

**CONDUCTING PEACEFUL, FREE  
AND FAIR ELECTION IN 2011 AND  
BEYOND:**

**THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS**

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## CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

### INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY AS A PANACEA FOR FREE, FAIR AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA.

BY  
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#### **Abstract**

*The paper agrees that democracy as a system of government has been adjudged as the best because of the opportunity it gives to the majority of the populace to participate in governance. It looks at the basic features and characteristics of democracy that distinguishes it from other forms of government. The paper also traces the evolution of political parties in Nigeria and established 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 management of their affairs. It further argues that since parties constitute the heart of democracy, the more vigorous and healthy they are, the better assured is the health of democratic process itself. The paper laments that most parties pay lip service to the concept of internal democracy, and in reality do not practice it nor respect it. Be that as it may concludes the paper the hope for credible elections in Nigeria cannot be achieved in the near further.*

#### **Introduction**

Definitions of democracy that are found in dictionaries go far beyond "government of the people by the people and for the people". Democracy as the only acceptable means of peaceful transfer of power, is indeed a philosophy of statecraft, and credible elections are necessary for democracy to flourish.

Democracy could be said to have originated in Athens- Greece, the birth place of Hellenic civilization. However, the Athenians democracy was not universal because only the nobles had the right to

choose, the masses including the slaves were not allowed to. It was other people and civilizations that have contributed to the overall development of democracy where the people became free to elect their representatives.

As a result of the contributions of other people and civilizations to the development of democracy, its definitions became according to Shekarau (2009) "as varied as the interests of persons and generations. Democracy is made identical with intellectual freedom, with economic Justice, with social welfare, with tolerance, with moral integrity, the dignity of man, and general civilized decency...". With this, all over the world, people have come to accept democracy as their emancipator from tyranny.

It is on this basis that the existence of political parties as a requirement for democratic practice becomes significant. Thus, political parties exist in democratic systems to perform the functions of recruiting and socializing leaders into political activities. They try to imbibe the political leadership with values and norms of democracy (Varma, 2007). Therefore, it becomes imperative for political parties to be coherent in structure, conflict free and have a strong identity that gives them their consciousness. In other words, if political parties do not democratize themselves by allowing the leaders to perform their functions, in the context of their assigned roles, this would lead to internal crises that would hinder their performance particularly at times of elections. Thus, free, fair and credible elections are the guarantee of democracy. There cannot be democracy without elections in which the people are allowed to choose their leaders. States have developed institutions and practices that ensure free and fair elections (Johari, 2005).

Nigeria since independence has had several times of democratic rule with political parties in place to contest elections. But the parties have had to face internal and extra crises and wrangling which have led to party fractionalization, break-up and eventual demise. In this present democratic dispensation, parties in Nigeria have not departed from the past experience. Be that as it may, open, competitive (free and fair) and meaningful electoral politics remain elusive to Nigeria. The democratic consolidation of electoral process still faces major impediment. Aina (2011), has captured these factors underlying the problematic nature of Nigeria's electoral process as, "limited autonomy of various electoral bodies, weak human resource base, lack of internal party democracy, the vicious circle of poverty...". Therefore, this paper will attempt to provide answers to the following questions, what should be the remedy for effective

performance of parties during elections? Why it is necessary for parties to create a conducive atmosphere for internal party democracy to allow for free, fair and credible elections? In doing this, the paper intend to look at the following: the conceptual analysis of democracy and party systems; the evolution of political parties in Nigeria; functions of political parties; internal party democracy as affects the present political parties as they prepare for April 2011 general elections; and look at the way forward.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Elite, Group and Power Theories**

These theories became very popular in the United States in the years following the Second World War, each claiming to be a full-fledged political theory in its own right. Elite theory was based on the idea that every society consists of two broad categories- the selected few, who are capable and therefore, have the right to supreme leadership; and the vast masses of people who are destined to be ruled. Even though this theory was first started in Central and Western European countries as a critique of democracy and socialism, it was suitably adapted in the United States by a number of writers to explain political processes as they existed in their country or, for that matter, in any democratic country.

