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# POLITICAL PARTY SUPREMACY, PARTY DISCIPLINE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the challenges of party politics in Nigeria and how it undermines National Development in the Fourth Republic. Political parties are supposedly, carriers of democratic principles. Their nature and functions make political parties central to democratic governance especially in new democracies like Nigeria where the challenge of building strong and formidable democratic institutions is critical. Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, political parties have appeared to be ineffective to properly govern the Nigerian state. Political party challenges such as weak institutionalization, lack of coherent ideology, godfatherism, party discipline and absence of party supremacy have contributed negatively in preventing political parties from actualizing their full democratic responsibilities. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the challenges of party supremacy and party discipline as part of the problems affecting the progress of political parties in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic. In fact, this paper investigates the implications of these challenges on Nigeria's national development and show how these prevent the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) from effectively governing Nigeria between 2015 and 2019. Findings of this paper reveals that, to achieve comprehensive national development in Nigeria, political parties must be re-institutionalized and ideologically reshaped to serve as the major pillars of democracy and good governance. In attaining its objective, the paper relies on secondary data basically drawn from different sources including journal articles, newspapers reports, op-eds, party statement and archives, as well as other research monographs.

**Keywords:** Development, Fourth Republic, Nigeria, Party supremacy

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## Introduction

The Nigerian Fourth Republic begins with the inauguration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian president under the umbrella of Peoples Democratic Party in May 1999. The election that produced him has grown out of flawed political processes, intimidation and outright brigandage which combine to undervalue the democratic process. Although his administration has embarked on several reforms, yet it has continued to lack legitimacy as a result of the flawed elections. International community was largely benign and chose to accept the result of the 1999 elections for the sake of 'democracy'. The 2003 and 2007 presidential elections as also won by the People Democratic Party (PDP) were severely criticized. The reports of both domestic and international observers about the elections pointed out several shortcomings that made the elections to have fallen short of international standards. Nigeria's return to democratic rule on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999 marked a political watershed in the country's history. This is not because it was her first attempt at enthroning democratic rule, but because the transition period was protracted and tortuous. Both Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha who midwived the transition programmes in the aborted Third Republic nurtured self-succession agenda and failed to liberalize the political landscape. Even though political parties have proliferated in Nigeria since General Abdulsalami Abubakar successfully handed over power to a democratically elected government in 1999, their character and operations leave much to be desired. They are faced with a plethora of contradictions which negate their roles in Nigeria's democratic project and development. Some of these challenges include (but not limited to) lack of ideology, absence of institutionalized parties, manipulation of ethnicity and religion by the elites, political violence, godfatherism and profound lack of intraparty democracy.

In recent time, one issue that has occupied public discourse in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic is the need to return to the era when political parties had firm control of the affairs of their elected representatives both in the executive and legislative arms of government. Since the return to civil rule in 1999, political party supremacy and party discipline has eluded Nigeria's democratic practice. Party discipline and party supremacy are twin factors that provide effective guide for party cohesion and coordination towards achieving set goals and objectives (Sahara reporters, 2018). The absence of these among political parties especially the ruling ones,

have led to the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian government to discharge its responsibilities in administering the nation's economic, social and political development. The implications of these seem to be quite obvious since the return to civilian rule in 1999. These cardinal ingredients of party politics have eluded most political parties in Nigeria over the past two decades. In many ways they have contributed to their failure and defeats during elections (Sahara reporters, 2018). Hence, party indiscipline and lack of party supremacy remain two of the leading sources of conflict, party polarization and social disequilibrium in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. However, political parties especially those with elective representatives, have been at the mercy of those they sponsored to political offices. These parties have been under the firm control of the executive and the cabals that call the shots from behind the scene. The lack of party supremacy and discipline is more evident today than at any other time in the nation's political history. Appointees of the former President – Muhammadu Buhari have suffered humiliation at the Senate, which was dominated by the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). The inability of the ruling All Progressive Congress to broker truce in the face-off between the Presidency and the National Assembly (NASS) has impeded the APC's resolve to work towards fulfilling some of its campaign promises. As a party that has control of the two arms of government, the APC's failure to rein them into accepting its authority has put a question mark on its cohesiveness and readiness to champion its change agenda.

