

Nigerian political parties and internal democracy

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Abstract

Political parties are known as a platform for recruitment of political leaders and the organisation of parliament and government, both in advanced and developing democracies. Since independence in Nigeria, the concept of internal democracy has been relegated to the background through the activities of political parties from the First Republic and the germane issue has become contending in the present Fourth Republic. Research has shown that this lack of internal democracy in political parties led to crisis in the past civilian regimes, and a causal factor on which the military anchored its intervention in 1966. Conflicting interests and ramblings in the Nigerian present political parties is attributed to a lack of internal democracy in the political parties. This study discusses the following: the emergence of political parties in the Nigerian project, political parties and internal democracy and Nigerian experience, as well as the challenges. A way forward to enhance peaceful existence, internal democracy within political parties in Nigeria and full development of the Nations democratic process is suggested. A descriptive research method was utilised, both primary and secondary data was used to gather data, and documentary analysis was used to analyse data to arrive at reasonable conclusions.

Keywords: political parties, internal democracy, Nigeria, Constitution, policy.

Sumário

Os partidos políticos são conhecidos como uma plataforma para o recrutamento de líderes políticos e a organização do parlamento e do governo, tanto em democracias avançadas ou em desenvolvimento. Desde a independência, na Nigéria, o conceito de democracia interna tem sido relegado ao fundo através das atividades dos partidos políticos, da Primeira República e a essa questão tornou-se relevante na presente Quarta República. A pesquisa mostrou que esta falta de democracia interna nos partidos políticos conduziu à crise nos regimes civis passados e a um factor motivadora em que os militares fixaram sua intervenção em 1966. Os conflitos de interesses e as divergência internas nos partidos políticos atuais nigerianos são atribuídos à falta da democracia interna nos partidos políticos. Este estudo discute o seguinte: o surgimento de partidos políticos no projeto nigeriano, partidos políticos e democracia interna e experiência nigeriana, assim como os desafios. Um caminho a seguir para reforçar a existência pacífica, a democracia interna dentro dos partidos políticos na Nigéria e o pleno desenvolvimento do processo democrático das Nações é sugerido. Utilizou-se um método descritivo de pesquisa, sendo utilizados dados primários e secundários para a coleta de dados, e usou-se a análise documental para examinar dados que conduzem a conclusões razoáveis.

Palavras-chaves: Partidos Políticos, Democracia interna, Nigéria, Constituição, Política.



Introduction

Political parties have existed since time immemorial in the history of the Nigerian project and internal democracy has always been a bone of contention. Independence in Nigeria was said to have broken the cord of colonialism and the nation became a sovereign state to decide her future. What is attainable today is a total deviation from the Nationalists' architecture. Nigeria adopted the concept of federalism in 1946 and became a federal state through the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. This was to help manage diversity and political tensions, negotiation and agreement. Political parties are the central features of any democracy; they are the vehicles through which the citizens come together freely to campaign for public office, express their interest and needs, and defend their aspirations for their society (NDI, 2008). Internal democracy is a crucial factor for the existence of internal cohesion in the Nigerian political parties. Absence of a well-structured, non-participation of the members, rules and processes, denial of party member rights, and a weak approach to handling grievances are as a result of the absence of internal democracy and poor leadership in the Nigerian political party system (Ikelegbe, 2013). Position integration is also a crucial factor and is necessary in a conflictual environment, hence this conflict could destabilise a nation if taken into the political system and not properly managed. Parties must stick to broad membership and democratic principle in a group integration process (Mathias and Fernando, 2008). Internal democracy provides an atmosphere where the party members have free access to information, participate in the decision-making process and consent to party rules. This political study dissects the following issues: Nigerian political parties, internal democracy in Nigerian political parties, the challenges and a suggested way forward for a good sustainable democratic process.