The despotic roots of the theory, as they lay in its European origins were explained away by saying that within those who constituted the ruling class, in addition to a ruling elite, there was a counter-elite, which could be raised to power by the masses if the ruling elite lost its capacity to rule. The masses in this way, exercised a kind of remote control over the ruling elite, but they could not be expected by virtue of their apathy to the power game, to exercise much positive influence. Once it was conceded that the elite need not be a cohesive group but that it could consist of a number of social groups, the advocates of the group theory contended, one has to accept the position that every society includes within it a large number of groups, which remain engaged in a perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. These groups were engaged in a process of balancing and limiting each other, through which harmony between the various interests in society, of which groups were the exponents, could be maintained. Politics could thus, be understood only in terms of interaction between various groups.

A group theory of politics it was pointed out, satisfactorily explains the functioning of the state and society. What motivates the political

elite, or the elite groups (as they could be described), to play an active role in politics was the power theorists pointed out, the inevitable and irrepressible urge in human beings to come to power. Politics, according to these writers, was the game of power and since the individuals were largely responsible on account of their own peculiar ways of socialization and cultivation of values, to find expression of this urge to power, an attempt was made by them to shift the emphasis from the elite and group to the individual. Politics, it was pointed out, was the study of who got what amount of power, when and how.

If one goes a little deeply into these theories, one can see that behind the elite and the group theories also, power is the primary urge. Without an adequate conceptual basis for studying power, as Meehan (1967), has pointed out, elite and group theories too would lose their significance. It is the urge to power which encourages or forces the individuals to form groups and to assert themselves through these groups.

Renzo Sereno, as quoted by Varma (2007), pointed out that the theory of elite reduces the study of politics to the study power relation; and Macridis (1964), says the same thing of group analysis, when he described it as "... a crude form of determinism". Interests, he writes, " is the primary propelling force and every action is based upon sharing of competing, struggling interest organized into groups".

Thus, according to Varma (2007), if power proves to be an inadequate principle for understanding politics, elite theory as well as group theory will collapse, along with power theory, as they have already collapsed as satisfactory explanations of the political phenomena, though they may continue to serve an useful purpose as descriptive categories.

## **Conceptual Analysis**

### **1. Democracy**

Democracy is not a mere form of government. It is a type of state as well as an order of society. Asirvatham and Misra,(2006:446 ) opines that, "Democracy as a form of state is merely a mode of appointing, controlling, and dismissing a government. A democratic society is one in which the spirit of equality and fraternity prevails". The meaning of democracy is not exhausted even after interpreting it as a form of government, a type of state, and an order of society. It invades the realm of industry too. There are many today who claim

that the battle for democracy will not be complete till industry is entirely democratized.

They argue that, while democracy has made great strides in the social and political fields, it has made very little advance in the economic or industrial field. Whether their claim is right or not, we must admit that no society can call itself entirely democratic if it uses democratic methods in some fields and autocratic methods in others. Democracy also embodies a moral principle. It means that every man has value. It enshrines the truth that government does not exist for its own sake, but for the enrichment of personality. Thus, no government has a right to be called democratic if it does not bring out the best in man.

Democracy could be said to have originated in Athens- Greece, one of the major components of Western civilization. Long before the Enlightenment, the English had their revolution in form of the Great charter of Liberties- the Magna carter 1215 signed by king John of England in which he pledged that he and his successors will never act without consultation.

Democracy implies recognition of the duties of government and the rights of the people. It postulates a measure of personal freedom and equal consideration of all classes. It is superior to other forms of government because the rights and interests of every person are secure from being disregarded only when the person interested in himself able and habitual disposed to stand up for them. The participation in governmental affairs lifts the individual above the narrow circle of his egoism and broadens his interests. It makes him interested in his country and gives him a sense of responsibility.

In democracy, the government is less dependent on the psychology of power than in other forms of government. Democracy makes authority a trust, the common interest; the common welfare becomes the sole Justification of government. It is important which a democratic system attaches to human personality that makes it valuable. This, Appadorai (1975) sums it all that, "the democratic method is to reach decision by discussion, argument and persecution".

