

# THE EVOLUTION AND PATTERN OF POLITICAL PARTY FORMATION AND THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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## Introduction

The history of the formation of political party in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era, before the advent of colonialism, the whole idea of political party was an alien phenomenon. Ekeh (1983) argued that political party form part of those institutions he referred to as 'migrated social structure', by this he means organisational systems that were literally parceled from metropolitan centres of Europe to Asia and Africa and engrafted in the new Colonial situation (Ekeh 1983). It is therefore impossible to discuss the nature of political party formation in Nigeria without coming to grip with the epochal significance and legacies of British colonial policies. For Instance, the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) formed in 1923 came into being as a result of the establishment of the Nigerian Legislative Council which extended franchise to Lagos and Calabar under the Clifford Constitution of 1922 (Adebayo 2006). The leading political parties that emerged in colonial and immediate post-colonial Nigeria were provincial in outlook, having drawn their provenance from socio cultural and ethnic based associations and this fitted well into the colonial policy of *divide and rule*. Independence did not obliterate deep seated mistrust and rivalry among the leading political class who perceived themselves first as

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champions and avatars of their ethnic groups rather than statesmen saddle with the responsibility of forging national unity and solidarity.

The crucial role political parties' plays in the overall development and wellbeing of a state, especially in culturally diverse and variegated societies cannot be overstated. The significance of political parties, goes beyond the mere utilitarian function of contesting and capturing or retaining political power. Political parties are necessary and crucial institution in the construction of a stable and participatory political order as well as serving as an instrument for interest aggregation and channeling disparate social groupings into a common socio political platform, thus providing a stabilizing effect to an otherwise fractions society (Cited in Amusan 2011). The history and story of political party formation in Nigeria as this study reveals however run counter to the theoretical and normative role expected of them. Political party formation from the pre independence era took a regional pattern starting with the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which at formation attempted to be national in outlook, but later came to be perceived as a party principally for the eastern region, the Action Group party (AG) for the western region and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) for the northern region respectively.

Each of these parties therefore regarded their respective geographic regions and ethnic base as bastion and fortress from which 'alien' intruders must be kept at bay. The attempt by the Northern People's Congress (NPC) to extend its reach and make inroad into the western region perceived as the stronghold of the opposition Action Group party through an alliance with a splinter group of disaffected AG members, precipitated political crisis that ultimately culminated in the truncation of democratic rule in 1966 (Sklar 1963). The Second Republic also witnessed similar patterns of party formation with the dominant parties in orientation and leadership a reincarnation of the first republic parties. This scenario, coupled with the electoral heist of 1983 and sundry administrative malfeasance by the dominant party of that dispensation- the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), eventually culminating in the collapse of the Second Republic (Joseph 1999).

The military regime headed by Babangida (1985-1993) attempted to decree elite accommodation with the formation of two government financed political parties, the National Republican Convention and the Social Democratic Party. This experiment did not last largely due to insincerity on the part of the administration. The birth of the current democratic dispensation in 1999 has not exorcised the ghost of elite fragmentation and mobilization along primordial fault lines. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) the erstwhile governing party formed in 1998 with membership that cut across

all the ethnic groups in the country eventually became bogged down by vicious factional wrangling that often assume ethno-religious and regional dimension (Simbine 2014). The emergence of the All Progressive Congress (APC) as the new governing party after the 2015 general election is also not free of accusation of ethnic and religious motivation in its emergence. Why have political parties in Nigeria failed to fulfill their theoretical function of serving as base for national unity and integration? Will the formation of two dominant political parties, the All Progressive Congress and the Peoples Democratic Party help in reversing this negative trend? These questions are what this paper seeks to interrogate.

## Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Understanding

### *Political party*

Political parties constitute an essential component of the modern democratic tradition. This is evident because without political parties, democracy that is based on the liberal model of majority rule would be practically impossible.

One of the earliest definitions of political party was given by Edmund Burke, he conceived of a political party as “a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours, the national interest upon some particular principles in which they all agreed” (cited in Adebayo 2006, 64). There are several other definitions of political party as there are scholars interrogating this concept. For instance Giovanni Sartori sees a political party as “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office” (cited in Kopecky & Mair 2003, 29). Sartori’s definition serves two useful purposes, On the one hand it is precise enough to distinguish political party from other groups in society, as it is only political parties that field and sponsor candidates for election. On the other hand, it is broad enough to include all political parties, whether in non-competitive single party regimes or in competitive multi-party system.

