



Party and Electoral Systems in Nigeria: The Nexus

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Abstract

Nigeria like any other developing nation-state has unique party and electoral systems. This is based largely on her creation by the British colonialists in 1914 coupled with her independence in 1960 and incessant military interjections of her democratic journey. However, by 1999 she once again returned to democracy in her fourth republic which is on till date; the longest in her history. This paper examines the nexus between the polar concepts of party and electoral system in the country. Utilizing a descriptive approach, it established that the two concepts are two side of the same coin that is without party, no development of a viable electoral system. It argues that the various electoral processes instituted in Nigeria's democratic expedition that has led to some degree of stability of the polity is a function of the failures and successes in the development of its party system; similarly, without an electoral system, party too is a misnomer. Therefore, party system which could be one, two or multi depending on the guiding principle in a given nation-state should be developed in Nigeria beside electoral system in the country along the dictates of the liberal western democracy. The paper recommends that identified gaps in party and electoral process before, during and after elections should be given adequate attention or corrected in building future electoral systems towards the consolidation of democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, Electoral System, Party, Election

Introduction

Political parties are fundamental to the operation of politics. As political machines organized to win elections and wield government power, parties came into existence only in the early 19th century but virtually ubiquitous. The only parts of the world in which parties do not exist are where they are suppressed by dictatorship or military rule. Political parties are the vital link between the state and society, between the institutions of government and the groups and interests that operate within society (Heywood, 2002).

The birth, existence, workings, survival, growth and development of party system depend extensively on the dictates and character of prevailing democratic norms in a given society. Political party consists of a group of people with an aim of capturing political power in an electoral competition with one or more other political parties. Political party could also be seen





as an organized group of citizens with common interest usually manifested in a political ideology and compete with one or more other similar organized groups in their struggle to capture or sustain governmental powers or authority with the ultimate goal of manipulating and controlling the modes of distribution of the country's economic resources. According to Woll (1989, p.59) "political parties are organizations whose purpose is winning elections and gaining government power. By competing with one another, they offer choices to voters and appeal for votes on ideological and practical bases" (1989).

Importantly, political parties compete for votes, for power and over policy. Politically ambitious individuals can climb to power only through one of the parties. But in some countries independent candidates are allowed to contest for elective positions outside the existing political parties. Each party attempts to put together a winning coalition on the basis of a distinctive public philosophy and attempts to appeal to a broader range of interests. Indeed, it is only a tiny proportion of the electorate that joins political parties. It is party members, corporate organizations, interest groups, individuals that raise the funds for the campaign and mobilization of votes during elections. Many party members are active in order to influence party policies. Thus, political parties are avenues for some citizens to play an active and influential role in politics (Wolinetz, 1997).

Conflict and co-operation between parties take place in several areas each of which is linked to one another. The behavior of each party is determined by factors such as number of parties participating in an election, its chances of forming government alone, its support from the electorate and organized pressure groups, the intensity of the conflict between it and other parties, the degree to which these differences can be compromised and the nature of electoral system. In a nutshell, what a political party does is affected by the nature of the political system in a particular country where it operates (Graham, 1993).

It should therefore, be noted that the number of party in existence in a country is dictated by the political system of a given nation-state. It is in line with this observation that Duverger (1999) submitted that the distinction between single-party, two-party and multi-party systems tends to become the fundamental mode of classifying contemporary regimes. For instance, in the United States of America, there are fairly large numbers of political parties but only two are dominant and able to put people in national offices; the Democratic and the Republican parties. But at the local and state levels, political parties there are in some cases one or multi. In Britain, two parties dominate; the Labour and the Conservative parties.

In Nigeria's first and second republics multi-party system prevailed with excessive ethnic factor in the Nigerian political space. The fact that ethnicity is a major factor in the country's social structure reflected in the origins and proliferation of political parties in Nigeria. Since the colonial period, and perhaps selectively till date, the peculiarity of the country in terms of party formation is that the parties were respectively regionally biased (Aminu and Ogbonna, 2015). In the third republic two party systems was imposed by the then military leader. In the fourth





republic multi-party system exist with over 20 registered parties. But by 2015 elections two parties dominated the political space.