Under favorable conditions, democracy encourages the intelligence, self reliance, imitative and social sense of free men by placing the ultimate responsibility for government on the citizen themselves; it makes authority a trust, and ensures equal consideration for all. Its success depends on the spiritual effort the people put forth and the adjustment of democratic institutions in accordance with changing conditions.

For democracy to work successfully, certain conditions are necessary. Foremost among these is the widespread habit of tolerance and compromise among the members of a community; a sense of "give and take". This is necessary because democracy involves the conception of majority rule, and the acquiescence of the minority in the decision of the majority.

Democracy demands from the common man a certain level of ability and character, rational conduct and active participation in the government; the intelligent understanding of public affairs; independent judgment, tolerance and unselfish devotion to public interest.

There must be the provision of adequate opportunities for the individual to develop his personality- access to knowledge through a system of state-aided free education; security against unemployment, minimum wage, coupled with fair conditions of work to guard against economic slavery. This implies that vast disparities in the distribution of national wealth should be progressively reduced.

Again, democracy requires proper organization and leadership. Leadership as supplied by parties which, inspite of their admitted defects are essential to the successful working of representative government. Appadorai (1974:141) outlined the importance of leadership in democracy. To perform them successfully certain qualities are demanded:-

- ❖ A will directed to a high purpose clearly visualized and courageously pursued;
- ❖ The instinct of gauging clearly the needs of the people and the initiative to formulate means of realizing them.
- ❖ The ability to present issues clearly to the people and to arrive at a fair Judgment of the content of public opinion at a given time.
- ⊕ Self-reliance, honesty and a sense of responsibility.

When leaders display these qualities, they contribute to the success of democracy.

## **(II) Basic Features and Characteristics of Democracy**

The first important feature for a true democracy is the inculcation of faith in certain democratic principles. Among these principles, the pride of place must be given to the value of every human being. Democracy means that every individual is as important as any other

individual and that no-body should be neglected in what is done by government.

Also, democracy can only endure when both leaders and the people possess clean hands and have pure heart. If democracy is to succeed, the average citizen should be prepared to play his part in the civil life of the community. He should be willing vindicate the rights of others, and not simply stand on the sideline and allow the innocent to suffer. Furthermore, for democracy to work successfully, it requires that there should be no great wealth on the one hand and no objects poverty on the other. According to Asirvatham and Misra (2006), the middle class is the backbone of any democracy. It makes for both stability and progress.

Again, if democracy is to work well, the people must have easy access to accurate and unbiased information. Freedom of thought, freedom of speech and writing, freedom of association are the very life breath of democracy.

Most importantly, without popular education no democracy can long endure. It may be said that education helps a person to be well-informed, balanced and discriminating. The prospect for democracy is not too bright unless speedy steps are taken to liquidate illiteracy (Appadorai 1975).

However, the history of democracies shows that these conditions are rarely fulfilled. In practice, democracy is the rule of ignorance. It pays attention to quantify, not quality. Votes are counted, not weighted. There is a real danger in democracy that the citizens may not be sufficiently educated to appreciate the meaning of the issues which come before them at elections. They may be misled by class passions. Thus, democracy can never represent the rule of the many because, as a rule, the people merely accept the opinions of their leaders.

Modern democracy is capitalistic. That is, political state represents nothing but the rule of a propertied oligarchy. The principle and practice of representation are also faulty. According to Appadoria (1975:141), "as it is, a representative knows enough of everything to do everything badly, and enough of nothing to do anything well".

There are some who question the fundamental principles of democracy- political equality and majority rule. According to Voltaire (1929), "equality is a myth...it is impossible for men to be equal" Decision by a majority is not a law of nature, for the smaller number may be the stronger force and may have all the reason against the mere impetuous appetite of the majority.

