

Arms Resistance and Influence on Political Parties in Nigeria

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Abstract— This article explored arms resistance and influence on political parties in Nigeria in the context of its impact and implications on the Nigeria socio-economic and political environment. The exercise was necessitated by the nature of Nigeria democratic environment that has been characterized by violence amongst political parties in the game of ‘who gets what, when and how’. This violence has culminated into the use and counter use of arms as a resistance mechanism to suppress opposition or opponents in the power struggle. This paper sought to identify factors responsible for the proliferation of arms in the Nigerian political system by the political parties which has made the system undemocratic and a war zone for political gladiators who would stop at nothing to win elections and remain in power. The paper also sought to trace the historical antecedents of arms resistance in the Nigeria political system as well as the way forward. It adopted frustration–aggression theory and Marxist conflict theory on post-colonial state as theoretical frameworks. This paper contends that irrespective of the fact that arms resistance in the Nigeria political system which has undermined social, economic and political stability is a colonial factor, it has been exacerbated by the monetization of politics, lack of party ideology, clientalism, unemployment, and lack of internal democracy. It recommends demonetization of politics, job creation, party discipline, internal democracy, review of arms laws and border defense as a way forward.

Keywords— Arms resistance, political parties, party politics, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

The use and counter use of arms as a resistance mechanism in the Nigeria political system has transformed the democratic environment into a war zone of power seekers who belong to different political parties. This has created an undemocratic environment where the bickering for power for all intent and purpose and at all cost has manifested in the use of arms by the politicians to suppress opposition, win elections and remain in office while accumulating public wealth for personal gains even at the detriment of national interest as prescribed by democratic principles. Thus, the political arena has become a war zone for political gladiators who stand face to face with ferocity and well-armed in the battle of “winner takes all” and “loser loses all” which has become the manifestation of party politics in Nigeria.

Nigeria’s party politics which has culminated into the use and counter use of arms as a resistance mechanisms to suppress opposition today dates back to the colonial time, and the contemporary incidences of intra and inter party squabbles associated with party politics in the country is nothing but a throwback to the past which was replete with schisms, bickering, backbiting, intrigues, violence, packing and sacking (Olaniyan, 2009:52). This scenario is borne out of the fact that party politics in about contestation for political power on who gets what, when and how between or among the political elites. Therefore, the notion of contestation, according to Landman (2005:52), captures the uncertain peaceful competition necessary for democratic rule, a principle which presumes the legitimacy of some opposition, the right to challenge the incumbents. The existence of free and fair elections and a consolidated party system. It is the contention of this paper that there is growing evidence of decline public confidence in parties in Nigeria; political parties have deteriorated in membership, organization and popular involvement and commitment to democratic ideals

Since the Nigerian state returned to democratic governance in 1999, party selection, election, accountability, discipline, etc appear to be far below democratic requirements such that Nigeria democratic project has been the subject of intense debate in many quarters (Obah- Akpowoghaha 2013). Political parties today are neck-dipped into all manners of anti-democratic activities including: electoral manipulations during primary and secondary elections, thuggering, hooliganism and vandalism during element party cross-carpeting, assassination of political opponents, arising from unfair method of selecting party’s flag bearers and generally lack of party’s internal democracy (Dike 2003). It is for this reason that Nwokocha (2007) lamented that Nigeria political system is characterized by prebendalism and primordialism.

Background to the Study

The grow and availability of arms presently in our political system has triggered several security challenges for the Nigerian democratic government. This has created an atmosphere of fear amongst Nigerian citizens and even the government itself. It is also clear that the issue of arms proliferation in Nigeria politics in the past and present republics to some extent has undermined the participation of citizens in electoral activities. Armed groups hired by political parties and politicians have now developed their own economic bases thereby freeing themselves from political patrons. This has led some groups into engaging in political processes themselves while distorting democratic processes vis-v-vis undermining public peace, socio-economic and political stability. Arms resistance is now a change of nomenclature for arms violence towards having access to public resources, whether through committing crimes, playing on communal tensions, stealing oil, or winning elections. A situation of this nature cannot make for peaceful democratic society that will trigger development.

Objectives of the Study

In this intellectual exercise, we are going to look at the impact and implications of arms resistance in the Nigeria political system with a view to understanding the genesis of party politics, inter/intra party conflicts, history of arms resistance in the Nigeria political system and the influence in the Nigeria democratic environment. Our argument will rest on causes of arms resistance in the Nigerian democratic practice and their effects on social, economic and political stability of the nation vis-à-vis a way forward.

Theoretical Framework

Mitchell (1999) has posited that “a framework is an essential tool in all investigations, for it provides the elementary concepts, assumptions ideas and directives that guide the selections and interpretation of facts”. In away, a theoretical frame is like a compass, which guides a scholarly investigation. It therefore, helps situate are search within a scientific analysis. The theoretical frameworks to be employed for this study are frustration-aggression theory championed by Dollard, Neal and Miller (1939 in Echem, 2015) and Marxist conflict theory on post- colonial state. This theory was developed by Karl Marx in his contribution to the analysis is of the inherent characteristics, contradictions and dynamics of post-colonial peripheral capitalist and developing states.