Elections on the other hand are seen as the heart of the political process. Elections are seen as nothing less than democracy in action. They are means through which the people can control their government and ultimately kick out the politicians or parties who are not serving the interest of the people. This portrays politicians as servants of the people and invests them with responsibility to act for or on behalf of those who elect them. In modern governance, everyone who wants to govern the people does so through election. Though elections may not in themselves be sufficient condition for political representation but there is little doubt that they are necessary condition. Indeed, election is the heart of democracy (Millard, 2011).

Democracy is seen as an institutional arrangement of filling public office by a competitive struggle for the people's vote. Democracy can be understood in terms of the rules and mechanisms guiding the conduct of elections. These include; one, which offices or posts are available for election, that is, those public offices whose holders have policy-making responsibilities (the legislature and executive in particular). Second, who is entitled to vote and how widely is the franchise. Third, how are votes cast, modern elections are generally held on the basis of a secret ballot. This is because secret ballot is usually seen as the guarantee of a fair election, since it keeps the dangers of corruption and intimidation at bay (Harrop and Miller, 1987).

However, electoral fairness also includes voters' access to reliable and balanced information, the range of choice they are offered, the circumstances under which campaigning is carried out and how the vote is counted. Fourth is whether the elections are competitive or not. This is important so that the electorate can have a genuine choice of both candidates and parties. The final issue is the fairness of the conduct of election. This is based on political and constitutional provisions of a given country. Election provides one of the richest sources of information about the interaction among individuals, society and politics (Dunleavy, 2006).

Democracy, particularly the western liberal type is perceived as the most legitimately accepted form of government in the contemporary world with a constitution, universal adult suffrage, the legislative, executive and judicial arms. The legislative arm initiates bills, approves or rejects bills initiated by private individuals, committees or even the executive arm of government. The party with majority members in the legislature provides its officials. The executive arm of government on the other hand employs the use of bureaucracy and other agencies to execute its policies. The bureaucrats are career officers and they are supposed to be non-partisan. They are answerable to the executive leaders and invariably through them to the legislature and by extension to the ruling party based on its ideology. Both legislative and executive leaders face elections periodically. This is in order to enhance their accountability and responsiveness to the electorate (LeDuc and Norris., 1996).

The existence of an independent judicial arm is guaranteed under the liberal democracy. This is in order to protect the rights of the individual and other agencies. There is also functional,





effective and reliable police and armed forces for the maintenance of law and order and the defense of the state against both internal and external insecurity and aggression. In addition, liberal democracy guarantees extensive fundamental human rights. Democracy says Oyediran (2002) is basically a political system in which all or the most significant groups in the populace, participate in the political process and have access to effective representation in the process of making government decisions in the allocation of resources. This paper therefore examines the nexus between party and electoral system taking into cognizance the fact that the party is a major tool that influences the electoral system and, its effects on the electoral system is found in the areas of structure, ideology, pattern of party interaction and the political system.

Theories of Political Parties and Electoral Systems

There are many theories on the emergence of political parties. Six of such theories would be discussed in this paper. Namely, loose groupings or factions, conflicts over distribution of wealth, conflicts over nature and role of government, natural differences in man, growth of democratic institutions and influence of voluntary associations. A further look at the theories could lead to a convenient re-grouping into three major ones, namely evolutionary theory, revolutionary theory and sociological theory.

Evolutionary theory has to do with interwoven of the loose or factional and natural difference in man's theories. The theory has some historical explanation and featured during the ages of absolute monarch and benevolent despotism. Using the evolution theory boils down to the fact that, political parties started as interest groups that tried to influence the ruler in favor of the interest represented by their members. The two major parties in Britain developed through this theory. In the 17th century, the cavaliers and the round heads were divided on the issue of power of the monarch versus the right of the parliament. These two groups later became the Tories and the Whigs. The Tories subsequently changed to what is now known as the conservative party while the Whigs scattered among what is now known as the labor, social democrat and liberal parties (Woll, 1989, p.68). Evidence across a number of disciplines shows that humans over evolutionary history have evolved sophisticated abilities to engage in political behavior through status seeking and coalition formation in order to attract resources to themselves, their kin, and their allies, an exposition that the theory can be used to understand politics or party politics in contemporary world (Petersen and Aaroe, 2015).

