

POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is a plural society with multi-ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversities. Since the amalgamation of the different groups that make up the entity now known as Nigeria, the country has remained in dire need of common national identity. Efforts have been made to integrate the country through constitutional means and the adoption of various policies, but these have not really produced the desired effect on the unity of the country. Many national policies and decisions have been ethnically influenced and interpreted thereby hindering successful integration of the country. It is against this background that this paper takes a look at political parties and national integration in Nigeria. The finding of the paper shows that political parties have serious role to play in forging national integration but that over the years, political parties have not lived up to expectation in this regard and recommended that effort should be made to strengthen political parties as instrument of national integration through the constitution.

Key words: Political Party, National Integration, Ethnicity, National Identity, National Unity

Introduction

The year 1914 marked the formative year of the entity now known as Nigeria. It was the year the Southern and Northern administrations of the country were amalgamated to become the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. With this amalgamation, Nigeria became the largest country in Africa and the most populous Black Country in the world. A diverse country in terms of: culture, language, religion, origin etc. The three major ethnic groups that later became Nigerians had nothing in common with one another. Coleman (1986, p.15) observed that within the boundaries of Nigeria are approximately 248 distinct languages. Scientific linguists according to him have not agreed upon any single classificatory scheme for African languages, but it is generally recognized that Nigeria is one of principal linguistic crossroads of Africa (Ajayi & Fashagba, 2014).

Before their contact with the European colonizers the various groups that make up Nigeria had developed and operated some indigenous, formal political and administrative

systems which were considered suitable for their different areas. Party politics was alien to their indigenous systems of administration.

Since their contact with the Europeans, the central political problem in Nigeria has been how to unite the different entities together as one nation. According to Ojiako (1981, p.1):

...the central political problem in Nigeria arises from the fact that the country includes three main ethnic groups – the Hausa peoples of the North, the Ibo peoples of the East and the Yoruba peoples of the West. The difficulty has been to find a means of binding them together to form a nation

Various attempts have been made since the colonial days to forge a united Nigeria with one national identity without success. The first attempt was made in 1906 when the colony and protectorate of Lagos and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria were amalgamated into the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria. The second attempt was made in 1914 when the two administrations: the Northern and Southern administrations were amalgamated and named the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. The third attempt was in 1951, when a federal constitution was introduced (Ojiako, 1981, pp. 1-2).

It is pertinent to note that the colonial masters made frantic efforts to unite Nigeria but at the same time created division and feelings of hatred between the North and the South, that up to the present time Nigeria is still in search of unity among its people. Consequently, Nigerians lack common vision and sense of nationhood, and there is no sense of common citizenship. For over sixty years of flag independence, the country still totters on as a toddler, often pulled down by joint identity and integration crisis (Ojo, 2009, p.385). Nigeria is also assailed by a curious and depressing distribution crisis triggered by a dubious formula for the sharing of the national cake. Frictions and tensions among the over 250 ethnic groups are recurrent phenomena. Cultivation of national outlook has inadvertently given way to a continued lukewarm attitude to nation-building by the frustrated nations whose emotions are stirred by the clandestine tribal organizations coordinating the races in the hot race for relevance within the polity (Ojo, 2009, p.385). Some of these clandestine organizations later metamorphosed into political parties when party politics was introduced in the country by the colonial masters. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the role of political parties in integrating the country thereby providing solution to the problem of national unity and identity in the country. In order to achieve the above objective, this paper is partitioned into five sections including this introduction which will take into cognizance of conceptual issues, method of data collection and theoretical framework. The second will focus on the emergence, development and the functions of political parties. The third section will x-ray previous efforts at national integration in Nigeria while the Fourth section will focus on political parties and national integration in Nigeria. In the last section we draw the conclusion with some recommendations for national unity in the country.