Major Tenets of the Theory

The theory contends that the state is an independent force and a neutral observer that caters for the common interest of the community. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the whole affairs of the bourgeoisie, or constant preservation protection of the dominant lass; the domination and exploitation of others, and the appropriation of the labour of others through force or other means. Also, the theory depicts the picture of how a typical African state tries to replicate three concepts of African state (Marx and Engels 1977).

Application of the Theory: Arms resistance in Nigeria political system today is a colonial phenomenon. Colonialism defined the character of post-colonialism state, in the sense that in their quest to secret and perpetuate their economic interests, the colonizers discouraged the rise of a strong bourgeoisie instead and planted stooges. Having a very weak economic base, the sesstooges resorted to using the state for primitive capital accumulation thus becoming a ready instrument for class formation and domination. In the words of Ake, (1998) colonial rule left most of the African states a legacy with of intense and lawless political competition amid stanideological void and a rising tide of the expectation of a better life. The political environment at independence was profoundly hostile to development. Hence the struggle for power was so absorbing than anything else, including development, was relegated to the background (Olutuah 2007). As those elites outside the corridors of power sought to pull together credible force to challenge these in power as well was to limit to significant extend their own exposure to harassment and abuse, those in power were obsessed with the consolidation of power and crushing any form of opposition. In a highly static post-colonial polity, they did not even have option of

channeling their ambition in to economic success, which was primarily a matter of state patronage. Political power was everything else; it was not only the access to wealth brutal so the guarantor of general wellbeing. This explain the inherent contradictions amongst the local bourgeoisie in political parties in Nigeria today that has been bedeviled by the use and counter use of arms as a resistance mechanism to win elements and remain in power and accumulate public health for selfish gains.

In the same vein, frustration–aggression theory is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard, Neal, Miller in 1939, and further developed by Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969 (Echem, 2015). The theory holds that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal. It attempts to give an explanation as to the cause of violence. According to the theory, frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions. Both are caused by poorer and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence as in the case of party politics in Nigeria that has ab initio been characterized by the use and counter use of arms by frustrated members (whose interests are not met) to suppress opposition. Based on the above explanation, the importance of the two theories in analyzing arms resistance and influence on Political Parties in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized.

Conceptual Definition

To define is to set boundaries to avoid symanticism. The following concepts are defined within the context of this exercise:

Arms Resistance

Arm resistance within the context of this exercise is the use and counter use of arms by political parties to resistor suppress opposition in a power struggle. It is also a situation where aggrieved groups whose selfish interests are not adequately protected by the existing administration resort to the use of arms to seek redress. To this effect, it is obvious that there is lack of both internal and external party democracy in Nigeria political system.

It is worthy to note that arms resistance in the Nigeria political system is not a post-colonial phenomenon but a colonial inheritance. This is because guns were introduced by the Europeans prior to colonialism during legitimate aridil legitimate (slave) trade between them and Africans. Subsequently, guns and other arms, ammunition and weapons were used by Europeans to realize their Imperial ambitions when they used force to suppress Africa's resistance to European incursion, conquest and colonialism (Adejo, 2005).

The above scenario has manifestation in electoral violence that has crippled Nigerian democratic processes. Political parties in Nigeria today do not rely on free and fair elections to win elections and assume power; rather, they use arms to suppress oppositions and achieve their selfish goals. This has resulted in the killing and counter killing of some politicians and their thugs before, during and after elections. A situation

of this does not make for a credible and sustainable democratic environment. We shall discuss in details the history, causes and effects of arms resistance in the subsequent subheadings.

Political Party A political party refers to any group of politically active persons outside a government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who thereby control

The operations of government and determine its policies (Lemay, 2001). Political parties provide a veritable platform for conveying representation into elective of likes in democratic systems. Essentially, political parties perform various functions in ensuring the growth and continuity of the democratization process. According to a research conducted by The Friedrich Ebert Foundation Centre for Governance and Development (CGD) on institutionalizing political parties in Kenya published in 2010 cited in Ekeoha (2011), political parties are the vehicles of representative democracy. They play several critical roles to make representative democracy a reality. These include:

- Representing societal interests within the state (by participating in parliament);
- Socializing political leaders on the principles of democracy and democratic participation;
- Carrying out political education and communication (by providing information on which the voters may base their election of candidates before them);
- Carrying out political mobilization and encouraging the public to cast
- Their votes in elections;
- Recruiting political leaders;
- Aggregating and articulating interests;
- Promoting pluralistic debates by presenting alternative policy platforms; and
- Integrating the diverse groups within a country into a cohesive nation.