In Nigeria, the emergence of political parties could be regarded as evolutionary as well. This is because the first set of political associations during the colonial era emerged as nationalist fronts against the colonial government, before they later metamorphosed into political parties. Examples of such parties include the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). Although they faded away later, they gave impetus to the entrenchment of political party culture in the country.

The Revolutionary theory is a combination of the theory of conflict over distribution of wealth and that of conflict over the nature and role of government which inevitably divide people into groups and subsequently into political parties on the basis of their opinions as well as the





natural differences in man which instinctively make man to belong to one group/political party or the other (Woll, 1989). For instance, the conservative party in Britain like any other capitalist party elsewhere enjoys its support from the wealthy business tycoons, landowners and other major forms of wealth while the labour party, the social democrat and the liberals drew their support from the relatively less privileged ones in the society. In Nigeria's first republic (1960-1966), the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) drew their support from the wealthy and established individuals in their strongholds while the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) drew its support from the down-trodden masses.

Also, in America, political parties' emergence is based on the revolutionary theory. During the constitutional conference in the 17th century at Philadelphia, out of the 55 delegates to the convention only 39 signed their names to the constitution. These people were later known as Federalists. The remaining 16 were anti-federalists who supported the previous confederation. Each group competed for votes during the ratification process and each won some and lost some. Thereafter, when the country was established, the political elites split along the two ideological lines. The federalists favored a strong central government while the Democratic-Republicans preferred a minimal, decentralized government. With the election of John Adams as the second President, the parties became formal organizations that offered candidates for political office. During the Andrew Jackson's reign as president, the Democrat-Republicans transformed into Democratic Party, while the old Federalists turned to Republican Party (Woll, 1989).

Sociological theory combines both the growth of democratic institutions and the influence of voluntary association theories. This theory holds that even where voluntary organizations may continue to spring up and exist, they may not develop into political parties unless democratic principles are seen to operate. The operation of democratic principles for instance, made it possible for Labor Party to emerge in Britain from the Trade Union Congress. It is in a similar manner, the group of 34 formed the core of People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1998 towards the Nigeria's fourth republic. Similarly, toward the 2015 elections in the country a mega-party, All Progressive Congress (APC) was formed through the merger of Action Congress (AC), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), CPC and factions of APGA and People's Democratic Party (PDP). In terms of election or electoral systems, four models shall be discussed, namely; the party identification model, the sociological model, the rational-choice model and the dominant ideology model.

The earliest theory of voting is the party-identification model. This is based on the sense of psychological attachment that people have to parties. Electors are seen as people who identify with a party in the sense of being long-term supporters who regard the party as 'their party'. Thus, voting becomes a manifestation of partisanship and not a product of calculation influenced by factors such as policies, personalities, campaigning and media coverage. This model places heavy stress on early political socialization by seeing the family as the principal means through which political loyalties are forged. These are then in most cases reinforced by group membership and later social experiences (Farrell, 2011). This explains that wherever a contest





for political office exists, the elector is relevant based on the existence of a party or individual to choose to deliver governance.

The sociological model links voting behavior to group membership, suggesting that electors tend to adopt a voting pattern that reflects the economic and social position of the group to which they belong. Rather than developing a psychological attachment to a party on the basis of family influence, this model highlights the importance of a social alignment, reflecting the various divisions and tensions within society. The most significant of these divisions are class, gender, ethnicity, religion and region (Pulzer, 1987). For example, the history of pre and early independence elections in Nigeria showed that people voted according to region, ethnicity, religion, etc. to the detriment of the quality of the person or party towards effective representation. These have reflected in numerous ethno-religious crisis before, during and after elections. The consequences of which can also be noticed from the various electoral reforms towards qualitative electoral process in the country.

