



# African Ruling Political Parties and the Making of ‘Authoritarian’ Democracies: Extending the Frontiers of Social Justice in Nigeria

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## Abstract

African democracies are distinguished by the character of their political parties. They are easily labelled as illiberal civilian autocracies. These features coupled with emerging so-called dominant ruling parties, demonstrate the inclination towards a new form of ‘modern’ democratic authoritarianism. In other words, the ruling dominant parties are appearing to be a ‘reincarnation’ of the one-party system and military rule that held sway for about three to four decades in Africa (from the 1960s). In the process of this transformation, African ruling parties have been grossly destabilising opposition and perceived dissenters through

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clientelism, patronage politics and extra-legal means, thereby undermining the provision of social justice in the guise of democratisation. In the light of this there seems to be a theoretical and empirical lacuna in the discourse of social justice, in explaining the contradictions inherent in safeguarding democracy through undemocratic practices, such as election misconduct, manipulation of judiciary, lack of provision of human rights, assassination and victimisation of political opponents, through which the provision of social justice is undermined. In this context and given the democratic authoritarian tendencies of African ruling political parties, this paper seeks to explore the pattern of authoritarian practice in Nigeria's ruling party – the People's Democratic Party (PDP) *vis-à-vis* the problems of social justice provision. Nigeria has returned to democracy about a decade ago, but the country is sliding towards a one-party system. The abuse of social justice, through detention, assassination and police brutality, defies any logic of democratisation. The paper therefore seeks to introduce a working framework for extending the frontiers of social justice for an integrative analysis and understanding of social justice in developing African democracies.

## **Introduction and Conceptual Issues**

The collapse of authoritarian and totalitarian political and economic regimes of east and southern Europe in the last decades of the twentieth century and the subsequent spread of neo-liberal democracy provided great political momentum in the world of democracy. This political and economic breakthrough was tantamount to a paradigm shift. Thus this international political development coupled with domestic forces led to the collapse or liquidation of military and one-party authoritarian regimes across Africa. The spread of (re)democratisation in the third and fourth democratic waves led to more than two-thirds of African countries becoming democratic, through organisation and conduct of multiparty elections – although most, if not all, of the elections have

not satisfied even the minimum international standards. However, the important element in the African (re)democratisation was the opening of the political space for the participation of everyone in the political process. Citizens were relatively 'free' to exercise their political and civic rights. This has led to the provision of a certain degree of social and political justice to citizens, from which they were barred during the heydays of one-party and military systems.

African citizens now seem to be more 'politically free' to participate in the democratisation process than during the decades of one-party and military autocracies. During that period, not only opposition groups and dissenters, but even ordinary citizens were incarcerated, maimed, jailed, assassinated and eventually their social and political freedoms (social and political justice) were grotesquely curtailed. The re-democratisation of African countries rekindles the hope of the international community that freedoms have been restored to Africans, and that democracy would come to stay on the continent.

However, as re-democratisation means radical political and socio-economic transformations, it is often clouded with uncertainties. In other words, not all countries in the process of democratisation or transition (as often called) do reach the desired destination.<sup>1</sup> A democratisation process could lead to success stories as in the cases of Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa or even recently Ghana; but it can also lead to breakdowns or reversals, as in the cases of Nigeria (1960-66; 1979-83), Togo, Burkina Faso; or even to the transformation of ruling parties into dominant parties,<sup>2</sup>

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1 The ultimate wish-destination of any democratisation process is democratic consolidation. However, democratic consolidation is not an end in itself, but a means of understanding the degree and scope of democratic deepening.

2 The ruling parties could transform into dominant parties without actual breakdown of the democratic order. This is a situation where, though all structures of democracy are in place, the behaviour of the regime or at least the behaviour of the actors in the regime cannot easily be distinguished from autocracy. In other words, despite the existence of democratic structures, the regime exhibits some main characteristics of one-party authoritarianism.

which could depict no less than a *reincarnation* of the one-party system, as in the cases of Mugabe's Zimbabwe and Museveni's Uganda.

In this context, as the transformation of African ruling parties into dominant ruling parties is a complex process, and is being achieved through various political strategies, this paper seeks to examine these political strategies and the question why this reincarnation process undermines the provisions of socio-political justice. However, due to theoretical and empirical ambiguity and cloudy boundaries between social and political justice, the paper not only argues that these theoretical dilemmas limit our understanding of justice itself; it also emphasises that their widespread application seriously constrains developing African democracies. Hence the paper argues for the extension of the frontiers of social justice to include political justice and be the defining element of democratisation where political parties occupy a central position. In this regard, it explores what authoritarian democracy and social justice really are, and in what ways the former undermines the provision of the latter.

Conceptually 'authoritarian' democracy requires an understanding of the concept of democracy itself. This is because 'authoritarianism' is an anti-thesis of democracy. Based on its minimal definition, democracy is a polity that has at least the following features: universal suffrage, recurring free, fair and competitive periodic elections, with more than one political party and sources of information (Morlino 2004:10). Morlino further argues that in any country that satisfies these minimum-cum-procedural criteria more 'analysis is still necessary to detect the degree to which [...] the two main objectives of an ideal democracy: freedom and political equality' are indeed present (Morlino 2004:10). In this context, 'any model of democracy that does not satisfy these two main substantive criteria is simply a hybrid regime whose failure to ensure a minimum level of civil rights [and political equality] keeps them below the minimum threshold requirements for classification as strictly democratic' (Morlino 2004:10). However, central to the argument of

a democratic regime are the issues of *freedom* and *political equality*. These are the defining and distinguishing elements between substantive democracies and their aberrations. *Freedom and political equality* are the foundation and *raison d'être* of social justice, the provisions of which rest with a democratic state. The aberrations of democracy are interchangeably called: defective democracies (Diamond 1999), illiberal democracies (Zakaria 2003), dominant and exclusive democracies (Morlino 2004), authoritarian democracies (Bangura 1991; Brown 2001), autocratic democracies and so on. The list is endless! Any democratic polity that is not a good democracy, is therefore not only a *negation* but a 'defective democracy' (Merkel & Croissant 2004).

However, using democratic governance as yard stick, the worst of the defective democracies is authoritarian democracy. This is a regime in which the procedural elements of democracy have not been implemented to the least minimum international standard, let alone provisions of freedom and political equality, which in this paper are equated with socio-political justice. By this token, conceptually, authoritarian democracies are those political regimes where leaders are not chosen in free and fair elections and in which people's rights to participate or engage in political, social and even economic activities, either individually or through any form of association, are severely curtailed. In these regimes, citizens are voiceless and cannot hold leaders accountable. Opposition and dissenters, either individually or in associations, are repressed severely through all forms of brutality, including assassination, kidnapping and incarceration. Authoritarian democracies could be harshly termed as irresponsible democracies (Morlino 2004). Post-independence African one-party democracies, such as in Kenya, Cameroon, Togo, Mobutu's Zaire, Kamuzu's Malawi, provide examples of authoritarian democracies. However, though levels could be established of different degrees of authoritarianism, this is not the main focus of the paper.

