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POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

By

Johnson, O. Olaniyi. Ph.D.

E-mail: Olanjohnson2005@yahoo.com

Mobile: +2348033692172

&

Adebiyi, Oluwashina Moruf

E-mail: Shinnna7@gmail.com

Mobile: +2347033275122

^{1&2} Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the role of political parties in nation building using Nigeria as a case study and with specific reference to the Fourth Republic. The objectives of this study are: to evaluate the general roles of political parties in nation building in Nigeria; to examine the extent to which political parties in Nigeria have fared in the task of nation-building in the Fourth Republic and to analyze the challenges confronting political parties in enhancing nation-building in Nigeria. However, through the adoption of the historical/qualitative analysis cum comparative method, and the adoption of the plural society theory as the theoretical framework it was discovered that Nigerian political parties beginning from 1922 till now have not fared well in the task of nation building. This is because political parties in Nigeria right from independence were interested in championing sectional interests. It was also found out that despite constitutional provisions most Nigerian political parties in the Fourth Republic have given little or no regard to nation-building. It is however, recommended among others that Nigerian political parties should be more concerned about the activities that can enhance nation-building. Political parties need to train and produce leaders that will promote the interest of the citizens and not a section of the population. This is to douse the tension that may arise from inter-ethnic conflict. Parties also need to adhere to constitutional provisions especially those on their formation and organization and those activities that can give credence to nation-building.

Key Words: Political Parties, Nation-building, Ethnicity, Democracy, Plural Society

Introduction

Political parties in any democratic polity are important political institutions. They perform important functions which are central to the democratic and governance processes. Political parties structure political processes and ensure that citizens' participation in these processes are orderly and are situated within the framework of the basic rules which govern the nation's political space. Much as political parties are important to democracy, the adequate performance of the roles and functions and the extent of their institutionalization as political institutions are equally central and crucial to nation-building. However, the extent to which political parties contribute to nation-building varies from nation to nation. Since the demise of colonialism in Africa, African nations have been battling with the task of building a viable, strong, united and sovereign political entity. The inability of African nations to establish a viable and united political entity has led to ethnic related conflicts in most countries and according to (Nkomo, 1999) this has claimed several lives. Thus, building strong, viable, united and sovereign political entities in Africa has remained a difficult task.

At independence there were high hopes that Nigeria as a new country in the nearest future will become an integrated and viable nation given its abundant human and natural resources. But disheartening is the fact that the country today is bedevilled with myriads of challenges which has made nation-building a difficult task. For close to 60 years of independence Nigeria is still faced with the task of uniting her different and numerous ethnic groups and sub-groups. While analyzing the challenges of nation-building in Nigeria Gambari (2008) noted that while most Nigerians support the principles of democracy such as the forming of government based on the will of the majority, holding regular elections, respect for the rule of law and respect for basic freedoms of citizens, what is obtained is that in terms of these democratic principles the nation's conduct has been far from democratic. He however, placed a large chunk of this blame at the door step of political parties in

Nigeria. He lamented that the country's political parties need to be more than avenues for delivering power to the highest bidders at all the level of government (Gambari, 2008). This invariably shows that political parties are viable drivers of nation building. It is on this note that this study examines political parties and nation-building in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The objectives of this study are: to evaluate the general roles of political parties in nation- building in Nigeria; to analyze how political parties can perform the task of nation-building in the polity and to examine the extent to which political parties in Nigeria have fared in the task of nation-building in the Fourth Republic. This will However, be explored through the adoption of historical/qualitative analysis and comparative method. From the introduction the study proceeds to conceptualize the terms political parties and nation building after which the study goes on to discuss the theoretical framework of the paper which is anchored on the Plural Society Theory (PST). This is followed by an historical exposition of the evolution of political parties in Nigeria. The next part discusses the roles and functions of political parties in modern states. Following this part is a discussion of the assessment of political parties in nation-building in Nigeria with emphasis on the Fourth Republic and an examination of the challenges facing nation building in Nigeria. The last parts conclude and give recommendations.

Concepts of Political Parties and Nation Building

Political Parties

Scholarly literature which examine political parties are numerous (Strom and Muller, 1999) but despite the enormousness the importance of studying political parties and the roles they perform in modern democratizes have always been emphasized (Montero and Gunther, 2003). Political parties have always been part of political institutions whose activities are critical to the adequate functioning of representative democracy. Based on this, scholars of democracy since the beginning of the study of modern political science had taking cognisance of the benefits of persistently monitoring and analyzing the development and the quality of performance of political parties (Montero and Gunther, 2003). This has been the case right from the time of Bryce (1921:119) who argued "that parties are inevitable: no free country has been without them; and no one has shown how representative government could work without them" to the period of Schattschneider (1942:1) who aptly captured the significance of political parties by stating that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties" down to the era of Stokes (1999:245) who concluded that political parties are "endemic to democracy and are unavoidable part of it".

