

Political Parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Challenges and Prospects

Henry Agba¹

¹ Postgraduate student, Department of Political Science, Rvd, Fr, Moses Orshio Adasu University, formerly Benue State University, Makurdi

Email: terdoohenry@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

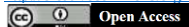
Keywords:

Political Parties; Democratic Governance; Nigeria's Fourth Republic; Internal Democracy; Party Ideology; Party Defection; Godfatherism; Elite Theory

Vol.01, No.03, 2026

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CCBY4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



ABSTRACT

This paper examined political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with the aim of identifying challenges and prospects. In a bid to achieve this objective, the paper relied on secondary sources of data collection. The methodology adopted for this work is the use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The paper adopted elite theory as its framework of analysis. Findings from this paper revealed that political parties are the key actors in democratic governance. Following the investigation, it became apparent that political parties have several roles to play in engendering participation in politics as well as democratic governance. Though there have been certain factors hampering the achievement of these lofty functions, among which are lack of party ideology, lack of internal democracy, party defection, the growing phenomenon of godfatherism, party funding among others. The paper recommended that the political parties must provide a level playing field for all party members. Also, political parties must entrench the principle of internal democracy.

Introduction

With the wind of democratization in Africa and Nigeria in particular, the formation of political parties has gathered more momentum. Political parties are *sin qua non* to electoral democracy, and perhaps one of the most complex and critical institutions of the modern democracy. The decades of the 1990s witnessed what Huntington called the third wave of democratization for Africa (Adebayo, 2009). Political parties are makers of democracy, and neither democracy nor democratic institutions are thinkable without political parties. The functions and responsibilities of political parties in a democratic society cannot be overemphasized. In fact, political parties are not just serving as a platform for electing public office holders but also performing the roles of opposition as well as watchdog to the government in power. They are not only performed functions that are government-related, such as making government accountable and exercising control over government administration; and electorate-related functions, such as political representation, expression of people's demand through interest articulation and aggregation, as well as structuring of electoral choices; but also, linkage-related functions, playing an intermediary and mediatory role between the government and the electorates.

Nigeria's political parties are products of the country's tumultuous political history. The oldest parties, the Nigeria National Democratic Party and the Nigerian Youth Movement, emerged from nationalist movements in colonial Nigeria and viewed participation in the colonial legislative body as a pathway to greater autonomy for the territory (Adeyemi, 2022). However, these parties were primarily represented and populated by the elite class, mostly from the south. The tripartite division of Nigeria into northern, western, and eastern regions under the Richard's constitution of 1945 given rise to ethno-regional-based party politics, deepening ethnic politics and exacerbating tension and conflict along tribal and regional lines. Periods of military rule that interrupted democratic governance in 1966, 1983, and 1993 further restricted the development of political parties to represent and engage citizens. While the major parties that dominate Nigeria's politics have disappeared, the foundations of the ethno-religious party system have remained in place.

The 1979 constitution introduced stringent measures for party formation and regulations to promote a national outlook in party activities and increase the spread of party membership across the country. The two-party system introduced in 1991 brought about public financing for political parties

with the aim of limiting the excessive influence of funders. A 2002 Supreme Court ruling liberalized the registration of political parties, leading to a surge of new parties. The number of political parties registered in Nigeria has jumped from three in 1999 to 91 in 2019, creating immense challenges for the regulation and management of party activities and processes (Ajogun, 2013).

Rather than acting as platforms for specific ideologies or issues, political parties are primarily used by Nigeria's elite to gain political power and influence. Defections are commonplace, particularly ahead of elections, as politicians jockey for the best platform to secure victory. It is against this background that this paper examines political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with the aim of identifying challenges and prospects.

Conceptual Analysis

Political Parties

In its simplest form, a political party is defined as a group of people with a similar interest in winning, controlling, and consolidating political power. Kura (2011) offers a more critical definition of political party. To him, a political party is an organization for expressing and harmonizing interests. Nnoli (2003) defines a political party as a group of people who share a common conception of how and why state acquire power and should be organized and used. Political parties have also been conceived as an instrument for contesting elections for the purpose of selecting candidates and parties to exercise political power (Yaqub 2002). A political party is simply a body of organized individuals whose ultimate aim and goal is to contest, win and capture governmental power through the instrumentalities of elections. While it should not be mistaken that the mere existence of political parties presupposes that a society is democratic or otherwise, however, competitive and periodic elections have come to at least define the character of liberal democracy (Momoh, 2013).

