



AN APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL CONFLICT AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA (1999-2019)

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Abstract

Democracy has become the most dominant political movement in the world today. The popularity of this political practice has been a worldwide trend over the years. Even though Nigeria has experienced over twenty-two years of uninterrupted democratic practice, there are various challenges confronting Nigeria's democracy which has restrained it from consolidation. Hence, the aim of this research paper is to examine the factors responsible for political conflict and its effects on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with a special focus on (1999-2019). Information about the subject of discourse was obtained principally from literature study complemented by other documentary and internet sources. It was observed from the paper that lack of accountability, inequality, corruption, weak enforcement agencies, god-fatherism among others are limiting democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This paper recommends that for democracy and democratic consolidation to thrive in the country, the principles of democracy such as rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of life and property must be deepened. Also, there must be enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture, stable political arena and a well refined political process that ensures continuous democratic practices.

Keywords: Election, Democratic Consolidation, Political Conflict, Electoral Violence, Democracy.

1.1 Introduction

In every modern society, election and democracy are classified as essential ingredients of development. Electoral politics began in Nigeria in the 1920's with the introduction of elective principles by the 1922 Clifford Constitution. This constitution was very symbolic as it served as a landmark in the electoral history of Nigeria. Nigerians were, for the first time allowed to exercise their political rights by voting their own candidates during elections (Ezera, 2010). Consequently, other constitution that emanated after 1922 improved on the elective principle. These preceding constitutions further expanded the scope of electoral participation.

In May 1999, Nigeria made a successful democratic transition after almost two decades of military rule. The inauguration of the country's fourth Republic thus marked a renewed sense of optimism and great expectation by Nigerian citizens and members of the international community. People had high hopes that this new wave of democratic politics in Nigeria would be characterized by the nurturing of a civic political culture that is conducive to the rule of law, respect for human rights, consolidation of institutional transparency, and indeed the political accountability of the elected officials. However, the past years of democratic experimentation have been characterized by undemocratic tendencies, disheartening political activities and crisis, rather than consolidate the "hard earned" democracy. This unwarranted attitude (election crisis) has continued to affect generally, the political development and particularly, sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. Ideally, election is a means of determining the will of the people regarding their choice of political leaders and regime types. In essence, both the process and the outcome of the election should reflect the consent and aspirations of the people as organized electorates (Olu, 2003). Ironically, election in Nigeria has been bereft of democratic ideals, much as it has been characterized by untoward circumstances. Consequently, there have been problems of political conflicts and fraud, most of which may arise from the excesses of the politicians in their desperate bid to consolidate their personal greed, capture or control state power. In the face of this therefore, electoral experiences in Nigeria have been inundated with crisis and left much to be considered. This ugly trend and the implications made this research work inevitable.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The concept of elections lies at the heart of a system of representative democracy. The other elements, also crucial to representative democracy, include the guarantee of civil and political liberties as well as the existence of an institutional arrangement whose function is principally to maintain the above stated elements through the rule of law. It is evident, at this point, that elections play a crucial role in the conception of democracy. This implies that the national, development, stability and order are premised upon the credibility of its elections.

Elections are therefore central to the process of democratic representative government because in any democracy the authority of government derives solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating the consent into governmental authority ideally is by holding free and fair elections. In Nigeria, elections have become an avenue for legitimization of bad governance. This assertion hinges on the fact that incumbent government holds on to power at all cost while opposition parties in a bid to capture state power, resort to all manner of irregularities. The result of this is usually political conflicts of highly destabilizing dimensions. The political atmosphere in Nigeria is unusually tensed during and after elections, while many interest groups usually emerge with the intent to

capture power. In the course of politicking so many factions of political parties emerge resulting in friction and warfare. All these lead to allegations, counter allegations, killings, kidnappings, etc that are politically motivated and outcomes of political conflict.

In recent times the problem in Nigeria seems to have assumed a frightening dimension. For instance, one group of politicians has continued to accuse the other on various issues particularly between PDP and APC members. One of such issues is about the legitimacy of most of the election results. This is in addition to intra party conflicts ravaging most of the political parties. The overall consequence of these developments is that the political atmosphere in Nigeria remains tense. Politically, Nigeria is like a ticking time bomb and a political catastrophe waiting to be unleashed.