Conceptual discourse

Political party

A political party is an organised participant in the government – an organised group, a formal organised group with structures, hierarchy and leadership. A political programme, which may be different from others, states its goals, policies, strategies and method. Its major goals are to solely control the machinery of government and to seek popular support of the citizenry to achieve their goals (Ikelegbe, 1995, p. 88). It is a voluntary association formed by people with common interests whose aim is to retain power through the election of its candidates to various public offices at different levels of government (Oarhe & Ikelegbe, 2009). Political parties are the primary channel through which the populace's expectations and fears are expressed and conveyed to government institutions and the parliament (Kadima, 2008). Nnoli, (2003) sees a political party as a group of people with common ideals of organisation and usage of a state's power. Political parties could be perceived as organs responsible for interest articulation to seek power for the implantation of this interest (Idike, 2014). Political parties play roles such as interest aggregation, formation of governments, developing and promoting policies, and selection of political leaders



(Carothers, 2006). Political parties serve as a measure and indicator of an effective democracy (Akubo et al, 2014). Political parties are faced with the responsibility of ensuring a successful democratic system. The presence of political institutionalisation and party autonomy is crucial to cope effectively with these enormous responsibilities (Omotola, 2009).

Political parties can be seen from the above definition as a mediators between the people and the government, and as a platform on which public officers seek to attain government office.

Democracy

The word 'democracy' was popularly conceptualised by Abraham Lincoln in Gettysburg as 'the government of the people, for the people and by the people'. To many people, anything short of this definition is considered the opposite of democracy. Democracy is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power, either directly or indirectly through representatives in a periodical election (Appadorai, 2004, pp. 137-139). To Jega, (2002) democracy means different things to different people, despite the multiplicity of concept and its contradictory nature. The essentials of democracy allow free discussion, free association and periodical elections, and continuous participation of the people in the Government. The success of democracy demands: a certain level of ability and character from the common man; rational conduct and active participation in the government; intelligence to understand public affairs; independent judgement; tolerance; and unselfish devotion to public interest (Appadorai, 2004). Democracy is a political system where the citizens are governed through any form of government and exercise of power through the people's representatives (Osakwe, 2001, Idike, 2014). Democracy assures civic capacity on the part of the citizens, which involves three qualities: intelligence, self-control and conscience. The citizens must understand communal interest and subjection of their will to that of the public, as well as their responsibility to the public, and the exercise their civic responsibility for the good of the general public (Bryce, 1929).

The essentials of democracy include: government responsibility to the people, existence and implementation of the rule of law, popular participation in both social, economic and political activities, transparent election, freedom of the press, sound political ideology, independence of the judiciary, freedom of communication, democratic equalisation among the people, and regular consultation of the people through the representatives (Aderigbe, 2001, Ugwu, 2007). The role of the political party in this regard is to ensure that a government is elected based on a free and fair election and ensures the citizens commitment to the continuity and survival of the state (Idike, 2014). Internal democracy deals with the coordination of political parties' affairs transparently within the tenets of the party rules and should inculcate equity and fairness (Akubo et al, 2014). Firstly, according to Nzongala-Ntalaya, (2001) democracy refers to three fundamental ideals, which include: a moral imperative that indicates representation of aspirations of people for freedom, for a better social and political order. Secondly, democracy is a social process that involves a continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental human rights, and lastly, democracy is a political practice anchored on the principles of popular sovereignty, rule of



law, accountability, change and popular participation. Democracy is costly to operate, its process of policy formulation is rigorous, and it serves the elites' interest rather than that of the majority (Oarhe and Ikelegbe, 2009).

Conclusively, democracy is a government established by the people and for the people. Thus, democracy is still considered as the best form of government in the modern world compared to other systems of government. It allows full participation of the citizens, an independent judiciary, respect for human rights and rule of law, and the existence of political parties on which candidates secure a position in government office to represent their various constituents in a periodic election.