Whatever the view one holds about political parties, two issues are essential for any definition: a political party is a group of people who must share a similar interest in gaining, consolidating, and exercising political power. Political parties are quite different from other social groups, such as labour unions and other associations, because of their unique features. In the words of Mohammed, Aisha and Saidu (2018, p.45) such features include:

i. **An Ideology:** An ideology is basically a philosophy or set of principles that underlie a political program. It consigns the shared beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that cause a certain group of people to come together, advocate, and develop specific political program. Nnoli (2003, p. 177) observes that ideology is a very crucial aspect of political parties, not only by serving as a cognitive structure for looking at society generally and providing a prescriptive formula, that is, a guide to individual action and judgement, but also as a powerful instrument of conflict management, self-identification, popular mobilization, and legitimization. The ideologies of a political party are put down in writing in a party manifesto (or blueprint or action plan).

ii. **Manifesto:** The manifesto is a statement of the goals and principles the party promises to pursue if voted into power. As a contract with voters, the manifesto spells out the party's perception of the country's problems and states how the party proposes to address problems and help achieve the collective aspirations of the nation if elected.

iii. **Membership:** Another essential feature of a political party is the membership base. A political party recruits people who are committed to its ideology and principles and who will be able to vote/participate in party governance, policy formulation, and campaigning. Members of parties can shape the ideology and policies of their parties (Alfa & Eikojonwa, 2019).

Parties tend to be deeply and durably entrenched in specific substructures of a specific society in a sustainable and well-functioning democracy. Political parties link governmental institutions to the elements of civil society in a free and fair society and are regarded as necessary for any modern democratic system.

Political parties are institutionalized mediators between civil society and those who decide and implement decisions. By doing so, they enable their members' and supporters' demands to be represented in parliament and in government. Even though parties fulfil many vital roles and perform several functions in a democratic society, the nomination and presentation of candidates in the electoral campaign is the most visible function to the electorate. A political party is a political organization that

typically seeks to attain and maintain political power within the government, usually by participating in education outreach or protest actions.

Theoretical Framework

The paper uses elite theory as its framework for analysis; The elite theory which originated in the United States and is associated with scholars like C. Wright Mills, Vifredo Pareto, Roberto Michel, and Gaetano Mosca. Pareto believed that every society is ruled by a minority with the necessary qualities for ascension to full social and political power. He proposed that the circulation of elites is a two-way process: between the elites themselves and the rest of the population, leading to the destruction of social equilibrium.

Mosca further developed the theory of the political elite, arguing that in all societies, there are two classes: the class that rules and the ruled class. The less numerous classes perform all political functions and enjoy the advantages that power brings, while the more numerous classes are directed and controlled by the first through manipulation and deceit machines. Michels developed the concept of the "iron law of oligarchy," which he believed was one of the iron laws of history that has prevented democratic modern societies and advanced parties from escaping. He explained this law through the concept of organization, which he believed was a preordained form of the common life of great social aggregates.

Elite theorists agree that elites continue to engage in various strategies to perpetuate themselves in power. Mosca talks of a "political formula," which is the moral and legal basis for being in the citadels of power. He argued that elites employ various methods, such as oratory, persuasion, and playing upon sentiments, to fool the masses.

The elites in Nigeria's Fourth Republic have kept the state apparatus hostage through a skewed electoral process and undemocratic governance, resulting in a lack of accountability, abuse of power for selfish pursuits, personal aggrandizement, and crass misrule.