Furthermore, there is agreement at least among those that objectively analyzed the conduct of the 1999-2019 elections, that it has been characterized with electoral fraud not only unprecedented political conflicts in the history of elections and electoral practices in Nigeria. This work therefore sets out to examine the factors responsible for political conflict and its effects on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with a special focus on (1999-2019).

1.3 Research Methodology

A qualitative descriptive analysis method was adopted for this research. According to Asika (2006), qualitative descriptive analysis essentially has to do with summarizing the information generated in the research. The adoption of the foregoing analytical method is necessary because the study shall principally rely on the secondary sources of data like publications from the INEC, Transition Monitoring Group and other groups and organizations that were involved in monitoring and reporting the outcomes of the elections in Nigeria and events thereafter. The official documents will be supported by data sourced from textbooks, journals, magazines, as well as internet sources, articles and other written works bordering on the conduct of the elections in Nigeria and events that followed.

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Some basic concepts that are relevant to this paper are reviewed and analysed for the purpose of clear understanding of the context to which these concepts are being put into use.

2.1.1 The Concept of Politics

The concept of politics has been given various interpretations and conceptualizations in various studies, with each of these having common linkages to one thing, which is control of power and resources, domination of a certain group by others, assertion of some level of political authority and subversion of both individual and group interests to serve personal aggrandizement (Erunke, 2012; Omodia, 2008).

Okuosa (2006) further observed that in modern democracies, there cannot be political power without political participation and adequate group representation. And by extension, political participation connotes a variety of ways in which people try to (and of course are supposed to) exercise influence over the political process, the kind of political process which has the potential of attracting best brains cutting across all gender, whether male or female. Therefore in the opinion of this researcher the level of participation also means that there should be a level of playing field for accommodation of diverse interests and opinions and, the general rule and perception of exclusivity of a group as having natural rights over political powers to

the detriment of others should be thrown to the dogs. Thus when this is the case, for sure, there will be the likelihood of equity in the level of participation and representation of all classes of individuals in the scheme of things, thereby clearly and conspicuously integrating diverse human potentials in the political arrangement in the society.

Although, the concept politics has been expressed in various ways by different scholars, there seem to be a common thematic point of view which is that participation or representation means such activities aimed at the objective of controlling the decision-making machinery. It is therefore a means to an end.

2.1.2 Concept of Election

Election is a process for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people called the electorate (Heywood, 2007). Elections are not just casting of votes to elect leaders, but also the active participation of the people in governance to ensure sustenance and survival of democracy. In this sense, it is not a ritual organized for people to queue up every four years to cast their votes but also a veritable process of changing leadership through peaceful means for improved socio-economic policies that benefit the people (LEMT, 2003). Ajayi (2005) maintains that election is a process through which suitable candidates are chosen for public offices through voting. It is a method of making choices by voting. He identifies two forms of election; direct and indirect election. Direct election is a method by which the electorates vote directly for candidates of their choice, while indirect election serves as a means by which representatives are indirectly elected through Electoral College.

2.1.3 Concept of Free and Fair Elections

In its simplest understanding, the notion of free and fair elections presupposes the election experience whose processes, procedures and outcome are transparent, credible and acceptable (Olu, 2007). In fact, it refers to elections that fulfill their democratic essence and merit.

Scholars over the years have been concerned with the idea of free and fair elections within the broader context of democratic politics and governance. Mackenzie (2007) identifies four basic conditions for free and fair elections to include:

- (i) Independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws.
- (ii) An honest, competent, non-partisan electoral body to conduct elections.
- (iii) A developed system of political parties, well organized to put their policies, traditions and teams of candidates before the electorate as alternatives between which to choose; and
- (iv) A general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rather than vague rules of the game which limit the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiment that rules are not observed.