Literature review

Political parties are the vehicles through which public officers seek recruitment into various government offices at different levels of government. Internal democracy is a crucial factor for a peaceful coexistence and full development of a party system. Much work was carried out in political parties and internal democracy, but emphasis was laid on party ideology, violence and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The Akubo et al, (2014) study found out that Nigerian political parties' challenges are as a result of a lack of institutionalisation and personalisation. In the study, the absence of internal democracy in the party is due to the heavy influence of the political godfather on their candidates: incessant party violence. They concluded that political parties in Nigeria are weak and vulnerable without a future, so there is an urgent need for internal democracy for party effectiveness and efficiency. Omotola, (2009) asserted that the connection is complex. Because the political parties forms the government which is an institution of the state, they are interdependent of each other. The study also placed an emphasis on the need for party ideology in a well-defined relationship, hence this absence pose a threat to political liberalisation, democratisation and democratic consolidation. The conclusion was that Nigerian political parties lack party ideology and there is a need for sound intra-conflict management as a functional tool of ideology – this could be achieved through the help of both the elites and civil society in reforming the party and the members to achieve a good democratic process. Idike, (2014) work concerning political parties, political apathy and democracy in Nigeria shows that political parties are organs of interest articulation for the purpose of attaining power and the implementation of interest. The political party is a global phenomenon and a germane issue to developing countries like Nigeria.

Ikelegbe, (1995) focused his study on the process of citizens politically organising themselves through interest groups and the political parties. The study went further to equate political parties as organised groups with the objective to have control of the state and to exercise power. The study concluded that the Nigerian political parties emerged through organisations and movements due to the presence of colonialism, and that these movements later became political parties that mobilised the citizenry to support and participate in its favour. Omoweh, (2012) asserted that the nature of political parties and its capacity to conduct free and fair party elections has to do with the political leadership; the level of intra-party and inter-party democracy determines the existence of democracy. Firstly, the study revealed three conditions for political parties' growth



and this includes the weakness of internal democratic practices within political parties, which is detrimental to democratic processes in all countries of the world. Secondly, it revealed that the ethnic basis of the Nigerian political parties speed up the rise of autocratic and ethnic hegemonic leaders who have not be able to rise above this ethnic consideration, both at the regional and at the national level. Thirdly, the beneficiaries of the factions within the political parties in Nigerian and South Korea tends to resist democratisation. The conclusion of the study was that steps to help bring a true democratic developmental state include: the involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs), and the need for vibrant labour unions to be the watchdogs in fighting corruption and ensuring true democratic practices in public institutions.

Oarhe & Ikelegbe, (2009) are of the view that political parties are essential to democracy and good governance and act as a central instrument. The study also shows that the ruling party between 1999 and 2007 performed below expectation in the promotion of good governance, and this could be ascribed to the problem of godfatherism. The conclusion was that there is an urgent need to imbibe discipline to enhance democratic process and good governance. Aleyomi, (2014) work on the role of political parties in renewing Nigeria's democracy was based on the compatibility of neoliberalism and democracy through the viability of the political party system in Nigeria. The study shows that the inability to democratically manage intra-party sources of conflict could escalate and pose a threat to national stability and economic growth. Lamidi and Bello, (2012) concluded that the activities of political parties from 1999 failed to engage on issues of governance; they rather spent quality time on internal crises due to factions and tribal loyalty. Therefore, party reformation is a prerequisite for a proper democratic process. To Badejo and Akpowoghaha,(2015) the Nigerian Fourth Republic 1999 political system has continued to experience a proliferation of political parties and decamping of members, and this development in the Nigeria scenario is due to a lack of internal democracy and the selfish interests of its members. It was concluded that government financial grants to political parties, the 'get rich quick' syndrome by party elites, inefficient internal conflict management, the multi-ethnic nature of the nation, and a lack of internal democracy were causal factors for members cross-carpeting and proliferating political parties. For a peaceful coexistence, the parties must observe internal democracy and respect for constitutional provisions Aleyomi, (2013) findings were that politicians in Nigeria take political parties and politics very seriously, and this is due to their personal interests. According to the study, those who decamped often anchored their lack of political integrity on lack of internal democracy and political patronage, and this behaviour is as old as the nations' independence and sovereignty.

