

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF
NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

Right from the colonial epoch, save under the 1989 constitution which decreed the existence of only two political parties, Nigeria has been very much disposed to the practice of multi-party system. This cannot be divorced from the fact of her ethnic diversity and deep social cleft. In her political history also, it has been observed that, numerous political parties have emerged on the country's political landscape only to decline or even disappear with bewildering rapidity soon after they were formed. This study therefore investigated this trend using content analysis and secondary data and discovered that, these multitude of political parties were either vitiated or kissed the dust on the altar of : structural defects; lack of party discipline; lack of principles or ideology by the political actors that formed the parties and personalization of party formation among other causative variables. The study further discovered that the trend has engendered the tendency towards de facto one party system throughout the county's previous republican or civilian eras, which if not checked through free, fair and credible elections, could have undermined the country's strife to consolidate democratic ethos and practice. The paper therefore concluded among other high points that, in order to further entrench democracy via multi-party system Nigerian partisan political actors should see a political party beyond mere platform that can be formed and dumped for yet another with a view to capturing political power.

Keywords: Nigeria, Political Party, Democracy, and Democratic Consolidation.

Introduction

The democracies of the societies that make up the contemporary Nigerian state like the Greeks democracy of aeon were not driven by the political groups universally known today as political

parties. Rather their democracies rest on consensus, compromises and the guide provided by the traditionally recognised leaders and elders in the communities who were rich in native intelligence and administrative acumen. With the advent of colonialism however, the British colonisers injected elective principle into the political process of the colonial Nigeria thus heralded the birth of the first political party in the country in 1923 named the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The country being a multi-ethnic country, the emergence of political parties as platform for competing for power or authority could not but degenerate into multi-party system hence the formation of political parties along the country's ethnic fault lines. Between 1923 and 1960 Nigeria had a total of 60 political parties and at the eclipse of the first republic, it had a total of 81 political parties (Ojiako, ND: 19). In the second republic also, the constitutional framework also permitted multi-party system and led to the birth and registration of five strong political parties and later increased to six. In the short-lived third republic, the 1989 constitution of the republic tolerated and of course decreed *de jure* two party system as only two political parties namely the National Republican Convention(NRC) and the Social Democratic Party(SDP) were allowed to exist. In the current fourth republic, the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010 permit the existence of multiple political parties to drive the country's democracy. In each of these republics, save the aborted third republic, the political parties went into elections with all fierceness and instruments of war with a view to outwitting one another. The emerging trend in this rabid competition for political power is for one political party to assume a larger than life height by widening its bowels to swallow the other political parties using all manners of strategy and stratagem, thereby engendering a *de facto* dominant one party state. The resistance put up by the remaining opposition parties has been found to include: undermining the dominant *de facto* one party through collaboration with the military and generating a disabling environment for the ruling party and by extension attract military intervention in the political process. This trend was indeed the bane of democratic growth and development in the first and second republics and is beginning to rear its ugly head in the current dispensation -the fourth republic. The central aim of this paper therefore is to investigate the rise and decline of political parties in the current fourth republic of Nigeria and lay bare its implications for the consolidation of democracy in the country.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the fourth republic of Nigeria, and more specifically from 1999 to 2015.

Conceptual Clarification

In order to place our analysis in proper perspective, two key concepts call for clarification namely political party and democratic consolidation. Let us now consider them starting with political party.

Political Party

The concept of political party has been variously defined. In any event, let it be re-emphasized that political parties constitute the plank through which those that control the machinery of government get to power or assume position of authority. In other words, they are springboard of political authority be it in democratic state or otherwise.

This is why Rosakin *et al* (2008:195) graphically submitted that:

almost all present-day societies, whether they are democratic or not, have parties that link citizens to government. Military dictators – such as Franco in Spain, Pinochet in Chile, or generals in Brazil – tried to dispense with parties, blaming them for the country's political problems. But even these dictators set up tame parties to bolster their rule... Whether they love political parties or hate them, countries seem to be unable to do without political parties.

It is on this basis that, Kapur (2008:638) wrote that by a political party, then, we mean an organized group of citizens who hold common views on public questions and acting as a political unit seek to obtain control of government with a view to further the programme and the policy which they profess. In another similar conception, MacIver (Cited in Kapur 2008:635) defines a political party as an association organized in support of some principle or policy by which constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government.

