

Political Parties and the Nigerian Political Process 1999 – 2006 and Beyond

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of political parties in Nigerian emerging democracy. A historical perspective is adopted tracing the origins of political parties in Nigeria and the roles they have played. We highlight the process of party formation/registration and the role of Independent National Election Commission (INEC) and the interaction between the political parties, civil society and non-governmental organisations. We emphasise the ethno regional basis of the parties in the past and the changes since the 1999 and 2003 general elections to date.

Introduction

The ordering of government institutions both democratically and non-democratically at various epochs and climes have pre-occupied the thoughts of well known political thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau and Hobbes. In their era, monarchical system of government held sway. However, these political thinkers had the same fundamental cardinal objective in locating the social conditions which were conducive to good government.¹ The aftermath of the revolutions in Europe swept away monarchical absolutism. Thus, a paradigm shift occurred. Political thoughts shifted emphasis to a new novel institution of power and influence-parliament, politicians and the political parties.

Political party as a term emerged in the nineteenth century with the development of representative institutions and extension of the suffrage in Europe and the United States of America. Ostrogorkil undertook a systematic study of political parties in 1902 and his findings has become an important feature of democratic governments world wide.²

Political Party- A Theorist Approach

Many scholars have variously defined political parties. One of such definition was espoused by Hodgkin, who made a clear distinction between parties and other types of political or semi-political organisations such as clubs, committees, movements, revolutionary fronts and mafias. Hodgkin postulates that

Political parties possess some discernible structures, basic units of some kind linked, however loosely with a central directorate, they advocate certain policies and make public from time to time some form of party programme; they are interested in using the mechanisms of representative institutions to achieve political power or at least an extension of their political influence; and to this end they compete with other parties (where these... and appeal to an electorate for allegiance and votes...it is probably most convenient to consider as parties all political organisation which regard themselves as parties and which are generally so regarded³.

Schlesinger defines political parties “as a leader producing organisation.”⁴ Political parties have been viewed by scholars such as Duverger,⁵ Dalh,⁶ Key,⁷ and Michels,⁸ as organisations whose primary goal is to capture state power. Accordingly, they all agree that politicians need parties to secure political power.

Political parties are veritable organs in democracy and are necessary for control of executive activities of modern state system. Ayoade posits that “political parties are a united body of men and women who subscribe to certain programme and political methodology of implementation”⁹. Sambo asserts that “political parties are basic institutions for the translation of mass preference into public policy”¹⁰.

Sigmund Newman defines a political party as “the organisation of society’s active political agents, those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent view.”¹¹ A political party has also been defined as an organisation that sponsors candidates for political office under the organisation.

On the whole, most political scientists agree that a political party is the most crucial institution in any democratic system of government since it serves as the fulcrum in which the electorates play a pivotal role by electing leaders with their manifestoes and policies.

Functions of Political Parties

Besides their operational features and structural hierarchy, political parties perform various functions. Functions common to all political parties include

recruiting leaders, educating the electorate and forming governments. Furthermore, these functions can be subsumed under the following,

1. Nominating candidates for elections to public office;
2. Structuring the voting choice in elections;
3. Proposing alternative government programmes; and
4. Coordinating the actions of government officials¹².

Among all the many functions, educating the electorate is incontrovertibly considered the most crucial. The reason advanced for this is premised on the fact that it is not always that a political party shall form government. However, in most cases political parties ensure that the public is comprehensively educated about its policies even while in opposition.

A Brief History of Party Politics and the Political Process in Nigeria before 1999.

With the deep-rooted continuities between colonial and post-colonial political party formation there is an historical background which is necessary to provide the context and point of departure for analyzing post-independence political parties and polity especially in recent time.

