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# POLITICAL PARTIES IN AFRICAN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES: A STUDY OF NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES (1999-2009)

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## ABSTRACT

*The period 1999-2009 was the 4th republic Nigeria which witnessed a democratic process with a constitution that provides for unlimited registration of political parties numbering over fifty; thereby giving way to a multi-party system in Nigeria. After such multiple registrations of parties, the people's Democratic Party became dominant thereby making all others to fizzle away and silenced. The party PDP won all the elections to the extent that those who won in other parties cross carpeted to the PDP for the reason of wining subsequent elections in Nigeria within the period under review moved towards a one party system of government with PDP becoming the dominant party with all its implications and benefits. This paper recommends a two party system arrangement for Nigeria because it will guarantee competition, constructive arguement by the oppositions which is a yardstick for fast running development of democracy in Nigeria. We equally recommended independent candidacy to create choices of candidates to wider Nigerians who may not like the candidates fielded by the two parties.Our theoretical perspective in the power theory as propounded by Morgenthau and other power theorists.*

**Keywords: Politics, Political Parties, Developing Economies, Democracy, Nigeria.**

## INTRODUCTION

The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (1999) section 221,222 and 225 defined the characteristicsof political parties in Nigeria, its right to participate and field candidates for elections in Nigeria, its funding and so on. The constitution stated clearly that no association other than a political party shall canvas for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at election. This simply means that only political parties have the constitutional mandate to recruite personnel that will contest election in Nigeria.

Amucheazi (2007) asserted that political party has become the most critical institution of governance especially in a developing democracy vis-à-vis Africa nations, in a democracy, it is almost indispensable. Amucheazi stated that there is no democratic political system in the modern era that does not uphold one kind of party system or the other. He directed that critical roles of modern political parties are to recruit the right personnel for government and to bring about integrity of various nationalities that make up the modern state to ensure stability of the nation.

Obasi Igwe (2007) defined political party as any group of people, organized for political objective from time to time publishing a manifesto, explaining its programme and canvassing for membership and support in its quest for power in a western type democracies. He stated

that political parties are officially recognized organisations, often part of the constitutional structure of the state. To the writer therefore, political parties are organized groups that seek to control the government through peaceful process usually called elections.

Also, Shirvely (2001) saw political parties as the appearance of elections involving large numbers of votes; and that politicians developed the political parties as device to help themselves and like-minded friends to get elected to power. He stated that a political party is a group of citizens linked with sizeable organisation, whose chief objective is to ensure that its officials attain power or are maintained in power-Shirly's assertion simply means that political party may not necessarily be an institution between the society and government for the purpose of securing governmental control.

Obasi Igwe (2007) defined democracy as what is the best way of building the good society to seek prosperity for all, even if accompanied by inequality or equality for even if it leads to lesser prosperity. It is the good democracy to liberate and empower the down trodden of all shades whether the poor and impoverished, under-class, children, women, the sick, minorities, the oppressed and other vulnerable citizens. According to him, the west or the industrialized nations of the world are yard stick for measuring developing economies such as Africa, Asia and the caribeans. It was the west that formed point of reference after its colonization of the impoverished, under developed nations. The west was therefore, defined in terms of modernization and integration. The local progressive leaders however, under-estimated the adverse potentials of the colonial structures such as the Army, bureaucracy, police etc. left by the colonialists and the continuing interest of the latter in the exploration of their economies. They used foreign inspired coups d'etats, civil wars, irredentism, bribery and corruption and rendered their development efforts a nullity, thereby making economic development without integration with other forms of development such as political, socio-cultural, individual etc. meaningless. This implies that development must be multi-faceted, embracing economic, socio-cultural, political individual and so on.

Walter Rodney (1972) stated that individual development implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being from the stand point of all the authors of development. Jerry Nwobodo (2017) stated thatNigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 after a long term ban on politics and political parties, the military juntas who seized power from the democratic politicians ruled by decrees.

The politicians felt relieved and jumped back to form political parties based on ethnic, religious and personal inclinations, before long, over 30 political parties were formed.