Conceptual Issues

Political Party Defined

Political parties are organizations that are more or less permanent in a democratic setting which contest elections in seeking the control of the government. Many definitions of political party abound but for the purpose of this paper a few of them will be required. Hence Appadorai (2000, pp. 537-538) maintains that: *“a political party is a more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political questions or controversies in the state, and who by acting together as a political unit, seek to obtain control of the government”*. Oyediran et al (2002) define a political party as *“an organized group of people who have similar political opinion and ideology and work together to gain the control of government, so as to be able to implement their party programmes based on their ideology”*. For Dare and Oyewole (1983), a political party is any group of people seeking to elect governmental office holders under a given label. Agbaje (1999, p.195) defines a political party as a *“group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices”*. He further maintains that a political party is a group of people and an organization like any other group of organization, except that it is distinguished from others by its unique objective which in a democratic setting is seeking the control of government through nominating its candidate and presenting its programmes for endorsement via the electoral process in competition with other parties.

The above definition and emphasis on democracy are important considering the peculiar nature of African politics where the military has constantly taking over the government thereby obstructing party political activities. Secondly political parties exist only in democracies.

In democracies therefore, a political party is more or less a permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments, and representing such interest in government (Agbaje, 1999, p.195).

National Integration

The concept of integration is one of those elusive concepts in terms of definition (Ahmed & Dantata, 2016). The literature on integration is replete with different definitions of the term (Ojo, 2009). According to Dudley (1976), it is often not clear how the concept is to be interpreted. Besides, the concept is used interchangeably with nation-building, national development, political development and sometimes as a term embracing all the three.

In this paper a few definitions by some authors will be cited for our present purpose. Hence Philip and Tenue (1964, p.9) define integration as *“a relationship of community among people within the same political entity ... a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes”*. Drawing from the above definition, it is observed that there is lack of relationship of community among Nigerians, to this end there is lack of common commitment to mutual programmes. For Haas (1958, p.16) integration is *“the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new center whose institutions’ processes*

demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. For Lindberg (1963, p.6) political integration is (1) the process whereby nations forgo the desire and ability to conduct foreign and key domestic policies independently of each other, seeking instead to make joint decisions or to delegate the decision-making process to new central organs; (2) the process whereby political actors in several distinct settings are persuaded to shift their expectations and political activities to a new center". Agbodike (1998, p.183), sees national integration as a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty towards a central political authority and institutions by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units. Coleman and Roseberg (1964), see it as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community. Deutsch defines it as "*the attainment within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful change among its population*".

The above definitions have given us a great insight into the basic elements of national integration which will help us in finding the position of political parties in national integration in Nigeria and also to enable us find whether the political parties have been able to live up to expectation in integrating the different entities that make up Nigeria.

Method of Data Collection

The method used in gathering data for this paper is the documentary method. Documentary sources refer to any written material that was ready in existence which was produced for some other purpose than the benefit of the investigator (Nwana, 1981, p.177). According to Obasi, (1999, pp.172-73) "documents are published and unpublished materials on activities of public and private organizations. Usually, these documents are produced for reasons such as historical documentation of the nature, dynamics and trends of events. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, documentary method involves the examination of various written documents on the issue of political parties and national integration, national unity and nation building in Nigeria. These documents include: textbooks, journals, the constitution or other government publications, magazines, newspapers etc. These documents were carefully analyzed to enable us achieve the objective of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

Many theories have been used to explain regional integration. The same theories can equally be adopted to explain national integration. To this end, the functionalist approach has been adopted in this paper.

Functionalists are first and foremost the protagonists of the administration of things instead of the government of men (Chime, 1977). For them the nation-state would become inadequate as the supreme and exclusive unit for organizing human needs in the face of technological revolution. While technology for them is making the world smaller and drawing people nearer, politics has persisted in canalizing irrational divisiveness in the nation-state. The functionalists advocated forsaking of constitutional approach for the functional, to capitalize on welfare, on economic and social organization to the detriment of politics. According to them, if

people recognizing their felt needs, organized piecemeal on the basis of those non-political needs, the nation-state system would sooner or later be dissolved in a swelling pool of welfare functions (Chime, 1977).