Based on this background, this paper chooses to focus on the problems affecting the progress of political parties in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examines the absence of party supremacy and lack of party discipline as the major challenges for political parties in Nigeria from 1999 to date. In order to be able to successfully explore these issues, the paper adopts two leading political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic – All Progressive Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) as the main units for analyzing its objective. However, there are important issues that need to be resolved here. These include data and methodological issues, conceptualization of key terms, and the theoretical framework used for analysis in this paper.

## **Methodology**

This paper relies mainly on qualitative data for its analysis, with research monographs, journal and newspapers reports constituting the bulk of its data. These are particularly useful in determining the conception of party supremacy, discipline, loyalty and acts of indiscipline among party members. Furthermore, these will also be useful in determining specific cases of party indiscipline especially since 2015 when the All-Progressive Congress became the ruling party as well as the impact of such on Nigeria's National development within the given period under study. Furthermore, content analysis has been shown to be a useful method for analyzing documentary research data. Consequently, these documents will be contend analyzed to reveal themes and sub-themes related to the research problems and objectives, and also to enable clearing theoretical issues related to party politics and development in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical context adopted to guide this paper is the institutional theory of political parties and party systems. Institutional theory is a type of theorizing, one that addresses power explicitly and emphasizes the causal role of political institution on political outcome and processes. Von Beyme (1985) posits that the institutional theory of political parties explains the emergence of parties as largely due to the way representative institution's function. Mainwaring and Torcal (2005) argue that political parties in advanced industrial democracies have achieved the highest form of institutionalization than those of developing democracies because electoral volatility in the latter is high, and there exist weaker programmatic or ideological linkage between voters and parties which consequently affect the overall development of these democracies. However, this theory emphasizes the level of the institutionalization of political culture and democratic norms in political parties. There are variants forms of this theory, some of which focus on the role of informal institution (corruption, social groups, clientelism, prebendalism) in influencing the role of political parties, while other emphasize the level of the institutionalization of political parties as a critical dimension to the undertaking of party system in modern democracy (see Muhammad, ed., 2017, p.3).

Institutional theory of political parties has been prominent since the 1980s beginning its life as a state centered theory. Although, to

some, the father of the concept is Samuel Huntington who made it central to his work—*Political Order in Changing Societies*. However, in shaping our understanding of the process and features of party institutionalization, the paper rather tends to focus on the arguments posed by Vicky Randall & Lars Svåsand. While some authors do not distinguish between party institutionalization and party system institutionalization or confuse the concepts, this paper is focusing on party institutionalization in the sense of the conceptualization developed by Panebianco (1988), and applied to the case of ‘new democracies’ in third world countries by Randall and Svåsand thus:

“(...) the process through which they [political parties] become institutionalized is not identical with the party’s development in purely organizational terms. Rather we suggest that institutionalization should be understood as the process by which the party becomes established in terms both of integrated patterns of behavior and of attitudes, or culture. We suggest further that it is helpful to distinguish between internal and externally related aspects of this process. Internal aspects refer to developments within the party itself; external aspects have to do with the party’s relationship with the society in which it is embedded, including other institutions.” (Randall & Svåsand 2002, p.12)

The definition of party institutionalization by Randall and Svåsand is theoretically discussed along the criteria of identification developed by Huntington (1962), Panebianco (1988), Levitsky (1999) and Kenneth Janda (1980). Using the common denominators Randall and Svåsand developed their own four-dimensional grid of party-institutionalization. Randall and Svåsand ‘take the four elements of systemness, value infusion, decisional autonomy, and reification as constituting the core of the process of party institutionalization, that is the process through which the party becomes established as an institution. The authors noted that ‘institutionalization in terms of the four variables will increase the party’s prospects for survival, however it is certainly no guarantee against regression or de-institutionalization’.

**Table 1: Dimensions of Party-Institutionalization**

	<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>
<b>Structural</b>	Systemness	Decisional autonomy
<b>Attitudinal</b>	Value infusion	Reification

*Source: Randall/Svasand 2002:13*

The internal dimension from the above grid refers to how well the party is organized and to how strongly the adherents are emotionally linked to the party. The structural aspect of the internal dimension captures Huntington's notion of 'complexity' and Panebianco's 'systemness'. Thus, a party that has a fairly detailed organizational network and in which decisions in the party follow, at least in a formal sense, the procedures set down in its statutes is considered highly institutionalized. The attitudinal aspect of the internal dimension refers to the strength of the affective linkage of party to societal groups. Parties are not only formal instrumental organizations that potential supporter regard like any type of supermarket, but purposeful actors in which the participants share an ideology and identify with the values of the organization. Thus, the more the party members and supporters identify with the party as an expressive phenomenon, and the higher the degree of voter's loyalty, the more institutionalized it is.