Democracy is a difficult form of government for the assumptions on



which it rests are difficult of fulfillment. For example, it assumes civil capacity on the part of the citizens. This capacity involves three qualities- intelligence, self-control and conscience. That is, the citizen must be able to understand the interests of the community, to subordinate his own will to the general will and must feel his responsibility to the community and be prepared to serve it by voting and by choosing the best men. However, in classic analysis and in practice, these assumptions have not been adequately fulfilled for party spirit kills independent Judgment.

### **Party System**

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 ideas of the existence political parties are 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 articulate organization of society's active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of government 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 influences 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 outcome of long drawn historical and political struggle 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 are characterized by the banning of opposition parties, coercing opponents to join the government party or enacting laws which forbids competition. In most one party system 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 county. However, there exist side by side fringe parties. For instance, in the United States, smaller parties exist alongside the Democratic and Republic parties. The two party systems 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 principle of society.

Therefore, the two party systems rests on consensus building, it places less emphasis on ideology and emphasis 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 number. There is no limit to the number of parties in a Multi-party system. Multi-parties 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, culture 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 tends to exacerbate the ideological aspect of the conflict. Thus, multiparty system may give rise to a relatively stable coalition which represent the major grouping of society and lead 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 good 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 in to 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 of or the 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 does political function is affected 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 argue that a party which is progressive in the function is democratic in nature and operate on the basis of democratic centralism. While the regressive party functions bureaucratically and operate 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 function 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 cue behind candidates and issues 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-de'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 alternative, 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, caliber of its officials and its performance, either in or out government (Amdi and Hinjan: 1990).

### **Evolution of Political and Party Politics in Nigeria**

The Mcpherson 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 affairs. The constitution ushered in an era of party organizations (Price: 1967). However, before the Mcpherson Constitution, there were ethnic cultural associations which were formed to articulate parochial tribal interest. When it was time for the British to encourage political participation then, these tribal associations were converted into outright political parties.

Be that as it may, 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 to take over control of the NCNC (Amdi, 1990:88)

From this point, the tripartite model of the politics of Nigeria was

established each given allegiance to their parties and regions thereby throwing Nigeria in to dysfunctional socio-political variables with dirty politics and tribalism. (Richard, 1992)

### **Internal Party Democracy: the Nigerian Example.**

Internal party democracy is when political parties play the game according to the rules, norms and guidelines as set by themselves. It is when the rule of law prevails in the conduct of their primaries following the process of nomination of candidates for elections. There is something about election campaigns: the electrifying atmosphere in infectious can-do spirit, the spine-chilling fear and verbal missiles thrown round. Ordinarily, the time should be interesting.

But, it is not always so especially here in Nigeria. The politicians are so desperate that they start by looking at the rules to explore how to break them. It is only in African politics that men who drive the process are too eager to sacrifice the future at the altar of the present. Therefore, a political party that lacks fairness in its internal picking of candidates is less likely to crave for fairness in a general election in which it contests against rival parties. To that extent that only free, fair and credible elections can sustain democracy, it should be a general warning that all is not well with the basics of this democracy as the journey for 2011 general elections promises to throw around much of these. The signs are all there.

After the round of primary elections held to beat the dead-line set for the exercise by the independent National Electoral Commission (NEC) the parties are breaking at the seams as party lords have decided those to send to various legislative houses and hand tickets for the executive offices. No party is left out of the malpractices that characterized the selection process.

Thus, the storm stirred up by the failed and stalemated primaries in the leading political parties indicate many unsettling things about Nigeria. Idowu (2011) outlines these as; most parties pay only lip service to the concept of internal democracy, but in reality do not believe in it or respect it. This shows the unenviable low level of Nigeria's political development. Second, there are unresolved problems with the structure of Nigerian politics, the institutions that regulate it, and the engraftment of unregulated cultural practices on our political ethos.

No party is spared the malady of imposition, and as the feverish movements and deflections across parties show, it will be difficult for any of them to use the concept of internal democracy as a campaign

strategy. This has shown that the parties were either naïve or dishonest in deliberately leaving the concept of internal democracy undefined. Thus, Idowu (2011) opines, "after the violence that visited their congresses and the criticisms that followed their idiosyncratic application of internal democracy, the parties must have experienced their individual epiphanies".