Scholars, in an effort to capture the essential features of a variety of political parties across different eras and regions of the world, have developed varying typologies and classification of political parties. While these classifications were developed essentially to help in building a theory of political party, it is also possible to use them in explaining some of the peculiarities and factional tendencies within these parties. Maurice Duverger

(1954) distinguished between what he called “Cadre Parties”, which are led by individuals with high socio-economic status, and the “Mass Party”, which according to him, mobilise a broad segment of members through the development of a large and complex organisation. He also identified what he called the “Devotee Party”; these party types are tied to the veneration of a particular charismatic party leader, an example being the Leninist communist party (cited in Anifowoshe 2004). Otto Kircheirmer (1966) advanced four types of party models, namely Bourgeois parties, Class-Mass parties, Denominational mass parties and Catch-all people’s party (cited in Gunther & Diamond 2003). Katz and Mair (1995) identified what they called the Cartel Party in which public financing of political parties and the expanded role of the state, induce parties to seek primarily to perpetuate themselves in power and avail themselves of these resources. Gunther and Diamond (2003) identified 15 different variants of political parties and categorised them into three broad spectrums based on; the nature of the party organisation, whether it is elite based or mass based; the programmatic orientation of the parties, whether they are ideological or clientele oriented and their behavioural norm-whether pluralistic and democratic or hegemonic in outlook and operation.

The various types of political parties are not mutually exclusive, in practical reality; political parties are often a hybrid of two or even all three types. This is true of the characters of political parties in Nigeria which have exhibited features similar to some of these categories discussed. What is also true in the Nigerian case is the fact that the contexts of the formation of political parties have had profound impact on the basic nature, outlook and outcome.

### ***National Integration***

National Integration involves primarily the wielding of disparate social, economic, political religious ethnic and geographical element into a single nation-state. It refers to a process, strategy and method of constructing a national identity and a sense of shared consciousness and national consensus among disparate groups using the power of the state. Coleman and Rosberg defined national integration in two dimensions, namely political integration- that is; the progressive bridging of the elite–mass gap on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and participant political community; and territorial integration- that is, the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal political community (Cited in Nigel 1971). One of the principal avenues for achieving national integration as outlined in the above definition

is through the formation of broad based political parties. The mobilisation and formation of a political party bring together under a platform political elites whose backgrounds cut across ethno-religious and cultural divide; exhibiting a high level of consensus within their fold, while espousing ideas that are national in outlook will accelerate and drive the quest for national integration. The lack of unity in Nigeria is therefore not so much the welding together of disparate groups and territories, but the failure to forge a cohesive state from the said territories after independence and the political party as an institution is implicated in this failure.

### ***Political Elites and National Integration***

Political elites are very important in any political system in the sense that they exert considerable weight in building and influencing state structures more directly than ordinary citizens. The role of and relevance of elites to the discourse on party formation pattern and national integration is therefore very pivotal. Studies on elite behaviour basically focus on the acquisition, use, misuse and consolidation of power by this group.

Proponents such as Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, and Wright Mills, takes for granted the fact that in every society, there will be homogenous elite who rule because of their members' superior organisational and personal abilities (Varma 1975). Elite fragmentation on the other hand, contends that elite's aspirations do not always cohere. Albert (2012) averred that "elite fragmentation happens largely in the context of absence of well-defined ideological consensus in a political system... it is made more potent by an environment where there are centrifugal ethnic and religious cleavages" (Albert 2012, 4). This assertion aptly captures the Nigerian situation where the ruling and governing elites are neither cohesive nor altruistic; they fan the embers of ethno-religious differences and thus keep the country perpetually unstable and divided.

### **Political Party Formation Pattern in Historical Perspective**

In Africa and indeed Nigeria before the advent of colonial rule, political party was an alien institution. However, nationalist pressures during that era quicken the pace of constitutional development and in turn stimulated the development of political parties (Coleman 1958). Political parties thus form part of what Ekeh called 'migrated social structure', referring to institutions and models almost literally parceled from metropolitan centres of the imperial

west to Asia and Africa and engrafted into the new colonial situation emptied of their moral content and underlying ethics that sustained them in the metropolis (Ekeh 1983). Thus the history and evolution of political parties in Nigeria has been undulating just as the quest for democracy, good governance and national integration has been full of various missteps and unfulfilled expectation.