In the same way functions of political parties are:

Aggregate and articulate needs and problems as identified by members and supporters; Socialize and educate voters and citizens in the functioning of political parties and electoral system and generating general political values;

- Balance opposing demands and convert them into general policies;
- Activate and mobilize citizens into participating in political decisions and transforming their opinions into viable policy options;
- Aggregate the varying interests of their members and articulate a unified front for achieving party's objectives.
- Channel public opinion from citizens to government
- Recruit and train candidates for public office, etc. Political parties are essential institutions that drive the democratization process.

Political parties are also widely seen as a sine qua non for the organization of the modern democratic polity and for the expression of political pluralism (Dode, 2010). The centrality of political parties in modern democracy is generally accepted both by contemporary scholars as well as policy makers charged with fostering the development of newly emerging democracies and those saddled with the task

of improving the quality of democracy in established democratic Polities (Biezen 2004). This analysis therefore underscores the crucial role that political parties play in the democratization process as it provides the channel for changing of government and continuity of the democratic system through periodic elections.

This is so because democratic stability cannot be superimposed or predicated on a shaky, unstable and unpredictable crises-ridden social and political environment (Ogundiya, 2005:381).

Max Weber (cited in Obah-Akpogoghaha 2013) defines political parties as contending groups that struggle for political control within corporate bodies. Political party is an organization of society active political agents who compete for popular support with another group or persons holding diverse views.

This definition pieces politicians and a candidate for leadership recruitment into both elective and appointive positions as principal actors and the objectives of party organization is to capture governmental powers. This definition is similar to that of Mildred Schwazand Kay Lawson (cited in Obah Akpogoghaha 2013) who opined that: "A political party is an organization that nominates (presents) candidates to stand for election in its name and seeks to place representatives (leader) in the government". By the theme of these definitions, the primary objective of political parties in the Nigeria context is that they seek to organize and dominate the organs of government and to provide governmental and national leadership.

Party Politics

Party politics is the totality of actions and in actions exercised by political parties in a state. However, democratic consolidation is a function of party politics. In other words, the growth of democracy in a country is as a result of conducive environment created by the interaction of political parties in a state. A negative interaction where actors (political parties) breach the code of conduct in the system or electoral process and undermining the constitution of the state, this will impact negatively on deepening democracy conversely, positive interactions of political parties both inter/intra parties' activities will have a beneficial growth on democracy. Democracy is a concept that revolves around and about the will of the people where the minority rights are properly ensured. A negative interaction of party politics describes politics without the people and disenfranchisement of autocracy. Moreover, the ultimate goal of election is to measure, assess, articulate and integrate the needs of the electorate. Election is an avenue whereby eligible voters and candidates make their will known. Once this process is interrupted by some class, then what exists is just artificial politics devoid of the general will. One can understand this better using elite theory of political parties (which is not the major concern of this paper).

Inter/Intra-Party conflicts in Nigeria: Fourth Republic as a Case Study

Right from the formation period, fourth republic parties are the composition of people from diverse opinion. The founders

of these parties share nothing in common than intra-party crisis. Omoruyi posited that the manner of origin of the parties does not fit in what we know from literature, their composition can be viewed as mere instruments of transition from military to civil rule (Omotola, 2009 in Iroanusi, 2000). Starting from the origin of the first three political parties, the ruling PDP was described as mixed bag of persons with different ideologies, that is, the conservative, the radical and the progressives; who do not only misunderstand themselves but are regularly feuding. The AD was a Yoruba based party, formed just to see that power returned to the south west. The compositions of APP (now ANPP) are the set of politicians who supported or served under Abacha regime (ADEBAYO, 2008 in Iroanusi, 2000). This explains why the current dispensation witnessed more intra-party conflict than the previous ones.

The tussle for power and control of the party machinery become the order of the day, as some member parade themselves as founders of the party. Sambine, (2004) posited that those who own or play major roles in the formation of the parties end up being dictatorial. In PDP for example, the former PDP chairman, Oge (2004) once lamented that:

There were individuals who did not see themselves as being members of the party, who rather ought to own the party or to own part of it and to dictate to the party.

Consequently, the crisis in PDP prompted Sambine (2004) to argue that the party is run as faction and caucuses with many big wigs posing as members of Board of Trustees and other as elders and leaders of the party. The collision among these group manifested in frequent change of party leaders. Within eleven years, the PDP had six chairmen, four of which one of them complete his tenure. Besides the internal wrangling between former president Obasanjo and his Vice Atiku, the issue of zoning within the party nearly broke the party into pieces. The rift within APP (now ANPP) led to expulsion of twelve strong members in October 2002. Similarly, the crisis in alliance for democracy (AD) at the beginning split the party into two camps and later led to the exit of prominent members of the party. The breakaway group formed a new party, the action congress (AC) which metamorphosis into the action congress of Nigeria (ACN).