Let examine three major Nigerian political parties and see how they conducted the primaries leading to April 2011 general elections.

### **Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)**

The party is smarting from rancor engendered by the dissension arising from the primaries. In parts of the North where the party is becoming a beautiful bride, there have been accusations of arbitrariness in the award of offices to contestants who ought to have been tested at the polls. The party has understandably become much quitter on the issue of internal democracy and is even more mortified in its campaign about every vote being made to count. The ACN will begin to think seriously of modifying its platform and the essentials of its politics.

The discontent in other parties has affected the peace and health of the ACN. It is the preferred destination for aspirants and politicians handed the short end of the stick in other political parties in the North and East. This has disturbed the status quo and equilibrium prior to the last minute movements. Many of those considered political featherweights who had been promised or given the governorship and senatorial tickets before the arrival from other parties are kicking against the development. However, the leaders have remained adamant, arguing that politics is about power and the test of strength.

### **Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)**

In the North where the CPC is very popular, aspirants would do anything to obtain the party's tickets. In the battles for the governorship mandate in Bauchi, Kano and Katsina States, the party has been so buffeted by aspirants who claim that they were shoved aside using undemocratic methods that they would not rest unless they obtain redress. In Bauchi State, Abdullahi Adamu is believed to have won the popular votes at the primaries. However, when the time came to forward the names of the candidates to INEC, Yusuf Tugur who reportedly was third at the ballot had merged the preferred candidate.

In Katsina State the situation is the same. It all started when a

committee was set to come up with a consensus candidate. The committee settled for Senator Danmarke Lado against Animu Masari. Masari was quick to denounce the consensus arrangement as anti-democratic. The party leadership agreed that all the aspirants should go to the polls. Again, at the primaries Masari lost to Lado. But at the end of January, it was Masari whose name was sent to INEC as the governorship candidate of CPC in Katsina State. The same story repeated itself in Kano State where Mohammed Abacha won but Ja'afaru Lawal Isah was sent to INEC. It only took the intervention of the court to redress these nominations.

### **Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)**

For 12 years the party waged the most blistering attack on internal democracy and the idea of one man one vote. Apart from limited democracy within the party, which ensures the impermanence of most of its actions, the party has experienced too much transformation in the hands of its self appointed and highly opinionated leaders to claim to have a soul or even a semblance of it. The party is indistinguishable from the presidency according to party rules and practices. The same anomalous politicking is replicated in the state where governors exercise an unyielding hold on the party almost to the total exclusion of critics and opponents.

For example, the chairman of its BOT, Chief Olushegun Obasanjo, had to lead a delegation to the national Chairman to ask for redress over certain injuries he and his allies within the party suffered during the congresses. Similarly, Chief Solomon Lar, former national chairman himself also complained angrily about the manner many groups were shut out of the party particularly in Plateau State during the primaries (Sunday Nation, January 9, 2011) Ogun and Oyo States have presented peculiar challenges for the PDP. Till date, it is not settled who would be presented as Governorship, Senatorial, House of Representatives and State Assembly candidate. In Ogun State neither of the two factions is willing to yield to the other. Chief Obasanjo, a former President of Nigeria is locked in battle with a sitting governor of the state Chief Gbenga Daniel.

In Oyo State, Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala leads a faction of the party. He has forwarded his name to the party as candidate in the April 16, governorship poll. However, the Lekan Balogun and group is doing all to frustrate the move. The group has gone to court and reportedly obtained an injunction restraining Akala from being presented or parading himself as candidate of the party since no proper primary was conducted before January 15 to pick a flag bearer



(Sunday Nation, February, 6, 2011:7).

This lack of internal party democracy has led to multi-litigations against the parties and granting of ex-parte orders to INEC as we prepare for the general elections in April. This has worried the National Chairman of INEC Prof. Attahiru Jega who is worried that if this is not curtailed will lead to chaos. In his February, 17 letter to Justice Aloysius Katsina-Alu, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Jega condemned the indecorous grant of these ex-parte orders to politicians by the courts. He pointed out in the letter that "from the deadline for the submission of forms of candidates by political parties on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011, to the date hereof, a total of 132 cases have been served on the commission out of this, 70 ex-parte orders have been issued by the courts on the matter" (The Nation, March, 1, 2011:17).