According to Ikeanyi Ibe (2009) many applications were expected as the politicians clamoured for multi-party system to contest the 2011 election in Nigeria. In spite of the influx of the parties, the people Democratic Party (PDP) emerged as the dominant party as they faced no serious challenges and the country was almost running a one party system of government. Many notable Nigerians such as General Yakubu Gowon (rtd), former vice president-Atiku Abubakar, Bola Tinubu - former Lagos State governor and many others reacted negatively to the development stating the negative implications of a one party system such as-running a despotic or tyrannical government in the country which implies undemocratic and

dictatorship rule as opposed to what democracy really implies. The Objective of this paper is to examine as much as possible, the performance of political parties.

Methodology: our Methodology was based on content analysis or secondary data in which we reviewed related literature to 'x' ray the performance of political parties in Nigeria from 1999-2009. We examined the true nature of party system in Africa as practised in Nigeria from the period under review.The paper seeks to find out if the period actually practiced a multi-party system or a mere camouflage by the military to deceive democracy as practiced internationally. The paper ends up exposing the ills of such system and recommended possible solutions.

**THEORITICAL PRESPECTIVES**

We adopted power theory as conceptualized by Morgenthau and others who defined power as the capacity to achieve an outcome through an actual use of threat or coercion and in effect, the essence of politics.

Power sometimes, in appropriately viewed as the opposite of influence instead of weakness, the power theory according to Obasi Igwe (2007) embodies all the scholarly efforts trying to explain the power phenomenon, especially by those who believe that appreciating all pervading centrality in the lives of men and society, the beginning of wisdom, hence the other name of the power approach is the realist school (Political realism).

Political realism implies that those who believe in or espouse the power doctrine want to deal with or relate to the world. The way it is, therefore recognizing those groups, people and states who have and can use power and behaving, even submitting if need be, instead of attempting possibly in vain to change the situation. Power politics is a theory in international relations which contends that distributions of power and national interest or changes to those distributions are fundamentals causes of war and system stability. Hobbes, T. (1969) and Max Weber (1978) believed that power is the recognition that exist only within a relationship which can be different ways and therefore the types of power depends on the types of relationship. Karl Marx's power theory contends power as to be held by a particular group/dominant class in a society at the expense of the rest of the society (sub- ordinate class). This is a constant sum concept of power since a net gain in the power of the dominant group represents a net loss in the power of the next society. According to Karl Marx, the source of power in society lies in the economic infrastructure. The basis of dominance or power is the ownership of force of production. The ruling class, those who own the forces of production uses power to exploit and oppress the subject class in all societies. The power to exploit others according to Karl Marx is defined as coercion. It is equally seen as illegitimate use of power, since it forces the subject class to submit to a situation which is against its interest.

**Political parties in Nigeria in the period under review (1999-2009)**

Gramsc, (1977) asserted that technically political powers are policing organism which a social group can employ as a vehicle for the expression of their ideological dominance over society. Onu (2000) conceptualized political party as an organized group of power seekers which when obtained use it to enrich itself first and do little in their national interest. Chizea (2004) and Shiverly (2001) described party system as the patterns formed by the political parties in a state or the set of all parties. It is also, how political parties in a country relate to existing

electoral laws in the struggle for political power. This also include the nature of alliances or coalitions, their strength and weakness and nature of the electoral law (Chizea, 2004) Duverger, (1954) and Shiverly, (2001) classified party system into four namely, the one party system (dominant party system), the two party system and the multi-party system. Shiverly stated that in one party system, the government and the party are closely identified, because the government enforces rules that other parties are not allowed to enjoy. The party may closely control the governmental apparatus as was the case in communist states or the party may simply have been created by those in charge of government. The party in a one party system concentrates heavily on the tasks of mobilization, communication and control. It cannot serve as well as an alternative source of political ideas because it is so closely tied to those who are already running the state. Most proponents of one party system says that it enables the government to eliminate any service opposites so that it can devote more time and concentration and control. It cannot serve well as an alternative source of political ideas because it is closely tied to those who are already running the state. Most proponent of one party system is that it enables the government to eliminate any service oppositions so that it can devote more time and concentration to issues of development.

Also, a party system avoids the instability that seems to arise from political struggles of different parties and sectional interest. However, in spite of all the above advantages, establishment of one party system has not succeeded to eliminate oppositions even during military dictatorship. Political parties according to Ndabaningi (1975) are the rallying points for civil oppositions.