Similarly, the activities of god father in political parties render the parties ineffective in the process of discharging their responsibilities. These god father impact negatively on democracy by restricting citizen participation as a voter or candidate. Also in an undemocratic way, they imposed candidates' right from local level to national level, on agreement that they surrender the state treasury to them (Omotola, 2009). These kinds of agreement explain why the divided of democracy become a mirage in our society. Thus, democracy has no meaning once it field to improve on the life of citizens. The legitimacy of leaders whose process of selection fall out of democratic norms is highly questionable at the expense of national stability.

The trend of internal crisis within the party since 1999 shows that parties in Nigeria spend more time on reconciliatory process, than on a programme that would benefit the electorates. It is equally deduced that failure of political parties to embraced dialogue in resolving their

internal crisis antithetical to democratic consolidation. Since the principle tenet of democracy is the possibility it offers or resolve crisis through dialogue, without recourse to violence, even when they are irk some (Omotola, 2009).

On the issue of ideology, parties in Nigeria possess one. All the six-three political parties, range from the dominant one (PDP) to the peripheral (party with no single elective seat) failed to be identified with one ideology. In the face of ideological emptiness, Sambine (2005) posited that most of these parties were only seeking cheap publicity, and come up with the ambitions to satisfy those not accommodated in the older ones. Despite the fact that PDP dominated the National Assembly in the beginning of the Fourth Republic (before the present dispensation under Buhari from another party), the executive find it difficult to get enough support to ensure easy passage of its bills. The frosty relations between the executive and the legislative, is as a result of weakness of the political party which fueled the Impeachment saga in the fourth republic. Less than a year, for instance, the First senate president and the speaker at the National Assembly was removed. The winds of impeach mental so blew so some states executive and legislature. For instance, in Abia state the speakers of state House of Assembly were removed twice between august 1999 and June, (Omotola, 2008). The implications of the frequent impeachment were captured by Adejumbi and Kehinde (2007) as follows:

First, it absorbed the attention and energies of them a in actors within the parties, diverting their focus form urgently needed internal party organization and panning for elections. Second, it reinforced then on a adherence to due process and rule of law. Third, it created fear, apprehension and tension in the political environment, and decelerating preparations for the elections. Fourth, it created an uneven playing field for actors between and within political parties.

The activities of all the parties shows that they possessed non identifiable ideology that serve as motivating force, which expected to be the source of their manifesto (Adejumbi and Kehinde, 2007). They failed to have a grand strategy of enlighten the electorates that would make them secured people votes. For instance, in 2007 the most visible message of the Action Congress (AC) campaign is that a vote for AC is a vote against the PDP government. The Democratic People Party (DPP) presidential candidate promised free compulsory education for all life elected president; give that Sokoto where he is their current Governor has one of the highest illiteracy levels in the country (Adejumbi and Kehinde, 2007). Similarly, the PDP promises to make Nigerian one of the 20 greatest economies by the year 2010. It is deduced that most to the candidates failed to address fundamental questions of Nigeria's development. The focus of the campaign, revolved around personality of the candidates. The made it difficult to distinguish between the sixty-three (63) registered political parties in terms of ideology and policy (Adejumbi and Kehinde, 2007).

The undemocratic conduct of political parties also contributes in no small measure to the political violence and political as assignation in Nigeria. As partly abstained from healthy intra-party rivalry in the process of candidate's election, the venue of party primaries were mostly turned into

violence gathering. In Benue State, for instance, fighting erupted in Aliade town, on 9 December 2006, after PDP allegedly reversed the result of the state assembly primary, replacing the winner, Tsetim Ayarger with Ashema Chado (Echem, 2014).

On the issue of opposition, the number of political parties in view of Echem (2014), suggesting a more democratic polity, a widening of political space and more options for voter. But most of these parties are composed of individuals whose personal interests are threatened by the existing governments and thus decided to join the opposition party. The existing opposition's party in Nigeria today lacks the integrity to stick to their stance on some salient political issues as it affects the citizenry. The priorities of all these parties is what they will gain in politics. Opposition parties in Nigerian democracy remained in effective due to their failure to form coalitions that will give a strong opposition to the ruling party and make them obey the rule of the game for people to enjoy the divided of democracy, scholars emphasized the need for alternative policy in Nigeria, for instance, Isakpa (2008) said, If ruling Politician is failing the people, it is the responsibility of the opposition to step in, in a credible, robust, articulate, clear and coherent manner, to provide alternative policy options on how to deal with the challenges that confront the country and the majority of the Nigerian people (Isakpa, 2008:37).

Once the elections is over, interest of common man is no longer in the opposition party's agenda. They will be struggling to be part a unity government initiated by ruling party. Members of Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), after 2007 general elections for example, abandon their party and presidential candidates to be part of the Unity government introduced by ruling party (PDP). The presidential candidate (Muhammed Buhari) of the party (ANPP) was persuaded by his party leaders to drop his case against the ruling party despite the admission of the president that the election is characterized by fraud (Gabriel, 2012). Issues of this nature keep re-occurring in the Nigeria political system.