With the above simple conceptualisation of genuine (good) democracy and authoritarian democracies, it could be argued that irrespective of whatever the nature and quality of democracy, political parties are *conditio sine qua non* to its formation and existence. Put differently, political parties are central to whatever type of modern representative democracy (Kura 2007). In fact, no democracy in the world could be inaugurated without political parties. In this context therefore, as argued above, the provision of freedom and political equality (as foundation of social justice) is the preserve of a state (herein the party government), and ruling parties in both genuine and authoritarian states are the catalysts through which such provisions could be provided or denied. Unfortunately, theorists of social justice seem not to acknowledge the role of the ruling parties in the provision of social justice. Where they do acknowledge this role, they do it in an implicitly theoretical way. This is a serious theoretical lacuna that this paper intends to help fill. What is social justice? How does it relate with freedom and political equality? Why and how do authoritarian (ruling parties) democracies undermine the provision of social justice? Can the frontiers of social justice be extended? These and other questions form the theoretical and empirical concerns of this paper.

The concept of social justice is not new in human social relations. Craig (2007) notes that the concept has recently re-surfaced in social and political discourse, especially among democratic governments that claimed to be social democratic. Given this theoretical re-awakening, it is obvious that the concept would have different or even conflicting interpretations. According to the modern architect of social justice, John Rawls, drawing from classical writers – Aristotle, Kant, Hume and others – social justice is described as ‘fairness [... and] the principle subject of justice is the basic structure of society ... the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation’ (Rawls 1971:6). Although Rawls’ description of (social) justice

is rooted in social philosophy, nevertheless, his conceptualisation of social justice is very important in understanding not only how social justice can be achieved but that the structure of society and social institutions is the essential mechanism of distributing freedom, ensuring political equality and bringing about 'the division of advantages'.

This means there is a clear theoretical connection between social justice and political justice. Not only are the two interwoven, but undermining of one leads to total negation of the other. Political justice refers to freedom and political equality. With regard to social justice, Rawls (1971:53) argues that the principles are: (i) 'each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme for others [... and] (ii) social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.' Craig (2007) however contends that based on these principles, social justice has a clear contra-relationship with the issue of inequality. In this context, state becomes the central actor in the provision of equality *vis-à-vis* social and political justice.

Further to the above, Miller (2001:1) conceptualising social justice as distributive justice, argues that it is about 'how the good and bad things should be distributed among the members of a human society'. The good things are income, wealth, education, housing, health care, etc, which are means of 'good life'. Miller (2001) also identifies three inter-connected principles to social justice: desert, need and equality. For desert, a just society is one whose social and especially political institutions are organised in such a way that citizens get the benefits they duly deserve. However, this approach should be dynamic in order to allow the approach of need to adequately operate. Thus according to him, the approach of need is 'not merely idiosyncratic or confined to those who hold a particular view of the good life [...] it must be capable of being validated on terms that all relevant parties can agree to' (Miller 2001:205). Thus the equality

approach to social justice, according to Miller (2001:232) is distributive in nature as it emphasises certain types of rights, which could be distributed 'equally'.

From the foregoing theoretical conceptualisation, it is apparent that social and political justice as the defining essentialities of democracy are multi-dimensional. They are directly linked to citizenship and rights. Marshall (1950) classifies rights according to the characteristics of citizenship, to include: (i) civil rights: property rights, legal guarantees, freedoms (ii) political rights: right to vote and be voted for, rights to associate, constitutional participation, and (iii) social rights, which Miller (2001) refers to deserts: the entitlements of basic education, health, social care, income, housing, etc. These are the means of good life. Despite the acceptance of the multi-dimensionality of social justice, some scholars argue for difference of importance between these classifications (Lister 2003; Dean & Melrose 1999). Of paramount importance, however, is the inter-connectivity of the multi-dimensionality of the social and political rights. In addition to this, one can maintain that in as much as the provision of the multi-dimensional social justice is a function of stable political community and effective political institutions, political rights appear to be the foundation of other categories of social justice.

Achieving social justice (particularly in its philosophical sense) has been a challenge to even 'genuine' democracies. This is not to say that it cannot be achieved. It is equal to arguing that achieving social and political justice critically requires:

A political community in which citizens are treated in an equal across-the-board way, in which public policy is geared toward meeting the intrinsic needs of every member and in which the economy is framed and constrained in such a way that the income and other work-related benefits received correspond to their respective deserts (Miller 2001:250).



This raises the all-important question of the role of the state in the provision of social justice. Plant (2000) for example argues that social justice requires government to work with a market system. This is because the idea of social justice seems to contradict the normative exigencies of a neo-liberal agenda, in which market forces are allowed to play a major role in the political and economic affairs of the people. Doyal and Gough (1991:230) stress that social justice 'stands against fanatics of the free market economy [...] but also demands and promotes economic success'. If the state (government) is a central force in the provision of comprehensive social justice, *this paper contends that ruling political parties are the super-force in the process of the provision of social justice*. This is against the indispensable role of ruling parties in the formation of government, social mobilisation, political education and leadership recruitment, and importantly also in public and social policy making and implementation (Strøm & Müller 1999; Tordoff 1988; Salih 2003; Kura 2007). In this context, the character of democracy and/or ruling parties is a yardstick with which to measure the commitment and the extent to which a given political community and its institutions uphold and provide social justice. But studies in social justice seem to have neglected or to undermine the linkage between the provision of social justice and the nature and character of a party government. The common perception that authoritarianism undermines social justice is not theoretically enough to suggest an overarching generalisation about authoritarian democracies. The next section explores the character of African democracies and their process of authoritarian reincarnations *vis-à-vis* strangling of social justice.

### **African Ruling Parties: *Reincarnation of Authoritarian Democracy***

Authoritarianism is not new in political governance in Africa. Post-colonial political regimes metamorphosed into one-party authoritarianism, experienced series of military coups or were dominated by

political civil wars and armed conflicts. These were the main kinds of situation in political regimes in post-colonial Africa, until in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the third democratisation waves spread through the region. In 1990 only four African countries were practising multi-party democracies, notably Senegal, The Gambia, Botswana and Mauritius. The end of the cold war, combined with domestic pressure from opposition groups and civil society, forced African leaders to open up the political space and allow multiparty elections to take place. This pressure was even intensified by Western donor countries and international organisations, which not only financed re-democratisation projects, but attached strict conditions of aid to democratic reforms (Shiner 2004). With these, Van de Walle (2002:66) stresses that the

[...] unexpected [democratic] changes raised hopes that a region long known for political and economic failure was about to turn a corner. [...] All through the region, single-party [and military] regimes found themselves pressed by domestic critics and global trends into allowing legal opposition parties, press freedom, and competitive elections. Multiparty races, which had been rare since the immediate post independence era three decades earlier became routine.