However, above conditions pointed out by Mackenzie represents ideal types. In effect, they can hardly be realized in absolute terms in any democracy, yet existing systems can ideally be evaluated in relation to these grand conditions. Determining whether an election is genuine, free and fair involves more than assessing whether electors turn up to vote; it requires a judgment on a dynamic and often evolving process, which itself often demands to be seen as a critical if somewhat imperfect step in the direction of representative democracy.

2.1.4 Concept of Political Conflict

Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines conflict as a situation in which there are a lot of problems that must be dealt with quickly so that the situation does not get worse or more dangerous (Longman, 2003).

The concept of political conflict is made up of two distinct concepts in one, which include electoral politics and conflict. In this section of the review, the two concepts are defined and then reviewed in the context of the subject matter of the current study. The words electoral politics in the opinion of Bamgbose (2011) is the process involved in the conduct of elections either at the public or private level. Bamgbose (2011) further stated that electoral process at the public level is the process of planning and conducting elections to choose representatives of the people in public offices of governance such as the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government at state and national levels. Robert (2011) stated that political conflict depicts acts of aggression, thuggery, and other similar acts that are displayed in the course of the electoral process. Ladan & Baki (2016) also noted that political conflict during general elections include the snatching of ballot boxes to rig and manipulate election results; causing pandemonium in polling stations to hinder voters from voting; beating up electoral officers and sometimes killing some in the process when weapons such as guns and cutlass are used during the elections. Political conflict is one major problem that has affected Nigeria's democratic consolidation and achievement of good governance (Gberevbie, 2014).

Drawing insight from Johan Galtung's seminal work on violence and peace, Albert (2007) defines political conflict as 'all forms of organized act or threats, physical, psychological and structural aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process' (Albert, 2007). Arguably, the most prominent and visible form of violence, physical electoral violence has remained a recurring theme in the general election in Nigeria since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1999. For example the 2011 presidential election witnessed the height of physical electoral violence with more than 800 fatalities beside properties that were destroyed mainly in the core northern states (Orji & Uzodi, 2012).

The West African Network for Peace (WANEP) and the International Crisis Group in their risk assessment for 2015 general election highlighted some of these violent trends on the eve of the elections to include the disruption of political rallies, negative and inciting statements by political actors, complaints over voters registration, arson and destruction of party secretariat and campaign billboards of rival parties, availability and use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and bomb explosions and shooting at campaign grounds and party primaries (ICG, 2014, pp. 6–8; WANEP Report, 2014, pp. 7–11).

2.1.5 Concept of Democracy

Democracy may be described as a system of government under which the people exercise political power, either directly or through their representatives periodically elected by themselves (Appadorai, 1975). Democracy ensures fundamental human rights, respect for the rule of law, equality of persons, popular participation, competition, multiparty system as well as the machinery for political and economic development of a society (Adeyemo, 2008). There is a general but specialized tendency to see democracy only in terms of a system of government rather than the totality of social relations and a system of values. In this way, it is defined as representing, in reality or in fiction, the supremacy of many over the few through the mechanisms of state. This conception of democracy narrowly distinguishes it from other types of government where small minorities dominate the majority. This is for example, the case of theocracy, where only the priests rule, monarchy, where only royal family or dynasty rules, aristocracy, where only the elite usually of landed property rules, oligarchy, where a few families rule, and of course, military dictatorship, where an omnipotent command of the armed forces rules (Bako, 2007). The essence and major objectives of democracy is the

creation of good condition for individuals and groups to have their fullest freedom and right to develop their actual and potential capabilities to realize whatever their stated goals are.

Generally, democracy is a form of government in which citizens in a state have political investments of political participation and trust (Ayoade, 2008). It essentially has to do with the ability of the people to control decision-making (Zack-Williams, 2001): which explains why Osaghae (2004) asserts that the central thing about democracy is to ensure that power actually belongs to the people. Democracy emphasizes freedom of the individuals in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens, justice in the relations between the people and the government, and the participation of the people in choosing those in government (Nnoli, 2003).

The foregoing is in line with the “common good and the will of the people” in accordance with democracy. For, according to Schumpeter, (2000), democracy entails “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions, which realizes the common good by making the people decide issues through the election of individuals, who are to assemble in order to carry out its will”. The second side of democracy, according to (Schumpeter, 2000 in Quinton 2007), emphasizes the centrality of competition to the emergence of political leadership. In this sense, democracy is an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote”.