As a concept political parties can be defined from the functional (Weber, 1968; Schattschneider, 1942; Schumpeter, 1962; Epstein, 1967; LaPalombara, 1974; Janda, 1980) and structural perspectives (Sumner, 1960). To Weber (1968) the term political party is used to describe associations in which membership rests on formally free recruitment and which have as their aim securing power within an organization for its leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages for its active members. Schnattschneid (1942:35) views political parties as "an organized attempt to get power". Power in this regard means control of the government. In his own perception Schumpeter (1962) views political parties as "groups whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power." To Epstein (1967) political parties connotes "any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect governmental office-holders under a given label." LaPalombara (1974:509) perceive political party as "a formal organization whose self-conscious, primary purpose is to place and maintain in public office persons who will control, alone or in coalition, the machinery of government." in the words of Janda (1980) political parties are organizations that pursue a goal of placing their avowed representatives in government positions.

The above definitions represent the functional connotations of political parties. However, one common factor to the definitions is that the ultimate aim of political parties is to capture political power. However, the scholars did not show in clear terms how such power can be captured. In addition to this, all the definitions given by the scholars apart from the one offered by Epstein (1967) did not include a 'label' or 'symbol' which is what distinguishes political party from other groups. To solve the issue of how to capture state power Satori (1976) defines political party as "any political

group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through election, candidates for public office." In a similar vein, Downs (1957) defined a political party as a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly contested election." Schonfeld (1983) noted scholars "who conceive of parties in functional terms do not necessarily ignore activity inside the party but that it is given importance only insofar as it influences the performance of party roles." To Heywood (2002) "a political party is a group of people that is organised for the purpose of winning government power, by electoral or other means".

The last three definitions indicate that political parties strive for the control of governmental power through contesting regular electoral completion. Heywood (2002:248) however, noted that parties can also capture state power through revolutions when he stated that political parties may seek political power through elections or revolutions. In the structural perspective however, Sumner (1960) views political parties as a combination of two persons or groups who come together to satisfy a great common interest while minor antagonisms of interest which exist between them are suppressed. In this regard political parties are important because they "are constantly forced" to practice "antagonistic cooperation," which is "the most productive form of combination in high civilization (Sumner, 1960).

Nation-Building

The term nation building became popular in the 1950s and 1960s among historically oriented political scientists (Friedrich, 1963). The major proponents of the concept include Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly, and Reinhard Bendix. To Friedrich (1963) nation-building is an architectural metaphor which literally implies the existence of consciously acting agents such as architects, engineers and carpenters. To the political scientist however, the term has to do with not only conscious plans put in place by state leaders but also include unplanned societal changes (Friedrich, 1963). As aptly described by Osterud (1978) nation-building became for political science what industrialization was to social economy: an indispensable tool for detecting, describing and analyzing the macro-historical and sociological dynamics that have produced the modern state. In whatever respect it is looked at, nation-building is a concept that is seen by many as evolutionary rather than revolutionary. In essence, it takes a long time and is a social process which cannot be "jump-started from outside" (Stephenson, 2005).

Defining nation-building presupposes an understanding of what constitute a nation. Nation in traditional terms has been defined as "population of an ethnic unity inhabiting a territory of a geographical unit." Ethnic unity in this regard implies a population having common language and literature, a common custom and common consciousness of right and wrong (Burgess cited in Agarwal, 2000). This definition has however, been faulted on the ground that a nation has not been regarded as an ethnic group either in traditional usage or in political science (Agarwal, 2000). Nation has also been defined as "a body of people united by a cooperate sentiments of peculiar intensity and dignity related to a definite home country" (Zimmern cited in Agarwal, 2000). From the above, the term nation signifies "a group of people usually of the same race, resident on the same territory, sharing a common language, the same religion, similar history and traditions, common interest with common political associations and common ideals of political unity" Agarwal, 2000). It is however, important to note that the definition of nation should not be confined to a definite territory. Members of the same nation can be found outside the shores of a territory.

In this regard we may refer to the Yoruba's of Brazilian origin and the Yoruba's from Trinidad and Tobago as belonging to the Yoruba nation of Nigeria. The conception of nation as groups of the same origin sharing all the variables including language, culture and tradition will entail the fact that social cohesion and integration already exist among them, thus, there will be no need to build a nation out of the existing unified nationals. Nation in relation to the concept of nation-building assumes that groups are of diverse origins. Therefore, nation in respect to nation-building can be perceived as a group of people living together within a geographical entity or territory and who share absolutely different origins, history, language, culture, tradition, values, religion and interest but have choosing to live

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together by some form of agreement which binds them together as a nation. In such nations, the question of nation-building is always central issue most especially when social cohesion is lacking among the diverse groups which forms the nation. To this end Kellas (1993) submits that nation has two significant elements namely; 'the objective characteristics' and 'subjective characteristics'. The objective characteristics include: a territory, a language, a religion, or common descent shared by members of the same group within a nation. The subjective characteristic includes people's awareness of its nationality and their affection for it.