The external dimension on the other side, refers to the party's relationship to its environment. Here the structural aspect revolves around the issue of autonomy. A party that is totally dependent on external factors is less institutionalized than one in which preservation of the organization is not at the mercy of such factors. Second, as regards the attitudinal aspect, reification refers to the fact that the party's existence is established in the public imagination. It has become taken for granted by external actors and therefore impacts on the way the environment behaves. A party that is expected to disappear may be ignored, a party that mobilizes extensive electoral support over time, cannot. Implicit in the concept of institutionalization is the time dimension. A party cannot be said to be institutionalized if it is not able to survive over time. But this should be seen as a consequence of both internal and external dimensions: pressures for change in parties may originate internally as well as

externally. In the long run, only parties which are able to respond to challenges from both sources can endure.

The theory viewed parties as institutions within the larger political system whose ideologies and activities affect political outcome and processes. Political parties are products of history and their development is attributed to both internal and external factors. The theory also claims that a party's history determines how it adapts to modern day challenges. In analyzing a party's ideological orientation, we must begin by analyzing its very origin. Also, the level of institutionalization of political parties within a given political system, determines the pattern of political processes which consequently affect the development and prosperity of such a given system. As such to understand the problems of party supremacy and party indiscipline among political parties in Nigeria, particularly the prominent ones, one needs to look back into the history of these political parties. Broadly, this study contends that, weak institutionalization of political parties in Nigeria that eroded the supremacy of these parties, resulted in disloyalty among their members which ultimately led to unstable national development in the polity. In the subsequent sections of this essay, the historical antecedence of the two most prominent political parties in Nigeria (i.e., Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress) will be highlighted. Nonetheless, the paper will now dwell on clarifying some key concepts.

### **Political Parties and Party Politics in Nigeria: A Contextual and Theoretical Issues**

Political parties emerged in the nineteenth century in response to political developments, particularly in respect to increased liberalism, participation, competitive electoral politics and eventual universal adult suffrage (Lapalombara, 1974, p.515). With the emerging politically significant mass of the electorate, some platforms for mobilizing their support became necessary. Such organizational structure also was needed to formulate and present common programmes, to assist and campaign for candidates, integrate candidates of different backgrounds and provide a common platform for action among successfully elected legislators and executives. Political parties are the linchpin of democracy. They serve as a conveyor belt between the electorates and their respective representatives. The inseparability of political parties and democracy can well be understood when one imagines what would be the

prevailing order in a democratic political system in which no political parties exist. The obvious political atmosphere that is likely to be created in the absence of parties is arbitrariness in governance and decision-making and resistance to political change by the powers that be (Muhammad, 2017, p.1). According to Nicaraguan '*Law of political parties*', "political parties are groups of...citizens in ideological agreements, formed with the goal of achieving, among other things, political power in order to carry out a programme that would respond to the needs for national development" (cited in Tellez and Cerda, 1984, p.174). This definition suggests that political parties play a crucial role in the institutionalization of democracy and its consolidation.

However, Edmund Burke (1962) defines a political party as a body of men united under one political platform for promoting the interests of some particular principles in which they all agreed. This definition suggests that a political party is an organization of individuals who share common interest in the way a political system is supposed to be governed and decide to organize under one political association in order to acquire and manage power with the sole aim of translating their principles into policy decision (Mohammed, 2017, p.3). A political party is different from other organized interest groups because its central goal is to wrest power and influence policy outcomes. According to Strom (1990, p.574), "a political party is an organization that seek benefit derived from the public office by gaining representation in duly constituted elections". This definition portrays a political party as serving a leading role in the promotion of democracy because through its platform, political representation, which is the cornerstone of democracy, is secured. One of the key features of political party is its ability to coordinate and present a common interest. This explains why Joseph Schumpeter (1942) defines a political party as "a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for power". Sartori (1976) views political parties as any political group identified by an official label that is present at elections, and is capable of placing through election, candidate for public office. For Sartori, parties are the central intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government. They can aggregate social cleavage, aggravate social divisions, translate social cleavages into political cleavage or block the politicization of social cleavages.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, there is a misconception about the notion that parties are interested to control government and to win elections at all times. It is true that parties want to win, but not all parties want to win always. There are parties that are not interested in winning elections. In most Western democracies, where political culture and institutionalization have reached their most advanced stage, there are parties that formed as single-point agenda promoting. Some emerge to campaign on a particular platform or to promote a specific agenda such as the green and tea parties. Neither of these parties seriously ever considers sponsoring candidates in electoral contest. Although, in Nigeria we do not have these types of parties, yet when we look around us in the political system, we will not fail to see that most of the existing parties were not established with winning elections in mind (see Katsina, 2016, p.2).