What these general conceptions suggest is that democracy, as a system of government, stresses the sovereignty of the people (Zack-Williams, 2001; Osaghae, 2004). It is also reminiscent of Robert Dahl's two dimensions of democracy” (Dahl, 2000). The first dimension sees democracy as “an ideal, goal, aim, or standard, one that is perhaps unachievable but nonetheless highly relevant not only for classifying and judging political systems but also for fashioning strategies of democratization, designing appropriate political institutions, and so on”. An ideal democracy is therefore conterminous with “a political system that might be designed for members of an association who were willing to treat one another, for political purposes, as political equals” (Dahl, 2000). Such a system requires certain criteria for effective functioning. These criteria include a set of fundamental human rights of citizens, democratic political institutions to boost citizens' participation in electing representatives, to freedom of expression, inquiry, discussion, and so on. One important thing is that these rights and opportunities must not just exist as merely abstract moral obligations, but must be “enforceable and enforced by law and practice” (Dahl, 2000).

This takes us to the second dimension of democracy. It has to do with democracy in practice, as opposed to its theory. This becomes the more pertinent because, as Dahl (2000) also pointed out, “having rights and opportunities is not strictly equivalent to using them”. The mere fact that a democratic society concedes certain rights, for example, to vote and be voted for, to their citizens, does not imply that all qualified citizens will participate in these activities. For example, empirical studies have shown that citizens do not put much value on actual participation in political life, as exemplified by the experience of the European Community as a whole. There, it was found out that “on the average over the entire period, 1973-92, 17 percent said they discussed politics frequently, and 34 percent said they never did so” (Dahl, 2000). Nevertheless, the defining characters of a democracy include pluralism and multipartism, including free and competitive politics; popular participation in the political process; rule of law and respect for human rights, and constitutionalism or respect for the “rules of the game” (Oche, 2004).

Abraham Lincoln conceptualizes it as the government of the people by the people and for the people. This powerful and historic definition suggests that democracy implies consensus government, freely chosen by the people for the pursuit of the ideals, aspirations, welfare, progress and interests of the people. Such government operates at the mercy of the people and held accountable to the people through periodic elections. It enables people to govern themselves through constant interactions and discussions of common issues, voting in elections and running for public office. Therefore, democracy requires institutional mechanisms, established procedures and organizations such as political parties, legislatures and interest groups through which public opinion is translated into government policy.

The most important elements encapsulating the democratic agenda are popular participation, equitable representation and accountability. Thus democracy provides opportunities for citizens to have inputs in the policy process or contribute in the making of decisions that affect their lives and environments. It is also a means of creating political infrastructure through which diverse interests are represented in government and the institutionalization of mechanism to hold rulers accountable to the public will and providing the means for the removal of government from power without rolling out the military tanks. And finally institutionalizing the principles of accountability through which rulers are held accountable for their action in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and co-operation of their elected representatives (Roape, 2009).

Therefore, democracy consists not only in winning elections but also and more importantly in establishing organic elections with the people and allowing them to control their leaders by holding them accountable. This may sound abstract especially in Nigeria where the political gladiators who canvassed and begged for votes from electorates abandoned them as soon as they assume office by claiming that their elevation or appointment is divine and not challengeable by any human institution. In such circumstances, elections become ritualistic and formalistic which changes nothing. The ritual of elections cannot guarantee democracy for people who face undemocratic courts and bureaucrats every day (Amuwo, 2002). These tendencies have continued to erode the significance of elections in the Nigerian democratic project.