From these two conceptions the following facts about political parties come to the fore: they are organized or built around similar or common interests. Second, their primary aim is to gain political power. Janda, Berry and Goldman (2000:237) see a political party as an organization that sponsors candidates for political offices under the organization's name. In this definition neither interest that pulled members into this organization nor their view(s) about governmental policies is considered germane or necessary. This might not be unconnected with the fact that in some democracies, in terms of ideas parties are hardly different. Still in some, like in Nigeria, party jumping or defection from one party to another without any ideological consideration or

nicety has become a permanent hall mark of their democracies and party politics. Writing on the United States of America, Roskin *etal(op.cit)* submitted that:

to many Americans, a political party means little. The two major U.S. Parties often appear alike; their basic values and proposals often overlap. In elections, candidate personality is usually more important than party”.

This is why Magstadt (2009:390) in simple manner wrote that the purpose of a political party is to select, nominate and support candidates for elective offices.

It is on this note that this paper conceives of a political party as an organized group of people who share common political principles and ideas as to the direction their political society should gravitate to politically, economically and socially, and also seek to gain the machinery of government to enable it drive or steer the political society towards that direction.

Democratic Consolidation

Since the task of sustaining democratic practice in states newly transiting from military or one form of authoritarian regime or the other to democratic governance has become a matter of great concern, scholars have generated a plethora of the notions of this task which is better known as democratic consolidation. According to Valenzuela (1990:1), while the scholarly production referring to problems of democratic consolidation continues to increase significantly, the term has often been used in a haphazard, uncritical way, as if its meanings were un- problematically clear and its closure self-evident. In any event, in all the contributions to the search for the meaning of democratic consolidation, one cogent fact remains very central: “perennial survival of democracy”. This is why Valenzuela in his engaging and illuminating analysis opined that:

democratic consolidation can be said to have been achieved when most significant political actors and informed publics expect the democratic process to last indefinitely, and when it is free of what have been called “perverse institutions” namely tutelary powers, reserved domains of policy, gregarious and deliberate distortion of the electoral system and political representation, and the existence of the widespread belief that non electoral means are not possible to form the national government.

In another notion, Andreas, (1997:1) surmised that the meaning we ascribe to democratic consolidation is context-dependent and perspective dependent. It depends on the type of political regime we study and on the type of regime we want to avoid or to attain. Applying this double

distinction of empirical viewpoints and normative horizons – on the basis of a four-fold typology of political regimes (authoritarianism, semi democracy, liberal democracy, and advanced democracy) – he wrote: leads to five concepts of democratic consolidation: avoiding democratic breakdown, avoiding democratic erosion, institutionalising democracy, completing democracy and deepening democracy. Flowing from the above and situated in the Nigerian context and the wider African context, the entrenchment of democracy has suffered persistent hiccups as a result of the bayonet of their political processes by the military (Adebisi: 2012:2) Having failed in engendering the promised development and good governance, it has now been widely acknowledged by the citizenry that the military lack the capability and the sincerity to solve the crises of governance they claimed the civilians have failed to properly tackle (*ibid*). Hence the growing desire not only to return to democratic rule, but to also sustain or retain it forever (*ibid*). Thus, it is proposed for our end here that democratic consolidation refers to all efforts to make successful restoration of democracy stronger and continuous (*ibid*). In other words, it refers to the sustained or uninterrupted practice of democracy by a body politic. Just as Valenzuela has acknowledged, it is equally admitted by this paper however, that:

consolidated democracies are not necessarily free of destabilizing conditions such as: presence of sharp ideological differences among major parties and political leaders, armed separatist or terrorist movements, social unrest that percolates through urban riots, or racial and ethnic tensions leading to violent confrontations; requiring all of these to wither away before presuming democratic consolidation in new or established democracies would be excessively stringent test. Rather they are strong enough to maintain the state of political equilibrium, stability in the face of destabilizing forces.

Political Parties of the Fourth Republic: their rise and decline

The Nigerian fourth republic was inaugurated on 29th May, 1999. Prior to the inauguration of the republic, the military government of General Abdusalam, which birthed the republic, had instituted a transition programme or time table on which was etched the formation and registration of political parties.

The transition programme was itself an off-shoot of the transition schedule of General Sanni Abacha who died on 6th July, 1998 and thus paved way for General Abdulasam to continue with the modified transition scheduled through which General Abacha would have through manipulative machinations or *politricks* morphed to a civilian President. For before he passed

on, all the five political parties which he created namely, the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Congress for National Consensus (CNC), Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) had strangely adopted him as their Presidential candidate and this development Bola Ige, a leading politician in the country, dubbed: five fingers of leprous hand (*Tempo*, 2001:22). As the transition schedule collapsed with Abacha's demise, the Abdusalam regime announced a very short transition programme. It commenced with the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and followed by the go-ahead to politicians to form political associations which would be eventually registered as political parties.