Also, there is a lack of party ideology. It was concluded that relevant sections of the 1999 constitution such as section 68(1) and section 109 (1) of the 1999 constitution became a platform for decamping for party members. This could pose a threat to the multi-party system and have a direct effect if not put in place to check on political progress and stability and clamour for a political party who place people at the centre (people oriented) and uphold political culture as an ideology. Finally, Okhaide, (2012) study titled 'Quest for internal party democracy in Nigeria'



examined the 2010 Electoral Act. In the study, it was revealed that the provision in section 87 (1) and (2) of the act prescribed the procedure for political parties' nomination of members, but the repealed section 87 (9) of the act, which empowers the political party members on candidates' nominations, led to the demise of internal democracy in the Nigerian political parties. It was concluded in the study that the primaries conducted by political parties could serve as a yardstick for measuring internal democracy in these political parties due to non-compliance with the constitutional provisions. This made it difficult for the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to effectively carry out its mandate, it gave opportunity to party lords to select candidates of their choice, and it was at the expense of internal democracy in political parties.

This research focuses on the absence of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties, the effect of godfatherism on the party system, the lack of atmosphere transparency and accountability in parties' objectives, and the non-inclusiveness of the grassroots members in decision-making.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study would engage the system approach to the study of politics by David Easton. The purpose is to reduce multiplication of efforts to integrate all knowledge and to treat all systems as inter-related. Parts of a system should be treated as organic parts of the same system, not as separate units. According to this theory, every unit has its own structures and sub-structures that function with the help of inputs, throughputs outputs and feedback. Emphasis is laid on certain forces that come from the environment and play a part in the decision-making process (output). The feedback plays its own part in connecting the input and outputs with the result from political system activities (Joharis, 2013). Political parties don't exist in a vacuum; it takes people who are the elite, middle class and poor in the party who operate in the environment. All party members must be carried along and involved in the decision-making process, regardless of the class they belong to; they must be treated with equity and respect. Grassroots-oriented parties are central to representative democracy and in order to enable them to perform this role effectively, a party system in a nation must embrace stability (Kadima, 2008).

The activities of political parties determine party viability and peaceful coexistence. Internal democracy is a crucial factor for its survival, and for party members' satisfaction.

Materials and methods

This study utilised descriptive research method. Internal democracy in the Nigerian political parties is a crucial element for the proper development of party system but where there is observance of this factor, especially in developing countries, there is bound to be intra-party conflict. The result in the Nigerian scenario is defection of members of a particular political party to another at will. Parties' primaries lack transparency. This development has gone a long way to hamper internal democracy and the opposition's viability in the Nigerian party system. Documentary analysis was adopted to arrive at reasonable conclusions. Sources of data are both primary and secondary sources. The primary source was through questionnaires and interviews, while the secondary



source was from textbooks, published journals, internet materials and newspapers.

The origin of Nigerian political parties

The Nigerian democratic experiment commenced in 1999 under the 1999 constitution (as amended). Political parties have existed and disappeared in different guises in the nation's political history (Adeleye, 2013). Herbert Macaulay, known as The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), formed the first political party in Nigeria in 1923. Its activities were restricted to contesting the election only in the Lagos City Council. UNDP hegemonic activities over the years led to the emergence of the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM), which became the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1934 and defeated the NNDP for the available three seats allocated for Lagos (Omotola, 2009). There was a new turn of events by 1944 due to the agitations of Nationalists, which resulted in the formation of The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (CNCN) under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay and later Nnamdi Azikiwe. In the 1950s, most socio-cultural organisations transformed themselves into political parties.

The Yoruba Egbe Omo Oduduwa became The Action Group (AG) under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern People's Congress emerged from the North in 1959. The emergence of the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) was as a result of a breakaway faction of the NPC, the Radical Youth based in Kano, which later dominated the political landscape in their respective regions, and spurred them on towards independence and the First Republic (Sklar, 1963). The First Republic political parties drew their strengths on a regional basis from the three regions. The aborted third Republic saw the activities of two major political parties, which were introduced by the then, Head of State General Gbadamosi Babangida: Nigerian Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). They contested until the annulment of the June 12 election, which the SDP was proposed to have won (Adeleye, 2013). According to Emordi et al, (2006) upon assumption of office by Abacha, the two existing political parties were dissolved and five political parties were inaugurated: the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Grassroots Democratic Party of Nigeria (GDM), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and Congress for National Congress (CNC). These political parties were said to have conspired and adopted Abacha as their presidential candidates for his third term bid agenda. Upon transition to democracy, the candidate of the People's Democratic Party, General Olusegun Obasanjo, emerged as the winner of the 1999 election and became the manager of the Nigerian economy till the merger formed by CPC, ANPP and ACN – APC opposition party – emerged as the winner of the 2015 general election.