For democracy to be consolidated in any society certain conditions are necessary. However, the economic condition is regarded as the most critical factor in determining the consolidation of democracy. It is claimed that political democracy and liberty become realities only when they are supported by economic and social democracy. Extreme differences in the distribution of wealth may impede the consolidation of democracy. Unless democracy is used as means of responding to the acute needs of the people such as food, security, shelter and clothing, the people would not be strong enough to support democracy. Democracy makes sense only when it guarantees freedom, liberty and economic emancipation. The economic bases of the modern state and the system of distribution are critical to democracy. When democracy cannot be translated into tangible things that touch on the survival of the people, the apparent freedom and liberty that democracy purports to promote is exploited for violence. For example, it has been shown overtime that the material poverty of majority of Nigerians is at the root of sporadic outburst of ethno-religious conflicts and crises in the country (Egwu, 2002).

In essence, democracy is about serving the people hence the elementary interpretation of democracy is about the people for the people. People elect representatives in government to be able to cater for their interests. It is on the basis of this sacred mandate and the

electioneering promises made to the electorate that political leaders are appraised and made accountable. The idea of governance is in fact measured by the amount of dividends of democracy enjoyed by the people.

In conclusion, democracy is a form of government that allows for the widest spectrum of participation and which can only be objectively, meaningfully and practically ensured through the electoral process. In other words, the electoral process is at the heart of the democratic system such that without the electoral process, it will be a questionable democratic system. Such a system cannot really claim to be democratic. As the key to mass participation in democracy, the electoral process provides the platform through which the electorate exercises its will to ensure that certain ends are achieved in the political system. Therefore, the credibility of the electoral process cannot and should not be compromised, for democracy to be consolidated.

2.1.6 Concept of Democratic Consolidation

A democracy is said to be consolidated when the people come to accept that a democratic regime is the most appropriate for the society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine (Diamond, 2009).

According to Beethan (2009), democracy can best be said to be consolidated when we have good reason to believe that it is capable of withstanding pressure or shock without abandoning the electoral process or the political freedom on which it depends including those of dissent and opposition.

According to Diamond (2009), democratic consolidation means the quality, depth, and authenticity of democracy in its various dimensions has been improved: “political competition becomes fairer, freer, more vigorous and executive; participation and representation broader, more autonomous, and inclusive; civil liberties more comprehensively and rigorously protected; accountability more systematic and transparent.

Fundamentally, democracy is consolidated when a government that has itself been elected in a free and fair contest is defeated at a subsequent election and accepts the results. The point here is that, it is not winning elections that matters, but losing it and accepting the verdict, because this demonstrates that powerful players and their supporters are prepared to respect the rules of the game above the continuation of their power.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This research work is essentially the effect of political conflict on democratic consolidation. It examines why and how political conflict affects the growth and development of democracy. Theories are set of axioms, maxims, hypotheses, and constructs that are used to explain, interpret, predict and describe relationships between and among phenomena. According to Legee and Francis (2004), political theory means a collection of interrelated law-like statements or hypotheses which are intended to explain some political phenomena or event. Each law-like statement specifies relationship between or among fairly abstract concepts. Therefore, in analyzing and explaining the interface between political conflict and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria we shall adopt as our framework of analysis, a combination of the Marxist Theory of the state, Frustration Aggression Theory and the Group Theory.

3.1.1 Marxist Theory of the state

This theory arose in reaction to the western liberal theory of the state which contends that the state is an independent force and a neutral observer that caters for the overall interest of every member of the society. According to Marxist Theory, however, the state is the product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms (Lenin, 1984). To this end, the state which arose from the conflict between classes is as a rule, the state of the most powerful and economically dominant class, which by this means also becomes the politically dominant class and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed (Jakutowski, 2003). Hence, according to Marx (1971) “the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”. The state autonomy in the class society is therefore more apparent than real for the state remains the instrument of the dominant classes for exploiting and suppressing the subordinate classes.