Statistically, between 1989 and 2000 alone, about seventy presidential elections were held in about forty-eight African countries. Similarly, during this period, legislative elections were conducted in at least 48 countries. Also by the end of 1990s, 39 of the 48 African countries' legislative houses had representatives from more than one political party. In other words, all these elections were conducted with more than one political party participating. Obviously, during this period, only Congo-Kinshasa, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, Swaziland and Uganda did not hold any multi-party elections (Van de Walle 2002) due to various kinds of armed conflicts, with varying intensities. This development rekindles the hope of Africans and the international community that with democratisation in Africa, other socio-political and economic problems would

give way to economic prosperity and political stability, consequently influencing the provision of social justice both as deserts and needs.

Indeed, what was even dramatic and glaring about African democratisation is that by 2003, about 44 of the 48 Sub-Saharan African states have already held what Lindberg (2006:140) refers to as ‘founding’ elections, which marked a radical shift from a ‘long period of authoritarian rule to fledgling democratic government’. Moreover, 33 of the 44 countries have already conducted second elections, 20 have completed three consecutive elections, and seven have had four or more consecutive elections (Lindberg 2006). This is a good democratic omen for a region where for more than three decades one-party and military authoritarianism held countries hostage. See Table 1 for African countries that conducted various numbers of democratic elections.

***Table 1: Successive Elections, Freedom House Political & Civil Rights Ratings & Democratic Status of Sub-Saharan African Countries***

<b>Country</b>	<b>No. of Elections</b>	<b>Political Rights</b>	<b>Civil Liberties</b>	<b>Democratic Status</b>
Angola	BD	6	5	Not Free
Benin	4+	2	2	Free
Botswana	4+	2	2	Free
Burkina Faso	4+	5	3	Partly Free
Burundi	BD	4	5	Partly Free
Cameroon	3	6	6	Not Free
Cape Verde	3	1	1	Free
C.A. Republic	BD	5	4	Partly Free
Chad	2	6	6	Not Free
Comoros	1	3	4	Partly Free
C-Brazzaville	BD	6	5	Not Free
C-Kinshasa	2	5	6	Not Free
Cote d’Ivoire	BD	7	6	Not Free
Djibouti	3	5	5	Partly Free
E. Guinea	2	7	6	Not Free
Eritrea	BD	7	6	Not Free

Ethiopia	2	5	5	Partly Free
Gabon	4+	6	4	Partly Free
The Gambia	3	5	4	Partly Free
Ghana	3	1	2	Free
Guinea	2	6	5	Not Free
Guinea-Bissau	1	4	4	Partly Free
Kenya	4	3	3	Partly Free
Lesotho	2	2	3	Free
Liberia	1	3	4	Partly Free
Madagascar	4+	4	3	Partly Free
Malawi	2	4	3	Partly Free
Mali	4+	2	2	Free
Mauritania	4+	5	4	Partly Free
Mauritius	4+	1	2	Free
Mozambique	2	3	4	Partly Free
Namibia	3	2	2	Free
Niger	1	3	3	Partly Free
Nigeria	3	4	4	Partly Free
Rwanda	1	6	5	Not Free
São Tomé & Príncipe	4+	2	2	Free
Senegal	4+	2	3	Free
Seychelles	4+	3	3	Partly Free
Sierra Leone	2	4	3	Partly Free
Somalia	BD	7	7	Not Free
South Africa	2	2	2	Free
Sudan	2	7	7	Not Free
Swaziland	2	7	5	Not Free
Tanzania	3	4	3	Partly Free
Togo	3	6	5	Not Free
Uganda	2	5	4	Partly Free
Zambia	4+	3	4	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	4+	7	6	Not Free

Sources: compiled from Freedom House 2007 and for number of successive elections from Lindberg (2006:141). The data were updated to include countries that conducted multi-party elections recently.

Note: A rating of 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free. BD: Breakdown of democratic regime due to civil war or other armed conflict.

Table 1 above shows that of the 48 Sub-Saharan African countries, six had conducted only one multi-party election. Countries in this category were affected by conflict and political instability. They include Congo (Kinshasa), Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the cases of Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone stand out. Other countries, due to the intensity and protracted nature of their conflict could not even conduct any multi-party election since the breakdown of their immediate post-colonial regimes. Examples of these countries are Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Eritrea and of course Somalia. In these two sets of countries, it is not only that they are not free, but political rights and civil liberties are grotesquely strangled and social justice provision completely thrown to the bush. Also, due to socio-economic and political breakdown, these countries simply turned into a 'Darwinian environment of survival of the fittest'. These political regimes are grossly incapable of satisfying the *needs* of the people, let alone providing the *deserts*. Only the military, the warlords and their sycophants, by virtue of their services enjoy the deserts aspect of the social justice.

About thirteen of the 48 countries in Table 1 had conducted only two successive elections, while nine countries conducted three elections. Importantly, thirteen countries have conducted four or more consecutive elections. These are the exemplary African democracies, whose political rights and civil liberty ratings vary between 1 and 2. However, some countries, such as South Africa, Ghana, Cape Verde, and Namibia, which conducted only two or three elections, also have ratings of 1 or 2.

What can generally be said about Africa, however, is that, while elections are an important component of democratisation, free and fairly

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3 During the writing of this paper Sierra Leone has just conducted a national election, in which through a run-off opposition party candidate Ernest Bai Koroma of All People Congress defeated the ruling party's candidate, Solomon Barewa of Sierra Leone People's Party. The success of this election, where an opposition party defeated the ruling party, shows that with support of domestic and international democracy stakeholders democracy can be institutionalised in Africa for development and the provision of social justice.

conducted and acceptable elections have continually eluded the region. This has continued to affect the quality of democracy. As the above Table 1 indicates, democracy has spread to Africa, but offers little progress in engendering and deepening democratic values of liberties. Of all the countries that held 'founding' elections and two, three or more consecutive elections, only Benin, Botswana, Mauritius, Cape Verde, São Tomé and South Africa have a civil liberty score of two points. Mali, Senegal, Seychelles, Ghana, Tanzania, and Lesotho achieved a three point score. In fact, according to the Freedom House report (2007), of the 48 sub-Saharan African states, only 11 are 'Free', 22 are 'Partly Free' and 15 are 'Not Free', representing 23, 46, and 31 per cent, respectively.

Though the quality of democracy as measurement of freedom, equality and social justice provision is in question, in almost three-fourths of African countries, the table indicates that the political rights and civil liberty ratings of a country and its quality of democracy improve in proportion with its number of successive elections.

The paradoxes exhibited by Africa's democratic 'breakthrough' simply unravelled the 'truth' of the difficulty in establishing a stable democratic government in countries ravaged by chronic 'poverty, authoritarianism, low administrative capacity, and ethnolinguistic divisions' (Van de Walle 2001:66). The paradox also shows how lack of political will and poor leadership can entrench patriotically and selflessly established democratic institutions. Democracy was expected to reduce the hardship that African citizens had been experiencing during one-party and military dictatorship. Ironically, however, the coming of democracy in Africa has only contributed to corruption, violent conflict, poverty, human rights abuses and the throttling of social justice.