### **Explaining Party Supremacy and Party Discipline**

Party supremacy simply means that government at any level must submit and align its policies and decisions with the manifesto and programmes of the political party that provided the vehicle it boarded to arrive in power. Party supremacy, demonstrates how party members fall in line with the decisions of their party, be it on national policy issues, party nomination processes, relationship with the government in power or opposition, sharing of political offices and whatever, is noble and acceptable, provided it does not infringe on the constitution of the country and the individual right of members. However, it is one of those concepts that emerged as a wish of the leadership of virtually all political party leaders in the world. Naturally, they tend to believe that as legislature and executives access power through the platform of their parties, they as party leaders should have a decisive say in what they do. The wish is rarely made with concrete success. There is however one notable exception. In proportional representation political system, the opportunity of emerging as a legislature is completely dependent on the location party leaders place prospective legislators on the electoral list. In that context, the notion of party supremacy is very real because that is what produces desired electoral outcomes. But in representative democracy however, the value placed on the relationship between the legislator and his/her constituency is stronger than that between the legislator and his/her party leaders. Democracy is about the people, so constituents are more important than party leaders and legislators are expected to relay, first and foremost, the wishes of their constituents rather than that of their party bosses, even though

they had been elected on the basis of a party platform. According to Maurice Duverger (1963):

Party supremacy and party discipline work best in parties with strong ideological context and coherence, especially socialist and communist parties. Party discipline he explains is weakest in large parties with faction and fraction...

What faction and fractions tell us, say Duverger, is a spitting process that has nothing to do with the masses supporting the party but everything to which “subordinate leaders seeking to oust the authority of leaders of higher rank”. By definition, the APC for instance is a party composed of factions and fractions whose origin were, until recently, in completely different political parties. The struggle over “party supremacy” is therefore much more about the positioning of factions and factions seeking to control the political process. Those who swear by the notion of party supremacy are simply trying to use their strong positions within the political party structure to increase their influence.

Party discipline on the other vein, exists when members of the same party vote the same way (Heller & Merrshon, 2000, p.3). It is the sticks and carrots used in order to maintain the unified vote inside the parliament (Linek & Rakusanova, 2002). Party discipline can be said to be the ability of a parliamentarians of a political party to get its members to support the policies of their party leadership. In liberal democracies, it usually refers to the control that party leaders have over their caucus members in the legislature.

### **Democracy and National Development**

Democracy is a vital instrument that to some extent propels political proficiency, economic development and social stability of many nation states. A true democracy is a sine qua non for the development of all sectors of any country’s economy. As observed by Nwanolue and Ojukwu (2012), the general success of any practicing democracy is deeply incumbent upon three major challenges. First, the challenge of legislative efficiency in which the activities of the national assembly ought to reflect and reform positively the socio-economic and political lacuna that has evaded the country for some reasonable length of time. Second, is the challenge of the executive and management of the nation’s economy and lastly, the willingness of the legislative powers that be, to grant much revered policy of

inclusiveness to the hoi polloi to participate vibrantly in the daily governance of the country (Mamudu & Hassan, 2011).

Likewise, development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. A country is classified as developed if it is able to provide qualitative life for her citizenry. The pride of any government is the attainment of higher value level of development in such a way that its citizens would derive natural attachment to governance. However, for a nation to be in a phase of development there must be some pre-requisites, which include socio-political and economic stability.