History of Proliferation of arms as Resistance Mechanisms in the Nigeria Political System

Perhaps, gun possession by civilians in Nigerian not new and predates colonialism. Guns were introduced by the Europeans prior to colonialism during legitimate and illegitimate (slave) trade between them and Africans. Subsequently, guns and other arms, ammunition and weapons were used by Europeans to realize their imperial ambitions when they used force to suppress Africa's resistances to European incursion, conquest and colonialism (Adejo, 2005). The gun boat diplomacy was popularly employed by the British to compel African chief to enter into various treaties with them. There was establishment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) used by the British to execute the British-Afro Waro (1901-1902), and other forms of resistance in Nigeria, West African Company (UAC) backed by British government in using force to suppress dissenting communities is imperative (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). These arms found their ways to the hands of Africans during the period of colonialism subsequently used in traditions and hunting in the rural

community. In no time, guns and gun powder became symbols of strength and power (as can be found in Arochukuwu symbol called Omu Aro), and were later transformed into ceremonial weapons displayed during funerals, burials, ceremonies and customary festivals among the natives. They also became symbols of individual and ethnic grandeur, and for deterring aggressors and invaders. Today, guns are no longer just ornaments of prestige, or just for hunting, safari and expedition.

Guns have transformed in terms of functionality, lethality, sophistication, ubiquity and motive of ownership. They have become weapons of criminality and instruments of the underworld (Chuma-Okoro, 2011). Arms are now being used by political parties to tackle any resistance from a supposed enemy (s) in the Nigerian democratic environment.

Ostensibly, the 1959 Firearms Act was enacted to check the increasingly rate of proliferation in Nigeria towards independence. The failure of the Nigerian government to execute a comprehensive disarmament and destruction programme after the civil war (1967-1970) exacerbated the proliferation of guns and illicit arms trafficking. As at 2002, the number of SALW in Nigeria was estimated by various reports and studies, at between 1 and 3 million including arms in lawful possession of members of armed forces, the police and those (majority) in the civilians. The 80% of SALW in civilian possession were illegally acquired because of the strict regulations (Ojudu, 2007). The above development has transformed Nigeria political system into a war zone of gladiators scrambling for power in order to accumulate and personalize public wealth for selfish reasons.

The use of armed thugs during elections in Nigeria by political parties

Without doubt, Nigerian politics has since independent, been characterized by thuggery and violence. Little wonder, politics is conceived as a dirty game and exclusive right of thugs and hooligans in Nigeria. Consequently, intimidation, harassment, maiming and killing. This trend is not a phenomenon of decency; thuggery, brutality and violence. Political behaviour has been with us for the past four decades. Immediately after independence, the politicians, in an attempt to capture, exercise, and retain power within their regional settings involved themselves in various acts that were politically immature, unwise and disastrous. They adopted a style that was antithetical to democratic tenet and of good governance. They recruited, trained and empowered thugs to harass, intimidate and victimize perceived political opponents and opposing views against their political ambition. This culture of thuggery has not only imbedded and sustained as part of the country's political behaviour since independence to the present moment, it has been one of the potent causes of the low participation of both men and women in politics. Obviously, there are lots of organizational and logistical problems that occurred during the election. These problems were in form of malfeasance (illegal or dishonest activity by people who are public officials) that should work painstakingly to promote the interest of the state but they failed in their duty where the top politicians were even using them to

some extent for thuggery, this explains prebendalism and primordialism

Effects of Arms Resistance in the Nigeria Political System

Arms resistance in the Nigeria political system has undermined the ability of political parties as a platform for construction of egalitarian society to achieve a sustainable democratic environment (Omitola, 2003: 143). Political violence that has manifested in arms resistance due to dirty practice of party politics in Nigeria has negatively affected the socio-economic and political stability in the country.

The following are the effects of arms resistance in the Nigeria political system;

- Increase in the illegal possession of arms by political parties and god-fathers.
- Circulation of arms and weapons during elections which actually undermine political participation;
- Insurgencies in the polity;
- The long years of peaceful co-existence and inter-socio-economic ties among Nigerians has been eroded as a result of fear, which has given way to violence between Muslims and Christian particularly in the Northern part of the country. The most recent is the activities of the Boko Haram, an Islamic sect who has since 2009 been unleashing terror on the people living in that part of the country with dead and casualties culminating to several thousands.
- Niger Delta militancy on the Niger Delta question
- Good governance and democratic order becomes a mirage in the desert

Nature of Nigeria Political System

Without mincing words, politics in Nigeria ab initio can be better described with all intent and purpose as prebendal and primordial. Nwokocha (2007:72) lamented that “politics in Nigeria is considered a dirty game”. According to him, “it is full of wrangling, which verge on hazards including insecurity of lives and property”. Nigerian politics is also controversial due to unprecedented struggle for power, together with mudslinging and character assassination, he maintained.