Political parties in Nigeria have been bedevilled by myriad of problems such as lack of clear distinctive ideological orientation, precarious political process, lack of coherence, lack of continuity and subtle alienation of the electorate from taking an active part in ensuring a responsive and responsible government through party platforms. Julius O. Ihonybere posits that “a well known fact of power politics in post colonial Nigeria is the fact that political elites and the rich have historically privatized the state and appropriated its instruments and resources. Governance is often interpreted as an opportunity to get rich and to use public instruments of violence to protect class interests.”¹³

The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was the first modern political party, under the astute leadership of Herbert McCauley which contested and won the Legislature Council Elections in Lagos in 1923. The NNDP, failed to achieve its desired objectives. This led to the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) in 1944 by McCauley in collaboration with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. However, prior to that some prominent political dramatic personae such as Ernest Okoli, J.C. Vaughan, Samuel Akinsanya and H.O Davies had formed a political party called the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938. The NYM did not exist for long. Its abrupt demise was traceable to intense competition for political office among the founders. The NCNC became the only nationally organised political party between 1944 and 1951. The 1946 Constitution, which supported the incorporation of regions, provided the platform for the emergence of other political parties such as the Action Group (AG), and the

Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) to challenge and participate in changing the ongoing political process. These new parties resorted to ethnic coloration as their leaders were drawn predominantly from the West and the North respectively. With the death of Herbert McCauley in 1951, the NCNC led by Dr. Azikiwe gravitated and patterned its followership along regional/ethnic lines in the East¹⁵. The ethnic distribution of the political parties is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnic Distribution of Party Leaders 1958

Party	Igbo	Yoruba	Hausa / Fulani
NCNC	49.3	26.7	2.8
AG	4.5	68.2	3.0
NPC		6.8	51.3

Source: Richard Sklar and C. S. Whitaker Jr. 1964

Apart from these three major political parties which dominated politics in the first republic with ethnic coloration, several other parties emerged in subsequent years. One of the most prominent was the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). Others included NNDP and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC).

Between 1966 and 1978, politics and governance was concentrated in the hands of the military after the coup of 1966 that swept away the first republic politicians from the political process. The period 1979-83 marked the second republic and ushered in a new dispensation for party politics with the registration of political parties: National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP). One important point of emphasis here, is that again, the major political parties of the second republic drew their support and loyalty from ethnic affiliations and origins of their leaders/presidential flag bearers-NPP from the southeast, NPN from the North and the UPN from the Southwest. Unfortunately, the military took over power again in 1983 and suspended all political parties.

On May 3, 1989 the ban on political parties was lifted. Over 30 political associations then surfaced. Only 13 parties were registered (Table 2) due largely to the stringent guidelines issued by the defunct National Electoral Commission (NEC).¹⁵ S

Table 2 Names of Registered Political Parties

	Party	Full Meaning
1	ANPP	All Nigerian People Party
2	IPP	Ideal Peoples Party
3.	NNC	Nigeria National Congress
4.	NPWP	Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party
5.	NUP	National Union Party

6.	PFN	Peoples Front of Nigeria
7.	PNP	Patriotic Nigerians Party
8.	PSP	People Solidarity Party
9.	RPN	Republican Party of Nigeria
10.	UNDP	United National Democratic Party
11.	PPP	Peoples Patriotic Party
12.	LC	Liberal Convention
13.	NLP	Nigerian Labour Party

Out of the registered parties, the National Electoral Commission recommended only six for government recognition based on their geographical cum membership spread and organisation. However, President Ibrahim Babangida rejected all the six political associations for failing to reach the set pass mark of 50 percent. A statistical survey indicated the following: PSP (43.9%), NNC (42.62%), PFN (41.2%), LC (34.08%), NLP (17.9%) and RPN (17%).¹⁶

The creation of two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Party (NRC) by Babangida distorted the multi-party process. Dr Arthur Agwancha Nwankwo contested that “despite the newness of the emergent political associations, they were still characterized by the inter-play of primordial political loyalties and forces”.¹⁷ It was to prevent this attachment to ethnic and primordial sentiments that the Babangida Junta defaulted on all known integers of political party evolution to impose unilaterally, a two-party structure on Nigeria in 1991-SDP and NRC with a mocking cliché “a little to the left (SDP) and a little to the right (NRC).”

The formulated ideological slogan of “a little to the left and a little to the right” culminated in the presidential election on June 12 1993 which was regrettably annulled due to a combination of insincerity and manipulation by the Nigerian armed forces. The election was perceived as the freest and the fairest ever held in Nigeria. To state the least, the political process was once again altered by the military machinations and manipulations of Babangida and the military junta. To salvage the situation and save the nation from the emerging political imbroglio, an Interim National Government (ING) was initiated on August 26, 1993, headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan. This lasted for only 83 days because it was rejected by most Nigerians who saw the ING as another ploy by the military to continue its rule by proxy. However, little did we know that the military preferred direct rule. General Sanni Abacha’s Junta sacked the ING in 1994 and took total control of Nigeria.