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Deducing from the above, nation-building can be defined as "a process of creating unity and a sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups of a state" (Elaiwu, 198:460). To Almond and Powell (1966:36) nation-building is "a process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller tribes, villages, petty principalities to a larger central political system." These definitions suggest that within the nation there exist various groups whose loyalty is directed to their immediate primordial environment at the expense of the central and larger political system. In a more comprehensive perspective nation-building have been seen as:

the process whereby a society with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures and religions come together within the boundaries of a sovereign state with a unified constitutional and legal dispensation, a national public education system, an integrated national economy, shared symbols and values, as equals, to work towards eradicating the divisions and injustices of the past; to foster unity; and promote a countrywide conscious sense of being proudly united and committed to the country and open to the continent and the world (South African Department of Art and Culture, 2015).

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From the above definition, a nation is built when the inequalities, exclusions and disparities based on ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, age, disability or any other distinctions which engender divisions distrust and conflict are reduced and/or eliminated in a planned and sustained manner. This create active community members and citizens as active participants working together for the attainment of shared goals, designed and agreed upon to improve the living conditions for all (South African Department of Art and Culture, 2015). It is however, important to note that there is the erroneous tendency to use the term 'nation-building' interchangeably with 'state-building' (Dinnen, 2006). While the two are interrelated they are distinct processes. While distinguishing between the two concepts, Dinnen (2006) pointed out that: "state-building" is seen as the task of building functioning states capable of fulfilling the essential attributes of modern statehood while 'nation-building', on the other hand, refers to more abstract process of developing a shared sense of identity or community among the various groups making up the population of a particular state". Based on this distinction, "state-building" focuses on the practical task of building or strengthening state institutions while 'nation-building' is more concerned with the character of relations between citizens and their state". State building has been at the centre of international development assistance with series of capacity-building initiatives geared towards strengthening key institutions. Nation building on the other hand has been seen as a complex process with minimal role for external assistance (Dinnen, 2006).

The Plural Society Theory of Nation-Building

The plural society theory (PST) is one of the pluralism theories developed majorly by sociologists and anthropologists to study and explain the relationship between unity and diversity particularly in multi-ethnic societies of Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Igwarra, 1993). The PST theory was propounded by Furnivall (1948) and was later modified by Smith (1971). The PST was first used by Furnivall (1948) in a comparative study of Burma, Netherlands and India. To Furnivall (1948) a plural society "comprises of two or more elements or social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit." To Smith (1971) a plural society is defined as "a society in which people mix but do not combine. Each holds its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals, they meet, but only in the marketplace; in buying and selling. Even in the economic sphere, there is a division of labour." In a plural society each group according to Furnivall (1948) "is

held by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals, they meet, but only in the market place, in buying and selling."

The basic tenet of the PST is that the advent of colonial rule brought about forced and involuntary union on the various ethnic groups that socially co-existed within these societies without necessarily having much social contact (Igwarra, 1993). Furnivall (1948) argued that the free play of economic forces in tropical countries influenced by colonialism had resulted in peoples being forced together only for economic reasons. Thus, in these artificial multi-cultural societies there were no common ethical standards, no common values and no common culture, interaction is involuntary imposed by the superior power of colonialism and force of economic domination (Igwarra, 1993). The result was societies are kept in place only by the superior force of the colonial power (Furnivall, 1948). This thesis was modified by Smith (1971) when he applied the PST to Sub-Saharan Africa. According to him "the plural society is composed of socially or culturally defined collectivities separated by autonomous institutional structures" (Smith, 1971).

It was further demonstrated that "in such collectivities there are closed corporations bound within a state dominated by one group for whom the state becomes the agency of subjugation. Integration is by force of regulation rather than by consensus" (Smith, 1971). In applying the PST to the Caribbean Smith (1971) revealed that major sociological theory which claims harmony and common values was neither applicable nor relevant to the Caribbean as these societies were intensely divided. He however, used culture to denote social institutions which comprises of the family, religion, education, language, law and regulations. However, these institutions he argued in a plural society vary from one ethnic group to the other. In essence he opted for the use of the term segment believing that since it was through these social institutions that "harmony" was constructed and maintained, their separation in Plural societies was linked to continuing conflict. Rather than being harmonised and stable, plural societies were always engulfed in conflict and were always unstable (Smith, 1971)

The PST theory has been criticised based on the fact that that there were a number of plural societies which successfully maintained stability and political order through the adoption of consociational democracy without having to rely on the use of external or internal forces but rather, through consensus politics in accommodating conflicting ethnic interests. Such societies include: Belgium, Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland (Lijphart, 1977). This criticism notwithstanding, the PST theory remains a veritable tool of analyzing the present predicament in which African states finds themselves, particularly in terms of fostering national integration, social cohesion and building a viable nation. The history of post-colonial Nigeria is replete with civil war, inter-ethnic conflicts, religion fundamentalism and agitation for self determination. All these have at one point or the other stood as stumbling blocks in the country's pathway to nation-building. It will be recalled that few years after independence the country was engulfed in a civil war which lasted for about 30 months. Since then inter-ethnic tensions, religion fundamentalism and fight for self determination have been the order of the day in the country. As noted by Osaghae and Suberu (2005:4) "breakdown, breakaway, civil strife, civil war, minority nervousness, and violent clashes, all of which would typically be regarded unusual in normal states are common forces or actual occurrences in divided states" like Nigeria.