In Nigeria, during the military rule of Sani Abacha, precisely in 1993, a coalition, during the military rule of Sani Abacha, precisely in 1993, a coalition movement known as the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC COALITION. (NADECO) was formed existing side by side Abacha's desperate bid to destroy all oppositions so as to transmute to civilian president- many had argued that Nigeria is not a one party State because NADECO was running side by side with the military rule of retired general Sani Abacha. Finally, Ndabaningi attests that common obstacle to the establishment of a party system in African has been from incursions.

Ghana was legally a one party state. It was on the 24th of January 1966b that General Arthur Ankra carried out a successful army revolt on the life of president Dr. Kwame Nkurumah not minding that all oppositions has been silenced on 4th of January, 1966. Col. Sanoule Lamizane ousted President Maurice Yemeogo of Upper Volta in spite of the suppression of opposition in favour of one-party system. Also, on the 1st of January, 1966. Col. Jean Badel Bokassa deposed President David Dacko of the Central African Republic in spite of the suppression of opposition. These are reasons why Nadabaningi (1975) asserted that the establishment of a one party system has not eliminated the real opposition. This means that the essence of establishing a party system has been variously faulted. For instance, the communist party of the Soviet Union was replaced with a multi-party system in such states; a variant of the one party system is the dominant party system. This means that one party hold power nearly all the time for many years. The combined strength of the other parties is usually not sufficient to constitute strong opposition against the dominant party.

Following the consistency of the dominant party in government, many politicians from the opposite will begin to cross over to the dominant party.

Shiverly (2001) adds that because of the politics, the whole government structure from civil service upwards had intimate ties to the dominant party. The dominant party system shares most of the characteristics of single or one party system. One of the negative characteristics of a single party system is that they are noted from human right abuse, they run rigged policies and avoid changes and therefore unable to deal with new situations. They also restrict options in terms of personnel and policies or ideology choices. Another type of party system is the two party system. The system is identified by the presence of two strong parties as major contenders of power. There may be more parties but two are in dominance above others. In the United States of American, there are many parties but only two are the major contender of power namely the democrats and the Republican parties. The two parties often receive up to or more than 60% of the votes cast during elections. The two-party systems have the advantages of offering better choices of candidates and policies than the other party system. It is likely to prevent the emergence of totalitarianism or dictatorship. In Nigeria, during the reign of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1983-1985, government formed two political parties for Nigerian namely- National Republican Convention (NRC) and the social Democratic Party (SDP). The two party system in Nigeria almost led to Bi-lateral division of the country into the existing cleavages such as North-south, Christian Muslim dichotomy or any such frictional lines. The implication is that it is bound to tension, rivalry, hatred and politics with bitterness. A multi-party system admits the existence of more than two parties which perform reasonably in election that their support is important for the smooth running of government or effective oppositions. Nigerians first republic could be sighted as an example of a multi-party system. Ibodje and Dode (2007) narrated that the 1959 election was contested by three major political powers namely- the NCNC, the AG and the NPC. Each of the three parties proved its strength in its home region according to its ethnic inclination but none of the parties was able to form the government at the national level. That led to the ricket coalition between the NPC and the NCRC, but the coalition collapsed before the 1964 general elections.

**PARTY SYSTEM IN NIGERIA (1999- 2009)**

General Abdulsalami, Abubakar, the last military government after General Sani Abacha (rtd) declared a one year transition to civil rule. He emphasized the need for national political parties as was enshrined in the 1999 constitution. Based on that, the independent electoral commission (INEC) gave provisional registration to nine political parties to kick start the fourth republic in Nigeria. The powers of the national parties were provided for in the 1999 constitution. The provision for the national parties was also provided for, in the constitution for the practice of the fourth republic.

**(Political parties performances in the 1999 national elections)**

| Pol.parties | Presidential | Senates | Reps |
|---|---|---|---|
| AD | 11/110287<br>137.22%) | 18(16,.5) | 68 (18.89%) |
| ANPP | | 23(21.10) | 80 (22.22 %.) |
| PDP | 18,738,154(62.39) | | |
| Total | 29,,84,441(100) | 109(100%) | 360(100%) |

In 1999, the AD and ANPP were in alliance and presented one candidate to challenge the retired generals in the PDP. The PDP won more than 60% in all the elections to emerge the dominant party in the elections.