The contradiction in Africa's democratisation is further shown by the increasing metamorphoses of many African ruling political parties into what can be called 'democratic authoritarianism'. The process of this metamorphosis has taken several dimensions, through which social justice is

being squelched. Even the so-called African exemplary democracies are caught in this democratisation dilemma. Many African ruling parties are transforming into what is commonly known in comparative studies as the dominant party system. However, the dominant party system, and the process in which such transformation and metamorphosis is taking place is typical of the situation of the three decades of post-independence Africa, during which one-party and military authoritarianism held sway. In other words, African ruling parties replicate all the tendencies of one-party authoritarianism, but with a difference. The modern form of the changing nature of African democracy is being defined by the nature of the global community. The international community has virtually commonly accepted democratic norms and values as the defining conditions for aid, debt relief and even bilateral and multilateral economic, political and social interactions. Thus, while appearing to appease the international community, the African ruling parties are changing into authoritarian dominant party democracies under the guise of democratising and ensuring 'unity and stability' (McMahon 2001:5). Through this process of domination, the ruling parties undermine social justice, political equality and jeopardize democratisation in various countries.

### **Dominant Parties and Authoritarianism: The Dilemma of African Ruling Parties**

The dominant party syndrome is not new in the process of political party development. For example, Almond and Duverger have identified scenarios of the development of dominant parties in several countries. Deverger mentioned the French Radicals, Scandinavian Social Democratic Parties, and the Indian Congress Party. While Banksten argued for the term 'dominant non-dictatorial party' and identified examples of Solid South in the United States, Mexico, Uruguay and Paraguay (cited in Sartori 2005). Blondel adds to the list of dominant non-dictatorial parties the ruling parties in Chile, Sweden, Norway,

Italy, Iceland, Israel, India, Venezuela, Colombia, etc (cited in Sartori 2005). Operationally, a dominant party is a party that 'outdistances all the others' and is 'significantly stronger than others' (Sartori 2005:171). In fact, based on this definition and electoral data from 21 countries,<sup>4</sup> Sartori has identified these countries to have had dominant parties at various periods in the course of their democratic development.

With regard to the development of dominant parties, the difference between Africa and other established democracies is both technical and methodological. Technically, in western democracies, the dominant party came last in the chronological development of democracy and it 'presupposes an advanced stage of organisational differentiation and specialisation' (Sartori 2005:220). But in Africa, the emergence of the dominant one party was abrupt and sudden. This was because of the socio-cultural and economic contextual realities of the different countries, which enabled the ruling dominant parties to easily become authoritarian in character and substance.

In many African countries, post-independence ruling parties changed to dominant and authoritarian parties, which remained in power until military coups destroyed their structures. Examples abound: Benin, Burundi, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Uganda, Mali, Lesotho, Rwanda, Niger, etc. After the re-introduction of democracy during the third and fourth waves of independence, most ruling parties in Africa are currently 'reincarnating' as dominant authoritarian parties. With this transformational 'reincarnation' of ruling parties, social justice and equality are in serious jeopardy.

What is new therefore about contemporary African dominant parties is that unlike their predecessor one-parties, which absolutely outlawed the

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4 Iran (1971), Mexico (1970), Philippines (1969), Bolivia (1966), Paraguay (1968), El Salvador (1970), India (1967), Chile (1965), Japan (1969), Norway (1969), France (1968), Sweden (1970), Israel (1970), South Africa (1966), Denmark (1971), Turkey (1969), South Korea (1967), Ireland (1965), Italy (1972), Iceland (1971) and Uruguay (1966).



opposition parties and dissenters, the modern dominant parties, perhaps in view of the changing global political economy, allowed the existence and participation of opposition parties in the democratisation process, and introduced populist policies intended to provide social justice and political equality. Despite these changes, the dominant parties employ extra-legal and authoritarian instruments to strangle opposition, undermine citizen participation and exacerbate the crisis of social justice. The next section examines various strategies employed by Nigeria’s ruling party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), in maintaining its dominance in a way which affects all dimensions of social justice in the democratisation process.

### **Nigeria’s PDP and the Development of Authoritarian Democracy: Implications for Social Justice**

Ironically, in any list of either global or African one and/or dominant parties, Nigeria is conspicuously missing. Nigeria has had no history of a one party or dominant party syndrome. But the country is famous for ethnic, political and military rule. These factors have contributed to the democratisation crisis that besieged the country since the demise of the First Republic in 1966. They have also largely contributed to intermittent violence, conflict, and political instability, the peak of which was the civil war (1967-70). The crisis of democratisation is best explained by the long period of military authoritarianism. Of the forty-seven years of Nigeria’s political existence as independent state, the military ruled the country for nearly thirty years. The political development of Nigeria could be chronologically outlined as follows:

***Table 2: Chronological Political Development in Nigeria***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Nature of Regime</b>	<b>Leader(s)</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1960-1966	Parliamentary Democracy	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa/Azikwe	5 Years
1966-1967	Military	Aguiyi Ironsi	6 Months
1967-1975	Military	Yakubu Gowon	8 Years

1975-1979	Military	Murtala/Obasanjo	5 Years
1979-1983	Presidential Democracy	Shehu Shagari	4 Years
1984-1985	Military	Buhari/Idiabon	1 1/2 Years
1985-1993	Military	Ibrahim Babangida	8 Years
1993-1998	Military	Sani Abacha	5 Years
1999-2007	Presidential Democracy	Olusegun Obasanjo	8 Years

The return of democracy in May 1999 represents a turning point in Nigeria’s political history. The sudden death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998, coupled with internal and external political pressure, forced his successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, to hand over power in what was the shortest transition to a civil rule programme in Nigeria. Thus within ten months, all relevant democratic structures, especially an electoral commission and political parties, were established and elections were conducted between December 1998 and February 1999. Only three political parties participated in the 1999 federal elections, namely: People’s Democratic Party (PDP), All (Nigeria) People’s Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). Other political parties only participated in the December 1998 local government election, which was the defining criterion for the registrations of parties. All together, nine political parties were provisionally registered in 1998 but only three scaled the hurdles of registration.<sup>5</sup>

The presidential and national assembly election results indicated an overwhelming success for PDP over the remaining two political parties. Due to differing results, particularly in the Senate and House of Representatives, the party did not have an absolute majority, but this outcome has provided significant insight into what might be expected in the next coming national elections. The following tables present the cumulative results of 1999, 2003 and 2007 presidential and governorship elections.

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5 The other six parties were: Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), National Solidarity Movement (NSM), People’s Redemption Party (PRP), United Democratic Party (UDP) and United People’s Party (UPP).

