constitution. Its style of governance has been but a little remove from the military in power.

Secondly, is the bad luck the party had in presenting Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as its first president in 1999 against Alex Ekwueme leader of G-34 and pillar of the party. Obasanjo radiated the scent of a patriot and nationalist, of an honorable soldier and dogged fighter, and of a detribalized and fair minded Nigerian, but in reality he was none of these. Apart from his self-centeredness and malignant dislike for the opposition, not to talk of his bitter and implacable hatred for city elite, he was considerably more insular and less knowledgeable than people knew. By presenting such a man who was not part of the party at its inception as its standard-bearer, the PDP offered itself to be bear-hugged to death. No wonder, Obasanjo's military instincts simply took the better of him as he proceeded to overwhelm everything around him. By dislodging the Sunday Awoniyis, Solomon Lars, Audu Ogbeks, Abubakar Atikus and all other founding members of the party from

leadership, it was no longer possible for the party to attract men of character or keep them.

Thirdly, by some inexplicable coincidences, most of the politicians thereafter admitted into the party, or who rose into prominence-Andy and John Uba in Anambra State, Adedibu in Oyo, Ibrahim Mantu of Plateau state and Tony Anenih in Edo state-were the sniveling and groveling types. Such people could not rise to the lofty height of dreaming great things for the country. There were a few cases of desultory inspiration, accidental display of pragmatic governance, but on the whole the country was/is bathed in mediocrity and rudimentary and uninspiring governance.

Fourthly, the PDP, as many Nigerians have pointed out, is merely a vehicle for capturing power, and a "discordant amalgam of strange bedfellows, jobholders, funny characters and pusillanimous and trashy politicians". But because there was a centralizing force to distill the best out of this motley assembly, the party has tended to portray itself as the problem with Nigeria. The Obasanjo presidency, using strong-arm tactics, prevented the party from being a useful vehicle for social and political change; and the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan presidency has shown lack of interest at a time when principled and visionary leaders are either few or nonexistent in the party.

PDP as a Garrison People's Party

One of the minimum conditions for the survival of constitutional democracy is that the rules governing political actions be obeyed and accepted as given. On the contrary the experience of competitive party politics in Nigeria demonstrates that politics is informed by a ferocious

struggle to acquire individual, group and class benefits through the monopolization of public offices, thereby turning the electoral process into a "Hobbesian state of nature".

In the beginning in 1998, according to Akinlotan (2008), the party even stood for something concrete in the ideological spectrum, something many progressives as well as conservatives could reach out to and feel. But after the withering reign, it is feel now impossible to say what the party stands for. It propounds nothing novel in terms of ideologies; it stands for nothing principled; and its amorphous structure that does take life from its constitution gives the public the impression that Nigerians are dealing with a mob of bandits.

Thus, since the inception of the highly defective form of democracy instituted in Nigeria in 1999, the country has been so unfortunate that it has only been saddled with men who are only versed in hijacking political power and with high deficiency in its judicious use. The PDP, the galling national tragedy pretending otherwise, which has thus far provided distracting and dull leadership, is over populated with men and women who possess everything but the minutest idea on the chief essence of leadership and the faintest clue on how to govern a complex country like Nigeria. Its 11 years of tears and blood are an eloquent testimony. Because the party is thoroughly hobbled and incapable of any brilliant socio-political programmes of lasting transformation, it has elevated blasé slogans and vacuous rhetoric into state policy: "we will rule for 60 years; we will capture Lagos and Kano states; we will be a part of the top most 20 economies in the year 2020; 7 points agenda will change Nigeria; we are rebranding Nigeria";

amongst many irritating “gobbledygook” concludes Adesola (2010).

And because of the insulting absence of a credible and viable opposition on the political front, and the sordid enthronement of the culture of *Shadenfreude* as evident in its election rigging capability, the PDP has now found it easier to foist many short-sighted, visionless, unpatriotic, and benighted bipeds as Ministers, Directors-General, and Chairmen on the already sorely impoverished Nigerians. In its rudderless cocoon, the party calls this compensation and political favoritism. This is indeed easier with the absurd “take-a-bow” sing-song of the insensate senate.