Nigeria, created out of territories under colonial subjugation had to contend with the reality of diverse ethnic groups to achieve nation-building. After the triumph of nationalism and the subsequent demise of colonial administration, the new ruling elite in the country realized that they were bequeathed with a state without social cohesion. Instead, they inherited a state with competing ethnic ideologies. Therefore, the new ruling elite in the country had to confront the daunting task of neutralizing the competing ethnic ideologies in the state with a view to creating an unalloyed loyalty and commitment among its people to the new nation. They hoped to achieve this by developing a strong feeling of national identity out of the deep ethnic and cultural divisions of the country. This difficult task however, was to be determined through a planned process of nation-building.

Political Parties in Nigeria: An Overview of Historical Evolution

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The historical trajectories of political parties in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era (Jibrin and Garuba, 2010; Omotola, 2009; Olaniyi, 2001; Dudley, 1982) precisely in 1923 with the formation of the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay. The formation of this political party was made possible by the inauguration of the Clifford Constitution which introduced the elective principle. This consequently led to the establishment of the Nigerian Legislative Council which granted franchise to Lagos and Calabar (Adebayo, 2006). Omotola (2009) however, noted that the fundamental objective behind the creation of the party was perhaps to buy legitimacy for the colonial government through very limited franchise restricted to Lagos and Calabar. The NNDP dominated the political scene until 1934 when the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) which was later changed to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed. The NYM defeated the NNDP during the 1938 elections by winning the three seats allocated to Lagos (Omotola, 2009).

The outbreak of the Second World War and the awareness for nationalist agitations created in its aftermath led to the creation in 1944 of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) which was later changed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). This was almost immediately followed by the formation of two other political parties, the Action Group AG and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) (Dudley, 1982). The NCNC which was described as having a national outlook was at inception led by prominent nationalists like Herbert Macaulay and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The party which initially was a mass party later degenerated into a party that was identified mostly with Nnamdi Azikiwe's Igbo of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria (Adebayo, 2006). The Action Group (AG) formed and led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo metamorphosed from a Pan-Yoruba socio-cultural organization known as the Egbe Omo Oduduwa literally meaning the association of the children of Oduduwa, who is largely referred to as the founder of the Yoruba race. According to Obafemi Awolowo the basic idea behind the formation of the party was the stability of multi-ethnic Nigeria. Similarly, the Northern People's Congress evolved out of a Hausa socio-cultural organization known as Jamiyya Mutane Arewa meaning the association of the peoples of the north. Unlike the AG membership of the NPC was confined to people of Northern Nigeria. By so doing the party carried its ethno-religious tendencies far beyond the other parties. According to Ige (1994) the party was never a national party. It regarded other parts of the country as places occupied by pagans and unbelievers.

In the early 1950s other political parties came into being. These include: the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), which was formed by a splinter group of the NPC, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the United National Independent Party (UNIP). The parties from the emergence of the AG and the NPC down to the others were created from ethnic cleavages. Biobaku (1986) noted that: the dominant parties in the North and South-East formed the government with that in the South-West in the opposition. Each party represented its ethnic group and each incidentally controlled the government of its region. Consequently, the parties of the first republic fostered ethnic sentiments making conflict of interest inevitable. This characterised the electoral politics of the First Republic, the ultimate consequence of which was the termination of the First Republic by a military coup de tat which brought in a military regime that lasted for 13 years.

After thirteen (13) years of military rule political party politics was rekindled to signify the commencement of the Second Republic (1979-1983). Even though new parties were formed their nature and character was not different from that of the parties of the First Republic. Such parties where led the old politicians and were thus, seen as the reincarnation of parties of the First Republic. These parties included: the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) which was the reincarnation of the Action Group (AG), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which was seen as a reincarnation of the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Others were Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) and the National Advance Party (NAP) which came into being during the second phase of the Second Republic. These parties dominated the political arena during the Second Republic. However, the attendant ethno-religious tendencies and politics of bitterness and acrimony which were nurtured in the First Republic manifested during the Second

Republic and again the second Nigerian attempt at democracy was terminated through another military coup.

The aborted Third Republic witnessed emergence of thirteen political parties jostling for recognition and registration by the then country's Election Management Body the National Electoral Commission (NEC). Prominent among these parties were the Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP), Nigerian National Congress (NNC), Liberal Convention (LC) and the Peoples Front of Nigeria (PFN) (Adebayo, 2006). It was however, noted that these parties still represented sectional interest like the parties of the First and Second Republics. The NNC was regarded as a reincarnation of the NPN while the PSP represented the progressives. The National Electoral Commission was however, given the mandate to use the manifestoes of the political parties to synthesize the formation of two parties (Adebayo, 2006). This thus, led to the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). The presidential election which the two parties contested in 1993 was annulled therefore leading to the demise of the Third Republic.