**Table 3: Summary of Presidential Election Results: 1999, 2003 & 2007**

Parties - Candidates	Percentage of Votes won		
	1999	2003	2007
PDP Candidates	62.8	61.9	70
ANPP Candidates	37.2	32.2	18
AC Candidates	-	-	7
Other Candidates	-	5.9	5
Total (all parties and candidates)	100	100	100

**Table 4: Summary of Governorship Election Results: 1999, 2003 & 2007**

Political parties	No of Governors won by party		
	1999	2003	2007
PDP	21	27	28
ANPP	9	7	5
AD	6	1	-
APGA	-	1	-
PPA	-	-	2
AC	-	-	1
Other parties	-	-	-
Total (all states)	36	36	36

Source: *International Crisis Group 2007:20*

With the above election results, the PDP presidential candidate, Olusegun Obsanjo, won the presidential election in 1999 and 2003 and the party's candidate, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, also won the 2007 election. In addition to winning the presidential election, PDP also won more than  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the state governorship elections and has  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the members of the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives). For example, in 1999 PDP won 21 governorship elections out of 36 states, in 2003 it won 27 and in 2007 28. Moreover, in states where the party won governorship elections, it has absolute majority in the State House of Assembly.

This imperatively shows that Nigeria is on the verge of becoming a one-party democracy. Given the pattern of the elections, Osuntokun and Aworawo (2003) contends that Nigerian politics in the fourth republic was not different from the previous democratic experiments. According to Epelle (2005:141) this was because, like the previous democratic regimes, fourth republic politics was patterned by:

...attempts at converting the democratic rule to monocratic contraption, subversion of popular will, and subtle and subterranean decimation of the opposition with all its concomitant consequences.

These indeed were among the common features of democratic rule in Nigeria. But one must argue that in the first and second republics, there was no attempt especially by the ruling party to institutionalise one-party rule. The fourth republic exhibited tendencies that were characteristic of some African democracies in the 1960s and 1970s, but absolutely alien to the political process in Nigeria. This is perhaps why any analysis of the metamorphosical process of the emergence of authoritarian party in Nigeria cannot be complete without understanding the questionable democratic credentials of President Obasanjo.

The (re)emergence of Obasanjo in the political scene of Nigeria redefined the nature of politics, and marked the beginning of a political crisis in the ruling party and the Nigerian political system at large. Obasanjo was a believer in the one-party system. This was the idea he had advocated after handing over power to civilian administration in 1979. His idea of an African one-party system was premised on the political and economic nature of Africa. He argued:

In essence my present suggestion is that we adopt a one-party system... This appears to be the only procedural mechanism through which we can transcend the divisive and centrifugal forces tearing us apart and diverting our attention from the monumental task of integration and nation building. For it is within such purview that ultimate unity is always to be hoped for, the subordination of sectional opinions to

the criteria of rationality.... The one-party system like a knife is a technique. I am sure we will all agree that a knife is a knife, whether in the hand of a butcher, carver or farmer. It is technique for achieving a set goal. It is the use to which we put it that matters. Too much opposition, that is opposition pushed to the extreme, will tear the political system apart.... My insistence is that one-party system as our national rallying point would give us continuity and structural change, continuity and stability as regards fundamental policies and objectives and dramatic (but peaceful) change of our dramatis personae (cited in Mohammed 2006:12-3).

With this political belief in the mind of a leader who was elected through a political party and who by virtue of such a position became the leader of the party, the stage was set for radical political transformation to actualise such an archaic philosophy. With enormous oil monies and presidential power at his disposal, it was quite possible to actualise such an agenda.

Just barely two years after the 2003 election, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was engulfed in an internal political crisis. According to Kura (2008), the party became crisis-ridden and identified the main problem that besieged it: the attempt to include and the actual imposition of the national chairman and other principal officers of the party by President Obasanjo. Other problems included the messy manipulation of the machinery of the party so that Obasanjo could emerge as the presidential candidate in 2003; the failed attempt at barring other parties from participation in the elections through 'day-light smuggling' of a new clause into the Electoral Act of 2001, and the destabilisation of the opposition parties. These acts in themselves are the main feature of party politics in Africa. In Nigeria, however, even students in their elementary study of social justice can discern how these strategies directly led to a tragic alienation of the masses and the 'recalcitrance of those outside the power game' (Amadasu & Amadasu 2003:121).

Another strategy that promoted the formation of an authoritarian one-party state was the edging out of all *real* and *perceived enemies* of (opposition to) this agenda, both within and outside the PDP. In this case, state resources were used to co-opt some individuals and even groups. Suberu (2006) observes that a lot of oil 'resources are controlled by the state...the party that is in control of the state, especially the central state, has a disproportionate leverage over the state. That is why PDP for example ...was growing from strength to strength through the power of patronage. I think the way the economy has affected the political party development is that it has made it possible for the party that is in control of government and so in control of economic resources [to] overwhelm the opposition and made it impossible for the opposition to think of taking over power in Nigeria.' This system of distributive patronage and largesse has further entrenched injustice and enfeebles the concept of distributive justice in Nigeria. For instance, this strategy has contributed to widening the gap between the rich and poor. It led to the consolidation *per se* of clientelism and prebendalisation of socio-economic activities, which are characteristically inimical to social justice. To this end, Epelle (2005:142) stresses that it was the conflation coupled with subversion of the people's will and desires that has thrown Nigeria into 'an orgy of violence by those whose demands on the system have not been met, and surprisingly by the state [PDP] itself'.

Against this background, there are two dimensions to violence in Nigeria since 1999: (i) violence orchestrated by poverty and (ii) violence officially caused by the PDP state to achieve its objectives. In the case of the latter, aside the use of resources, over which the party has absolute control, the state also employed security agencies to deal with dissenters. Suberu (2006) argues that the state or better still the PDP constitutionally has 'the capacity to also use the police and even INEC<sup>6</sup> to remove or uproot forces that are in opposition' to it and its one-party agenda. In uprooting the

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opposition through violence the tactics of intimidation, arbitrary arrest, arson, politically engineered unrest, threat, kidnappings and outright assassinations were tactically employed. Specifically, the police have been notorious in disallowing opposition groups to hold demonstrations or meetings. This violates international codes of freedom for assembly and freedom of opinion. It also violates the Nigerian Constitution itself. These strategies incontrovertibly undermine the respect for freedom and equality, which are the basic rudiments of democracy. The magnitude of this PDP-induced violence, instability and general uncertainties clouded the eight years of the Obasanjo regime.

In relation to the magnitude of the political violence orchestrated in building a one-party democracy by the PDP and its agents, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (2003:31) observes that 'the spectre of political violence and assassinations in the country had become so intense that...one can still not really see the *remarkable difference* between it [civilian regime] and the days of the military' (emphasis added). The violent nature of turning Nigerian democracy into one-party authoritarianism is underscored by the number of politically motivated assassinations just in the course of the last eight years. Igbafe and Offiong (2007) provides a list, but there are many more people whose mysterious death could to date not be accounted for.

The most serious of these killings include the assassination in cold blood of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige, Harry Marshal and other prominent stalwarts of opposition parties. Most of the people assassinated were from opposition parties, and most of the victims either occupied strategic positions in their parties or were important political figures whose presence could thwart the PDP one-party strategy. Unfortunately, all these political murders have not been duly investigated let alone culprits prosecuted.