Under Abacha, party politics was bereft of organisation and coherence. Political engineering assumed a deeper level of skepticism. Arthur Agwuncha Nwankwo stated that “when Abacha came to power, he dismantled the political structures set up by Babangida and went ahead to supervise the emergence of his own political parties. The five parties under Abacha were aptly likened to the five fingers of a leprous hand. Because of their praetorian

origin...¹⁸. Abacha's regime registered five (1-5 in Table 3) out of the 15 political associations that applied for registration.

Table 3: Political Associations under Abacha and the Ratings

S/No	Name of Association	Score (%)
1	United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP)	74.77
2	Congress of National Consensus (CNC)	65.78
3	National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN)	63.32
4	Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPM)	57.35
5.	Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM)	53.78
6.	All Nigeria Congress (ANC)	49.28
7.	Peoples Consensus Party (PCP)	48.85
8	Social Progressive Party (SPP)	48.65
9.	Peoples Progressive Party (PPP)	43.71
10.	National Democratic Labour Party (NDP)	30.87
11.	National Democratic Party (NDP)	26.56
12.	Solidarity Group of Nigeria (SGM)	21.01
13.	Progressive Party of Nigeria (PPN)	19.01
14.	Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)	16.46
15.	National Solidarity People Alliance (NSPA)	11.49

Source: Anchor, March 19-25, 2001, p.19b.

Before his death on June 8, 1998, Abacha had been mooted as the consensus candidate ratified by all the five registered parties involved in the political transition that was going no where.

Political Process and Parties 1999-2003

Scholars and many well-meaning political observers have remarked that the political process in Nigeria have at best been haphazard and at worst non-existent. It has been characterized by rhythmic dislocation and disruptions with absence of an enduring political legacy or ideology.¹⁹

A renewed attempt at democratic polity in 1999 generated enormous enthusiasm which is comparable to the mood in the country on the eve of national independence in 1960. A search for a new political order assumed a different dimension with the coming to power of General Abdulsalami Abubakar and the unveiling of his political agenda for the fourth republic. Over 30 political associations were formed as soon as Abdulsalami released a 10-month transition package containing party registration, conventions, campaigns and phased elections. Alade Odunewu informs that "a true political transition in our (this) context is about a movement from the culture of unquestioning obedience of military rulers to the engaging challenge of participatory democracy".²⁰

Most discernibly, Abdulsalami's political process was a clear departure from the political party experiments of Babangida and Abacha. Unlike the

failed political party experiences of Babangida and Abacha periods, where the electoral body embarked upon compilation of unverifiable statistics of parties spread and organisation, the fourth republic was premised on their performance in the December 5, 1998, local government elections. Only 9 out of the 30 political associations were eventually short-listed to contest the December 5, 1998 local government elections.

A post-mortem of the parties' participation reveals that at the end of the proceedings only three were deemed qualified. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP formerly APP-All Peoples Party), and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) after a slight modification to accommodate it (AD), were duly registered. Therefore, the choice available to the electorates in subsequent elections to the states and national assemblies, gubernatorial and presidential positions were limited to the PDP, APP and the AD. The contradiction of this was exposed with the outcome of the January 1999 gubernatorial election where the PDP had 21 governorship positions to APP's nine 9 and AD's six 6.

Like in the first republic, party alliances were arranged. The dominance of the PDP at the December 5, 1998 gubernatorial elections heightened party alliance between the APP and the AD, who jointly presented Chief Olu Falae and Alhaji Umaru Shinkafi in APP/AD alliance which was pitched against PDP's Olusegun Obansajo and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

The alliance between APP and the AD resulted in a muddled focus which robbed not only APP/AD of the elections victory, but also the PDP of concrete and different ideologies. This seemingly lack of ideology is traceable to the mad rush to see the military out of power in Nigeria political life. Accordingly that the process of party formation is then biased towards the establishment of elitist parties headed by well-known figures with conservative ideological antecedence, "it is therefore highly unlikely that any political process that emerges without a radical ideological base would be able to challenge the neo-colonial and dependent capitalism in which Nigeria is locked into".²⁴

Most of these political parties with the exception of United People Party (UPP) and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) shared similar ideological tendencies as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Ideological presentations of political parties before the 1999 General Elections.