Institutional Designs for the Operation of Political Parties in Nigeria

Institutions, defined as organizations or rules governing the structure and activities of organizations, are important. They matter (Norris, 2004; Peters, 2000) because they define operational structure, influence, regulation, and change behaviors and outcomes. This is the perspective of rational choice institutionalism. That political actors have a "fixed set of preferences or tastes... behave entirely instrumentally so as to maximize the attainment of these preferences and do so in a highly strategic manner that presumes extensive calculation" (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 12). It is, however, important to caution that not all institutions produce the desired outcomes. Political actors could manipulate institutions to achieve their goals. In extreme circumstances, institutions are even jettisoned for personal aggrandizements. In such situations, conflicts and misunderstandings could lead to organizational incapacity or even the most debilitating outcomes.

Accordingly, there are five categories of institutional designs governing the formation, operations, and activities of political parties in Nigeria. These are: the 1999 Constitution; the Constitution of Individual Political Parties; the Electoral Acts; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) statutory rules; and other informal rules. Sections 221-29 of the 1999 Constitution stipulate criteria for the creation of political parties. This is where our definition of parties becomes relevant to understanding the formation and operation of political parties in Nigeria. Importantly, for any political association to qualify as a political party, it must fulfil the following criteria:

- i. The names and addresses of its national officers are registered with INEC;
- ii. Its membership is open to all Nigerians;
- iii. its constitution is accepted and registered with INEC;
- iv. its name, symbols, or logo do not contain any ethnic, religious, or regional connotation;
- v. Its headquarters is in Abuja (Section 222).

Similarly, the constitution and other statutory rules of the political parties must accordingly provide for the conduct of a periodic election on a democratic basis for the election of its principal officers, executive members, and members of its governing body at regular intervals not exceeding four years. Members of its executive committee and other principal officers must reflect the federal character of Nigeria, and these officers must belong to different states, not less than 2/3 of the 36 states and FCT (Section 223, Sub-sections 1-2). Individual political parties' constitutions provide detailed rules and

regulations governing the internal operations of the party. It also provides statutory laws establishing all relevant structures and organs of the party as well as their functions.

The constitution provides procedures for the establishment of ad hoc committees, such as disciplinary and inquiry committees. It also provides procedures for amendments. Importantly, the party constitution provides the *modus operandi* for the appointment, selection, nomination, and/or election of the principal officers and the nomination of candidates for public office. The constitution also provides detailed sources of party funding and financing and mechanisms for managing such funds. The procedure for election, selection, or appointment is *prima facie* for engendering internal democracy within the party. There are two categories of party candidates that are elected: the principal officers that are selected or elected through congresses and conventions, and candidates fielded to contest elections against other parties' candidates across all levels of government. In addition to the constitution, guidelines are also periodically formulated to regulate party conventions and congresses.

The Electoral Act is another category of statutory rules governing the activities of parties. It is usually provided by INEC, subject to enactment by the legislature (National Assembly). It is provided prior to general elections. Nigeria had the 2002 and 2006 Electoral Acts for the 2003 and 2007 with the 2022 for last year's general elections, respectively. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the second-most important source of institutional designs governing the activities of political parties in Nigeria.

The 1999 Constitution empowers it to register and monitor all the operations and activities of political parties. No wonder; therefore, often, INEC is at loggerheads with most of the parties. The conflicts range from funding to complying with constitutional provisions on internal and external audits to congresses and conventions. The last category of sources of institutional designs is informal rules. These rules are not usually statutory or codified. They are generated from socio-cultural norms and values governing people's behaviors and activities. For example, the issue of zoning has gradually become a norm in Nigeria's political landscape even though it is not constitutionally enshrined. The informal rules also work under the guise of clientelism and neopatrimonialism. It is mostly a universal norm that patronage is provided to party loyalists. In advanced democracies, there are internal party rules guiding the distribution of patronage, whereas in emerging democracies, such as Nigeria, the highest donors and strong political party architects determine who gets what, when, why, and how.

Rules and regulations are essential in creating institutions, regulating and changing actors' behaviors, and achieving organizational objectives. The extent to which those institutional designs achieve the expected outcomes is a function of the socio-cultural context under which organizations operate and the actors' behaviors. Institutional designs are not ends in themselves but means of achieving outcomes. That is perhaps why institutions are not fixed and static. They change in accordance with the circumstances and changing objectives of organizations, driven again by changing human needs and desires.