It is with this nature and character of the party that a group has emerged calling itself PDP Reform Group (PRG) canvassing for the re-orientation of the rank and file of the party, in order to create a new PDP. The assessment of the group reading of the party is that it has lost its integrity. They opined that a party with a gaping shortage on integrity would find it difficult to do things honorably. Speaking on the topic, “political party reform as sine qua non for electoral reforms”, the guest speaker, Akanu Agabi (SAN) and former Minister of Justice, urged PDP to give up its past for Nigeria to grow. Agabi observed that “the party is characterized by a culture of intolerance”, which he described as a dangerous trend in a democracy. His words: “a party that pretends to be infallible is doomed”. (*The Nation*: Friday, May 21, 2010) P.2. This Masari led Reform Forum described PDP as a military instrumentation in the hands of civilians. They argued that PDP is not a vote-canvassing machine but a vote-allocating syndicate designed for the forcible homogenization of unwieldy and unruly elite. This is bastard nationalism.

They are indeed speaking the minds of many Nigerians. A major care of focus is the quest for deepening internal democracy in the party. Nigerians have severally expressed their frustration on the failure of internal party democracy to thrive as the central pivot of multi-party democracy in a plural society. Without internal party democracy, it is difficult or even impossible to achieve democracy at a larger level. It is important therefore that those in positions of authority must as a matter of political necessity respect the views of party members in the process of recruiting leadership to various positions within the party.

It is my opinion therefore that reforming a system that is comatose is necessary if the rejuvenation that will propel growth and development in the polity is to be achieved. This can be realized when politics of principles and ideology forms the kernel of democracy, as is obtained in other climes.

The Way Forward

In the heat of our displeasure with the PDP, there is the tendency to forget that it is not the party per se that is bad, but its principal leaders. This places two burdens on the electorates: first is how to work towards the recall and reintegration of credible politicians into the party; and second is how to deliberately and intelligently strengthen the major opposition parties in order to present a vigorous and powerful alternative to the ruling behemoth. It pays no one for the PDP to collapse only for another leviathan to step into its shoes. In fact, it is my opinion that, rather more openly and assertively, it is time to begin work on transforming and bifurcating the political space into a two-party structure, with all the parties coalescing around the PDP and

ANPP on one hand, and around the ACN, CPC, AD and LP on the other hand. If that process will take a long time in maturing, political leaders of the ACN/AD should begin to take steps to attract into its fold scores of parties with proclivities towards progressive politics.

The ambivalence towards the PDP should be quietly erased. The party must be engaged rather than ignored or avoided. It must be clear to all now that given the PDP's hold on power and its enormous resources, the wiser option is to work on the party from within to cause a change in its modus operandi, character and philosophy rather than resort to fighting it from without. But that Nigeria needs the PDP for now is beyond question, though this view may be unpopular.

Furthermore, we must hold our hope for the day when the PDP or its successor as well as other parties will truly win the people's votes based on programmes and the substance and charisma of their candidates. If all Nigerians congregate in one party, as the PDP dreams, our democracy will be endangered and our political process will hang askew. We must therefore resist the temptation to hate or like a party simply because we oppose it. That will be intolerance, the same intolerance the PDP now advances by its subversion of the electoral process.

No one in the PDP, not even the president, has given us confidence that when it comes to the overriding national interest, party interest will be subordinated to public interest. Be that as it may, my advice is that, until the PDP can find the men to think more about the country than the party, and to look at their party's progress in terms of the country's manifest destiny, the party will not grow as well as its physical structures will

indicate.

Thus, henceforth, all leaders as provided by the PDP must begin to love the country more than they love the party- "no more family affairs" that the party is known for. Again, the PDP should secure a powerful hold on great ideas and philosophies that fire the imagination of the people; there is nothing else it can do or build to endear it to the people.

Finally, Nigerians must look forward to the day when our political parties will be obsessed with making Nigeria great, so that they would be reluctant to hurt it through electoral violence and subversion. As a matter of emphasis, what the PDP urgently needs now are great men and women who would build the party as a tool for building the nation.

Other parties must also avoid the mistakes that have rendered the PDP soulless. If anything, let them seek to profit from the PDP's vagrancy, and offer to Nigeria leadership and ideas that fire the imagination and inspire the people into great feats of national rediscovery and renewal.

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