AD: Welfarist economy with emphasis on efficiency in gas development, attraction of foreign investment, in capital intensive sector to resolve the debt crisis.

APP: Welfarist, mixed economy with emphasis on efficiency in agriculture, gas development. Attraction of foreign investments in capital intensive

sector. To seek solution to debt crisis.

PDP: Welfarist, mixed economy with emphasis on diversification of the economy to reduce reliance on oil. Leading role of the state in some sectors and privatization of sectors with private entrepreneur and which capital locally can handle

MDJ: Welfare mixed economy committed to private entrepreneurship and transparency in public finance.

PRP: Socialist economy based on public control of strategic economic sector. Fair taxation policy, ownership system and large scale industrialization.

UPP: Capitalist free market based on privatization of public enterprises as medium term economic progress to ease the debt crises and the implementation of the Vision 2010

Source: National Concord, December 2, 1998. P.11.

From Table 4, it can be observed that while the PDP, APP, AD and MDJ advocated a welfare approach, the UPP and the PRP were capitalist and socialist in their outlook. The major difference among the political parties was their economic philosophy. Only the AD and the APP shared similar economic philosophy. Despite this trend, the PDP won convincingly the presidential elections in 1999 albeit claims in some quarter that the elections were rigged.

Above all the PDP and APP showed electoral strength in the six geo-political zones, whereas the AD recoded success only in the South-West. Among the three parties that vied for the 1999 general elections only the PDP can be considered to have a national character. However, it performed poorly in that 1999 general election in the South-West. One of the basic reasons which continued against the PDP Success in the Southwest then was largely due to the military background of its presidential candidate-chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The fear of a pseudo-military dictatorship was another factor. More fundamentally, the major actors in the PDP were agents of the military retired soldiers and political sycophants who collaborated and continued with the military juggernauts to truncate the 1993 June 12 elections.²⁵ The political process continued until the 2003 general elections when the south-west

(Yorubas) supported their son – Olusegun Obasanjo for a second term as president under the PDP.

Political Parties and the Electoral Process in 2003

The 2003 general election was viewed as the turning point to break the continued dominance and control of the PDP. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) incapacitated due to shortfalls in the funding requirement necessary to carry out its functions before the elections. As if this was not enough, INEC faced a barrage of the court injunctions that made any genuine efforts at registration of new parties, review of voters register and conduct of general elections a very difficult task. To save face the INEC registered three other political associations – All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA); United Nigeria Peoples Party (UMPP); and National Democratic Party (NDP) – to contest the 2003 general elections..

The process of registering three more parties was not well received by political activists and NGOs representing civil society. They challenged the political status quo of party politics in Nigeria and the process of registration which they believed to be unconstitutional.. The Federal Court of Appeal in July 2002 ruled that INEC and the National Assembly had no power to set guidelines for the registration of new parties outside what was provided for in the 1999 Constitution. Prior to this INEC had drawn up its guidelines from the Electoral Act 2001 (aspects of which had been voided by the Supreme Court in March, 2002). Justice Salim Mustapha maintained in the lead judgement that: “In my view there are no other conditions for an association seeking to be registered as a political party to comply with other than those spelt out in Section 222 and 223 of the constitution” and ruled that the 27 associations which had applied for registration be allowed to do so without further delay by INEC.

Indeed, Section 222 of the 1999 constitution requires each political association to submit names and addresses of its national officers to INEC, open up its membership to all Nigerians, deposit its constitution and the amendment thereof with INEC; reflect no ethnic or religious symbols in its logo and have its headquarters situated in Abuja. Similarly, Section 223 covers the constitution and rules of the political parties as they have been duly registered. The implication of this court ruling was that it allowed unrecognized political parties to confirm their existence. This process fed the stream for the 2003 general elections and reduced the political tension which had developed when the INEC rejected some political association’s registration. As, a result of the Supreme Court ruling 30 political parties contested the 2003 general elections

Nigerians were also apprehensive towards the end of 2002 about INEC’s organisational acumen to hold the 2003 elections. This was worsened by thee non-release of the election timetable on time. There was still skepticism even it was officially released by the INEC. The timetable mandated that the

election to the Senate and House of Representatives would be held on April 12, 2002 while the Governorship and Presidential elections were to be held in April 2003. The House of assembly elections were scheduled to hold on May 3, 2003²⁸.