Ironically, even though many of the political parties have jettisoned the rules, regulations, and guidelines governing their operations and activities, they are still able to withstand internal conflicts and crises. It can be argued, therefore, that institutional designs provide a marginal contribution to the stability of the party. What seems to work perfectly for the party is the power of clientelism and neopatrimonialism, of course, superintended and/or supplemented by the abuse of the powers of presidential democracy.

Challenges of Political Parties in Nigeria

Lack of Party Ideology

Ideology is a crucial aspect of politics, not only serving as a cognitive structure for looking at society generally and providing a perspective formula, but also as a guide to individual action and judgement (Olanrewaju, 2015). Ideology is also a powerful instrument of conflict management and self-identification. In fact, ideology is the engine room of any political party. Dilly (2005) emphasized that the success of any political party is determined by the degree of political ideology, especially in advanced democracies. This issue of ideology has been so central to the activities of political parties across time and space; ideology has been regarded as the durable convictions held in common by party members with respect to the most desirable form, institutions, spirit, and course of action of the state. Ideology has been regarded as the most important vehicle of any political party. Fundamental to party ideology is

the entrenchment of internal party democracy to guarantee equal opportunity for participation and protest. In advanced democracies such as the U.S., Britain, Germany, etc., parties have been known to exist on a sustained ideological basis, not just as a platform for ascending to political power.

However, in Nigeria, since Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigerian parties have been established on baseless foundations. The absence of ideology in Nigerian parties is of great concern (Dode, 2010). Political parties are no longer after doctrine, myths, or beliefs; they refuse to offer anything special to differentiate them from other parties. This is because the more political parties we have in the country, the more difficult it is to differentiate one from another.

Nigeria's journey to civic culture, which is the fastest route to democratic consolidation, has been made rather unnecessary by non-ideological political space. Ideology enriches the content of politics and, as such, helps in the development of discursive democracy. The availability of manifestoes by political parties means that electorate can take parties on national issues and would help determine their choice of party to vote for in elections. Parties and their manifestoes need to espouse the ideology on which they plan to run government in order to give electorate a clear picture of where the country is heading and decide whether or not to work in that direction (Okoosi-Simbine, 2005). Lack of manifestoes and culture of debate in a democracy is slow poison that would kill the system in due course. Manifestoes provide the yardstick for measuring the performance of political parties and help them fulfil their reward mandate.

Political ideologies are largely alien to Nigerian political parties, which are utterly bereft of any modicum of a sense of direction (Olaitan, 2015). Political parties are just a constitutionally recognized platform for elevating our light-fingered leaders into vantage positions of authority, from where they loot and stash away unquotable figures in Swiss accounts while the masses wallow in penury. Hence, we have opposition parties that are just groups of disgruntled elements itching to have a bite at the national cake. This lack of ideology and a sense of direction accounts for why carpet-crossing is the order of the day in a Nigerian political setting. The view of Prof. Jibo

The dearth of political ideology during the 2007 PDP governorship campaigns in Benue State thus: "campaigns are carnival-like feeling; people were entertained with good music and dance rather than experience stress which is usually associated with political campaigns..... the campaigns messages were generally mundane. No serious issues were discussed". This description fits perfectly the campaigns grounds of many political parties in Nigeria. Jibo (2014, p.268-269)

Lack of Internal Democracy

Internal party democracy is an all-inclusive phrase that is used to refer to a whole range of methods that allow and grant party members access to party deliberation and decision-making (Scarrow, 2005). It was also conceived as the internal arrangement, structure, and coordination of political parties in consonance with democratic principles, with direct bearing on how candidates are selected, leaders emerge, policies are made, and funding is provided. Therefore, Okhaide (2012) observed that the need for political parties to adhere to the principle and practice of internal party democracy cannot be overemphasized.