The Rational-choice model of voting shifts attention onto the individual and away from socialization and the social groups in understanding election. In this view, voting is seen as a rational act, in the sense that individual electors are believed to decide their party preference on the basis of personal self-interest. Rather than being habitual, a manifestation of broader attachments and allegiances, voting is seen as essentially instrumental. That is, as a means to an end. It portrays voters' behavior like that of consumers who express a choice among the available policy options (Hyman, 1959). For example, it has been shown that given the crisis associated with multi-party system in Nigeria, two party system as witnessed in the Third Republic (I.e. National Republican Convention - NRC and Social Democratic Party - SDP) which de-emphasized ethnic/regional and religious affiliation can as well make rational choice attainable and serve as critical element in national integration, cohesion, nation building and the development and consolidation of democracy. Simply put, the rational choice model explains that voters choose the party of their own interests, view point and priorities i.e. the party that can make them achieve their ends Aminu and Ogbonna (2015).

Finally, Radical theories of voting tend to highlight the degree to which individual choices are shaped by a process of ideological manipulation and control. This theory emphasizes how groups and individuals interpret their position depending on how it has been presented to them through education by the government and above all by the mass media (Dunleavy and Husband, 1985). It tries to show that people vote based on their social hierarchy as a function of mass media and party competition. E.g. the British Labor Party which enjoys enormous support from UK workers. Same applies to the support of some trade unions to political parties' in Nigeria e.g. Labor Party



Party and Electoral Systems in Nigeria

Analysts have asserted that there is a correlation between party and electoral systems (Kadima, 2008; Aminu and Ogbonna, 2015; Olaiya, 2006; Chege, 2007; Olumide, 2018). In the words of Kadima, political parties are the primary channel through which the needs, expectations and even fears of the population as a whole are expressed and conveyed to state institutions, including parliament and government; while an electoral system is a model by which the votes received by the contesting candidates, parties or groups of parties are translated into seats. That, electoral systems can be engineered to achieve direct and indirect political goals such as the restriction of the number of political parties, the discouragement of ethnically-based political parties, the inclusion of minority communal groups and the avoidance of single-party government, and vice versa. Kadima, further assert that different electoral systems have different effects not only on political representation but also on the shape of the party system itself. This view clearly attests to the way and manner party system and electoral reforms correlate as political drivers to governance and nation building.

This is because nation-building efforts have encompassed a range of initiatives, such as the engineering of particular political systems, electoral systems, party systems and political institutions and the devolution of powers to national and sub-national entities. In relation to political parties development in Africa, nation building encompasses strategies which includes, but were not limited to, the establishment of single-party systems (e.g. former Zaire, Togo, Gabon, Cameroon, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville and Co^te d'Ivoire); mergers of parties (e.g. Zimbabwe); the imposition of two-party systems (as happened briefly in Nigeria in the mid-1990s); electoral alliances, party coalitions and power sharing arrangements (e.g. Mauritius and South Africa); etc.,(2008).

In the Nigerian context, political party's formation and growth followed the introduction of elective principles in Nigeria's polity. This started the journey of electoral reforms and counter reforms which continues till the much acclaimed Uwais' electoral reforms in the country. An excursion into party development in Nigeria clearly attests to this fact. For instance, the establishment of the Legislative Council under the 1922 Clifford constitution gave rise to the inauguration of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923.

The party led by Herbert Macaulay was the only party that contested and won the 1923, 1928 and 1933 Legislative Council elections as well as Lagos Town Council elections in 1923, 1926, 1929, 1932 and 1935. In 1936, the Lagos Youth Movement changed its name to Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). The party displaced NNDP and won the 1938 Lagos Town Council elections as well as the 3 elective seats in the Legislative Council. In 1944, the National Council of Nigeria (NCN) was formed. In 1945, the NCN changed its name to National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) due to the fact that three unions from Cameroons joined the Council. But after the 1963 plebiscite, its name also changed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). Supporters of the party were later restricted to mainly Eastern Nigeria and partly from the then Midwestern and Western regions.(Ojo,2017;Olumide, 2018)