Nigeria since 1960, when it attained political independence up to date, continued to battle with the problems of development in spite of its huge human, material and natural resources. Development can be said to be a critical factor and a desirable phenomenon in the sustenance and growth of any nation (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). However, development is not a free gift as can be learnt from the indispensable lesson provided by the Asian Tigers. It is a product of careful design, effective resource mobilization and collaborative action with the people and their leadership. It entails sacrifice and dedication coupled with careful observation and openness to change efforts (Akume, 2012). Asian countries like Japan and Singapore are the envy of the rest of the world today, on account of their technological advancement and progressive economies. Of course, they did not attain this height overnight. Hard work, toil and sincerity of purpose made this possible. As a corollary, Nigeria can also attain as well as surpass the feat of the new famous Asian Tigers, if it is determined to do so (Durojaiye, 2013). Also important for mention is the pivotal role played by their political leadership in directing the growth paths of their countries towards ensuring economic progress and development. In essence, the paper will now look into the brief history and development of the two leading political parties in Nigeria—Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) respectively.

### **People's Democratic Party (PDP)**

Of all the political parties operating in Nigeria's political space in the Fourth Republic, the People's Democratic Party is by far until 2015 the largest and most popular party in Nigeria. The party was formally inaugurated on August 31, 1998 (The Guardian, 1998; The Umbrella, 2000). PDP's popularity and larger numerical strength derived from

the fact that its original founding members were indeed eminent, selfless and patriotic citizens who not only refused to participate in General Sani Abacha's political transition program, but also openly opposed the General's self-succession bid. This group, which came to be called "G34", was the nucleus of what later became PDP, following its transformation into a political party during General Abdussalam Abubakar's transition programme. The G34 was headed by Dr. Alex Ekwueme, the Vice- President of Nigeria in the Second Republic. Omo Omoruyi noted that, PDP arose from three main sources. First were the politicians, who were denied registration by General Sani Abacha during his self-succession project. They later metamorphosed to G34, a group that petitioned against the self-succession project of Sani Abacha. Second, those politicians who were former followers of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), and were not opposed to the self-succession of the Abacha and also not part of his machine. This group called itself the All Nigeria Congress (ANC) and was led by Chief Sunday Awoniyi. Third, were those who were the followers of the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua under the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM). Chief Tony Anenih and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar belonged to this group (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011).

In the course of transforming itself into a political party, the G34 group simply threw its door open and allowed itself to be invaded by a large number of people and group most of who were neither committed to the original ideals of the group nor the country's overall socio-political and economic well-being (Ofoeze, 2001). Indeed, some of these invaders are those persons/groups who either assiduously worked for the Abacha self-succession bid and/or those who had, in the past, created or immensely contributed to the country's socio-political and economic misfortune. Thus, the PDP, as it is today, is simply an ugly amalgam or motley of individuals and factions who not only lacked consensus on fundamental issues of socio economic and political life, but also have nothing in common with one another except in terms of their commitment to capture and retain political power (Ofoeze, 2001).

In the 2015 general elections, PDP which prided itself as the largest political party in Africa was immensely defeated by the APC; the party which emerged to challenged and basically paused the sixteen years of PDP's rule in the country. However, the inability of the PDP towards the 2019 general elections to comprehensively reorganize

and rebuild its self, reshape its ideology as well as strengthen its internal democracy led the party to vehemently lose power for the second and recently third time (2023 general election) since the inception of the Fourth Republic.

### **All Progressive Congress (APC)**

APC has emerged as the most dominant political party in Nigeria since 2015 general elections. The party was formed on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 in anticipation of the 2015 general elections. The party emerged as a result of an alliance by the then Nigeria's four biggest opposition parties namely, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) (Agomuo, 2013; Akor, 2013). The resolution to merge was signed by Tom Ikimi, the then spokesman for the party, who represented the ACN; Senator Annie Okonkwo on behalf of the APGA; the former governor of Kano State, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, the Chairman of ANPP's Merger Committee and Garba Sadi, the Chairman of CPC's Merger committee (Agbakwuru, 2013). The party received approval from the nation's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 31 July, 2013 to become a political party and subsequently withdraw the operating licenses of the three previous and merging parties (the ACN, CPC and ANPP). The Nigerian middle class saw the emerging APC as the alternative to the ruling PDP.

Despite being a relatively new political party, APC is Nigeria's dominant political party and has the widest national spread since 2015 elections. The party attracts a large national following and seems to appeal more to the youth and other sections of the Nigerian population who appear weary of PDP's long reign since the beginning of the Fourth Republic.