In Nigeria, there is a quest for the enthronement of internal democracy among the registered political parties, particularly as it relates to the conduct of parties' primaries, where candidates are chosen to stand for election on the platform of their political parties. Internal party democracy does not only affect the credibility of elections but also the quality of leadership, governance, and development. In relation to the selection of viable and competent candidates, this is most importantly and firstly done through the organization of a primary election, which is a type of poll organized before the general election for the purpose of nominating a party's candidate (Wilhelm & Grabow, 2011).

Since the inception of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, political parties in the country have been marred by various degrees of internal conflict, squabbles, and crises, with the implication that the interest structure of the parties is often mired in endless contestations. Odibachi (2010) rightly asserted that since the inception of the first republic in 1999, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has maintained the front burner in the perpetration of internal crises resulting from the selection of candidates through party primaries. This, according to Aniche and Egboh (2015), contributed to the eventual defeat of the party's 16-year rule in the 2015 general election. Specifically, in August 2013, there was a major crisis in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) during their national convention. The crisis led to the creation of the

Kawu Baraje faction in the party and the Bamaga Tukur faction in the party. The result of these internal squabbles was the eventual creation of the New People's Democratic Party by the Kawu Baraje-led faction (Aleyemi, 2013). Similarly, Kura (2011) further noted that the 2006 primaries, which preceded the 2007 election, were also marred by resultant chaos and internal crises. Events in the 2007 election revolved around Obasanjo's third-term presidential ambition. Yar' Adua's consequent selection and other cases of intraparty rift. Within these unfolding events, candidate imposition and political sabotage were clear. Obasanjo, who was at the time president, declared the election a do-or-die affair. All these were because of agitation for power shift from the south to north.

In the same vein, other series of party primaries that showed a lack of internal democracy among political parties in this Fourth Republic were evident in the 2011 primaries, leading to the imposition and substitution of candidates. Adekeye (2017) succinctly puts it that in the Imo gubernatorial race, Mr. Ifeanyi Aranume was replaced with Engineer Ugwu, and in Lagos, Hilda Wiiliams, who emerged as the winner in the primaries, was also replaced with Senator Musilliu Obanikoro. Similarly, Kura (2011) observed that disregard for constitutionalism and a lack of internal democracy were cases where Mr. Rotimi Amechi was replaced with Mr. Celestine Omehia. With emphasis on the 2019 party primaries held between Saturday, August 18 and Sunday, October 7, 2018, the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) was embroiled in an internal crisis. Thus, APC governors were at war with the party's chairman, Adams Oshiomole, over the choice of the mode of the primaries to adopt Ojo (2018). It was specifically noted that APC had parallel primaries in Bauchi, Taraba, Cross River, Rivers, Imo, Delta, and Ondo States. Again, just concluded primary elections in Nigeria for 2027 general elections justified the level of lack of internal democracy in the Nigeria political system as All Progressive Congress (APC) and other political parties have changed names of candidates who legally won elections with those who did not.

Party Defection

Related to the problem of lack of political ideology is the challenge of party defection. Party defection is known by different nomenclatures such as "floor-crossing," "carpet-crossing," "party hopping," "dispute," "political party transition," "political party switching," "decamping," and "waka (canoe)-jumping" (Malhotra, 2005). According to Asogwa (2020), party defection is more common in the current democratic dispensation than in any republic or political party in Nigeria, especially in the Fourth Republic, which is not suffering from asylum crises. Party defection refers to changing political parties. In other words, it means changing from one political party to another. It is the political orientation of a member of a political party to move to another political party because of dissatisfaction with his current party (Awofeso & Irabor, 2015). Factors responsible for party defection include intra-party feuds, selfish interests of the political actors, incomplete party ideology, internal democracy, and leadership crises, among others.

The rate of defection of party members from one political party to another in the Fourth Republic has brought Nigeria's party system to mockery and disrepute. The scenario portrays Nigerian politicians not only as people without character and principle but also as people who are in politics for self-aggrandizement. Party leaders in the PDP suddenly move to the APC and begin to contradict everything they had done in the PDP and vice versa (Agudiegwu & Ezeani, 2015). In all these types of horse-trading and deal-making, no one seems to talk about the people or securing obligations or commitments for infrastructural development. No one seems to raise the issue of free education or healthcare, let alone anything remotely representative of the needs of the people (Badejo, Agunyai, & Buraimo, 2016).