Both local and international observers monitored the 2003 general elections. Some of the notable ones were the European Union Observer Mission (EUOM), Washington based Institute for Democracy (IDASA), Nigeria's Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), etc.

Twenty political parties out of the 30 registered for the 2003 elections contested the presidential election. It is important to note that the Alliance for Democracy (AD), one of the three powerful parties in the 1999 elections, opted not to field any presidential candidate. This was hinged on the directives from Chief Abraham Adesanya, the Afenifere leader (Afenifere is a pan-Yoruba Organisation) that the AD and its supporters vote for President Olusegun Obasanjo the PDP candidate²⁹ who is a Yoruba man.

The outcome of the elections indicated PDP (the ruling party) recording a landslide victory. This raised fundamental questions and doubts about the transparency and fairness of the electoral process. In the gubernatorial elections PDP increased its control of states from 21 in 1999 to 28 in 2003 gubernatorial elections (out of the 36 states). The PDP equally won convincingly in the National Assembly elections. At the presidential poll the PDP garnered 24.4 million votes representing about 61.49 percent. The ANPP and AD were left to feed on crumbs and their fortunes nose-dived at the general elections of 2003. The ANPP, which had 9 states in the gubernatorial election in 1999, could only muster six states in 2003. The AD which had boasted of six states in 1999 gubernatorial election lost out woefully as it only managed to retain Lagos State.

The results of the general elections of 2003, with PDP dominant at all levels of government, gave rise to the clamour that Nigerian party politics had returned to the infamous one-party system. What emerged from the 2003 elections was that the PDP had taken control of the executive and legislative branches of government of the federal government, most states executives and assemblies and local governments.

Since political parties are pivotal to democratic ideals they are therefore, inseparable from democratic processes. The 2003 general elections, like other elections held in the past, were veritable avenues for popular participation in government through democratic process. Most significantly, the 2003 elections set the tune for others to be held in the future. In fact, it has become a model being the first successfully recorded transfer of power from civilian-to-civilian since the inception of electoral process in independent Nigeria.

However, the 2003 general elections have been criticised by both local and international observers. Elections are meant to serve as avenues of exposing general strengths and weaknesses of political institutions.

Regrettably, despite our protracted long history of electoral practice in Nigeria, the electoral system has remained largely infamous, ineffective and inexplicable. Various criticisms have continued to trail the 2003 elections. The Nigeria Civil Society (NCS), the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), the Catholic Justice Peace and Development Commission (JDPC) and Labour Election Monitoring Team (LEMT) are some of the various organisations and agencies, who have denounced the 2003 elections as fraudulent. Others include the Federation of Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), the Muslim League for Action (MULAC) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The following flaws have been observed:

1. Inadequate preparation by INEC resulting in logistical problems and inefficiency of officials especially on April 12, 2003 elections.
2. Pre-election activities such as voter's registration and education were hurriedly carried out by INEC.
3. The display of voters register for verification was not effectively done in some areas.
4. In essence voter's registration exercise created room for electoral fraud.
6. Domineering influence of state governments on INEC officials in many states including supplying, personnel who served as INEC electoral officials.
7. Violence in many parts of the country resulting in disruption or abortion of election at polling stations especially in the southeast and south-south zones.
8. The use of members of the armed forces and para-military to intimidate the electorates and party agents especially in the southeast.
9. Under-age and multiple voting
10. Ballot snatching and ballot stuffing
11. Falsification of results.
12. Employment of party faithful as INEC ad-hoc staff.

Current Political Trends

Like in the first republic, present political parties in Nigeria have tilted towards ethno-religious inclination. Adebayo Williams opines that "...no leader as yet made it his conscious mission to weld the disparate nationalities of Nigeria into a unified block... (as the nationalities are boxed into geo-colonial space of the memories of their distinct histories"³¹

Ethnic confrontations manifested by party politics have been reinforced by religious clashes and conflicts. The current political parties reflect their ethno religious arrangement – the Hausa-Fulani of the north predominantly Muslim, the Ibos in the East largely Christians and the Yorubas in the west fragmented between the two religions. The current three most powerful parties are drawn mainly from their ethno religious outlook. For instance, the

AD is essentially a Yoruba political party, while the ANPP is associated mainly with the Hausa-Fulani. The PDP on its part has massive Ibo following with strong presence and support from the northern generals. Other parties such as the APGA, UNPP and NDP accentuate further the ethnic structure and outlook of Nigerian party system.