The First Republic political parties – the Northern People's Congress (NCPC), mainly the Hausas Party, the Action Group (AG) (the Yoruba), the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) (represented the Igbos in the East) – were based on tribal, ethnic and religious regional identities (Corentin Cohen, 2015). The narrow focus of the pre-independence political parties served as a defined policy for challenging colonial rule and to attain independence for the nation. Parties' activities were not regulated



but the mobilisation was for their immediate constituencies. This became a platform for the promotion of ethnic and primordial interests that later sabotaged their connections and later encouraged suspicion and rivalry, violence, and the termination of agenda that served as a basis for military takeover in Nigerian politics (ALF, 2000). Tribalism and ethnicity was inherited from the pre-independence political parties and is still very strong in the six geopolitical regions of the country. The Professor Ekelis theory of the two publics can be used as an illustration where an ethnic group dominated the primordial society and civic society was the government (Nigeria). Most of our nationalists were nationalists by day and tribal men by night. Tribal sentiments pose an obstacle to a sustainable democratic process and party development as even the anti-corruption war of the present president, President Muhamadu Buhari, have seen most people frown when their tribal man is indicted.

The absence of a truly national party and the lapses in the formation of Nigerian political parties led to the demise of internal democracy in the present democratic dispensation.

Political parties, internal democracy: the Nigerian experience

Despite the constitutional considerations and provisions of section 221-229 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which made provisions for intra-party democracy, the activities of political parties in Nigeria lack internal democracy. Internal democracy encompasses two instruments of intra-party democracy: organisation of free and fair elections, and a periodic election of party members and its representatives – equal and popular participation of its members, and equal representation of interests (Okhaide, 2012). This ranges from the nomination of candidates to party primaries, alliances and many others. The mistake of the Nigerian ruling class is its failure to build a strong and socially stable system for a democratic practice to take root (Musa, 2015). Ukaeje, (2011) was clear in his assertion that Nigerian political parties are likened to a paradox, due to the lack of democratic principles such as internal coherence and discipline. What is obtainable is the opposite: this absence of internal democracy poses a stumbling block to a sustainable democratic process. Nigerian political parties have neither risen above ethnic considerations nor observed internal democracy in its structure, organisation and its politics, but have been bedridden with crisis and become an avenue for corruption in the country. Politics has become a profession to the detriment of public interests, and a source of primitive accumulation and profit maximisation (Jinadu, 2013). Parties have adopted the role in contemporary democracies as aggregators, mediators, and solutions to collective action problems. Politics provides a platform for political aggregation, organising and coordinating votes, a vehicle for solving collective action problems, and it facilitates the activities of political actors (Allen, 2008). The question of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties is of paramount importance for the development of a political and democratic process in a contemporary society (Oarhe & Ikelegbe, 2009). The health and strength of a Democratic Party system serves as a determinant factor and success of any democratic experiments in a nation (Allen, 2008). According to Omeje, (2015) ways of ensuring internal democracy include: popular participation; accessible party leadership to the people after



winning elections; involvement of non-Governmental organisations such as churches, mosques, student, trade unions, and farmers; the establishment of a quality research team for investigations; and adopting a quota system to reserve a certain percentage for ethnic minority. In the Nigerian context internal democracy is far from a reality, and this lack of internal democracy in the political parties led to the breakdown of The Nigerian People's Democratic Party (PDP) which is yet to come to terms with the opposition role it has to play in the Nigerian politics.