The dire consequences of these as underscored by Jega's insinuation in the letter are that, there is "a ploy to sabotage the democratic process". This is because it has become difficult for INEC to come out with the final list of candidates standing for the various elective posts in the political parties. From Akwa Ibom, Ogun Enugu, Lagos, Kano, Katsina, Oyo states among others, the courts have frustrated efforts by INEC to get parties' candidates registration behind it.

It is sad to note that elections in the country are not about people but about the politicians who hold the polity in awe. INEC must be left to do its job devoid of avoidable impediments, whether legal or not if the dream for free and fair elections in April is to materialize.

Perhaps, one can infer that what has informed this lack of internal democracy by parties is the scrapping of section 87 (9) of the Electoral Act 2010 as amended by the National Assembly. Section 87 (9) before it was dropped read: "where a political party fails to comply with the provision of this Act in the conduct of its primaries, its candidate for election shall not be included in the election for the particular position in issue". This position rightly gave INEC the almighty moral baron to force non-democratic-minded political parties into line.

### **Conclusion**

Political parties may now and then answer popular end, they are likely in the course of time and things to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the rein of government. I share this suspicion of political parties. I see

political parties in Nigeria as divisive and self-serving, more interested in winning elections or representing narrow interests than in furthering the national good. On the other hand, political parties are indispensable vehicle for organizing a broad citizen participation that is essential to the maintenance of democracy and political stability.

Democracy as a concept has varying meaning in the minds of scholars and practitioners. However, it has been adjoined as the best form of government because it promotes freedom of choice, equality Justice and popular participation. In its practice, there must be the existence of political parties under whose platform electoral contestation would take place.

Internal party democracy has always been the problem of the Nigeria democracy. Internal democracy in the parties is a double-edged sword that is capable of weakening the party system. This has made many to look for alternative. To Fasure (2011), what the parties need is rule of law and not internal democracy. He argues that, primaries are internal affairs of the parties and should not be subjected to the regulation of government except to ensure that a candidate put forward meets the minimum requirements of the constitution.

Thus, let the parties advertise abinitio that they would not conduct primaries and that their candidates would emerge by anointing. In that case, there would be no grudge. A money bag shopping for platforms would not be in a position to hijack the ticket and more importantly, there would be no basis for litigations. We are fighting the wrong cause and dissipating our energy on the wrong cause. The money and resources wasted by the candidates during nomination could have been preserved for prosecuting the election properly. Too many candidates had to break bank to win the primaries and were already broke by the time of the election proper.

I think the real issue we should be concerned about is having a free and fair election. If the elections are really free and fair, an aspirant who feels he or she was unfairly denied ticket can fly the flag of another party or stand as independent candidates. In the United States for instance Senator Joe Lieberman lost the Democratic Party's Senatorial nomination in 2006 but contested and won as an independent candidate (Fasure, 2011). The trouble is that most candidates don't want to work that way. They cannot run on the strength of their own name. They want to grab the ticket of the party popular in an area and then coast home to victory cheaply. It doesn't work that way.

They have to establish their own social contract with the voters

and truly earn their consent. This is the only change in out-look, the refurbishment of the mental infrastructure for democracy as the precursor to the revolution we desire in democratic politics in Nigeria To concentrate only on election without focusing on other equally important democratic determinants has been rightly described by Alamu (2011) as sheer electoralism.

In the light of the above, it can be safely conclude that unless there is a profound attitudinal reorientation on the part of the Nigerian political elite, elections and the entire democratic process will always be imperiled. However, attitudinal re-orientation and re-engineering is a painfully slow process and not an overnight prescription. It involves a gradual shift of mental psychological structures. It is a function of repeated gestures leading to an accumulation of positive memory. When you factor all this into analytical framework, the pained conclusion is that it is not yet the dawn of genuine democracy in Nigeria

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