In 1948, the Action Group (AG) emerged out of a Yoruba cultural grouping (Egbe Omo Oduduwa) with Chief Obafemi Awolowo as its leader. The party from inception announced itself as a western regional political organization. In 1951, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) originated from a cultural organization; Jama'a Mutanen Arewa. The party was to serve mainly the interest of Northern Nigeria of all shades. Ahmadu Bello became the leader of the party as from 1952 (Arifalo, 2001). The three parties NCNC, AG and NPC dominated and won the regional elections in the East, West and North respectively and federal legislative elections from the regions in the 1950s. The then existing smaller parties in each region were in alliance with the bigger parties from other regions. However, those smaller parties drew their membership from the minorities in their areas. They include the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Aminu Kano with the poor masses of Kano and environs as members. Also, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka had the Tiv of Benue province and its environs as members, while the Ilorin Talaka Parapo (ITP) led by Josiah Olawoyin had the support of Yoruba speaking people in Ilorin and Kabba provinces.

In the eastern region were the Democratic Party of Nigeria and the Cameroon (DPNC) which was a breakaway faction of the NCNC, led by Kingsley Mbadiwe. There was also the United National Independent Party (UNIP) also a breakaway from NCNC championed by the expelled Ministers and Legislators in the 1952-53 crises in the party. The UNIP fought for a separate Calabar-Ogoja-River state. In the western region was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was a breakaway from AG led by Ladoke Akintola in coalition with a breakaway group from NCNC led by Fani Kayode. Other minority parties in the western region were the Mid-West Front and the Commoner's Liberal Party (Aghalino, 2006). The pre-independence era party activities witnessed the guidance of an electoral system or existence of the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN), established to conduct the elections of 1959, followed by the 1960 Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) which was dissolved in 1966 after the first military coup.

It should be noted that the UMBC, ITP and UNIP were in alliance with the AG while NEPU was in alliance with NCNC in the first republic. Also, the NNDP was in alliance with NPC particularly during the 1964 elections to form the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). The NNA competed with the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) which was made up of NCNC, AG and the Northern Progressive Front (NPF), combination of NEPU and UMBC (Oyediran, 2002).

During the first lap of the second republic (1979-1983), five political parties participated, namely; Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria's People Party (NPP), People's Redemption Party (PRP) and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Towards the second lap of second republic in 1983, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) was registered to make the parties six (Katsina, 2013). During the period, NPN won the presidential elections but could not enjoy majority position in the federal legislature which led to its alliance with NPP. Indeed, those second republic political parties were alleged to be reincarnations of the parties in the first republic i.e. GNPP and NPP reincarnation of NCNC; NPN reincarnation of





NPC; PRP reincarnation of NEPU and UPN reincarnation of AG with strong regional if not ethnic support.

This era witnessed the establishment in 1978 of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) constituted under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo and conducted the 1979 Elections that led to the handover of power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the NPN. The electoral body strives to conduct free and fair elections taking into consideration some of the short comings of party system and elections management of the pre-1978 era. FEDECO was later scrapped after the military take over by General Muhammadu Buhari.

In the third republic, none of the 13 political associations that applied for registration was registered by the then military government. In their place two political parties were established, administered and funded by government, namely; the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The two parties were funded by the then military government and their manifestoes and constitutions were written by it in order to make every member co-founder and co-joiner. The SDP had upper hand over the NRC in all the elections including the presidential one which was annulled in June, 1993 and declared inconclusive (Oyediran, 2002). This, raises a lot of concerns as to the future of party politics and electoral contest in Nigeria as politicians feel caged and must aligned to the party of government choice not what they fought and struggle to establish. This era saw the establishment of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to regulate and execute the transition to civil rule in 1987 under the Military rule of General Ibrahim Babangida. The body conducted elections from Local Government, State, National Assembly and the President in June 1993; which was later annulled by the same administration.

For the fourth republic, 13 political associations were given provisional registration by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998 out of which 3 were given full registration to contest the 1999 elections, namely; Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP). PDP led in all the elections including the presidential election where the AD and APP fielded a joint candidate. The same tempo was maintained in 2003 when another round of elections was conducted after the four-year tenure with PDP domination of the polity though APP's presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari gave a good account of himself by giving the PDP a tough contest. By 2007 when another round of elections was held PDP maintained its domination of the political space though the APP changed its name to ANPP-All Nigeria People's Party and also featured Muhammadu Buhari as its presidential candidate for a second time.