In discussing the history and evolution of political parties in Nigeria, Ujo (2000) classified political parties into four generations. (Cited in Saliu & Muhammad 2008). The first generation of political parties according to him consists of the pre 1945 parties. These included the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) formed in 1923 and 1936 respectively. These parties were localised in their base and their interest covered very narrow and specific policies of the colonial government. This perhaps explains the limited cases of ethnic and tribal politics in this era. While Herbert Macaulay led NNDP won, all seats in the legislative council as a result of the introduction of elective principle by the Clifford constitution of 1922, it was not until 1938 that it was successfully challenged by the NYM.

The second generation consisted of those parties that emerged between 1945 and the end of the first republic. This group, according to this classification was the National Council of Nigeria Citizen, (NCNC) the Northern People Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). These parties' major preoccupation was to wrest power from the colonialist, a feat they eventually accomplished. One major flaw that characterised these political parties was their formation pattern and subsequent degeneration into ethnic-based parties and the personalisation of their operations by founders. The cultural influence in the formation of these parties undoubtedly played a significant role in this regard. For instance the Action Group party (AG) which emerged as a response to the growing popularity of the (NCNC) in the western region is traced to the pan Yoruba socio-cultural organisation, the '*Egbe Omo Oduduwa*' (the gathering of the descendants of Oduduwa). After series of meetings and preparation, the cultural organization on March 1951 metamorphosed into a political party and held its inaugural conference in Owo, a town in the present day Ondo state Nigeria (Mackintosh 1966).

The same is true of the Northern People's Congress which emerged from a cultural organisation called *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (Association of People from the North), formed in June 1949. The leaders of the group announced that the objective of the group was to combat idleness and injustice in the northern region. This cultural group eventually transformed into a

political party in October 1951 (Dudley 1968). The cultural and ethnic origin particularly of the NPC and the AG consequently generated conflict between them as each sort to protect its regional enclave while they attempted to make electoral inroad into the political base of the rival party; this strategy only served to inflame ethnic hatred and animosity. Independence was however achieved in spite of these rivalries because of a high degree of mobilization of the citizenry to end colonial rule. However, intra and inter party rivalries characterised these parties after independence leading to their degeneration into ethnic pressure groups, a trend that eventually led to the truncation of democratic rule (Yakub 2004).

The third generations of political parties going by Ujo's classification were the parties of the second republic (1979-1983). The constitutional and political reforms of 1975-1979, moved the definition of political party away from a functional notion to a legal-constitutional one. Political parties were defined more in terms of structure than of functions, with emphasis on structural requirements for political party registration such as national outlook and spread, internal organisation or democracy, recognition and registration by an electoral management body.

The aims of the constitutional and political reforms that preceded the inauguration of the second republic among other things were to de-personalise operations of political parties, and to de-ethnicise and give them a national outlook (Omoruyi 2002). The parties of that era included the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP) and later National Advance Party (NAP). What characterised political parties of this dispensation was their degeneration into regional parties. Most of them turned out to be reincarnates of the first republic parties. The NPN, UPN, NPP and the PRP were adjudged to be similar both in leadership and orientation to the Northern People's Congress, Action Group, the National Council of Nigeria Citizen and the Northern Element Progressive Union of the first republic respectively. Intra and inter party rivalries, corruption and the electoral heist perpetrated by the National party of Nigeria (NPN) led to the collapse of the second public (Babarinsa 2003; Joseph 1999).

The fourth generation political parties following Ujo's classification included parties of both the Babangida and Abacha government sponsored and financed parties. The Social Democratic party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Unlike the earlier parties, because of the stringent requirement for party registration and government funding of the parties, ethnic and regional rivalries were not pronounced. The evolution of the two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National

Republican Convention (NRC), grew out of security and national integration considerations and led to the gradual reduction of ethno-religious and regional politics during that era, as the data from the series of elections held between 1989 and 1993 demonstrated.