Following the INEC's go-ahead, politicians within about a month, had formed fifty (50) associations (*Sunday Tribune*, October, 25, 1998:9). Thirty (30) of them obtained registration forms from INEC and by the end of the timeline set for submission, only twenty-five (25) of them returned their forms (*ibid*). The criteria set by INEC for registration as a party include: payment of a non-refundable fee of (₦100,000) one hundred thousand naira for registration form; the names and addresses of the members of its national, state and Local Government Area Committees are registered with the Commission; its membership is open to every Nigerian citizens, irrespective of place of origin; circumstances of birth; ethnic group, sex or religion; it accepts the principle of power sharing and rotation of key political officials; it is first recognised and provisionally registered and that a party must have and maintain functional branches in at least 24 states of the Federation (*ibid*).

While a number of them had some presence nation-wide, many of them could not boast of their presence in more than countable or few local governments.

Out of these plethoras of associations, nine scaled through the initial hurdle and were given the go-ahead by INEC to participate in the local government elections slated for December, 1998.

At the conclusion of the election, only two political parties namely the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Nigeria's People's Party APP could cross the hurdle and got the nod for registration accordingly having met yet another provision in the Guidelines that to qualify for final registration a party must win not less than 5 per cent of total votes in 24 states of the 36 states of the federation. However, out of political expediency, the Abdusalam regime registered

the Alliance for Democracy (AD) as the third party. More specifically, the party was registered because most of its key sympathisers, promoters and members were Yoruba people of South West who the military believed if excluded, the transition programme might not be totally successful more so that the Yoruba people were still then aggrieved about the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election result which produced Chief M. K. O. Abiola a Yoruba man, as the President of the country. Thus, the 1999 general elections in Nigeria were contested by these three political parties. From the foregoing, it can be established that the responses of the political class to the call for formation of political parties clearly indicated their preference for multi-party system. In the general elections that followed the three political parties made their showings with the PDP, APP and AD coming first, second and third respectively in the elections. For example, this can be seen in the Governorship election result shown in the table below.

Table I: The result of 1999 Governorship Election

S/No	Party	No of Governors
1	PDP	21
2	APP	9
3	AD	6

Source :Abiodun M. and Ogundiwin A. in Talla M.S. and Terhamba W.(2010:169)

It was these three political parties that formed the government at the federal, state and local levels in 1999 and commenced the country's fourth republic. It should be noted that two political parties namely the PDP and APP contested the 1999 Presidential election. The AD and APP after political horse trading that culminated in an Alliance presented a joint candidate, Olu Falae. The PDP candidate, Olusegun Obasanjo won the presidential race. As politics is largely a game that is often played by constellations of group, the group dynamics in Nigerian politics refused to wane as the political groups or extractions which were denied registration in 1998 headed for the supreme court in 2002, a year to another general elections, to challenge their exclusion and operations as political parties. In a landmark judgement, delivered on 8th November, 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the iron gate or the road block erected by the INEC especially the regulation directing that political associations seeking registration to establish offices in at least

24 states of the federation was unconstitutional (*Saturday Tribune*, November 9, 2002:6). This thus opened the flood gate for emergence of more political parties in the country and by extension the true practice of multi-party system. More specifically with this development, thirty political parties emerged and contested the year 2003 general elections (*Saturday Tribune*, 2002:5).

Apart from the removal of the hitherto stringent conditions for registering political parties in the country, other factors that propelled the formation of more political parties include: First is ethnic diversity of the country. The import of this is the fact that a number of the parties either consciously or unconsciously put on ethnic toga. This was particularly true of the AD which we have already identified majorly with the Yoruba people; and also the APP which changed its name to All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), taking more of Northern outlook and the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) which emerged as the political nest of Igbo clan. Second is the financial support the state was giving the political parties then. For example, the Electoral Act 2006 provided for State financial support (Adebisi, 2012:5). Thus a good number of those forming parties had the hidden agenda of forming parties to collect money from the state only for the parties to fizzle out after election. Third, the three major parties were wrecked by intra-party crisis of which one of its ripple effects was defection to another party or the formation of new parties by the defecting elements. Most of the intra-party crisis bordered on absence of democratic choice within the parties. The cumulative effect of all these was that, save the PDP, all the parties that mushroomed before the 2003 general elections including the ANPP and AD of course became very weak. Consequently, the PDP began to emerge as the most dominant political party in the country and thus crept in the fear that Nigeria was emerging a *de facto* one party state. Part of the outcome of the 2003 elections which gave this impression is as shown in the table below:

Table II: Result of 2003 Governorship Election in Nigeria

S/No	Party	No of Governors
1.	PDP	27
2	ANPP	7
3	APGA	1

4	AD	1
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Source: Abiodun M and Ogundiwin A.O (2010:169)

Going by these results, it is quite obvious that the PDP had gained greater ascendancy or has risen considerably in strength. Apart from the fact that more than 15 other political parties could not win governorship election at the state level, the two hitherto opposition parties namely the ANPP and AD suffered significant decline. ANPP's governorship election success had reduced to 7 from 9 in 1999 and AD's governorship election success had plummeted from 6 in 1999 to just miserable one state. The APGA which had hoped to capture all Igbo five states was able to garner victorious votes in only one state. This dominant position of the PDP of course gave the PDP leaders the hubris to later pronounce that the PDP would rule Nigeria for sixty (60) years. Apart from the fact that most of the parties that contested the 2003 election were weak and wrecked by irreconcilable intra-party wrangling, the 2003 general elections were allegedly rigged by the ruling party at the federal level, the PDP although the hands of other political parties were not also absolutely clean.. According to Ofeimun (*The Comet* 2003:12)

the general conduct of the elections as it turned out was marred by gory manipulations and massive fraud. One only needs to corroborate one's experience as a voter with the reports that have since emerged from journalists at the beat and monitors from all over the world including the European Union. All the reports are quite agreed on the fact that there was inordinate stuffing of ballot boxes, swapping of boxes, forgery and falsification of results, and undue deployment of military and police agencies in a mode that vitiated the credibility of the elections.

He wrote further:

in areas where there was hardly a turnout because of violence and threats of violence, the results showed one hundred per cent turnout. In many cases there were more votes than there were voters. Polling had hardly began in some areas and the ballotboxes were already too full to take more. Evidently, no other political parties, outside the ruling People's Democratic Party had the means and the reach to deploy all the logistical instruments to benefit from either the purloining of the Register of voters and the untamed discretion granted to the election officers. (*ibid*).

Indeed the victory of the PDP was so sweeping that it was widely qualified not just as landslide, but also earthquake and a hurricane. This cannot be far from the truth because while the PDP Presidential candidate, Olusegun Obasanjo got 24.4 million votes which translated to 61.94% of the total votes, the 27 new parties scored only 6% of the votes while the remaining 32.19% went to the ANPP.

The PDP was able to achieve this because of four factors. First, it was suspected that the party was able to influence the electoral commission, a supposedly independent and neutral body charged with the organisation and conduct of elections in the country. For example, there were

allegations of deliberate inadequate supply of ballot papers to the strong holds of opposition parties, and outright falsification of results. Second, there was also the use of state security agencies by the ruling party PDP to intimidate voters. Third, being the incumbent party in power, the party had access to a lot of slush funds though unproven to allegedly bribe poor voters. Fourth, following the victory of the party in 1999, some politicians saw the PDP as a winning party. Apart from this, some also saw it as a plank to participate in national politics. This was particularly the selling point of the party to the Yoruba people of South-West who had a record of being in opposition parties. Thus the party became a nest for party jumpers and also for those who perceived the party as safe havens to partake in the sharing or butchering of the national cake. This is why Olunloyo a notable politician in the country concluded that:

there is no party in Nigeria. They are not sound. They are like castle built in the air, on the sea shore by children, made of sand. That is why some people are able to move. Some have moved from PDP to AD, from AD to PDP. If some want something in the state, they join AD, if they want some job at the federal level they join PDP(Tempo, 7 December, 2000:7).

Based on their different levels of success the parties formed government after the elections. Amidst governance, group activities never ceased. Indeed in Nigeria the culture is that barely few months after a general election, alignment or realignment of groups or forces for the next general election begins in earnest. Thus politicking and group moves towards the 2007 general elections did not take much time to crystallize. Before the elections some parties had sunk into total oblivion while new ones had crystallized.

There were fifty (50) of them; twenty (20) more in number than those in existence and contested the 2003 general elections. This was about an increase or growth of 40%. Compared to the 2003 list, it is palpably evident that Nigerians still preferred multi-party system.

However this sheer numerical growth rather than vitiating the PDP dominance, further gave the party stronger room to gain greater ascendancy more so that these parties could not reach workable alliance to wrestle power from the PDP. It was not therefore surprising that the PDP again recorded landslide victory in the 2007 general elections. One strong pointer to the fact that most of the parties were weaklings was that only twenty-five (25) of the fifty (50) could field presidential candidates in the election held in 2007. Another pointer to this is the fact that, of the 25 that fielded candidates only three (3) parties scored the million mark. This is shown in the table below. The trend could therefore be described as the higher the number of political parties the weaker their strength. In other words, the phenomenon is that of bewildering rise and rapid decline.