As the nation-state is becoming increasingly incapable of fulfilling its basic social, economic and political tasks, more and more shared aims and functions would be delegated to the more efficient integration organizations, which would be capable to implement those functions. The main aim of the functionalists is to create supranational institutions (Domonkos, 2011).

This theory is considered appropriate in this paper because of the over politicization of national issues in Nigeria. The common needs of the different sections that make up the country are of no significance to the elites and political leaders who saw the state and its institutions and agencies as a source of wealth to them. This over emphasis on politics has led to disunity, lack of development and crisis of various forms in the country. To achieve national unity and better integration in Nigeria, great emphasis should be focused on economic, social and cultural cooperation while de-emphasizing politics.

The Emergence of Political Parties and Party Activities in Nigeria

The West African Conference of 11th – 29th March 1920 was a milestone in the emergence of political parties and party activities not only in Nigeria but also in other West African territories. The conference established the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) which sent delegation to London in October the same year and demanded among other things: “a legislative council composed of representatives of whom one-half should be nomination by the Crown and the other half elected by the people to deal with legislation gradually (Okafor, 1981, p.75 & Coleman, 1986 p. 191). While the colonial governors rejected the claims and demands of NCBWA, the claims and demands became a source of influence to future developments in West Africa so that a year after, the Governor of Nigeria, Hugh Clifford proposed elective representation for some areas in Southern Nigeria (Okafor, 1981), and this led to the formation of political parties to fill the elective offices. Hence, with the support of most of the leading nationalists, the late Herbert Macaulay founded in 1922, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and in September 1923, the Party won the three legislative council seats for Lagos (Ojiako, 1981, pp. 9-10 & Okafor, 1981, p. 189).

The aims of the party include among other things:

1. To achieve greater political responsibility for the Africans. Self-government was for the party, desirable but not an immediate objective.
2. To achieve complete municipal status for Lagos.
3. To persuade Nigerian government to promote Nigerians to responsible positions in the civil service.
4. To recognize the status of and cooperate with the NCBWA.
5. To nominate and elect members of the legislative council of Nigeria.
6. To establish branches and auxiliaries in all parts of Nigeria which would be controlled by the parent body in Lagos (Okafor, 1981, p. 190).

The party claimed to be Nigerian and national, it was actually a Lagos party. Its activities were limited to Lagos alone. It did not establish branches in other parts of the country as one of its stated objectives. Even when it established a branch in Kano, its members consisted of people from Lagos resident in Kano (Okafor, 1981). In 1933, the Lagos Youth Movement was formed and in 1937, it was renamed Nigeria Youth Movement with Barrister Hezekiah Oladipo Davis as the Secretary General. The mission of the movement was the development of a united nation out of the conglomeration of the people who inhabit Nigeria. According to the party as quoted by (Ojiako,1981):

It shall be our endeavor to encourage the fullest play of all such forces as will serve to promote understanding and a sense of common nationality among the different elements in the country. We will combat vigorously all such tendencies as would jeopardize the unifying process (p.12).

The movement could have been a genuine and serious effort by the educated elements to encourage the development of a real national consciousness save for the leadership crisis which led to its failure (Okafor, 1981).

The failure of the Nigerian Youth Movement led to the emergence of another party with a better national outlook: the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) later, National Council of Nigerian Citizens. The main objectives of the party were:

1. To extend democratic principles and to advance the interests of the people of Nigeria and the Cameroons which were under British mandate.
2. To organize and collaborate with all its branches throughout the country.
3. To adopt suitable means for the purpose of imparting political education to the people of Nigeria with a view to achieving self-government.
4. To afford the members the advantages of a medium of expression in order to secure political freedom, economic security, social equality and religious toleration in Nigeria and the Cameroons, as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The Success and growing popularity of the NCNC did not go down well with Awolowo. He interpreted the NCNC ascendancy as one of possible Igbo domination over other ethnic groups in the future political life of Nigeria (Okafor, 1981).