Omoruyi (2002), posited that the innovation of the two party systems in 1989 introduced some elements of discontinuity between the past and 1989 in terms of origin, composition, leadership selection, funding and the interest they served. According to him it removed the idea of ‘founders’ and ‘joiners’, as all were joiners. It removed the idea of owners, as the government financed the operations of the two parties and provided a level playing field for all those who wanted to stake a political career from either of the two parties.

For instance the SDP had a Muslim-Muslim ticket in M.K.O Abiola and Babagana Kingibe as it’s presidential and vice candidates respectively, which clearly violated known balancing act of Christian-Muslim ticket or vice versa; yet Nigerians ignored religious affiliations of the presidential candidate and his running mate and voted for them *en masse*. Also, none of the two parties of that dispensation could be labeled as either belonging to the south or the north.

The two-party system adopted in the truncated Third Republic effectively discouraged the politicisation of religion and ethnicity the twin evil that have bedeviled the polity since the pre independence era. In effect, for the first time in Nigeria’s history there were political parties in which no one or group of persons could claim to have founded. The experiment was highly instrumental to the conduct of Nigeria’s freest and fairest presidential election of 12th June 1993. Unfortunately the military junta that designed the transition programme never really intended for the experiment to succeed as it annulled the election, and halted the match toward democracy and national integration. The five political parties registered during the Abacha regime, aptly described by Bola Ige, a frontline opposition figure of that era as “the five fingers of a leprous hand” were designed to fulfill the ambition of Abacha transforming into a civilian president and were dissolve after his demise.

The fourth republic has as its take off point after, the death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998. The transition to civil rule programme of the Abdulsalami’s administration lasted for only eleven months, the shortest in the country’s history and ushered in the fourth republic. Political parties of this dispensation in the words of Nigeria’s first executive President, Shehu Shagari “were created in a matter of weeks and prepared for elections in a matter of days” (Cited in Saliu and Muhammad 2008, 163). In other words, parties of this era did not evolve organically to produce a prior long term political association between the various groups and individuals that came together. This has impacted on their operation and performance such that nineteen years after

the return to party politics, with over sixty registered parties, their relevance have remained contested. Even those that have acquired governmental control have not significantly contributed to good governance and better quality of life for the generality of Nigerians nor have they robustly espoused ideas and ideals aimed at strengthening the fragile nationhood; rather, they have violated every known rule of decency and probity both in the management of electoral processes and in the conduct of the affairs of State.

Hence, today political parties mean different things to different people depending on who is assessing their evolution and relevance. Olusegun Obasanjo for example, once described the political party under whose platform he rose to become president - the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as "*a dynamic amalgam of interest groups held together by, if anything at all, the fact that the party is in power and therefore the strong expectation of patronage*" (Cited Anifowoshe 2004, 65). In the same vein, Bamanga Tukur a former national chairman of the same party was quoted as describing his party as *an amalgam of diverse groups united only by one purpose- to grab power, but not yet fused into a functional political party for development* (This Day 2013).

These assertions by the national leaders of a party that until recently was in charge of managing the affairs of the country captures the essence of national malaise in Nigeria and partly explains why political parties in this dispensation have not fulfilled their role as institutions for national development and integration. The formation in July 2013 of the All Progressive Congress APC by leading opposition leaders and a splinter group from the PDP who collapsed their respective platforms in order to form a broad based party represents a new phase in the democratic evolution of the country. The new party did not only hold a successfully national congress to elect officers to administer the party, it has succeeded in wresting political power from the former ruling party in the general elections conducted in March 2015. The successes of these two events especially the alternation of political power at the national level have expectedly generated renewed but cautious optimism in the prospect of not only consolidating democracy but also charting a new course for the development of the country.

## The Challenges of Political parties as institutions for National Integration

Some of the problems of political parties in Nigeria that have served as hindrance and impediment to the deepening of democracy include the non-institutionalisation of political party, weak party leadership, absence of

party discipline, little sign of an ideologically coherent party system and a narrow conception of the responsibilities that political powers demands are well acknowledged in the literature (Simbine 2002). A closer scrutiny of these factors reveals they also largely account for the inability of political parties to serve as agency for national integration in Nigeria.