The ethno religious underpinning of Nigerians political structure has necessitated certain political leaders canvassing overtly for electoral support based on religious and ethnic affiliations. Certain factors have been alluded to as potentially constituting threats to our democratic process as well as the stability of Nigerian's fragile polity. In Monte Palmer observes that the ruling class was principally more concerned with serving themselves and their ethnic community rather than Nigeria as a nation. He emphasises that "Nigeria's political parties are based on ethnicity such that being Ibo, Yoruba or Hausa-Fulani was more important than being Nigerian."³²

Nigeria's fourth republic with its numerous political parties and their leaders are under the control and firm grip of their ethnic, religious or regional associations. Notable among them are Afenifere and Yoruba Elders Council (YEC) in the south west, Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo in the South-east and Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA), largely dominated by the Hausa-Fulani from northern Nigeria.³² Other less influential, but which have gained prominence, include Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Middle Belt Joint Action Committee for the north-central region.

The imperfections of our political party systems have continued to generate interest far and wide. Politics at party level has degenerated into war fronts. Political assassinations and eliminations has become the order of the day. The relevance of parties at engineering the political structures has not been adequately felt due to problem of organisational adherence. Opposition groups which should act as checks and balances on the ruling party PDP, remain non-existent. Some form of merger plans have been mooted but nothing concrete has been done to challenge the ever increasing dominance of the PDP.

Other political parties, with the exception of the PDP, had been clamouring for the Federal Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), headed by Prof. Maurice Iwu, to give directions by announcing the timetable for next elections (2007). Most parties were worried about the delaying tactics of INEC and the general silence of the Federal Government. Divergent opinions feared that INEC and the ruling Party PDP had a covert game plan. This was buttressed by rumours that an Interim National Government (ING) could take over the reigns of government come, 2007. Fortunately, the Federal Government and INEC, at a forum in Abuja on Tuesday 29, August 2003 announced the dates for the 2007 general elections: voter registration in October 2006; while the presidential, national

assembly, state assemblies and gubernatorial elections to take place on the 14 and 21 April, 2007 respectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work has uncovered some salient issues on the relevance and importance of the role of political parties in national development. The prolonged military rule has considerably weakened our belief in sustaining democracy. However, political parties have continued to create avenues for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Since 1999, political parties have shown remarkable desire to exercise power. However, skepticism about Nigerians democratization process cannot be glossed over. The current political parties cannot be said to possess serious quality of a true political party because continuity has remained their major problem. It is imperative to state that real attempt at political continuity have always been truncated by military incursion into the political arena and the recurring decimal of party disbandment. Oyeeye Oyediran asserts that “many politicians behave like political bats changing party affiliations in response to the political fortune of their group.”³⁷ The formation and haphazard organisation of parties has contributed to the non-ideological bases of most political parties. Therefore, concerted efforts should be geared towards the restructuring of our party system to impact positively on the political process. To achieve these, premium should be accorded to the following:

- the convergence of a national conference where Nigerians can freely express their burning national and personal issues and make inputs on how to restructure and reconstruct the Nigerian state. This forum would offer alternatives on the need to make Nigeria a truly democratic state.
- There is an urgent need to promote and entrench political institutions in Nigeria’s electoral system that can endure changes. The Independent National Electoral Commission should be allowed to effectively carry out its functions without being dictated to by the powerful political class or the government in power. The over dependence on government by INEC for funds should be discouraged. This way INEC would not be subjected to manipulation to favour big time politician or the party in power.
- The Constitution urgently needs to be reviewed and made to reflect democratic tenets of the parties. Recognition rather than registration should be the hallmark of recognition. Parties must be nationalistic in outlook and exhibit the potential of continuity marked with distinctive ideological outlook. Political parties should be allowed to evolve electoral laws and reduce the hazards of ethnic nationalities

through constructive institutionalization of social justice and equity deeply rooted in cross-national realities.

- The education of the electorates must be upheld and encouraged by all political parties, the government of the day and INEC.

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