**(2003 presidential elections/ parties performance in elections)**

| Pol: parties | Votes | % of votes |
|---|---|---|
| PDP | 24,456,140 | 61.94% |
| ANNPP | 12,710,022 | 32.19% |
| APGA | 1,297,445 | 3.29% |
| UNPP | 169,609 | 0.43% |
| NCP | 161, 333 | 0.41% |
| PAC | 157,560 | 0.40 |
| NPD | 132,997 | 0.34 |
| JP | 119,547 | 0.30 |
| PRP | 100,765 | 0.26 |
| PMP | 57,720 | 0.15 |
| APLP | 26,921 | 0.07 |
| NNPP | 23,830 | 0.06 |
| MDJ | 21,403 | 0.05 |
| ARP | 11,565 | 0.03 |
| DA | 6,932 | 0.02 |
| NAP | 6,727 | 0.02 |
| BNPP | 5,756 | 0.01 |
| LBPN | 4473 | 0.01 |
| MMN | 3,757 | 0.01 |
| Total | 39,480,489 | 100% |

**National Assembly election in 2007 and party performance**

| | Senate | House of rep |
|---|---|---|
| Parties | No. of seats secured | Seats |
| PDP | 87 seats (79.82%) | 263(73.06&) |
| ANPP | 14 (12.85%) | 63(17.5%) |
| AC | 06 (5.50%) | 30(8.33%) |
| PPA | 01 (.92) | 03(83%) |
| ACCORD | 01 (.92) | 03(83%) |
| LP | | 011.28% |

Only these six political parties out of the numerous multi-party registrations could win seats in the elections. Still leaving PDP as a dominant party having won elections from 1999-2007 was representing the 4th republic.

Virtually no strong or serious oppositions existed, thereby making the party a dominant and almost running a one-party state in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Garuba (2007) asserted that the re-election of the PDP government in 2003 was not as a result of the party's credible performance but because the party was almost becoming a one party or dominant party system in Nigeria with all its obvious implication.

Ibeanu (2007) stated that the whole scenario was a result of wider socio-economic forces arising from the activities of the project Nigeria bourgeoisie and the activities of its organic intellectuals which make life so difficult and unbearable for our people. Ibeanu (2007) acknowledge that INEC, the electoral umpire is blameless even though it is a system wide problem involving political parties, government and communities and not INEC alone.

Iyare (2004) described political parties especially in the 4th republic Nigeria as lacking in organization, discipline, focus or souls. He asserted that their membership is filled by corrupt, unpatriotic and undisciplined political elites that see elections more as an investment rather than a call to serve. He accused the government of using security operatives to favor the ruling party. Sometimes, the government delays funding of the electoral body and allow weak electoral system.

Iyare (2004) identified South Africa with 126 political parties to justify the Nigeria political party system saying that the Nigeria system is not as multiple as that of South Africa.
Party system in the 4th republic dating 1999-2007

The research analyzed the theory of party systems identifying various greatness of each of the major party system such as the dominant party system, two party system, one party system etc. we evaluate party performance and discovered that despite the existence of multiple parties in the 4th republic Nigeria, the PDP or people democratic party showed much dominance throughout the period under review, controlling over 60% of votes and seats in most national elections within the period, even when other parties formed an alliance to challenge the dominant party, yet the PDP prevailed thereby almost making Nigeria a one party state. Finally, we wish to conclude by recalling that the fourth republic started in 1999 with a multi-party arrangement and strong oppositions but after the PDP became champions in all the elections with over 60% votes from the local government to National level elections, other parties fizzled out to join the PDP with only few weak opposition parties in the political scene.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend a two party political system equivalent to the Ibrahim Babangida's government two party system in 1993, named NRC and SDP sponsored by the government. We recommend the two party systems because we discovered that all politicians in Nigerian were either members of the SDP or PDP which created constructive oppositions to the party in power. Though, it may be termed Christian or Muslim, North or southern party, yet it enabled constructive criticism capable of moving Nigeria political scene forward.

Some may criticize the system as regional, North/South dichotomy, Muslim/ Christian etc. yet it was more patriotic oriented than most of the multi-party system arrangement. One party system is capable of drawing Nigeria into a totalitarian or dictatorship state and therefore not recommended by us.

We equally recommend in addition to two party system INDEPENDENT CANDIDACY to give the Nigerian wider society the opportunity of making choices among the candidates fielded for the state and national elections, incase, the choice of candidates joined by the two parties may not meet the choice of wider Nigeria society.

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