Given the recent development in the All Progressive Party power tussle, we could deduce that, though the people clamour for change, change was not secured. The democracy process is heading for failure, hence the elected officials don't consider the electorate's needs and aspirations but are only concerned with who gets what and from what region. Ugwu, (2007) likened Nigerian political parties to warlords of Ancient Confucius China, who operated as semi-gods in political parties, giving orders and commands. He argued further that parties in Nigeria lack ideology and internal democracy, and their reward system is based on patronage. Turning the periscope towards the current conflict in the Nigerian National Assembly, it is attributed to a lack of internal democracy and is the symptom of regime reproduction among the party lords. The performance of the past administration has not encouraged internal democracy either; for example, it was noted that there were no party primaries for the PDP presidential candidate in the 2015 general election and that President Good luck Jonathan was assumed a consensus candidate based on a 'Yes' or 'No' ballot with no contestant. Even with the aggrieved going to the court of law to stop the procedure, the wind vein pointed the direction that the supposed party leaders made it to point and this was a mockery of a sustainable democratic process. Another vivid example worth noting is the current Bayelsa September 2015 controversial APC governorship primaries that were flawed. The Chairman who was to conduct the primaries was allegedly whisked out of the arena due to miscreant activities, which led to the cancellation of the result, and thus the primaries were full of irregularities. Elections have been more controversial in manipulated public institutions, which result in a high level of poverty for the populace (Yagboyaju, 2011). As a matter of fact, this is what the Nigerian political parties anchor their activities on: internal conflicts as a result of conflicting interests of party members. Jega, (2015) put some light on the state of political parties in the nation when he asserted that the germane issue is that too much opportunity is given to these parties to be hijacked by the powerful private individual, who later become the boss and determine 'who becomes who', that there is need to put in place a mechanism to make political parties public-owned institutions, and internal democracy can only be found in smaller parties. The Nigerian political atmosphere is characterised by money politics, political vagrancy, indiscipline and a lack of cohesion (Omotola, 2009).

The elements that form cohesion of political parties in the democratic transition were to facilitate internal democracy. These elements, according to Jinadu, (2013) include: party conventions; party nomination primaries; establishing a party bureaucracy to help identify party technocrats and career politicians; instilling a new democratic culture through the encouragement of political participation that will give birth to politicians with system-supporting orientation to the polity; strong political



ideology that reveals the difference in each political party; discouraging the personalisation of political parties; and giving room for accountability and transparency in dispensing party finance.

The challenges

The problem with political parties in this geographical location is not the absence of laws; existing laws are meant to govern its activities. The candid issue of substituting candidates after primaries was as a result of the flaws in the electoral act, which gave room for impunity (Jega, 2015). Onwe, (2015) further equated the Nigerian political parties to public liability companies, whose actual owners are the rich shareholders who put in both material and financial effort for its establishment and control its operations. This is the position of the president or governor upon assuming political office, who utilises the resources at his disposal to dispense as political patronage. He asserted further that this activity has made the nation's political water shark-infested and muddy. Given the fact that the Nigerian political parties have not grown above ethnic consideration is an issue open to public debate. Once a candidate is nominated, his credentials are usually based on his ethnic origins, not on merit. Momoh, (2013) enumerates the bases on which most Nigerian political parties were established in the Fourth Republic – the proliferation of political parties, which led to the demise of the past republics and internal contradiction, encouraged factions and ended up promoting the creation of new parties by the aggrieved. The issue is that deepening democracy is secondary to contemporary political parties. Rather, focus is geared towards winning elections by all means to make them able to control the nation's resources in their best interests, even when the interests of the poor masses is at stake, given the political behaviour.

Another issue in the Nigerian party system is the attitude of the ruling elite towards its members and godfatherism. A recent example of the absence of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties is the controversial emergence of the new Kogi state governor. He was not part of the inconclusive 15 February governorship election, but was used as a replacement for the late governorship aspirant (Abubaka Audu). This transpired despite the provisions of section 181 of the 1999 constitution, the father of all laws and acts, which states that if a State Governor dies before being sworn in, the Deputy shall elect his Deputy with support of a simple majority of the House of Assembly of the State. The Attorney- General of the nation's grounds for party replacement with a new candidate who did not partake in the inconclusive election was anchored on section 33 of the electoral Act, which states: if a Governor dies, there is room for a replacement. This led to the situation where James Falake (Former Deputy), who was to be nominated as the Governor, was asked to remain as Deputy and Yahaya Bello, who never partook in the inconclusive election, was nominated as the Governorship candidate by the party lords. The aggrieved is now in ordinary court to try and get his mandate back. We could deduce from the following case that the problem of godfatherism is the rationale behind the retarded growth and non-observance of intra-party democracy in the Nigerian political system. This view was supported in Ikelegbe, (2013) when he asserted that the problem was due to the following: internal contradiction in the parties; state actors' authoritative attitude towards party members; and inequality, which later led to their inefficiency.