It is rather unfortunate that we are starting our evaluation of Nigeria democratic practice with such loose and unprecedented manner. It is true that freedom, order and equality have always constituted the dilemma of democracy in various places according to Janda, Berry, and Goldman (2000), but irrespective of that, Nigerian democratic experience ab initio has been that of a negative story. It will not be out of place to say that Nigerian democratic environment as projected by the local Bourgeoisies who became politicians is a sham. Kunle, Rotimi, Adegun, and Georges (2004) in their observation argued that the challenge of democratic practice in Nigeria is a historical one. Nwokocha (2007) also captured the scenario from a historical perspective. In his view, Nigeria has recorded a past where political thugs smeared election campaigns. However, this had reduced in the Fourth Republic. Meanwhile, a disastrous innovation had taken over the activities of thugs, which manifested in the form of ethnic militia. This is a cabal of hoodlums which laid pretences initially to protect ethnic

interests and maintained law and order, later it transformed to carry out rather sinister activities including election fraud, armed robbery and life assassination (Nwokocha, 2007).

Ekekwe clearly captured the scenery. In his words:

Because each contender for power, whether at national or regional level. Was desperate to retain or gain office for without office its chance for capital accumulation would be gravely jeopardized violence and thuggery became synonymous with politics. People killed and were killed in the fight to gain or retain office Nigerian politics in the First Republic could be adequately described as approaching a Hobbesian state of nature for the politicians, especially during periods of regional or national elections, life was indeed solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Ekekwe, 1986).

One can properly understand the nature of Nigeria politics under the following;

- Politics of prebendalism
- Politics of Primordialism
- Politics of Federal Character
- Politics of Rhetorics
- Politics of Intemperate Utterances

For the purpose of this paper, we are limiting ourselves to prebendalism and primordialism.

Politics of Prebendalism

We found this concept appealing in discussing Nigeria democratic practice because of its characteristics. Richard in Nwokocha (2007:72) has described Nigeria political system as being characterized by Prebendalism according to which “patterns of political behaviour rest on the justifying principal that offices should be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of office holders as well as their reference or support group”.

If we go down memory lane, we will observe that the only reason the political elites in Nigeria support democracy is because of the personal and selfish benefits associated with its practice in Nigeria. Analyzing the rise and fall of second Republic, Recharad argued that Nigerians support political democracy just like they would support the military because “it is the best way for elites to continue their ethnically and regionally based competition for the spoils of office” (Nwokocha, 2007).

As Adans Oshimohole rightly argued, the perception of the public about politics is not different as seen below:

Politics under both civilian and military government is largely a matter of “who gets what, when and how:”? For the public government by politicians (Yoruba: *ijoba oselu*) succeeded government by whites, (Ijoba Oselu). Government by the people doesn't enter into it. Nigerians generally may have had little love for Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, but they certainly appreciate, and act on his advice to seek yet first the political kingdom (Nwokocha, 2007:72).

The former Abia state governor (Ogbonnaya Onu) had argued that although the first and second Republics failed, they were not wasted periods in our socio-political history. Those periods had their fine and glorious moments and indeed produced many admirable and heroic actors such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Malloam Aminu Kano,

Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, Chife Dennis Osadede, Dr Micheal Okpara and a host of others silent heroes and honest politicians too numerous to mention. This accredited statement of his is not to be misconstrued for a song of praise that sought to bring to the fore our past heroes – no. It is rather a song of glorious moments of loots in our socio-political history.

In as much as these personalities were historical personage, the lessons to avoid the past mistakes and pitfalls of the political saga of the first and second Republics were not imbedded. Sam Oyovbaire disappointment and Tunji Olagunju accede to this view when they noted that, “what became obvious in the second Republic was that no national leader could emerge to galvanize and inspire the entire Nigerian populace for democratic development”. The irresponsible attitude of the political class to governance has threatened the very survival of the Nigeria State. They further argued that the misgovernance of the political class has adversely affected the economy – a situation that has subjected the masses to abject poverty.

We should however note that the primary objective of any form of government is to achieve both rural and urban development. In other words, rural and urban development in Nigeria has become an issue of discourse because of its importance to the people. World Bank’s Rural Development Policy defines rural development as “a strategy designed to improve the economic and social conditions of a specific group of people (the rural poor). It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the areas” (Okara, 2009:29). The question that arises from this definition is: who are the poorest? Obianuju and Obi (2004:200) and Marger (2008:156) have seen the poorest as those under the condition or state of being without necessary wherewithal or resources enough to sustain an acceptable standard of life. It is a state of existing with possessions too little to live a good quality and healthy life. Certain developments regarding the relationship that exist between the state and the masses have raised the question on whether the state is an instrument for development or an obstacle to them (Alapiki, 2005:21). Another issue is that the Nigeria democrats have narrowed the concept of development to economic base devoid of other constituents. Currie (1973) would frown at such conceptualization because he believed that economic growth should not be likened to overall development of any nation or State.