TableIII: The Results of the 2007 Presidential Election

S/No	Candidate	Party	Votes
1	Umaru Mura Y'ardua	PDP	24,638,063
2	Major Gen. Mohammed Buhari	ANPP	6,605,299
3	Atiku Abubakar	AC	2,637,848
4	Orji Uzor Kalu	PPA	608,803
5	Attahiru Bafarawa	DPP	289,244
6	Emeka Ojukwu	APGA	155,947
7	Pere Ajuwa	AD	89,241
8	Prof. Patrick O. Utomi	ADC	50,849
9	Dr. Birmi Olapere	NPC	33,771
10	Ambros Owun	HDP	28,419
11	Arthur Nwakwo	PMP	24,124
12	Rev. Chris Okotie	FP	24,049
13	Emmanuel Okereke	ALP	22,677
14	Sir Lawrence A. Adedoyin	APS	22,409
15	Habu Fari	NPD	21,974
16	Galadima Liman	NNPP	21,665
17	Maxi Okwu	CPP	14,027
18	Sunny Joseph Okogunu	RPN	13,566
19	Dr. Iheanyichukwu G. Nnaji	BNPP	11,705
20	Osagie A. Obayuwana	NCP	8,229
21	Olapade Agoro	NAC	5,752
22	Dr. Akpona Solomon	NMDP	5,664
23	Prof. Isa Odidi	ND	5,408
24	Mallam Aminu Abubakar	NUP	4,355
25	Rev. Dr. Moji Obasanjo	MMN	4,309

Source: *Tell*, May 7, 2007, p.19

This fact is further strengthened by the following data: in the governorship and Houses of Assembly elections in the same year, the PDP also led the pack with 28 governorship slots, and majority seats in 27 houses of assembly out of 36 states (*Tell*, May 7, 2007:16). Before the 2007 general elections, the PDP held sway in 578 of the 774 local governments; 31 of the 36 Houses of Assembly; 27 of the 36 state governments; 247 of the 360 seats in the Houses of Representatives and 87 of the 109 seats in the senate (*ibid*). The pre-eminence and dominance of the party is not of course opaque.

However, just like the 2003 elections, the 2007 general elections were equally tainted with rigging obviously in favour of the PDP thereby heightening the suspicion that the party was determined to turn the country into a *de facto* one party state. *Tell* (May 7, 2007:18) captured this very well when it reported that:

though rigging had been elevated to an art by all political gladiators across the parties, the opposition parties were out-done by the PDP (emphasis added) in the rigging spree. In many states, they had a field day snatching ballot boxes and stuffing them with thumb-printed ballot papers with reckless abandon, sometimes in the full glare of armed security agencies.

All these were confirmed by local and international election observers that observed the elections (*ibid*). Indeed the elections was adjudged the worst in the electoral history of the country (Abubakar Atiku quoted in *Tell*, May 7, 2007:18). Another contestant, Buhari also buttressed this when he said that the elections were bereft of credibility judged against national and international standards. Even Umaru Yar'Adua the winner of the presidential election and also the supreme court of the country that later heard appeal to it for adjudication admitted that the elections were flawed.

As general elections are held every four years in Nigeria, and true to the antics of Nigerian politicians, the preparation for the 2011 was not long in commencing. As in the past, the political landscape was soon awash with political realignment and formation of more political parties still. Indeed by early 2011, sixty three political parties had emerged on the political scene. In other words, thirteen new political parties had joined the existing 50 between 2007 and early 2011.

Out of these, only (20) twenty was able to field Presidential candidates. Save the PDP, Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the rest political parties performed abysmally in the Presidential election.

This multiplicity of parties further confirmed Nigerians' faith in multi-party system. In any event, this multitude of parties went into the 2011 general elections, and the general outcome once again proved the dominance of the PDP. For example and more specifically, the results of the Presidential elections glaringly show that while the PDP remains very strong, the other political parties were of feather weight. See the table below:

Table IV: The Full Results of Presidential Election (2011)