### **A glance of Political Party Supremacy and Party discipline in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

The battle to make political parties supreme in Nigeria will indeed persist, as the presidential system of government, which the country adopted—where the three arms of government are independent but derive their powers and authority from the constitution, do not support the concept as parliamentary system does. This puts the political parties in a bind, as members continue to challenge the parties' hierarchies (The Guardian, 2019). In spite of the moves by

the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the main opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to rein in their members and ensure that they submit to the authority of their leaderships to decide their affairs, otherwise known as party supremacy, indications have shown that both parties may have cut out a herculean task for themselves in that pursuit under the present system of government. Party supremacy as advocated by both parties is not attainable under a presidential system of government. The only way to win the confidence of party members and enjoy their unflinching support under the current system is by ensuring justice, equity and fairness in managing the affairs of these parties (The Guardian, 2019).

There have been numerous cases where members of a political party who felt shortchanged in the scheme of things challenged the decisions of the party up to the Supreme Court and overturned such decisions. This is more rampant during party congresses and primaries. There had been instances when elected members of a party in the National Assembly (NASS) defied the party by supporting candidates of their choice for the principal positions in the NASS instead of those endorsed by the party. For instance, in 2011 Aminu Tambuwal emerged as the Speaker of the House of Representatives instead of Mulikat Akande Adeola, who had PDP's endorsement. Tambuwal, then a former deputy whip, scored 252 votes to Akande-Adeola's 90 votes. He enjoyed the overwhelming support of majority of members, who were bent on torpedoing PDP's zoning formula, which ceded the post to the Southwest geo-political zone. Similarly in 2015, Yakubu Dogara who represents Bogoro/Tafawa Balewa Federal Constituency in Bauchi State, emerged Speaker of the 8th Assembly against the wishes of his party, APC. He defeated Femi Gbajabiamila, who represents Surulere Federal Constituency, Lagos State, in a keenly contested election, scoring 182 votes to Gbajabiamila's 174 (The Guardian, 2019). The party had conducted a mock election where Gbajabiamila emerged as the party's official candidate but Dogara and his supporters ignored their party, saying that they preferred to be beaten on the floor of the House.

Another similar scenario played out in the Senate in the same year, as Bukola Saraki was elected Senate President instead of Ahmed Lawan, the preferred choice of APC. The Senate President and his deputy of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly in Nigeria have been elected through a process similar to those described under Article 419 of the Nigerian Criminal Code, and particularly obtainment by false

pretence. Yet some will insist that, the constitution gives the powers to elect the leadership of legislature to legislators themselves and not to their parties. Of course, there is the notion of free legislative mandate as in enshrine in the 1999 Constitution, basically section 50 (1) of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It provides thus;

50. (1) There shall be: - (a) a President and a Deputy President of the Senate, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves; and (b) a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves.

But however, it is only in Nigeria that a legislator can claim the right to behave anyhow in the legislative chamber against the party on which he/she was elected. What is the need to have different political parties contesting election if after the elections the political parties submerged into one.

### **Dynamics and the Challenges of Party Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, politics is still seen as a winner-take all contest. Violence is often the by-product of this misconception of the democratic process. This is also compounded by the poor state of the economy and political patronage associated with the nature and patterns of party politics in the country. The lack of clear adherence to the democratic process in its most basic form is an obstacle to democracy in Nigeria. Naturally, political parties in Nigeria are characterized by challenges that undermine their role in promoting development and democratic consolidation. These challenges are obvious in how the political parties suffer from lack of coherent party ideology, lack of sufficient institutionalization, lack of internal democracy, godfatherism as well as incessant political violence. In essence, this paper tends to demonstrate in depth these challenges, in a view to enable extensive comprehension.

One, lack of party ideology. According to Roger (1982) party ideology constitutes the political doctrine from which a programme of action emanates, and on the basis of which citizens choose how they would want to be ruled. Onwa (2016) notes that, "political parties are primarily faced with the responsibility of creating competitive ideologies based on the yearnings of the people in general". These ideologies must be embedded in the socio-economic realities of the

people that will motivate their support as electorates. But most political parties in Nigeria (APC and PDP inclusive) lack this fundamental responsibility. None of these parties have the mechanism and structure to reorient the masses on a broad based ideological political culture.