The Action Group (AG) was a political protrusion of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, a Yoruba Cultural Organization founded in 1947 (Ojiako, 1981; Okafor, 1981 and; Dare & Oyewole, 1983). With the prospect of a new constitution in 1951, Chief Awolowo and some other prominent members of the Egbe formed the AG party in 1950 which was officially launched in March 1951. The aim of the party was:

1. To bring and organize within its fold, all nationalists in the former Western Region so that they might work together as a united and disciplined group, and
2. To prepare and present public programmes for all government and to work hard to see them carried out (Dare & Oyewole, 1983, p. 125 & Coleman, 1986).

A group of Northerners met in Kaduna on 3 October, 1978 and formed a socio-political organization known as Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa A Yau (The Association of Northern people of Today). Another group met in Zaria and formed another organization called Jamiyyar Jamaar Arewa (The Northern Nigerian Congress), which was later changed to Northern People's Congress (NPC). On October, 1951 the NPC was converted into a political party. The motto of the party was: one North, One people, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe. The party's objectives included, among others:

1. Regional autonomy within one Nigeria
2. Local government reform within a progressive Emirate system based on tradition and custom.
3. The voice of the people to be heard in all the council of the North.
4. Membership of the NPC to be open to all people of Northern descent, whether as individuals or as a union or as a political party etc (Okafor, 1981, p. 210).

One basic feature that the NPC and AG shared in common was the stress on regional particularism, and this foundation has continued to affect all political activities in Nigeria since then.

Party-politics was disrupted in 1966 and has been disrupted several times. In 1999, Nigeria returned to democracy and a number of political parties came on board. Twenty-four (24) political parties applied for registrations but only nine (9) of them met INEC requirements and were registered (Odo, 2011). Experience and evidence has shown that the later political parties have not done any better in the area of national integration in the country. The different regions still have sentimental attachment to one political party or the other which in the long run creates division among the people of Nigeria instead of binding them together.

Functions of Political Party

Whether elite or mass party, political parties perform the following functions

1. Political parties select and recruit leaders or political office holders.
2. They organize, educate and enlighten the masses or electorates and make political discussions clearer and meaningful.
3. They promote interest in politics
4. Political parties serve as a link between rulers and the ruled.
5. They present their programmes and manifestos to the public. This enables the electorates choose the right set of national objectives. Hence political parties determine national policies and objective.
6. Political parties unite people from different parts of the country that cut across ethnic or religious lines, thus promoting national unity, etc (Oyediran et al, 2002, pp.78-79; Dare and Oyewole, 1983, pp. 36-37). The functions outlined here will help us in analyzing the role of political parties in national integration in Nigeria.

National Integration Efforts in Nigeria

The coming into being of the Nigerian state as a colonial creation made it an imposed state obviously lacking in normative acceptance by the society (Olaitan, 1998, p. 140). As a product of British experiment in political cloning, Nigeria is a politically arranged country (Ayoade, 1998) consisting of a conglomeration of ethnic groups and fatherlands which are heterogeneous in many respects (Agbodike, 1998). The question now is how have these ethnic groups cooperated to achieve national integration? How have those in power worked together to achieve national integration and unity among the disparate groups that make up Nigeria? How have political parties strived to unite the people of Nigeria towards the common goal of national integration and identity?

Answers to these questions will be provided by first examining the background to disunity among the various groups before looking into the various policies that have been put in place – such as state creation, federal character and quota system – for national unity. This will enable us identify the particular area where political parties will play unique role for national integration in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, the political history of Nigeria has been dominated by efforts at fashioning a system that will suit the people who are diverse in so many areas including: pluralism of language, religion, socio-political and economic formations as well as administrative styles, social norms and personality types, historical evolution, disproportionate population; size, unequal economic resources and educational attainments. There are also differences in social wants, needs and preferences as well as talents and opportunities (Ayoade, 1998; Agbodike, 1998). These diversities tend to generate mutual suspicion and misunderstanding which tends to keep the people separated (Agbodike, 1998). The colonial administration bequeathed an enduring legacy of mutual suspicion and contempt to their Nigerian wards. The thirst for power among the Nigerian nationalist politicians between 1945 and 1959 gave rise to series of intrigues. Ogugua (2004, p. 121) argues that: *“none of them loved Nigeria but were concerned with building both political and financial empires; hence the spirit of nationalism gave way to regionalism and ethnicity”*.