The classical Marxist Theory of the state has been further developed to take into consideration the peculiarity of the neo-colonial state by the Third World scholars such as Ekekwe (2005), Ake (2005) and Ibeanu (2008). The major contention of these scholars is that the post-colonial state is a creation of imperialism and as such, has followed a developmental strategy dictated by the interest of imperialism and its local allies. In furtherance of this theory, it is apparent that the narrow range of interest of the Nigerian bourgeoisie would always stand contrary to that of the exploited members of the society. In the light of this, it is only logical that the dominant class will not be favourably disposed to the emergence of anyone that may upset the power balance. On the other hand, it is a common practice that in election, people would always support credible candidate(s). This, therefore, implies that elections in post-colonial state like Nigeria would always have the dominant ruling class and other members of the society on a collision course. It also means that electoral results must always be in favour of the ruling class that dominate and control the institutions and structures of the state. Where this goal is threatened, the rich and abundant institutions (including coercive machinery) of the state are brazenly employed to the service of the dominant members of the ruling class. The federal government under both military and civilian administrations has variously demonstrated this intensification of the repressive power of the Nigerian State against the other members of the society as seen in the 1964 General Elections and 1965 Western regional elections as well as 1979, 1983 and other general elections in Nigeria.

At this point, it is obvious that this theory helps us to understand the root causes of political conflicts and the inability to consolidate democracy in Nigeria. These are the fundamental causes of election conflicts which are bound to undermine democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

3.1.2 Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory tends to explain the reasons behind the aggressive nature of people in certain situation. Political conflict is a manifestation of people’s aggression resulting from election fraud. Therefore, this theory is capable of giving deeper and scientific understanding of this study.

Frustration aggression theory believes that the primary source of the human capacity for crisis of violence is the frustration aggression mechanisms. The anger induced by frustration is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression irrespective of its instrumentalities. If frustration is sufficiently prolonged or sharply felt, aggression is quickly likely to occur

(Dugan, 2004). Men who are frustrated have an innate disposition to do violence or cause crisis.

According to Gur (1970), the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation. This relative deprivation (frustration) predicts collective crisis or violence by social groups. When people perceive that they are being prevented from achieving a goal, their frustration is likely to turn to aggression. The closer one gets to a goal, the greater the excitement and expectation of the pleasure and vice versa. Unexpected occurrence of the frustration also increases the likelihood of aggression.

3.1.3 Group Theory

As a tool for political analysis, this theory shows a great deal of interest in the internal organization and processes of various groups and discusses questions relating to their boundaries, size, territoriality and other forms of integration. Political conflict which is the major focus of this study is being carried out by group(s) either political party(ies) or supporters of such parties, party thugs, voters, politicians etc. Essentially, political crises revolve around group(s).

Under this theory, society is taken as a mosaic of groups living in interaction with one another, and the government is described as a forum within which the group struggle can proceed in the presence of certain overreaching boundaries and limits. According to the group theorists, the government can be distinguished from other groups in terms of the mechanics and processes of adjustment they provide for the purpose of handling the ongoing struggle for political interest group. The government thus 'comprises of groups representing within its framework broader social processes, as well as interest and claims, thus making available to outside groups a number of points of access, at which it is open to influence' (Varma, 2005). Against this backdrop, it becomes pertinent to explain the term 'group'. It simply means a collection of individuals. However, in terms of group theory, it connotes a different thing. According to Bently, the author of group theory, a group means a certain portion of the men of a society, taken however not as a physical mass cut off from other masses of men, but as a mass of activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in many other group activities (Bently, 1952).

The group theory thus leads logically to particular concept of the social system and political behaviour and it is through the social system the various groups seek to realize or maximize their interest. The society is a single universe of groups which combine, break, and federate and form coalitions and constellations of power and in a flux of restless alterations is and it is kept going by the push and resistance between groups.

3.2 Empirical Review

The review of the extant literature is an attempt to ascertain how other scholars have attempted to address the issue at stake. There are numerous literature on political conflicts and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, and few relevant ones are reviewed hereunder.

For instance, Moru (2005) opined that through different political conflicts manifested themselves in different zones after the conduct of general elections, the events in the South West zone of the country were peculiar, because of the nature of conflict and destruction to took place in some states. He observed that actual voting did not take place

in many areas where results were announced, which caused infractions in these areas. According to the writer, the dimension this ugly phenomenon took in the zone is an indication that there are some fundamental flaws in the Nigerian political system which manifest variously in the manipulatory tendencies evident in the electoral processes. In conclusion, the writer averred that the characteristic feature of the Nigerian political terrain is the dominance of power with citizen's participation in the processes of regime change remaining non-existent.