Two, looking at intra-party democracy in Nigeria, many political parties in Nigeria find it very difficult to adopt an open system that will not only allow members of the party to participate in the decision making but also give them unrestricted opportunity to contest in elections under the party's platform. This kind of socio-political restriction and constraint has increasingly resulted in party wrangling, war of attrition, recrimination, acrimony, coordination dilemmas, and cross-carpeting in many political parties (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). The problem as a matter of fact, hinges on lack of internal (intra-party) democracy, and both PDP and APC are not immune to this trial.

Three, is the issue of God-fatherism which signifies "an ideology which is constructed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who gets party ticket to run for an election and who wins in an electoral contest" (Ogundiya, 2009), is responsible for distorting the effective functioning of political parties in Nigeria. Godfatherism also weakens the power of parties to discipline erring members. Some godfathers, who fund and support parties, tend to breathe down the neck of party leadership and one can see a lot of that happening in APC (The Guardian, 2019).

Four, lack of institutionalization of political parties. Parties in Nigeria have not been able to attain the expected degree of institutionalization especially in the areas of internal cohesion and discipline. This deficiency has also contributed to the decline of their conflict management capacities at both intra and inter-party levels of relations. The level of crisis at both party levels of relations is worrisome. It is such that none of the parties have been able to hold together without severe conflict that most times threatens their very hearts (Sambine, 2013). In Nigeria's democracy, some political parties often exist and revolve around their founders or some public figure. When parties generally lack strong institutionalization, they showcase a low level of organization and become even more available to be hijacked by a few party leaders who dictate to the majority.

Five, incessant political violence. The most damning record of political parties is the persistence of violence in our political system (Ibeanu, 2013). Apart from elections conducted by colonial government and the military, others particularly those conducted in 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and even the recently 2023, were affected by violent crisis. Numerous parties in Nigeria were, to a varying degree, involved in the formation, mobilization and deployment of armed groups during party registrations, primaries and general elections. Related to the above is the fact that individual thugs, cult groups and armed gangs hire out their services to party leaders, who arm and pay them for specific violent role during primaries and general elections. One of the violent methods engaged by these chieftains is assassination. Politically motivated assassinations have been a major feature of the struggle for power and resources within and between political parties in Nigeria. Other forms of violence are attacks on the property, campaign and party offices as well as supporters of opponents.

### **Implication on Nigeria's National Development**

The absence of party supremacy and the prevailing level of indiscipline in the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) have confronted the party and significantly hamper it in actualizing its mission of reviving the Nigeria's economy and of providing effective governance and management in 2015 and in the subsequent years. The party has regretted an avoidable mistake for the period of its first four years in government as seen in the emergence of the leadership of the National Assembly against the APC's wish, which basically emerged to have dominated the National Assembly in 2015. In 2015, when former President Muhammadu Buhari and by extension, the presidency, said, it had no business with the leadership of the National Assembly, it thereafter regretted and paid dearly for such a heinous political miscalculation. The emergence of Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki via an unholy alliance between some senators of the ruling party APC and senators of the opposition PDP, was the starting point of the four years in-house fight, wrangling, rancor, political bickering and opposition, throwing the executive and legislative arms of the APC government into parallel directions in spite of its dominance in the two chambers of the National Assembly. These have with no doubt delayed many aspects of the decision-making processes of the APC's government and had contributed negatively to the lack of cohesion and ineffectiveness of the party in administering the state in 2015.

Interestingly, there was a point in time when the presidency sends the names of its key Principal Officers to the National Assembly for confirmation and approval, most of which ended up being rejected despite their competence and wealth of experience. However, some scholars viewed this as part of the strengths and commitments exhibited by the Nigerian 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly to prevent the presidency from penetrating into its chambers and undermining its independence. Arguably, these had however, indirectly resulted into lack of cohesion between the two organs of government which led to inefficiency in running the statecraft in 2015 and in the long run, hijacked the state's progress for development. Also, at other critical times, and to the embarrassment of the nation, there was observed such contradictions in the views expressed by both the President and the Vice President. It was worsened, when inter-government agencies and departments under the executive particularly the DSS and EFCC declared an all-out war against each other playing into the hands of a hostile Senate of National Assembly where the "hawks, Jackals and hyena" waited patiently to feast on the confusion created in the absence of party discipline and supremacy. It was immaterial that the leadership and control of the Nigerian bicameral legislature was well under members of the same ruling political party. The nation suffered much more than that, as the APC administration hardly got anything done on record time underscoring the depth of the friction. We also witnessed a serious opposition to the policies of government by principal officers of the same ruling party. More than half of the controversies and disagreements at the National Assembly, within the time under study, clearly had nothing to do with the lot of Nigerians and could have been averted thereby saving precious legislative time and the state's resources. It would have been good for the development of our democracy if we had a functional ruling political party where party positions are conceived, debated and resolved before they are thrown to the larger state structure of the legislature where party affiliations and partisan loyalty dominate discussions.