Following the successful execution of the transition programme of General Abubakar Abdulsalam, the country in 1999 returned to democracy signalling the commencement of the Fourth Republic. At inception three political parties were registered. These included the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). These parties dominated party politics at the beginning of the Fourth Republic. Barely four years into the Fourth Republic the number of registered political parties increased to 30 (with the formation of the Action Congress (AC) which was later changed to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and some others parties) and before 2007 the total number of registered political parties in Nigeria was close to 35 (Simbine, 2005). The People's Democratic Party held power from 1999 until recently when it was defeated at the presidential polls in 2015 by the All Progressives Congress (APC) which is a merger of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) (Nwankwo, 2015).

The historical trajectory of the development of political parties in Nigeria is fraught with ethnic and primordial sentiments. The foundational structure of the formation of political parties in Nigeria rested on ethno-religious sentiments. One therefore, is not perturbed with the incessant overthrow of governments through military coups and counter-counter coups which characterized the previous republic. Stemming from the history of party formation and party politics in Nigeria Azeez (2009) noted that: "in pre-independence Nigeria, party politics and party formation assumed an ethnic completion (competition), even as it metamorphosed into the post-independent first republic". One cannot but conclude that ethno-religious sentiments have been and remain a prominent attribute of party formation and party politics in Nigeria. This has remained stumbling block in the country's process of nation building and its quest of achieving a stable democratic and integrated polity.

Political Parties: Roles and Function in Nation-Building

Political parties occupy significant and central position in the nation-building process of plural and divided societies. In highly heterogeneous polities, political parties are expected to be a formidable unifying force of diverse group relations. In this regard, parties are perceived as efficient drivers of democratic sustenance, social cohesion and nation-building. Democracy as a system of government enables opposing views to be heard in order to create alternative and divergent views which are all directed towards national unity and democratic development. On this note, every political party ideology, vision, programmes and activities must be geared towards achievement and maintenance of national cohesion and unity. To buttress this assertion, Meisel (1967) opined that: "in a country lacking a strong national political culture and the institutions fostering it, political parties have a special role to play as agencies for the creation of national symbols, experiences, memories, heroes." To this end, Political parties play crucial role in the establishment and development of national identity and cohesion among diverse groups in a polarised polity through the performance of certain traditional roles and functions they perform in a democratic polity.

One of the major functions of political parties in modern states is to articulate and aggregate interest. Interest articulation means to express ones concern and curiosity in clear and unambiguous terms. To aggregate interests on the other hand means to collect and balance different and often competing, interests. Interest articulation and aggregation functions of political parties was popularized by Almond and Coleman (1960) when they used them to describe different ways that interests are input into the political system. In ethnically divided societies citizens hold diverse values and preferences that they wish to pursue and achieve through public policy. Parties try to harmonize these interests and preferences with each other, bridges antagonism between different groups of the society and thereby seek to produce a consensus among as many groups as possible. Political parties act as very effective mediator in setting disagreements in society in a peaceful and institutionalized manner.

Almond and Coleman (1960) noted that political parties rather than interest groups perform these functions better because parties consist of wide coalitions of citizens with vastly different interests. Therefore, to assemble this coalition and in order to source for electoral support political parties need to aggregate the diverse and varying interests. Political parties in this regard, reveal public expectations and demands of various social groupings which make up the polity. Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) considered this function as the function of 'political opinion making'. They contended that in modern societies (particularly deeply divided societies) the process of political opinion-making is a polymorphic process. This entails the fact that forming public opinion implies the input of divergent views. They however, see political parties as the principal agents of aggregating and representing public opinion in the political decision making process of such divided societies (Hofmeister and Grabow, 2011). By doing this, political parties engender the integration of various groups and sub-groups which share diverse and varied characteristics.

Political parties perform the important role of political recruitment. By this function political parties select candidates who will represent them in general elections. Thus, the political recruitment function of political parties is a basic function of political parties. A party that cannot recruit and nominate candidates for elections has ignored its basic essence of existence. This is because one of the fundamental rationales behind the formation of any political party is to capture control of government. To achieve this objective a political party must strive to recruit candidates for all elective offices. Recruitment of candidates is done in two stages (Seligman, 1961). The first is the certification stage which includes: "the social screening and political channelling that result in eligibility for candidacy", the second is selection stage which includes: the actual choice of candidates to represent parties in the general election (Seligman, 1961). The process of selecting candidates for elective offices is crucial both for political parties to win elections and for political parties to serve as strong uniting force among members of diverse background and characteristics who are members of the parties. Scarrow (2005) opined that the recruitment of candidates is an important assignment for political parties, because their visibility during electioneering periods and while they hold power is to a large extent determined by which candidates are selected for electoral contests. Based on this, political parties are saddled with the task of selecting candidates for elective posts through a process of selection that must be devoid of most importantly of ethno-religious sentiments and bias which are vices which destroys the unity of political parties. Recruitment and selection of candidates based on transparency, equity and merit foster national unity cohesion and ultimately nation-building.