Arowosegbe (2005) investigated the influence of material conditions in the dispositions and counter dispositions of the electorates and political office seekers in their quest for state power in presidential and gubernatorial elections. Focusing on political conflict, the writer particularly examined the impact of Nigeria's political history, its economic base as well as class/property relations on the politics of election, democratic transition and the phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigeria politics and discovered that the zero-sum game approach to politics especially the increasingly violent blood-letting and normless political culture of impunity and outrage which created a political spectacle that weakens democracy in Nigeria are clearly not accidental but corresponds strictly and logically to the history, the nature and character of the Nigerian State and its politics. To resolve these negative features and dangerous challenges hallmarking Nigerian government and politics, the writer recommends decentralization of power and all resources away from the central state apparatus to the constituent governments and ethnic segments, greater recognition of the peculiar needs and historic identities of various communities in the implementation of structural reforms, among others.

Imade (2007) focused on the role of civil society in sustaining Nigerian fledging democracy. He argued that a weak civil society and non-democratic culture is to a large degree the product of political conflict and instability. He maintained that a vibrant civil society coupled with civility and social capital are the basic buildings blocks for the consolidation of democracy.

Furthermore, he stated that a vibrant civil society can champion government reforms, confront corruption, advocate respect for human rights, promote and defend democratic processes and institutions. In summary, the writer believed that the best and only chance of bringing a more sustainable peace, economic development, and stable government in Nigeria is to give civil society a greater role in governance.

4.1 Conclusion

As political terrorism permeates the polity with an increasing wave of political assassinations, the elites exacerbate unneeded political disputes rather than trying to resolve them. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not yet negotiated the path to consolidation through her political leaders. But consolidation is a possibility, and it becomes apparent when political elites show a growing commitment to establishing a democratic regime and when they have a view that democratic processes and institutions are essential for regulating public life. Political parties must work to uphold the rules of the game and engage in internal democracy in areas like party nomination, primaries, and party organizations in order for the democratic experiment to continue to thrive. This is crucial because in Nigeria, no system would function until the guiding rules of politics and of the age-long practice of democracy (justice, probity and fair play) are strictly adhered to by the political class.

4.2 Recommendations

Nigeria's political disputes have proven inconsistent with the development of democracy. The following recommendations are put out as a course of action in light of this. It is necessary to discourage the way that political power is aspired to and used without constraint. In other words, practicing politicians must play the political game in accordance with its statutory and administrative responsibilities. There are no other possibilities when the constitution is strictly followed in letter and spirit. Any constitutional infraction that is let to go unpunished poses a threat to the country's democracy. Politicians must be willing to admit that there is a limit to the genuine democratic movement in Nigeria if it is to be successful and sustained.

The creation of parties is closely related to what was just stated. Regarding that, it is hard to argue against the necessity of these parties engaging in significant reform in order to restore order to the system. The growth of weak, sectional political parties tends to advance primitive, ethnic politics akin to those of the preceding republics. Additionally, political parties need to have a strong philosophical base and ideological stance. It is also implied that there is an attitude toward party politics. Political parties and candidates must embrace the democratic values of equality, respect, tolerance, and accommodation for class, gender, and racial disparities. They should prevent political supporters from using violence and dissuade them from leveling unjustified accusations against political opponents.

In a similar vein, appropriate authorities or government agencies must provide both political elites and the general populace with enough political education on the qualities of moderation, civility, and interpersonal trust. This is desired in order to promote a culture of political participation and to enable political debate free from animosity and other indications of political instability, which have dominated the nation's political process and prevented Nigeria's democratic effort from becoming firmly established. This justifies an immediate end to the typical godfatherism and political hegemony of the caucus. In order to guarantee free and fair elections in our society, INEC should also be isolated from presidential power and removed from it. The journey towards the golden dawn of democracy could be postponed indefinitely unless the commission's appointment and funding are made independent of the executive body. In order to achieve this, the INEC must actually be independent, living up to its name. Because of this, its funding must be charged to the consolidated revenue funds, in which case executive influence will be totally neutralized and the electoral body will be able to run a legitimate election.

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