Stemming from the above, the aftermath of the 2019 general elections, once again led to the victory of the All Progressive Congress in the presidential, governorship, national and state assembly elections and, with the emergence of new leadership in strata of the country, provides the party with another opportunity to put its house in order. It was indeed a chance for the party to build a robust relationship between the executive and the legislative arms in

the interest of peace, better understanding, support, cooperation and good governance for the party to successfully execute its policies and programmes without the unnecessary sabotage and political back stabbing as witnessed in the first four years of its reign. Although, it is evident that neither the presidency nor even the party have interest in who emerge as leaders of both the green and red chambers of the 8th Assembly. But it would have been a perilous and tragic wound in the APC's history not to have interest on who became the Senate president or Speaker of the House of Representative in the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Also, it would have been equally a political suicide to leave the National Assembly leadership in the hands of the people who do not share the same mission, vision and destination with the party. How could one explain, repeating the same mistake of the 2015 in 2019, when a cabal in the assembly holds the executive by the jugular for another four years. Also, how could one explain the former President Buhari's success in the fight against corruption when there existed uncommitted persons in the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly that have not been on the same page with the president vision. It is treacherous to tread the same path of mistake which was regretted for four full years. Arguably, in a growing democracy such as Nigeria, party supremacy must be at the forefront with lots of lobbying to have a leadership that will be on the same page with the party for proper execution of policies in a bid to actualize sustainable national development and progress.

From the foregoing, the ruling APC leadership should have focused in implementing key policies in its manifesto. One of such policies is restructuring Nigeria for effective security, good governance and economic prosperity. The party should also have reminded its elected members that security of lives and property remains a cardinal policy in the party's manifesto. Instead, the party's leadership maintains on the perverted version of party supremacy in an attempt to dictate to the parliamentarians. In spite of the ability of the APC to successfully installed a new leadership of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly with Ahmed Lawan as the Senate President and Femi Gbajabiamila as the Speaker House of Representatives, the issues of economic development, security and even fight against corruption did not prospers in the state. Sadly, the APC government appears to be helpless in the face of enveloping insecurity across the state. This has consequently affected the development of Nigeria in the last four years and even now. How the APC government has allowed kidnapers a free reign in the Northwest region of Nigeria is perhaps

the biggest shame of its rein. The government whose duty is to chase out these criminal elements is watching helplessly together with the political party under whose umbrella it asked Nigerians for their votes, how innocent and patriotic citizenry are killed with impunity.

### **Conclusion**

The ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) has been confronted with many challenges related to party supremacy and party indiscipline since 2015. The party will face a huge test on these issues in the days ahead and how these turn out will of course be of great interest to many political observers. This paper showed that these challenges appeared critical to the party's progress and these contributed enormously to the ineffectiveness of the party in achieving its objectives in 2015 and in the subsequent years. Political parties as expected, are among the strong institutions that contribute to the stability of a country's democracy and its consolidation. However, that was not the case with Nigeria particularly in the Fourth Republic. Lack of comprehensive programmes, organizational autonomy and coherent ideology have continued to undermine the effectiveness of political parties in Nigeria to respond to the country's national development. Hence, political parties in Nigeria must re-institutionalize themselves for the effective management of the state. They should evolve naturally from the grass root level. Those with standard manifestoes and standard ideologies should be allowed to contest for power and those without should quit naturally and fizzle out from the polity. Parties should practice internal democracy to make them strong, effective and efficient through consistent observance of principles of transparency, accountability, consultation and consensus building in policies and decision making. Indeed, the fortune of Nigeria's democracy depends on her political institutions and to actualize development in the state, it is imperative for the political parties to promote and encourage social justice, equity and fairness in managing their affairs which will basically help in winning the confidence of their members and enjoying their unflinching support in governance. Above all, these will significantly assist in the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy and the development of its economic, political and social life.

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