Politics of Primordialism

Another way of classifying Nigeria politics is also captured by Nwokocha (2007). He calls it politics of Primordialism. According to him,

Primordialism is the basic impulse of crude, fearful or unrefined lifestyle, smacking off being rugged and violence. This applies to Nigeria politics having resisted change as it were from the virtues, exposes errors, prejudice, and forestalls blackmail, all serving as mines on the path to national unity, but the elites abhor it, leading to mutual hatred and suspicion between the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria (Nwokocha, 2007).

It will not be out of place if we infer from the above that Nigerian politics is politics of primordialism. This has been politics of black mail and violence – a major ailment of the

first Republic, which persisted predominantly in the second Republic. Evidence in political violence, nepotism, thuggery, religious bighting and ethnic chauvinism according to Nwokocha (2007) serve as ready arsenals in the kitty of many politicians when they are afraid of losing out in a political tussle. This scenario cannot make for peaceful democratic environment.

Essentially, this is diversionary tactics used to cause confusion by politicians in the incidence of real or imaged failure, meant to heat up the polity. Politics in Nigeria has fallen far below the expected standard, which has debunked the basis of national interest; instead it is an offshoot of primordial interests. In the same veins, it is game of winner takes all. Some cynic justifies the present trend based on party lineage, patronage and related obligations, and huge expenditures, which has trailed our election campaigns. The politicians who expend these monies, it is argued therefore, try to recoup them on being elected to the seat of power. To overcome this negative import, we must strive to rid our political campaigns, such excesses as petty demands of cash and other gifts, which the politicians cash in on while in power to sell their votes and conscience, to garner wealth and promote their selfish interests at the detriment of the electorate. In fact, the incident of such behind the scene activities of our politicians has manifested in different forms and patterns portraying them as pseudo – representatives.

No wonder ascending the pinnacle of Nigeria leadership is a risky adventure. Recounting the experience of the topmost eleven Nigerian statesmen who has the opportunity to rule the country, both civil and military. Amaechi Nzekwe had written, thus:

Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966) was assassinated Aguiyi Ironsi (1966) was murdered. Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975) went on self-imposed exile, though he has since returned from exile. Olusegun Obasanjo was lucky virtually the only one so lucky. He left office as a gentle man, but then in 1995, he was sent to prison on a controversial coup plot but subsequently, he was lucky again to be elected president, (1999-2007). Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) was toppled and kept under house arrest presently released. Mohammadu Buhari (1983-85) was overthrown, arrested and detained. Ibrahim Babangida (1985-93) was forced to resign. Sani Abacha (1993-98) was overwhelmed by the ironies of leadership. He died of heart attack, overwhelmed. Abdulsalam Abubakar (1998-99) had the honour of ably handing over power to a civil regime (Nwokocha, 2007).

Thus, the obvious tragedy of politics in Nigeria is that the experience are not pleasant, the mortality rate is high, the pains are extremely severe, the story is indeed that of tears and despair. Concluding, Amaechi Nzeke queried what legacies the politicians have left for future generations over the forty years of independence. The answer is a heart rendering story of underdevelopment in form of poor leadership, injustice, crisis of confidence, economic sabotage, misappropriation, ethnic and sectional chauvinism, religious bigotry, bribery and corruption, destruction of national institutions and infrastructure numerous others social vices. St. Augustine of Hippo said it all when he noted that “in the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized brigandage”.

Edmund Burke responds to this problem suitably well. For him, “what good people suffer for not taking part in politics is to be ruled by fools”. In fact, James and James (2010) reemphasizing Burke political philosophy, argued that the worst crime often committed by the good ones is being apolitical. It is true that some good Nigerians such as the Lagos radical lawyer, Gani Fawehimi, literally put their lives on the line to fight injustice and mal-administration, but majority of Nigerians have remained quiet and sober over these social malaise. This worsens the situation, as silence means consent.

Without mincing words, Politics in Nigeria (ab initio) is dominated by power elites of mean character, who on gaining power by hook or crook, will turn around to vilify the psyche of the populace. But sometimes, the military wade in with their rifles. The masses worship wealth no matter how ill gotten, while the traditional rulers adorn the rich some of whom are social miscreants with titles. This is the bane of politics in Nigeria. This should be resisted. Both the leadership and the electorate are to blame, because these ignoble politicians utilize the social prestige wrongly gotten to garner support to assume the mantle of leadership (Nwokocha, 2007).

II. CONCLUSION

The democratic process no doubt has been bedeviled by poor party politics as a result of not only ethnicization of party politics, poor political leadership, excessive westernization of the concept- democracy, party indiscipline, lack of clear cut party ideologies, the politicization of the higher echelon of the military profession among other but also and more worrisomely, lack of internal and external party democracy.