In addition political parties are very significant agents of political socialization of a country. They stand as very crucial instruments of engendering political participation among the people. It is in the process of enhancing political participation of the people that political parties socialize them. The success or otherwise of a democratic polity largely depend on how effective the people are mobilized to take part in the political process. According to Gupta (1975:268) "political socialization is the developmental process through which an individual learns the basic orientation necessary for the maintenance of the democratic system. It provides information about citizenship role, impetus for participant role and awareness of political values. Through this individuals are inducted into political culture and their democratic orientation takes shape." "Political parties play a key role in the political indoctrination of the people. They are the most active and direct agents of political socialization. Particularly during the election period, they serve as guide to electorate and political teacher to children through their posters, pamphlets, wall-paintings, slogans, processions, propaganda on loud-

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speakers, buntings, badges and buttons, door-to-door canvassing and public meetings. In all these activities, children participate out of curiosity and thus in a smooth manner they are politicized" (Mishra, 1980:116). It however, important to note that the process by which people acquire political values is important not only for active political participation but also for the period before they engage in any explicit political activities. This is because it is through the political socialization process that citizens imbibe the orientation and feeling of oneness. Thus they learn how to co-exist without recourse to social and ethno-religious diversities. Therefore, political parties through engaging in political socialization contribute immensely to the process of nation-building.

Furthermore, political parties serve as a veritable tool for effective political communication in multi-ethnic societies. They are artificial instruments that control the flow of information between the party's leadership, its audience and the electorate (Barney, 2005). Political communication which is "the process by which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, or citizens, exert intended or unintended effects on the political cognitions, attitudes, or behaviours of individuals or on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state, or community (Perloff, 2014:30)" "provides vital avenues for public participation, structure citizens' electoral choices and connects leaders and elected officials around common programs" (Norris, 2005:3). Nevertheless, political communication is a very delicate issue most especially in deeply divided societies. This is because it can be used for positive and negative proposes. Political communication involves the transmission of symbolic meanings, the transfer of highly volatile and emotional words that can induce agitation and revulsion. Since words convey different meanings to different people, political messages in political communication can unavoidably mean different meaning to different groups and as such can inevitably lead to friction and conflict among such groups in such divided societies. Thus, political communication when used in negative terms threatens the peaceful co-existence of various ethnic groups of the society. But when used for positive purposes, political communication has a great potential of unifying various ethnic groups within the society.

Again, political parties serve as a reliable platform of political education. Political education strives to ensure informed and effective citizens participation in the democratic and nation-building processes. In this regard, political education serve as a veritable tool for enhancing the inculcation of democratic values which is aimed at improving effective citizens' involvement in fostering co-existence among various ethnic groups within the polity. To achieve this however, political education should include but not limited to teaching of democratic tenets, values and norms such as personal responsibility, supremacy of the rule of law, equality, justice, responsibility and political liberty as well as personal responsibility and societal consciousness and cohesion (Centre for Governance and Development (2010). The objective of political education is to forge consensus party, societal or national issue. It is required that any society should be unanimous on values and principles guiding societal interaction life and peaceful co-existence. This has been found so because social justice and political order co-exists and are determined by members of the society. In this context, a political party bridge the gap between it and the society and are in turn expected to be democratic, accountable and a strong and reliable unifying force in the society (Centre for Governance and Development (2010).

In generic terms, political parties through the various roles and functions they perform in a nation contribute largely to the creation of unity amid diversity in a polarised state. Political parties formulate programmes that can draw the attention and support of voters and the majority of the members of the society. Through the various functions and roles political parties consciously or unconsciously reconcile the different ethno-religious groups within the society. However, the actual performance of these functions or the extent to which parties perform the functions to achieve nation-building has been a source of worry and concern particularly in the African sub-region.

Political Parties and Nation Building Roles in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Following about fourteen years of military rule (1985-1999) the country returned to multi-party democracy precisely on 29th May, 1999. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) after winning the 1999 presidential election attained political power and held on to it for 16 years (1999-2015). The party lost power in 2015 when it was defeated in the presidential election by All Progressives Congress (APC) a coalition of about four political parties. However, one will not be erroneous to comment that since, the

commencement of the Fourth Republic political parties have contributed little or nothing to nation-building in Nigeria. Nigerian political parties have not lived up to expectation in terms of the performance of their traditional roles and functions which enhances nation-building. The tale of political parties vis-a-vis nation-building in Nigeria has been that of intra and inter-party conflict, ethnic chauvinism, religious fundamentalism and corruption. These vices seem to have taken over the nation-building roles of political parties in the country.