The second perspective of violence orchestrated by the PDP toward turning Nigeria into authoritarian one-party democracy is failure to

introduce policies of resource redistribution in the country. The policies of poverty reduction, privatisation and other economic restructuring have only aggravated the economic situation of the poor. In fact, since 1999 when democracy returned to the country, poverty has continued to grow without serious intervention to promote development. Where such interventions were introduced, the benefits were siphoned to the PDP stalwarts. It is not overstatement to state that the economic policies only widen the gap between the rich and the poor. This is perhaps why the United Nations Development Programme (2005) observed that in Nigeria 'poverty has become a way of life'. This makes people to become disenchanted with democracy. A typical example of this is the situation in the Niger Delta region, which has even gone beyond the control of the PDP government. The government consistently employs instruments of coercion, as the police and the army, to stop violence in the region, but to no avail. The unsuccessful government policies are a direct violation of the principles of social justice. There was no adequate plan to at least ensure the provision of a *needs* approach to social justice in Nigeria. In sum, these two dimensions of PDP politically-engendered violence have continued to assist the party in dominating the political system without serious challenge.

Other strategies used without restraint by the PDP in establishing authoritarian one-party democracy are: (i) controlling and undermining other institutions of democracy as INEC and the judiciary, (ii) creating factions within opposition parties, (iii) attempting constitutional reform for a third term, (iv) employing electoral malpractices, (v) using EFCC to harass, intimidate and exclude other party candidates in the democratic process, and (vi) making use of ethno-religious manipulations.

As part of the strategy to strengthen its grip on power and dominance, the PDP has undermined the electoral commission (INEC) and the judiciary. Constitutionally and by virtue of other statutory laws, such as Electoral Acts, INEC is supposed to be genuinely independent of



political manipulation by the ruling party or its agents. In controlling and manipulating INEC in a willy-nilly way, the PDP government consistently starve the Commission of funds and appoint PDP members as principal officers of the Commission. In the case of the latter, Mada (2006) argues that it is no longer an allegation or insinuation that 'many staff of the Commission are card carrying members of the ruling party'. These problems have contributed to a situation where INEC is grossly incapable of performing its duties impartially. According to Ogunsanyo (2003), INEC has never been in absolute control of its activities before, during or even after election. This means that INEC 'is a partial arbiter that exists at the mercy of [PDP] government and which can be directly or indirectly susceptible to manipulations with the consequent subversion of wishes of the people' (Akinboye 2005:307). Subversion of the people's wishes, which in itself represents a disgusting violation of their freedom to contest and elect candidates of their choice, takes place when by:

...mere subterfuge of manipulating the party lists submitted to INEC in Abuja and replacing the names on the original list, victory was declared for some individuals. This was well after the deadline has passed for submitting new names to replace disqualified ones (Ogunsanyo, 2003:16).

Apparently, in order to satisfy the interest of the ruling party, INEC was involved in both the 2003 and especially the 2007 general elections in changing names of candidates already submitted by political parties and even outrightly delisting and reregistering opposition parties' candidates and parties themselves. In similar fashion, the registration of new parties, which is a simple exercise anywhere in the world, became 'highly contentious as the ruling party (PDP) became averse to it in a desperate attempt to muzzle the political space' (Akinboye 2005:309) and denied people expressing their political rights and freedom.

Evidently, the muscling of INEC not only incapacitated it, but also prevented the Commission from conducting an acceptable election in Nigeria. INEC, in collaboration with the ruling PDP, has conducted and supervised the worst elections in the history of democracy in the world (up to that time). The extent of electoral malpractice has defied the imagination of domestic and international monitors and observers (Stakeholder Democracy Network 2007; European Union Election Observation Mission 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007b). To start with, it was apparent before the conduct of the 2007 general elections that INEC was not only ill-prepared but that it was acting on certain prescriptions of the PDP. The Commission has failed to provide an authentic voters' register, which is the first step towards conducting elections. For instance, ICG (2007:2) contends that in 'apparent support for the strategy by which Obasanjo and the PDP had sought to eliminate certain candidates, INEC disqualified a number, including the vice president, on the grounds that they had been "indicted" by a federal government administrative panel'. When this decision was overturned by several court injunctions and the Supreme Court, INEC was thrown into uncertainties and many opposition parties found themselves in internal crisis, struggling to replace their candidates. These happenings made it easier for the PDP to rig the elections. In several places, elections were not even conducted but results announced. If elections represent a mechanism through which people elect their government, provide its legitimacy and hold it to account, electoral malpractice is a total violation of the political freedom and equality. This has been the hallmark of the PDP government.

Coupled with the above is the deliberate orchestration of election-related violence as a strategy of rigging and electoral malpractice. For instance, prior to any general elections in Nigeria, leaders and members of opposition political parties are officially harassed by security agencies. ICG (2007) observes that in the week before the 2007 elections, opposition figures were harassed and arrested with a view to scuttle their campaigns, and even frighten their supporters. Police arrested

and detained the Action Congress (AC) governorship candidate in Osun State, Rauf Aregbesola, AC's leader in Oyo state, Michael Keleso, two members of House of Representatives, five members of Ekiti state House of Assembly, and many other senior supporters of the party in Gombe. Others include the Katsina All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) chairman, Yusha'u Armiya'u, and several others. These arrests and many others were strategies of conscripting the political space for opposition parties, as no PDP leader or supporter was involved. In fact, prior to the 2007 elections, the Federal Government announced that the Inspector General of Police, Sunday Ihindero, bought 40,000 AK-47 rifles, to be used for security provision during the elections (Peter-Omale 2006). The objective was to coerce and threaten people against demanding for justice after election rigging.

The violence and intimidation induced by the security agencies led to clamping down on any individual or organisation opposed to the PDP government. For several times, the Mobile Police (anti-riot police) made raids on Africa Independent Television (AIT) during which tapes were seized and staff molested. This is in addition to a series of cases of intimidation and threat of censorship against newspapers and magazines. In developed democracies, election days are normal days, when after voting citizens would go about their normal daily lives. In Nigeria, election days are special days. They are days of violence. They are days of anguish and mourning. They are days when security agencies – police and soldiers are massively deployed to curtail outbreaks of violence. Although to a certain level the security agencies had contained the escalation of violence in several states after the rigging of the 2007 elections, security personnel were used simultaneously to intimidate and coerce opposition parties. Agande et al (2007) noted that in the 2007 elections, the police in particular were used to ruin the electoral process. INEC officials connived with them to allow underage voting, stuffing of ballot boxes and even hijacking of ballot boxes from electoral officials in favour of the ruling party. In Ondo State, for example, Chigbo (2007)

reports that soldiers and police were seen carrying ballot boxes from one polling station to another through which massive rigging was facilitated in favour of the ruling PDP. In fact, in various homes of PDP candidates, security personnel were seen providing assistance for stuffing of ballot boxes. Policemen and PDP thugs moved from one polling unit to another arresting over 300 members of Labour Party, which were mostly party agents observing the elections. Consequently, PDP agents simply stuffed ballot boxes and declared results (Chigbo 2007). Ajaero (2007) also stresses that in situations where electoral officials were bribed or 'settled' to change or falsify election results, police provided adequate shield and disallowed agents of other political parties to observe the election as provided by the Electoral Act 2006.