By 2011 round of elections Muhammadu Buhari formed a new party, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) under which he contested for the presidency. Despite his popularity and the PDP candidate, Goodluck Jonathan was declared winner. Towards the 2015 elections, a new party was formed i.e. All Progressive Congress (APC) which comprises of ACN, ANPP, CPC and factions of APGA and PDP with Muhammadu Bahari as its presidential candidate who the presidential elections. An electoral body, the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria



(NECON) was established in 1995 to conduct elections in the country but was later dissolved as a result of the demise of the then Military leader President Sani Abacha. This was soon followed by the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998 i.e. on the eve of the fourth republic in accordance with Section 153 of 1999 Constitution. INEC has so far conducted the 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011, and the 2015 election with policy and legal reforms rooted out observations and public outcry on conduct of political parties and the populace before, during and after elections. The most recent electoral policy direction is the supervision and conduct of elections under the COVID 19 pandemic.

It is worthy to note from the above that the history of party development in Nigeria is the pathways of electoral processes in the country. This is because the change in the management and operation of election in the country explains greatly the nexus between party and electoral process in Nigeria. For example, Jinadu (2011) argued that parties that emerged from the 1987 and 1999 constitutional orders were somewhat devoid of the genetic ethno-regional reincarnation of the old parties. This may not be unconnected with the provisions of Section 222 of the 1999 Constitution, which stipulates that an association would not be recognized as a political party in Nigeria except if it fulfilled certain conditions such as its name, symbol or logo having no ethnic or religious connotation, its activities are not confined to only a section of the country, her headquarters must be located in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, etc.

This clearly attest to the fact that the parties before the 1999 constitution symbolizes ethno-religious and regional outlook which calls for the reforms of the electoral process as deduced from the historical perspectives above. Similarly, Akinwale and Adeke (2019) reported that an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) National Commissioner argued that for electoral reforms to sanitize the country's electoral system, it should begin from political parties. And, if Nigeria really wants the needed reform in its electoral system, political parties must conduct free, fair and transparent primaries. According to him, primary election of political parties is probably the beginning if we want to reform our electoral system. That is where the electoral process should start from. This clearly attest to the centrality of the party in the electoral process and little can one talk about electoral process without happenings or pitfalls in party development. Above all, the electoral body in the country has undergone reforms and counter reforms from the pre –independence, independence and post independence eras in which most of the major focus was on strengthening party management and electoral contest.

Summarily, the nexus between party and the electoral process is an obvious one as one cannot be mentioned without the other. If one argues that there is an improved electoral process in a state, it inadvertently implies that the improvement was a result of credible party in the polity. Likewise, an improved electoral process or electoral administration in a state is a function of reforms initiated from the shortcomings identified in the establishment and management of political parties or party system in a country. For example, the electoral administration of the 2015 General elections in Nigeria can as well be argued as a function of the reforms initiated by the electoral management body prior to the 2015 elections or indirectly the role played by political parties which necessitated the need for improvement in the electoral process before the





elections. This shows that it is important to study or simplify/strengthen key election drivers in a country such as election petition, monitoring and evaluation of party activities, appraise judicial verdict on elections, assess patterns of voting and voters behavior, analyze hate speech and electoral violence among others towards better party development and electoral process.

Conclusion

This paper observed that the fundamental framework of Nigerian politics, party and electoral process is a communal one and that the political culture or party affiliation and election pattern in Nigeria is strongly tended towards consideration of communal identification. Such communal attachments could be called primordial loyalties or politics of identity which may be based on language, religion, region or blood ties which to a large extent defines the nature and character of the party politics in the country. It was further observed that multi-party system thrived in the country's first, second and part of the fourth republics while the two-party system adopted in the third republic was imposed by the then military government.

However, there has never been room for a one party system. Also, the multi-party system experienced in the country could have been as a result of intermittent military intervention which gave no room for merger of various interests that would have occurred if civilian rule had been allowed to exist for a longer period as being experienced in the fourth republic with the 2015 elections. This shows that if the tempo is sustained, primordial considerations would gradually fade away for party and the electoral process to deliver the much desired quest for the consolidation of democracy in the country.

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