As earlier mentioned the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have been in power for the most period of the Fourth Republic. Before it was voted out of office party politics within the PDP was highly characterised by intra-party conflicts (Nwafor and Unaji, 2016; Cohen, 2015; Jude and Ika, 2015). The party since 1999 has been wiggling in intra-party crisis in most cases orchestrated by but not limited to the following: leadership tussle, lack of internal democracy, imposition of candidates, conflict of interests among party members, activities of godfathers, non inclusion of members in the affairs of political parties, concealment of vital information to party members and corruption among leaders of political parties (Nwafor and Unaji, 2016). These have remained major causes of intra-party feud within the PDP. Onyishi (2015) noted that during the first term of the party in power, the PDP had more than three Chairmen. This trend continued during the second term with even a higher number of chairmen which had at one time or the other took charge of the party's affairs. The frequent change in the leadership is a manifestation of intra-party feud. The crisis according to Onyishi (2015) provided justification for party members who are obsessed by party flirtation in search of greener political pasture. Thus, the political language of the PDP was characterised by such words as: defection, decamping, cross-carpeting (Onyishi, 2015).

Intra-party conflict has serious and grievous implications on both democratization process and nation-building. Some of these include: decamping of aggrieved members to other political parties, animosity and fictionalization of party members (along ethnic lines), divided loyalty among party members, instability in the party and over-heating the polity (Nwafor and Unaji, 2016). Political parties of the Nigerian Fourth Republic rather than represent the interest of the multitude of their members and followers by promoting social cohesion and integration among them, engages in the satisfaction of the parochial interest of a selected few. This breeds ethnic chauvinism which certainly does the process of nation-building a great harm. Parties of the present political dispensation have remained platforms for ceding political power to the highest bidder at all levels of government: local, state or federal. This practice leads to corruption as members of political parties who get to power through money politics tends to recover money spent through looting of state treasury, embezzlement and mis-appropriation of public funds.

Corruption has been a major characteristic of parties since the inception of the Fourth Republic and it has permeated the entire gamut of the country. To demonstrate the extent of corruption in the political system Anazodo, Agbionu and Ezenwile (2013:7) posited that: "corruption is present in all sectors of our society, more especially in the government institutions, the Executive Arm, the Legislative Arm (the Senate, House of Representative), Local Governments, the judiciary (courts, tribunals, lawyers), and uniformed establishments (Military, police and road safety corps)." In the ranking of levels of corruption among Nigerian Institutions by Vision 2020 it was observed that political parties ranked second after the Police in the corruption index (Anazodo, Agbionu and Ezenwile, 2013). In this regard, political parties can be perceived as organizations that make use of their structures to put members in politically lucrative positions in return for financial rewards and divert public resources into the hands of party leaders. This explains why contesting election into public offices is seen as do-or-die affair. Elections under such circumstances are characterised by high level electoral violence manifesting in the form of political assassination, murder, arson and destruction of properties which are viable breeding grounds for inter-ethnic rivalry and ethno-religious conflicts.

The desire to win elections at all cost has engendered the use of hate speech in the Nigerian political terrain in the Fourth Republic. Though the use of hate speech in the nation's electoral process dates back to the First Republic its use has assumed an unprecedented dimension in the Fourth Republic. The use of hate speech characterized the campaign period of the 2015 general elections. During this

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period political communication was devoid of issue based campaigns rather political communication was based on the use of hate speech to date the image of political opponents. The use of hate speech further worsened the already tensed pre-election atmosphere. The period leading to the 2015 presidential election was characterised by the incessant use of hate speech which orchestrated a worrisome increase in election related violence (National Human Rights Commission, 2015). Coming barely after, two years of the present administration, the recent "quit notice" served the South-Eastern residents of northern Nigeria and the counter "quit notice" from Niger-Delta militants to the residents of northern origin living in the Niger-Delta region is a clear manifestation of the failure of political elites of the country to address adequately the varying socio-political and economic interest of the various ethnic groups of the country through active and visionary political party programmes and activities. While the Peoples Democratic Party must have failed to achieve this in 16 years of holding power, the present administration of the All Progressives Congress is claiming to find it difficult to adjust the situation claiming that the past administration of the PDP had done little or nothing to move the nation forward. This indicates a clear failure of party system and party politics as played by the country's political elites.

The "quit notice" given by the Northern Youths Forum and the counter ultimatum given in response by the Niger-delta counterpart is a clear destructive force of nation-building and as observed by Akabogu (2017) is "clearly a recipe for anarchy and bloodshed of unimaginable proportion which might degenerate to ethnic cleansing as was witnessed in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis in the recent past". It would be recalled that few years after gaining independence the country was plunged into a 30-months civil war which occurred partly as a result of claims by one ethnic group of marginalization by the other. The unfortunate incident claimed several thousands of lives and remains one of the nasty epochs in the political history of the country. The "quit notice" issued by the warren parties has created a tone of deep mistrust and frightening anxiety among the diverse ethnic groups and sub-groups in the polity. Nation-building under such scenario cannot thrive. The effrontery to issue 'quit notice' in a state that is constitutionally bounded together by the force of law can be said to be as a result of leadership failure in country. However, much of the blame of leadership failure can be heaped on the inability of political parties to train and produce individuals of repute and integrity to lead the country to greatness.