The involvement of security agencies, according to International Crisis Group (2007), is 'more fundamentally a symptom ... of professionalism.' However, it can be argued that the use of police and soldiers in electoral malpractice is beyond a question of professionalism. It is an issue of how they are constitutionally under the direct command of the ruling party and are manipulated to serve selfish interests. More so, when the ruling party has an agenda of institutionalising one-party regime, the security agencies become political tools of achieving such objectives. Thus professionalism or lack of it can be exploited. In an interview with Crisis Group, a retired police commissioner argued that Nigerian police has already been submissive and openly showed allegiance to the ruling party. This is largely because according to him, it is difficult to differentiate between a 'ruling party' and 'government'. For neopatrimonial and clientelistic reasons, since the President or better still the ruling party has political control over the police and the army, every officer would tend to show allegiance to him/it in order to benefit from patronage and largesse and/or to save their jobs. In sum, Human Rights Watch (2007:136-138) observed that:

Since the end of military rule in 1999 Nigeria has enjoyed the longest stretch of uninterrupted civilian government in its history

as a nation. While this period has seen some improvement in respect for civil and political rights, government actors including the police, military, and elected officials continued to commit serious and persistent abuses against Nigerian citizens.... Nigeria's police and other security forces continued to be implicated in wide spread acts of torture, ill-treatment, extrajudicial killing, arbitrary arrest, and property destruction.

These problems have affected the security agencies in discharging their professional duties. Instead of securing lives and properties and protecting freedom and social justice, security agencies are partners in undermining the provisions of social justice and human rights. This has serious implications for stable democracy in a pluralistic country like Nigeria.

Ethno-religious exploitation and manipulation is another strategy employed by the PDP to strengthen one-party authoritarianism in Nigeria. Democracy is the best system of government that could douse violent ethno-religious and regional tensions. Perhaps, as a grand strategy, Obasanjo's PDP directly attempted to set the major ethnic groups against each other in the struggle to institutionalise one-party rule in Nigeria. There was an informal pact between the so-called 'Northern oligarchy' and Obasanjo in 1998 for power sharing between the North and the South. The pact itself was undemocratic and never in the interest of the people, though it minimised the Southern people's cry against marginalisation. The pact was later denied by Obasanjo, perhaps because of his and the PDP's interest in a one-party system. Against this background and to truncate the self-perpetuation ambition of Obasanjo-PDP *vis-à-vis* institutionalising one-party democracy, the Northern oligarchy made a spirited attempt to block tenure elongation and the return of power to the region. Several individuals from the North declared their interests to contest the presidential election under all the major political parties. Counteracting this development, Obasanjo mobilised powerful

southern politicians, especially the governors through the Southern Governors' Forum (SGF) to vehemently oppose any power shift. Thus several former (then serving) governors declared their candidature for the presidential office. This marks the return of tense ethnic politics in Nigeria. Though there was no direct violation of social justice, the fact that the exploitation and manipulation of ethno-religious pluralism were intended to perpetuate one-party rule left much to be desired about the question of social justice in Nigeria. At the least, this has destabilised the PDP and ANPP, and has further thrown the Nigerian democratic process into serious complications and uncertainties.

It is discernible from the foregoing analysis that human rights and social justice have been compromised through the tactics employed by the dominant ruling party in Nigeria. This is evident in the poor human rights record and the serious social problems that continued to besiege the country since the return of democracy in 1999. It is vital to stress that the relative 'success' of cultivating a dominant one-party democracy and its attendant consequences in Nigeria is premised on institutional problems. In other words, the explanation for decadence of social justice and the making of authoritarian one-party regime lies with the character of social and political institutions in Nigeria. In this context, the next section introduces an institutional framework for extending the frontiers of social justice through party government (ruling party and opposition parties).

### **Extending the Frontiers of Social Justice: Towards an Integrative Institutional Framework**

The provision of social justice is an institutional issue. It is determined by the nature of the political system and the capability of its socio-political and economic institutions. Where the institutions are developed and the political system is democratic, there is a possibility for the citizens of such a state to enjoy a relatively higher degree of social justice and

human rights. Thus in any analysis of social justice and in constructing a social justice framework *vis-à-vis* its provisions through the policy-agenda of a (ruling) party government, the nature of the political system and the presence of political parties are fundamental. The context of the socio-political and economic system is important in that all institutions relevant to the provision of social justice must be put in place and made capable to discharge such functions. For example, in understanding the link between political institutions and social justice provision, the national constitution, as the embodiment of the fundamental laws and principles of governance, should be the first point of focus. The nature of the constitution and how it was formulated are very important in ensuring social justice and preventing the emergence of an authoritarian ruling party. The national constitution stipulates the design and operations of party government, and the functions of and relationship between and among all institutions of governance. The constitution also catalogues the fundamental human rights and duties, the responsibility of the state in safeguarding such rights, and of course defines the political and economic contextualities of the state itself. It also made the protection and provision of those rights justifiable in that individuals whose rights are infringed upon could seek legal redress (Ojo 2006).

Where a constitution is designed undemocratically or enforced autocratically, as in the case of many post-military constitutions in Nigeria and other developing countries, such a constitution is likely to make the emergence of authoritarian ruling parties relatively less complex and the provision of social justice more cumbersome. For example, the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, under which the current democratic dispensation was constructed, is defective in many respects. One of these was that by commission and omission it influenced the development of an authoritarian ruling party, which is metamorphosing the democratisation process into a one-party system, and undermining the development of strong opposition parties. The constitution was so defective that it lacks legitimacy, because as International IDEA (2003:26-27) observes,