The weak leadership, weak cohesion, divisibility and grounds for conflict and violence was due to poor leadership of the political party lords. Parties procure their electoral victory through fraud and violence. Electoral violence is based on a party's capability, resources and incumbent power, which indicate the ruling party as the perpetrators (Ikelegbe, 2013). The Nigeria party system is weak and vulnerable, with a future hijacked by desperate politicians who don't have national interests at heart (Akubo et al, 2014). Parties' primaries usually face many challenges, such as encouragement to step aside, horse-trading, and a culture of imposition of preferred candidates by godfathers. This development led to the shrinking of democratic space and a lack of credible leaders with the responsibility to deliver good governance (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009). Godsons are placed in various public positions by their godfathers, their financial backing in return for consensus and promise of loyalty, influence in the running of the affairs of the State, contracts, appointments, employment and allocation of resources (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009).

The points noted above reveal that where this challenge looms, such parties spend quality time on settling internal conflicts instead of getting involved with issues of governance and instilling internal democracy in the party. This could prevent growth, peaceful coexistence, and pose a stumbling block to the full development of the Nigerian political parties.

Results/findings

The findings of this research are as follows:

1. Lack of internal democracy in the Nigerian party system is due to the influence of godfathers, whose level of interference is very high in the day-to-day running of the State for their own interest.
2. That incessant defects of politicians has weakened the activities and political integrity of the opposition party.
3. The future of Nigerian politics is characterised and marred by ambitious politicians who take to violence in order to claim political victory.
4. Patronage and the politics of favouritism is a stumbling block for political parties to assume their enormous responsibility of helping the nation to attain a proper democratic process.
5. The dearth of internal democracy is attributed to the repealed section 87 (9) of the 2010 Electoral Act, and the noncompliance of section 87 (1) (2) of the Act.
6. Lax implementation of the constitutional provision and the omission of relevant sections based on the selfishness of politicians.
7. Lack of transparency in parties' primaries and non-inclusiveness of the grassroots members is due to the absence of internal democracy in the party system.

Conclusions and recommendations

The issue of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties remains an issue that is yet to have a permanent solution. The Nigerian experience is worrisome. The existing internal conflict could be attributed to the conflictual interests of the party members. There is the need for Nigerian



political parties to embrace internal democracy as guide for viability and full development of the parties. The grassroots must be involved in the development agenda, and there is a need for strong party ideology, aims and objectives to enable the citizens to believe in the parties' policies and programmes, as this would help strengthen the democratic system, and lead to peaceful coexistence. Intra-party conflict, particularly in the ruling party, could escalate to the country as well if not properly managed.

Based on the above discussion in this study it was recommended that political leadership of any political party must instil party discipline and engage with the people on a continual basis. It was also suggested that there is a need for Nigerian political parties to adhere to constitutional provisions on their formation and in intra-party activities. The party should endeavour to be people oriented, not only to a few political elites, but to the grassroots in policies and decision-making as this would reduce internal conflict among the party members, and increase party effectiveness.

It was also recommended in the study that the Nigerian political parties should endeavour to observe internal democracy so as to give room for transparent party primaries, as this would reduce incidences of replacing candidates, thereby promoting an atmosphere for peaceful coexistence, equity and fairness. The problem of godfatherism should be drastically reduced to give room to the people to be able to choose the best to represent them as this would go a long way to strengthening the democratic process in the country. Finally, it was recommended that the parties should have strong political ideology as this would serve as a guide to parties' objectives.

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