The political elites in Nigeria maintained the structure of European dominance by immediately engaging themselves in the pursuit of life of ease, amassing of wealth, development of political empires and distribution of the national cake. These were politicized along ethnic lines, meritocracy was thrown overboard and a culture of mediocrity was gradually given seat to operate and lord it over the rest of us (Ogugua, 2004, pp. 122-23).

During the post-independent period, the political parties still maintained the tilt toward ethnic groups (Ogugua, 2004).

Consequent upon the above, the initial effort towards unity and national integration resulted in state creation. According to Ayoade (1998, p. 106)

The attempt to redress North-South regional imbalance resulted in the creation of states but it resulted in weakening the south against the North. This then became the justification for other methods for

the promotion of a sense of belonging in the country by eliminating or at least minimizing domination resulting from imbalance in appointments.

Implicit from the above is that state creation could not solve the problem of national unity in Nigeria and can never solve the problem as there are still more agitations for state creation in the face of increasing signs of disunity.

To solve the problems of domination and marginalization and to ensure structural balance of claims and gains by various groups and interests in Nigeria, the federal character principle was conceived. The term was coined by the Constitution Drafting Committee that drafted the 1979 constitution. The federal character principle was enshrined in section 14(3) of the 1979 and 1999 constitutions. Hence section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution states:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies.

The *raison d'être* of federal character in Nigeria is to ensure harmony, promote national integration and stability of the nation. It emphasizes the need for ethnic-balancing as a necessity in the evolution of Nigerian citizenship and for ensuring less acrimonious relationships among the various peoples of Nigeria.

However, while stressing the imperative of ethnic balancing, the federal character principle invariably enthrones ethnicity and de-emphasizes the nation. It also strengthens the parochial, particularistic orientations and primordial ethnic attachments of Nigerians.

The federal character principle may be used to satisfy the quest for representativeness and proportionality in allocating resources and in appointments. But in the application of the formula choices are made on the basis of criterion other than merit. This leads to lowering of standard against national interest.

The quota system does not help matter after all. It leads to production of sub-grade soldiers and officers in the army. Standards and professionalism are endangered and compromised in the civil and other public services (Agbodike, 1998; and Obi & Abonyi, 2004).

It was against the backdrop of the political crisis emanating from the June 12, 1993 presidential election that the idea of rotational presidency became a serious issue in political discuss in Nigeria, if the marginalization of segments of the country will come to an end – (Olaitan, 1998). The idea of rotational presidency would have been laudable but at present, it lacks constitutional backing as it is yet to be enshrined in our constitution. Nevertheless, major political parties in recent time have bought the idea and have incorporated it in their party

constitutions. But unfortunately, personal and selfish interests of the party leaders have in most cases rendered their constitutions impotent thereby frustrating the idea of rotational presidency.

Political Parties and National Integration in Nigeria

Our outline of the functions of political party shows that political party is a tool or instrument for national unity. It unites people from different parts of the country. And by extension, political party can be a veritable instrument for national integration in Nigeria. Political parties promote national interests, unite, simplify and stabilize the political process. They bring together sectional interests, overcome geographical disturbances and provide coherence to divisive governmental structures (Mbah & Orjinta, 2020). But the question now is: have political parties in Nigeria played this key role? How can political parties be positioned to play this role in Nigeria?

It is observed that political parties since inception have fallen short of expectation as instruments of national integration in Nigeria. Apart from the NCNC that had national outlook, other pre-independence political parties were regional in outlook and pursue mainly regional interest. The motto of the NPC and the activities of the AG speak volume on this. The political parties were born out of the desire to fill legislative council seats for the regions at the time. When independence was achieved the parties were preoccupied with the interest of their regions rather than national interest. Most of the party leaders wanted to use the parties as instruments for personal enrichment. No concerted effort was made to use the political parties to achieve national integration.