The situation has become worrisome because political parties on their own now encourage defection based on the philosophy of "the more, the merrier, which is posing a serious threat to democratic governance in Nigeria. Badejo, Agunyai & Buraimo (2016) are of the view that the strength of character of politicians reflects the strength and effectiveness of political parties, which is invariably directly proportional to the degree of resilience democracy enjoys. The available data have revealed that during the 2015 general election, out of the 29 governorship candidates of the main opposition party, the All-Progressives Congress (APC), 18 had at one time or another been members of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which lost the March 29, 2015 presidential election to the APC (Yusufu, Ogaji & Idrees, 2022). The usual practice in Nigeria is that politician's defect to other political parties if they fail to secure party nominations during their own party primaries, while some who feel

disillusioned, cheated, or denied free and fair primaries defect to other parties so as to participate in the elections, with the intention of returning to their original parties after such elections.

Since the inception of democratic governance in 1999, there has been a gale of defections by politicians in Benue State. The 1999 elections brought Dr. George Akume as governor of the state under the PDP, with Prof. Daniel Saror, Joseph Waku, and David Mark as senators of the three senatorial districts, all on the PDP platform (Aliegba & Agaigbe, 2021). In the elections that followed thereafter, especially in 2007, political leaders who lost elections began to defect to other parties. For instance, Senator Daniel Saror, who had served one term as Senator on the platform of the PDP, defected from the PDP to the ANPP, where he served another term and contested for governorship since he did not stand a chance of winning the ticket for the PDP in the primary elections. Adom (2017) also noted that Gabriel Suswam, a protégé of George Akume, became governor under the PDP. Dr. George Akume, on the other hand, won the senatorial seat for Benue Northwest, also under the PDP, with Colonel Joseph Akaagerger (Rtd.) for Benue NNortheast Senatorial District and David Mark being reelected for Benue South Senatorial District (Adom, 2017). Former Governor Ortom who defected from PDP to APC after crashing out of PDP primaries in 2014 for the 2015 general elections was handed the party's governorship flag in the state and in the build up to 2019 general elections, he defected back to PDP in a dramatic show of "red card" political scenario, Daily Trust (2018). These defections have continued unabated after successive elections. As 2027 elections approaches, party defections have become the order of the day. In Benue alone, some prominent politicians like Matthias Ibyua, Micheal Kase Aondoakaa, chief Sabastine Hon among others have variously cross carpeted to either PDP, SDP or Labor Party respectively.

The Growing Phenomenon of Godfatherism

One of the concepts that has gained currency since the inception of democracy in the country is that of godfatherism. The recent activities of some Nigerian godfathers could be likened to attributes of mafianism; however, some still see the existence of godfathers as the balance of power in a democracy. Ezenekwe (2006) believes in the need to have a good-hearted individual (a people's hero) in the sole realm of absolute power, a godfather to distribute power as he deems, and anoints who rules. But godfatherism has taken on a strange dimension in Nigeria's political environment. It has become a menace, pulling down the foundations of masses-driven governance, thereby denying Nigerians the much-deserved dividends of good governance.

In the treatise on the civilian regime of Obasanjo and its relationship with godfatherism in Nigeria, a myriad of social commentators agreed on its nature. Among these are Soyinka (2004) and Adeoye (2009), among others. For Soyinka (2004, p. 45), "the greatest disservice President Obasanjo has done to the nation was to have promoted the cult of godfatherism, its illegalities, its naked violence, and its corruption." However, Adeoye (2009, p. 270), in discussing the dynamics of godfatherism in Nigeria during Obasanjo's civilian regime, argues that:

It got so bad under the watchful eyes of the Obasanjo-led government that godfathers assumed different names: gangsters, mafia, and criminals. The worst manifestations of godfatherism in Nigerian history came to life under President Obasanjo's democratic rule for one simple reason: he promoted and allowed it. Some of the godfathers truly possessed all the characteristics of mafianism, many of them behaving like Al Capone in a criminal world, but this set of godfathers perpetuated their criminality in an enduring political environment.