Leadership deficit for instance, is an important factor in understanding the Nigerian predicament. It is a widely acknowledged fact that the progress or otherwise of any society depends largely on the quality of leadership such a society or state can muster. This assertion is true with organisations either public or private and crucially applies to political party leadership. If a political party is imbued with strong and purposeful leadership, such a party will not only serve as an effective tool for national integration but will work for the overall transformation of the country.

While colonial amalgamation brought people of different nationalities under a single territorial and institutional framework, the leadership of the country was not sufficiently socialised towards the objectives of evolving a true sense of national identity and commitment to the survival and development of the country. The narrow political ambition and class interest of the political elites who took over from the departing colonialist prevented them from working as united front once independence was achieved and this factor continues to undermine the quest for national integration (Ekanola 2006). Successive political elite have continually resorted to this time tested strategy of the manipulation of primordial cleavages to further deepen the divisive tendencies among the people.

The institution of political party has also remained weak and underdeveloped. Institutionalisation refers to the process by which political party become established and acquire value and enduring stability (Saliu & Muhammad 2008). Prolong military rule have stunted the growth of democratic institutions like the legislature and political party. They are often among the first casualties in the event of a military coup. The authoritarian culture of the military now permeates the psyche of politicians and their conduct within political parties. This has greatly undermined the ability and capacity of the political parties to act as effective pillars of democracy and agents of national integration. Institutionalised parties tend to employ peaceful and democratic means in their quest for power. It is not uncommon in this era to hear party officials boast of their intention to capture particular states during electioneering campaigns. The political parties of the present dispensation have been dominated by retired military officers and ex-service men with a Command mindset, democratisation thus carry with it a high dose of military flavor (Adekanye 1999). Nigeria is currently having her longest

spell of democratic rule which has seen the emergency of dozens of political parties; many of which remain so only in name and visible only during electioneering campaigns with the intent of cutting political deals from the more prominent political parties.

The above challenge dovetails into the problem of the narrow conception of the responsibilities that political power demands. Nigeria political elites have a pathological conception of politics as the super highway to wealth. In a country where the state controls large resources while the productive sectors remain largely underdeveloped, the state power of patronage is enormous. There is therefore, a high premium placed on political office.

All weapons are deployed into the contest, including fanning the embers of ethno-religious and regional sentiments. The motivation for standing for election is not primarily to serve, but to secure public office and appropriate its benefits for personal and group interest. This patron-client relationship in politics is what Joseph, referred to as prebendalism (Joseph 1999). The debilitating effect of this kind of political practice is the weakening of the capacity of the state to deliver social goods to the populace. Citizens are then left with no option than to find succor and relief in their ethnic or religious groupings. The recoil into atavistic enclave has complicated national security challenge with the evidence that over 30 of the country's 36 states of the federation are currently under one form of undeclared emergency or the other. At the base of the problem is the withering strength and influence of the Nigerian state vis-à-vis the rising ferocity of various armed non-state actors challenging the state monopoly of the instrument of coercion. The mushrooming of various violent extremist groups with diverse grievances such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), Niger-Delta Avengers (NDA), Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, (MASSOB) Indigenous People Of Biafra (IPOB), and the two most vicious and virulent groups, the Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram, tells a story of a country reeling under the weight insecurity occasioned by a declining state capacity.

## Breaking the Cycle of Ethno-Regional Party Formation Pattern

While historical evidence from the first and second republics revealed that political parties were either formed based on ethno regional affiliations or invariably evolved into regional based parties, evidence from that era also

showed ongoing attempts to forge party alliances and build coalition of like minds across regional lines which if not truncated by military intervention would have culminated in the formation of two broad based and dominant political parties (Akinola 2014). Perceptive and progressive politicians realised early enough the importance of discarding parochial platforms and reaching out beyond narrow confines, but their efforts never really bore fruitful dividend. In the first republic, the second federal elections conducted in 1964 were contested between two broad coalitions of parties. The opposition parties that came together to form the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) comprised principally of the Action Group party (AG), the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress(UMBC).

While the ruling party, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) formed an alliance with the breakaway faction of the Action Group that had merged with the western wing of the (NCNC) to form a new party known as the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The coming together of these parties with the ruling NPC resulted in the formation of the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA). It was these two broad political parties that contested the 1964 federal election, though the opposition party boycotted the election in many significant areas. The controversy arising from the conduct of that election coupled with a potpourri of other events culminated in the January 1966 coup (Ige 1995; Akinola 2014).