Citing Chinua Achebe, Gambari (2008) noted that the problem with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. It was noted by him that leadership is a critical issue in nation-building and that it can be understood from two important perspectives. The first perspective according to him leadership include personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment, and competence of individual leaders at the helms of affairs. The second perspective includes: the collective qualities of common vision, focus, and desire for development of the elites as a whole (Gambari, 2008) and the nation in general. To buttress this, Bello (2013) argued that part of the conditions necessary for successful nation-building is having a group of independent, patriotic, selfless, dedicated and capable leaders. Political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic appear not to have imbibed the virtues of quality leadership stated above. Where these virtues are missing parties' activities and programmes will be majorly designed to favour a few at the expense of the majority.

Political Parties and the Challenges of Nation Building in Nigeria

Political parties are bedevilled by some challenges in the quest to contribute to the achievement of a cohesive and unified political entity. Some of these challenges can be located in the inherent nature of the country. The heterogeneous nature of the country accounts for one of these challenges. While Nigeria may be an appealing country considering its landmass, fertile vegetation which covers the Savannah grass lands in the north and the rain and mangrove swamp forests in the south, mineral deposit and skilled manpower, the multi-ethnic nature of the country serve as hindrance to achieving a cohesive and unified entity. In the words of Markson (2017) "Nigeria is a country of diverse peoples and cultures. It has the largest collection of ethnic nationalities and cultures in Africa, which also constitute the country's population of about 170 million. This number ranks it as the most populous country in Africa, and of course, the world's most populous Black Country." With these characteristics the formation, growth, programmes and activities of political parties are characterized

by ethnic, regional and other parochialisms. Thus, political parties foster sectional and parochial interest thereby lacking the necessary wherewithal to promote nation-building.

The weakness of mass communication media as well as the underdevelopment and the discontinuities in communication network constitute another major challenge confronting political parties in the process of nation-building (Sklar, 1970). These challenges often prevent political parties from developing an effective and penetrative communication process both within the party and between parties and the citizens. They also prevent political parties from ensuring high informational output as it relates to government plans and programmes and expected responsibilities from the citizens (Sklar, 1970). The mass communication media constitute a central force in political communication. It is through the mass communication media that citizens acquire the information that they base their political decisions on. The mass media helps identifying problems in the society and serve as a medium for deliberation (Aghamelu, 2013). The mass media assists the marginalized segments of the society based on ethno-religion sentiments to air their views so as to turn such views to issues of public debate. In this respect, the mass media serves as a conflict settlement medium by promoting compatibility among distinct and diverse groups.

According to Kenterelidou (2005) the mass media are of critical significance to government and politics in the sense "that politicians use different methods to communicate with their constituencies which renders the media to a linkage institution" (Kenterelidou, 2005:7). However, weak mass media cannot be disposed to performing the above functions. Weak mass media instead of serving as viable political communication platform remain tools and medium in the hands of political parties and politicians to distort political information which is capable of misleading the citizens and capable of fuelling ethno-religious conflicts. Ethno-religious conflicts become more pronounce and manifests during elections in form of electoral violence. Political Parties play an important role in managing conflict in societies especially those divided along cultural, linguistic, religious, regional or other lines. They channel aggregate and express political demands. But if their commitment to democratic ideals is not high and if the electoral system and laws governing them are not effective, political parties can narrowly serve the interests of competing elite groups, enforce social cleavage and pursue divisive agenda's to secure power (UNDP, 2011:3) which can prepare palatable incentives for violent conflicts.

Conclusion

Political parties by virtue of the roles they perform in modern states are important agents of nation-building. However, the extent to which they serve as agents of nation-building depends on how effective they are in performing their roles of achieving social cohesion and mediating and preventing inter-group conflicts. A retrospective look at the historical antecedents of evolution and development of political parties in Nigeria will reveal that Nigerian political parties at independence were not designed and structured to foster social cohesion and nation-building. This is because such parties basically evolved out of socio-ethnic ethnic associations and as a result they function as ethnic organizations which fostered ethnic and sectional interests rather than the interests of the society at large. This resulted to inter-party rivalries which ultimately led to violent party politics and the termination of democratic dispensations. Party politics in the Fourth Republic has been taking this trend. The nature of party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has not been pleasant. Party politics has been characterized by all forms of vices including: assassination, arson, intra and inter-party clashes and monumental electoral violence.

The parties rather than being a medium for reconciling and mediating conflicts and preventing occurrence of violent acts through the constant observation of democratic procedures have become sources of violent conflicts and instability. For political parties to serve as important agents of nation-building there is the need for them to train and produce leaders who will champion and protect the interest of the entire citizens and not a part of the population. Again, political parties should make effective use of the mass communication media at their disposal not for achieving personal and parochial aims but for effective communication and dissemination of information that will serve the interest of the entire society. In this regard, political communication should contain constructive

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messages of issues, programmes and activities of the political parties aimed at fostering nation-building. Furthermore, political parties should at regular intervals organize political education programmes that will educate their supporters on the need to desist from activities that will fuel election related violence before, during and after electioneering period. This is to prevent the provocation of ethnic and sectional agitations.

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