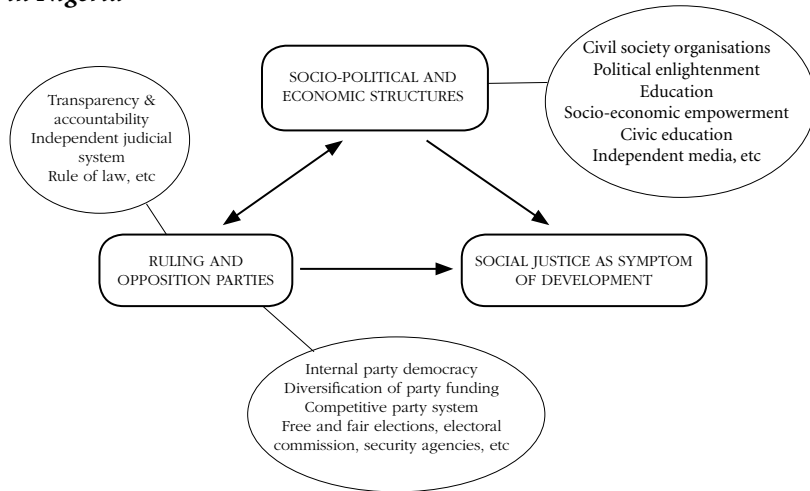
‘...the process of making the constitution allowed only a very limited consultation with the populace.... The conditions for a full, open and informed debate did not exist.’ This means that the development of a competitive party system and the responsiveness of a party government to the provision of social justice are premised on a legitimate and acceptable constitution, which designs and ensures the ‘obvious involvement of all stakeholders in fashioning its contents...’ (IDEA 2003:26-27). Irrespective of the ways a constitution is designed, it should ensure that all democratic processes are followed, so that its contents are acceptable by the people. The idea is that only a ‘people-based’ constitution, together with political will, can help in guaranteeing social justice, and making the development of authoritarian ruling parties difficult. Such a constitution would aid the development of a competitive party system, and strengthen the rule of law and electoral politics. A people-based constitution also has the merit of resolving some peculiar problems associated with federalism, especially the contentious and delicate Nigerian federalism.

Another area of consideration in the analysis of political parties cum provision of social justice is to understand what can be called ‘internal policy dynamics’ of the ruling party and other parties. Understanding the policy orientation of ruling parties and non-ruling parties is tantamount to understanding their ideology, their constitution, organisation and their key actors and activities. This would help in understanding the commitment of a particular political party to entrenching democracy and addressing the issues of social justice. It would also help to inform the commitment of parties towards introducing and implementing all relevant social and economic reforms necessary for the provision of social justice. For example, no regime would be able to ensure social justice without sound economic programmes to address poverty and social inequalities. From the foregoing discussion, a triangular integrative framework could now be envisaged in understanding the relationship between the nature of political parties, social justice and



the structure of the socio-political and economic system of a country. This could be symbolically presented as follows:

**Figure 1: An integrative Framework of analysing social justice in Nigeria**



The above triad shows an integrative institutional relationship between socio-political and economic institutions and political parties, as well as their responsibility to provide social justice in a particular ‘democratic’ regime. Provision of social justice in any democratic country must not be seen as mere philosophical jingling, but as a necessary prerequisite for social harmony, unity and development. As pointed out earlier, understanding the process of the making of authoritarian parties is tantamount to construing the contextual realities of social justice in a given society. Thus to institutionally analyse social justice *vis-à-vis* political parties, it is paramount to examine the environmental context.

Socio-political and economic structures are important variables, and analysts should determine the level of education, the nature of media activities, judicial system and independence, social coexistence, culture, political arrangement, political history, level of economic development,

percentage of people below international poverty line, employment ratio, and so on. While these issues are important in the making or unmaking of an authoritarian party regime, they are also vital in the wider spectrum of providing social justice.

Thus while the state has responsibility in the provision of social justice, citizens also have responsibility in this process. The state therefore has the further responsibility of creating an enabling environment for the citizens to realise their potentials as well as benefit from the social justice system in the country. This is perhaps why national constitution making is significant as it sets the institutional boundaries for the activities of both the state and its citizens, and establishes the mechanisms for government activities and the protection of all elements of social justice.

Moreover, as indicated in the above figure, there is an interwoven relationship between the nature of political parties and the socio-political and economic environment. In this relationship, there is an overlapping effect. As the environment influences the making and unmaking of authoritarian or democratic parties, the policies and activities of political parties in turn influence the socio-economic and political structures of the society. However, both the environment and the political parties logically have a serious impact on social justice, especially since it is defined as a symptom of development or underdevelopment.

When, in light of the above framework, the objective is to achieve social justice through developing a competitive party system in the general socio-political and economic environment under which political parties and other policy stakeholders operate, there is need to strengthen the activities of civil society organisations. The activities of civil society should complement the functions of government and other stakeholders towards proving and developing social justice. Similarly, the education sector must be strengthened to provide quality education. The state must also implement civic education and political enlightenment programmes, to complement the work of media and civil society

organisations in educating and enlightening citizens about social justices, rights and duties, and about workings and functions of agencies of government, such as the police, judiciary, and bureaucracy. Relevant anti-poverty policies must be introduced and implemented to address the issues of growing poverty and to economically empower the people. To achieve these objectives, ideologically differentiated political parties are indispensable.

Nevertheless, in view of the overlapping relationship between the environment and the nature of political parties, in the world of political parties there is the need for internal party democracy, diversification of party funding and finance, free and fair elections, and a competitive party system, as ways of strengthening party organisation and undermining the development of an authoritarian ruling party and repressive democracy. For these programmes and policies to succeed, both at the level of political parties and the larger socio-political and economic environment, the governmental system and administration must be characterised by transparency, accountability, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, independent media activities and other governance issues. In sum, good democratic governance with its attendant attributes is the determining linkage between the success of the social and economic reform policies and programmes (at the level of parties and in the larger environment) and the delivery of social justice as outcome of development.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper examines the relationship between the process of the development of authoritarian one-party democracy and the negation of social justice. Although there is a theoretical definitional tension in the conceptualisation of social justice, there seems to be a relative agreement that provision of social justice is the distinguishing attribute of good democracy. Importantly, however, the strategies that the so-called African dominant ruling parties employ in winning elections with landslide

victories and in further strengthening their grip on power defy all logics of democracy. Through these strategies, especially as shown in the case of Nigeria, social justice is grossly undermined. This has continued to affect the quality of the democratisation process, and has created serious dilemmas and uncertainties within countries.

To address the problems of African ruling parties metamorphosing into one-party authoritarianism, the paper proposes a triangular institutional integrative framework, linking the socio-economic and political institutions of the state (defined as general environment), political parties and social justice (defined and understood as an outcome of development). The framework envisages an interwoven relationship between socio-political and economic structures and the nature of political parties, which can greatly influence the metamorphosis of ruling parties into one-party authoritarianism. In the context of the framework, both the general environment and the specific environment of political parties affect the provision of social justice. In view of the triad institutional linkages, the framework suggests reforms at both general and specific environment, which could have the capacity of changing the trends of development *vis-à-vis* social justice. Reforms at political party level could help in institutionalising a competitive party system and the development of ideologically differentiated political parties as essential safeguards against the development of authoritarian dominant (one-party) ruling parties.

However, it is important to note that the framework is not without some limitations. For example, it would be too ambitious to suggest simultaneous reforms in both the general environment and the environment of political parties. The boundary between the two environments is difficult to define. Reforms at the level of one environment could easily affect another. The same political elites are major players in the two environments. Reforms could also have unintended consequences. Despite these shortcomings, the framework has provided insight in approaching the

issues of development that could change the provision of social justice through political parties in Africa. The success of the implementation of the framework therefore squarely lies with all relevant stakeholders operating in the two environments either directly or indirectly. In other words, the success of reforms that would change the pattern of political party development *vis-à-vis* the provision of social justice as outcome of development depends on the political will of the relevant stakeholders.

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