STATES	PDP	ACN	CPC	ANPP
AKWA IBOM	1,165,625(94.58%)	54,148 (4.39%)	5,348 (0.43%)	2,000 (0.16%)
ANAMBRA	1,145,169 (98.96%)	3,437 (0.30%)	4,223 (0.36%)	975 (0.08%)
BAYELSA	504,011 (99.63%)	370 (0.07%)	691 (0.14%)	136 (0.03%)
BENUE	694,776 (66.31%)	223,007 (21.29%)	109,680 (10.4%)	8,592 (0.82%)
CROSS RIVER	709,382 (97.67%)	5,889 (0.81%)	4,002(0.55%)	2,521 (0.35%)
DELTA	1,378,851 (98.59%)	1,310 (0.09%)	8,960 (0.64%)	2,746 (0.20%)
EBONYI	480,592 (95.57%)	1,112 (0.22%)	1,025 (0.20%)	14,296 (2.84%)
EDO	542,173(87.28%)	54,242 (8.73%)	17,795(2.80%)	2,174(0.35%)
EKITI	135,009(51.56%)	116,981 (44.67%)	2,689 (1.03%)	1,482 (0.57%)
ENUGU	802,144 (98.54%)	1,755(0.22%)	3,753(0.46%)	1,111(0.14%)
FCT	253,444 (63.66%)	2,357 (0.58%)	131,576 (33.05%)	3,170 (0.80%)
GOMBE	290,347 (37.71%)	3,420 (0.44%)	459,898 (59.73%)	5,693 (0.74%)
IMO	1,381,357 (97.98%)	14,821 (1.05%)	7,591 (0.54%)	2,520 (0.18%)
JIGAWA	419,252 (36.72%)	17,355 (1.52%)	663,994 (58.21%)	7,673 (0.67%)
KADUNA	1,190,179 (46.31%)	11,278 (0.44%)	1,334,244 (51.92%)	17,301 (0.67%)
KANO	440,666 (16.49%)	42,353 (1.58%)	1,624,543 (60.79%)	526,310 (19.69%)
KATSINA	238,980(25.35%)	17,973 (1.91%)	624,515 (66.25%)	46,554 (4.94%)
KEBBI	359,198 (39.95%)	26,171 (2.83%)	501,453 (54.26%)	3,298 (0.36%)
KOGI	399,816 (71.17%)	132,201 (23.53%)	6,516 (1.16%)	16,491 (2.94%)
KWARA	268,243 (64.68%)	52,432 (12.64%)	83,603 (20.16%)	1,672 (0.40%)
LAGOS	1,281,633 (65.9%)	427,203 (21.96%)	189,983 (9.77%)	8,941 (0.46%)
NASSARAWA	408,997 (58.89%)	1,204 (0.17%)	278,390 (40.08%)	1,047 (0.15%)
NIGER	321,429 (31.54%)	13,344 (1.31%)	625,574 (64.03%)	7,138 (0.70%)
OGUN	309,177 (56.86%)	199,556 (36.70%)	17,654 (3.25%)	2,969 (0.55%)
ONDO	387,376 (79.57%)	74,253 (15.25%)	11,890 (2.44%)	6,741 (1.38%)
OSUN	188,409 (36.75%)	299,711 (58.46%)	6,997 (1.36%)	3,617 (0.71%)
OYO	484,758 (56.14%)	252,240 (29.21%)	92,396 (10.70%)	7,156 (0.83%)
PLATEAU	1,029,865 (72.98%)	10,181(0.72%)	356,551 (25.27%)	5,235 (0.37%)
RIVERS	1,817,762 (98.04%)	16,382 (0.88%)	13,182 (0.71%)	1,449 (0.08%)
SOKOTO	309,057 (33.97%)	20,144 (2.21%)	540,769 (59.44%)	5,063 (0.56%)
TARABA	451,354 (61.07%)	17,791 (2.41%)	257,986 (34.91%)	1,203 (0.16%)
YOBE	117,128 (18.83%)	6,069 (0.98%)	337,537 (54.26%)	143,179 (23.01%)
ZAMFARA	238,980 (25.35%)	238,980 (2.35%)	624,515 (66.25%)	46,554 (4.94%)

Source: The Punch(2011:6)

Let it be also said of the 2011 elections that the PDP victory was still inextricably linked to rigging. For example after the elections there were protests in some states such as Katsina, Kaduna, Gombe, Yobe, and Bauchi among others. This trend has been a source of worry to the opposition parties as they were being diminished or decimated by the PDP. Indeed, consequent upon their diming and dismal electoral fortunes and their inability to operate properly, the INEC decided to

de-register some of the unviable political parties although one of the parties the Fresh Party first challenged this in court and obtained a favourable judgement stating that INEC's action was improper. However INEC has taken a counter legal measure by way of appeal which has kept the deregistered parties' names out of the roster of registered parties in the country as at December 2014. In August, 2011, six (6) of the parties were deregistered. By December 2012, additional 32 political parties were deregistered. This was anchored on two factors: first is the inability of the parties to win any national or state assembly seats in the April, 2011 general elections as required by section 78(7)(ii) of the Electoral Amendment Act, 2010. Second was the inability of the parties to hold their conventions as scheduled, or have their national officers elected as required by the 1999 Constitution as Amended in Section 223(1) and(2).