Desperation for political power in the country is because-power seekers in Nigeria sees politics as an avenue for making money, a sort of opens same to wealth to be in power is to control state resources that are often converted to personal use. This implies that the acquisition of political power is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end and the ultimate end of course is economic power and the primitive accumulation of public health for personal use by the political elites. In fact, the Nigeria democratic system has been characterized by prebendalism and priordialism.

Without mincing words, monetization of politics has made arms resistance endemic in the Nigeria political parties — a situation where political office holders’ salary and entitlements are far beyond what a professor in the university receives. Another issue of concern is the formation of political parties. The political parties’ formation in Nigeria is done along various ethnic lines, while the ideological content is thus lacking and principles are compromised for insanitary. Consequently, this affects consolation and consequently the welfare of the citizenry, whimsically and capriciously bastardized. As a result, unhealthy rivalry for political power, political violence and dirty practice of party politics, crises of political succession, assassination of political opponents, decamping and cross-capering nature of hungry politicians without vision and hijacking of political parties in Nigeria by the money bags’ and the so called godfatherism have led to social economic and political instability even in this Fourth Republic.

This paper also concludes that a major cause of arms resistance in the Nigeria political parties is lack of political ideology. This is attributable to the fact that the political players and the electorates have very limited knowledge and understanding of the true meaning of political ideology and its usefulness in shaping the political culture and programmes of political parties. Perhaps, this is the reason politics is largely perceived as the most lucrative industry in Nigeria because it guarantees opportunity for primitive accumulation of public wealth. This, in part, explains there as on political parties in Nigeria are run like clientelist ventures, which are devoid of political ideologies. The inability of some political elites to capture power none political party; would immediately make them to dump the party for another party. In the same vein, when their interests are not properly accommodated, the resort to aiding and abating armed hoodlums to frustrate their opponents.

Indeed, most and if not all the politicians in Nigeria are political prostitutes. Unarguably, a principled and focused political party is supposed to be driven by ideology.

This is because ideology is the force that fires the spirit which controls the actions and programmes of political parties. It is also central to the existence of political parties to the extent that the lack of it predisposes political parties to internal quabbles, lack of sense of direction and makes them to be mere platforms for actualizing personal interests of the few. This promiscuous character of the Nigerian political elites is attributable to the fact that all the political parties in the country lack ideological beliefs, hence Simbine (2004) pointed out that—political aspirants cross carpet from one party to another for the flimsiest and selfish reasons to satisfy their ambitions —a practice that has resulted in both inter and intra-party crises (including the use of arms) in the country. Thus, a Nigerian looks more at democracy in economic terms than political ideology. This also explains the reason most political parties in Nigeria are just mere platforms for the elites to ascend to power and wealth, thus, using means to achieve their selfish objectives.

The impact and implications of the above include; proliferation of arms, electoral violence, undemocratic political environment, insecurity, social, economic and political instability amongst others.

The Way Forward

The central argument of this paper is that inter and intra-party conflicts which have culminated into arms resistance to suppress opposition have been having its toll on Nigeria’s faltering democratization. This is occasioned by the fact that politics in Nigerians conceived in pseudo terms to the extent that it is reduced to a mere investment making machine by the political class.

For democracy to deepen in Nigeria, this negative misconception of politics as a means of acquiring wealth must be changed to a positive conception of politics as an art and science of delivering public good which tends towards improving the quality of life for the citizenry and not about satisfying the greed of a few privileged class of individuals.

Based on the negative influence of arms resistance on political parties and the consequences on the overall social,

economic and political development in the Nigeria democratic system, the following policy recommendations as a way forward are proposed with a view to ensuring that political parties become effective institutions that would promote the democratization process in Nigeria.

- Politics should be demonetized in Nigeria. Demonetization should entail cutting down the salaries and entitlements associated with political positions as well as reducing the costs of party forms to enable young youths and school leavers with moralism compete favorably in elections
- Laws on Arms Possessions in Nigeria should be reviewed and borders properly defended by the agencies responsible for that.
- Job creation for the idle youths should not be deemphasized
- Political parties should entrench internal democracy within their internal structure and workings, especially in the selection of candidates within the party and for elections.
- Members of political parties should subordinate themselves to their party constitution.
- Political parties must evolve political ideologies and their activities must be guided by the ideologies they so represent
- Political parties should organize regular capacity building programmes to orient their members to imbibe and exhibit values and ideals that would sustain the process of democratization in Nigeria. The conduct of elections in political parties should be free and fair as throw up credible candidates.
- Personal interests of party members should be subordinated to the larger interest of the political party.
- Members of political parties should be treated with equity and fairness through the creation of a level playing field for the active participation of all their members.
- Political parties should ensure that they still discipline in their members by enforcing the party constitution on every members.
- Political parties must endeavour to be inclusive in their decision making process.
- Political parties should employ dialogue in resolving conflicts between its members.

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