The effort at evolving broader and national political platforms was repeated in the second republic (1979-1983) when the National party of Nigeria emerged as the dominant party following the 1979 general election. This scenario compelled the self-styled progressive politicians to attempt to forge an alternative political platform via the Progressive Parties' Alliance (PPA) which comprised of the Unity Party of Nigeria, (UPN) the Nigeria's Peoples Party (NPP) the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP). The alliance however collapsed in its formative stage because of rivalry as members were unable to agree on a common candidate for the 1983 presidential election. According to Richard Joseph:

Although the UPN was actively engaged in the meetings of the "progressive governors" and although it participated in the negotiations which led to the creation of the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) in March 1982, it did not enter into the subsequent arrangement to have a new party, the Progressive People's Party (PPP) (Joseph 1999, 167).

In the aborted third republic, two political parties were decreed into existence by military fiat, these parties were certainly not as ideologically coherent as their label ostensibly gave the impression, but the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was without doubt closer to progressivism on the ideological spectrum than its opponent, the National Republican Convention (NRC). The experiment collapsed with the annulment of the 1993 presidential election. The country however faced a choice between a broadly conservative party and a roughly progressive party in that election (Bourne 2016).

At the start of the current democratic dispensation in 1999, there was an alliance between the All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) which succeeded in fielding a joint presidential flag bearer of the APP/AD alliance against Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP in the February 27th 1999 presidential election (Simbine 2002). It is the nucleus and core of the group that midwived the 1999 alliance between the APP and the AD that eventually merged with other splinter groups to form the All Progressive Congress Party (APC) in 2013. The democratic and political evolution of the country since independence thus partly depicts attempts and movements towards the formation of a two party system. The uninterrupted spell of democracy since 1999 thus provided the opportunity to evolve and consummate two dominant parties to serve the course of democratic consolidation and national integration. The formation of the APC is perhaps a realisation of the political truism that regional and sectional political parties have only served as platforms for the promotion of ethnic chauvinism and regional rivalries and have become unfashionable. The two dominant political parties, the APC and the PDP today boast of a crosscutting membership and support base all over the country thereby breaking the cycle of regionally based Political parties.

The birth of the new party engendered a national debate on the character of the leading members and the promoters of the party and their claim to progressive credentials. While a segment of the commentators and analyst dismissed the merger as simply an alliance of frustrated and aggrieved politicians, other welcomed the emergence of the party arguing that a strong and competitive two party system can only serve as a sinew the nation's democracy (This day 2013). While it may be true that the country's democracy will be better served by two strong parties, what Nigeria does not need are two parties whose only difference are their nomenclature, such that if any political actors loses out in the power calculus in either of the two leading parties, they quickly defect to the rival party in the quest for power. This appears to be the case presently with politicians moving in different directions depending on the power equation and permutations at every round

of election. The APC is certainly not exactly the immaculate progressive party as their name portray, it is at best a motley crowd of discernible element of both progressivism and conservatism. The defeat of the PDP in the last general election and the alternation of power have presented a chance to deepen and consolidate democracy in Nigeria. It is also an opportunity for reformist to insist on internal reforms so as to transform the party (Adeniyi 2017; Abdullahi 2017).

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This day live Online "Two Party: Tentative Steps".

## ABSTRACT

Political parties are crucial institutions in the construction of a participatory democratic order; they provide platforms for developing competing public policy proposals, as well as serving as instruments for channeling disparate social groupings into a common political platform, thus providing a stabilising effect to an otherwise fractious society. The significance of political parties therefore, goes beyond the utilitarian function of contesting or retaining political power to include the ability to provide a unifying force in the face of deep-seated ethno-religious cleavages. The historical trajectory of political party formation in Nigeria however runs counter to this theoretical and normative ideal. Political parties in the pre and post-independence Nigeria have served as sites for the mobilisation of the people along primordial fault-lines. This paper argues that the two main political parties in Nigeria today presents an opportunity to break the cycle of regional based parties that have hobbled efforts towards national integration.

## KEYWORDS

Political Party; Mobilisation; democracy; Integration; Nigeria.

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