In 2013, three of the remaining political parties namely the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria People's Party and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) negotiated a merger. The negotiation eventually culminated in the emergence of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the delisting of its three main off-shoot parties thereby leaving the country with 25 political parties as at August 2013. Between August 13 and shortly before 2015 general elections, three additional political parties were registered bringing the total number of the parties that participated in the elections to twenty-eight(28) as shown in the table below.

Table V: List of Political Parties that Contested 2015 General Elections

S/N	NAMES OF POLITICAL PARTIES	RESULTS
1	Accord	A
2	Action Alliance	AA

3	Advanced Congress of Democrats	ACD
4	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria	ACPN
5	Alliance for Democracy	AD
6	African Democratic Congress	ADC
7	African Peoples Alliance	APA
8	All Progressive Congress	APC
9	All Progressive Grand Alliance	APGA
10	Citizens Popular Party	CPP
11	Democratic Peoples Party	DPP
12	Fresh Democratic Party	FRESH
13	Hope Democratic Party	HDP
14	Independent Democrats	ID
15	Kowa Party	KP
16	Labour Party	LP
17	Mega Progressive Peoples Party	MPPP
18	National Conscience Party	NCP
19	New Nigeria Peoples Party	NNPP
20	Peoples Democratic Change	PDC
21	Peoples Democratic Movement	PDM
22	Peoples Democratic Party	PDP
23	Progressive Peoples Alliance	PPA
24	Peoples Party of Nigeria	PPN
25	Social Democratic Party	SDP
26	United Democratic Party	UDP
27	Unity Party of Nigeria	UPN
28	United Progressive Party	UPP

Source; www.inecnigeria.org/? P. -11=1

The merger was intended to provide a stronger challenge to the dominant ruling party, the PDP in the 2015 general elections and in other future general elections in the country.

Let it be said that the rise of political parties in Nigeria is not only an indication that the country prefers multi-party system, but also a pointer to the fact that Nigerians love self determination and liberty or freedom of association as a plural society. Aside the due and alleged undue advantages the PDP has consistently enjoyed over other political parties in the country as pinpointed elsewhere in this paper, the fact of rapid decline or obvious weakness of most of the parties can be attributed to the following factors: first is personalisation of party formation in spite of the legal framework to forestall this. Such parties have found it difficult to outgrow beyond the personalities of their founders and gain national acceptance. Second is ethnicisation of party formation. Although at the formation of some parties their promoters never intended to make them sectional or ethnic biased. However after sometime due to the visibility of people from an ethnic group in the leadership of the parties they are quickly tagged ethnic parties. This label thus has diminishing effect on their national acceptability. Third, some parties became weak and eventually died because their promoters originally formed them to obtain the financial grant the constitution and the Electoral Act provided should be given to parties. This was particularly the trend when the Electoral Act 2006 prevailed. The consequence of this then was for the parties to fizzle out after collecting the grant from the state.

Another reason is that some of the parties were never intended to last. Their promoters just established them as alternative platform they can recourse to in case the major party they belong to fails to nominate them for elections. Once their promoters get what they wanted in their major party or another fairly strong party the temporary plank is abandoned to die a natural death.

Beyond this, the phenomenon of defecting from one party to another, an act of party indiscipline, has affected the fortunes of some of the parties. While the fairly strong parties profit from this phenomenon, the strength or vigour of the smaller parties is often depleted by this brazen act of indiscipline. Hence the rapid decline of the smaller parties. This phenomenon is further exacerbated and facilitated by the fact that most of the parties were not formed around any avowed ideology or principles for which members are willing to stand by or be ready to die for. Ironically, just as this phenomenon has weakened some parties, it has in turn strengthened some other political parties. This was particularly the narrative of the APC before it went into the 2015 general elections. As a result of the internal wrangling that rocked the PDP then which was occasioned majorly by lack of internal party democracy and other irreconcilable differences

among the leading lights in the party, the party experienced a gale of defections from which the APC profited profusely. Thus within a very short period the APC waxed into a formidable opposition party. It was with this strength the APC contested the 2015 general elections and wrestled power from the PDP at the Federal level as it won the presidential and National Assembly elections among others overwhelmingly. The results of the elections are as shown in the tables below:

Table VI: Summary of the Results of 2015 Presidential Election

S/N	NAMES OF POLITICAL PARTIES	NO. OF VOTERS SCORED
1	AA	22,125
2	ACPN	40,311
3	AD	30,673
4	ADC	29,665
5	APA	53,537
6	APC	15,424,921
7	CPP	36,300
8	HOPE	7,435
9	KOWA	13,076
10	NCP	24,455
11	PDP	12,853,162
12	PPN	24,475
13	UDP	9,208
14	UPP	18,220

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

Table VII: Summary of Results of 2015 Governorship Election

S/N	PARTY	NO. OF STATE WON
1	APC	21
2	PDP	8

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

Table VIII: Summary Results of National Assembly (Senate) 2015 Election

S/N	PARTY	NO. OF SEATS WON
1	APC	60
2	PDP	49

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

Table IX: Summary of 2015 National Assembly (House of Representatives) Election Results

S/N	PARTY	NO. OF SEATS WON
1	APC	225
2	PDP	125
3	Other Parties	10

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

Finally, following the abrogation of state funding of parties, some of the parties outside, that is non-governing parties, have been incapacitated by lack of funds in their operations.

Implications for Democratic Consolidation

The rise and decline of political parties in Nigeria has mixed implications for democratic consolidation. On the one hand and on a positive note, the emergence of numerous political parties is an indication that the people still prefer multi-party driven democratic rule. For obviously under it, they have the opportunity to enjoy freedom of association which was held in abeyance under military rule. On the other hand however, the dominance of a single party, the PDP particularly at the national level since the beginning of the fourth republic in 1999 up to May 2015, was perceived as a threat to democratic consolidation. As adumbrated earlier, there was the apprehension that the country was degenerating to a *de facto* one party state. This fear could have been unfounded but for the apparent fact that the PDP's victory was usually a doubtful and opaque victory, often allegedly procured through blatant rigging or brazen

manipulation instead of free and fair process. This fear was not further allayed by the boastful declaration of the chieftains of the party that the party would rule Nigeria for sixty years or more. However following the defeat of the PDP in the 2015 general elections there is a ray of hope for democratic sustenance in the country. Put differently and more specifically, the victory of the APC no doubt, has raised the hope that the country is possibly poised for democratic consolidation as it seems that alternation of power, an essential ingredient of democratic consolidation, may henceforth take root in the country. This is more so that, in spite of the pockets of electoral malfeasances that took place during the elections, the elections were largely adjudged free, fair and credible by both local and international observers. The immediate concession of defeat by the then President Goodluck Jonathan was also a good vista for democratic consolidation.

Concluding Remarks

There is no doubt that the foregoing analysis has evidently shown that Nigerians naturally prefer multi-party system. The granting of the latitude to form as many political parties as possible has of course promoted the liberty of the people which is one of the hallmarks of democratic practice. However, the dominance of one party since the beginning of the fourth republic up to 2015 was not idyllic for democratic consolidation as the *de facto* one party system this seemed to be engendering was capable of provoking resistance and eventual truncation of the fledgling democracy. This was more so that the victory of the dominant party was often largely seen as a victory procured via unfair means. But following the victory of the opposition party in the 2015 elections, there is hope for democratic consolidation in the country. In any event, for the consistent journey to be enhanced the following are recommended: First, it is recommended that Nigerian multi-party system must be married with the adoption of proportional representation which will to some extent guarantee some inclusiveness of smaller parties and thereby engendering greater stability and an enduring democratic structures and practice.

Second, it is also imperative for the Nigerian state to reduce the pecuniary benefits payable to political office-holders so that the contest for offices will not be a matter of life and death. Though politics is a game of who gets what, when and how, it should be reformed into a game of service rather than an avenue for accumulating wealth as it is presently the case in the country. Third, the deployment of rigging-proof modern technology in the conduct of registration of

voters and the 2015 general elections proper should be sustained. The use of Permanent Voters Card (PVC) and Card Readers indeed helped to curb rigging during the 2015 general elections .With improved energy or electric power supply, Nigeria should in the foreseeable future embrace electronic voting which will help to further curtail rigging and enhance people's confidence in the electoral process and by extension their love for democracy and also their yearning to make it a way of their political life.

Finally, it is also imperative for the Nigerian state to work on the democratic temper of the political gladiators which is currently riddled with high level of intolerance and thuggery. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should continue or sustain its campaign for tolerance and peaceful conduct during elections so as to ensure free and fair elections. All other agencies of political socialisation should also join in the crusade or task of establishing or inculcating the right democratic attitude in the country's political actors and the electorate .More specifically the political actors must be sensitised to the need to build their parties into much more enduring and formidable organisations for achieving not only short term political goals but also long term goals, and should not also treat them as platform they can use and dump at the slightest discomfort.

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