Promotion of national interest formed the priority of the programmes and manifesto of the second republic political parties. But unfortunately, the structure of the parties tended to promote private interest. The party leaders failed to implement their party manifestoes and electoral promises through the use of state power. They used state power to pursue personal interests, rather than pursuing national integration (Odo, 2011). Quoting the constitution drafting committee, Odo, (2011), argues that: “*given the conditions of underdevelopment, power offers the opportunity of a life-time rise above poverty and squalor*”. This has led to the politics of “*do or die*”, in their bid to occupy political position.

However, political parties in this fourth republic have not done better than the previous ones. In terms of spread, some of the parties have wider national spread like the PDP, APC e.t.c., but the activities and programmes of these parties have not helped matter in the area of national integrations. Ikelegbe (2013) argues that there is so much similarity in policy positions, manifestoes, ideological leanings and strategies particularly among the major parties. The parties according to him are not organizational platform for alternative views and programmes of governance and development but associations, factions, cliques, and networks for power and resource struggles. He maintained that the only common thing among the political parties is the intense struggle to access state power and resources. The parties according to him have been weak political institutions. Party activities are reinforced by ethnicity and religion (Mbah & Orjinta, 2020) at the detriment of national unity and integration. Many of them are centered on a

few persons or hijacked and dominated by money-bags, political patrons and political machines. Some are hijacked by a few chieftains and godfathers or sole founders. The leadership of the parties has been plagued by selfish maneuvers and interests, disputes and fractionalization. The party elites are greedy, opportunistic, self-serving and deceitful and are actually to some extent, coalitions of various factions of regional and economic rent seekers (Ikelegbe, 2013, pp. 159-170).

As the leaders of these political parties struggle for their personal economic gains, no time was left to think of national interest and particularly national integration. Instead, the leaders employ tribal, ethnic and religious sentiments to woo people from their region to support their selfish personal interest and struggle, and this has left the different parts that make up Nigeria more divided and separated than united and integrated.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this paper, we have examined the role of political parties in national integration. We started by examining the evolution of the Nigerian state as a country by the colonial masters and the challenges there from. We conceptualized political parties and national integration. We made effort to trace the history of political parties in Nigeria. The functions of political parties were also discussed. Attempt was made to discuss national integration efforts in Nigeria.

The findings of this paper show that various efforts have been made towards national integration through: state creation, federal character principle and quota system and rotational presidency. The finding of the paper also shows that these efforts have their challenges which militated against them in the realization of their objectives. The finding shows that politics has been at the center of the factors for the failure of these efforts. Virtually everything in the country is politicized. While the efforts were intended to achieve national integration, solidarity and unity, it ended up creating disunity among the people, and marginalization of one section by the other thereby leading to intense struggle for power between and or among people from different ethnic groups.

We also found that due to the nature of party politics, the political parties would have been a veritable instrument for national integration but unfortunately, the foundation and character of political parties in Nigeria is such that instead of the parties pursuing national objective, they pursue sectional interests. Secondly, some of the party leaders are more powerful than the political party itself and as such their selfish personal interest overrides the interest of the party and the nation as the case may be.

We therefore recommend that:

- The role of political parties as instrument of national integration should be specified in the constitution of the country.
- Any organization with sectional identity should not be registered as a political party.
- Internal democracy should also be a condition for electoral contest. Any political party without internal democracy should not be allowed to present candidate for national elections in Nigeria.

- Party constitutions must be strictly adhered to by the members.
- It should be made unlawful for any party member to cross-carpet to another party. Any person who wishes to cross-carpet should remain a non-party man for a period not less than five years before joining another party.
- Political parties should be made to follow strictly their manifesto if it wins election.
- Rotational presidency should be part of both the national constitution and party constitution so as to give every section a sense of belonging.
- Political offices should be made less lucrative to reduce the struggle to occupy them.

In conclusion therefore, since the aim of political parties is to control the machinery of the government, it is the most veritable instrument for national integration and national unity.

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