Cases of godfatherism are bound to occur in Nigeria. For instance, between 1999 and 2003, the fight was between Emeka Offor (Godfather) and the Governor of the state, Chinwoke Mbadinuju (Godson), who refused to dance to the tune of the godfather; Abubakar Rimi vs. Aminu Kano; Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu vs. Alhaji Lam Adesina; George Akume vs. Barnabas Gemade; George Akume vs. Gabriel Suswam; George Akume vs. Samuel Ortom; George Akume vs. Hyacinth Alia; and Nyesom Wike vs. Sim Fubara, among others.

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, the Nigerian political landscape has, more than ever before, been plagued by the overbearing presence and influence of political godfathers. Most politicians see political godfathers as the most convenient means of winning elections. However, experience has shown that the patronage of political godfathers carries with it grave consequences, not only for the politician but also for the public and the political stability of the country itself. The stranglehold of godfathers in

Nigerian politics continues to affect the aspiration of the country to attain the best democratic policies in many ways. It accounts for the corruption and violence that have characterized many elections in Nigeria. The crises being witness in some political parties in Nigeria today are the ugly effects of political god-fatherism in the country.

Party Funding

Party financing is essential in a democracy, and it is expected that the process should be transparent and in line with the regulations provided by the laws of a given country. Failure to adhere to the rules leads to corruption and other illegal practices. In Nigeria, there are set limits for elective offices of maximum campaign spending according to the 2010 Electoral Act. All contestants are required to strictly adhere to the rules. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, politicians used the process of political party financing to enrich themselves, while the electorate also got influenced in the process through a cliental-patron relationship where national resources were shared according to who had access to power. Public funds are looted to finance political campaigns, and in return, the winners loot directly from the public treasury to accumulate wealth and exert influence on their patrons. The correlation between money and politics in Nigeria has corrupted the electoral process since violations of electoral rules through excessive spending give some contestants an undue advantage over others.

The concept of political party financing has increasingly become an issue of great concern for analysts, policymakers, and commentators worldwide. It is an avenue for sponsoring campaign activities to capture power, but it should be transparent and less corrupt in nature to enable fair play. The status and transparency of political parties are very important for a sound democratic system. The IDEA Handbook of Political Financing (2011) examined various rules and regulations in political party financing across continents, including sources of campaign finance, donations, contribution limits, maximum spending, and other issues related to it. The process of political party financing and elections in Nigeria during the Fourth Republic is seen as perpetuating corruption, where politicians, especially those from the ruling party, diverted public funds to buy their way into offices. The election campaign in Nigeria is very expensive due to the cost of media spending, corruption, political culture, zero-sum games, crowd renting, and weak political institutions.

Money politics is prevalent in Nigeria because the political parties have the aim of winning power at all costs to have access to public resources for personal gain. They tend to employ all resources available through private funding towards that purpose, which corrupts the process. Money has impacts on politics in Nigeria with implications for democracy, especially in developing democracies like that of Nigeria, often resulting in a source of corruption. There emerged what is termed "godfathers," who sponsored anointed candidates in return for favours and resource distribution. There are constitutional and electoral acts that provide rules and regulations for political party financing in Nigeria, but the problem is adhering to the provisions and the ability of the electoral body to monitor the process and sanction the offenders. For instance, all issues related to political finances are covered in Section 225 of the Constitution, while reports on finances are covered by Section 226. The sections above empowered the electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to examine and study all income and expenditures of political parties in the Fourth Republic and punish offenders. In addition, the 2022 Electoral Act provides some sections for political party financing and a maximum limit on campaign spending.

Prospects

Political parties undoubtedly remain one of the most significant methods and vehicles for political organization. Indeed, parties play a pivotal role in enhancing efficient functioning of any democratic system. According to Stokes (1999), the central claim of democratic theory is that democracy induces governments to be responsive to the preferences of the people. Beyond these functions of political parties, however, is the political opposition role performed by parties in a democratic setting. Even though political opposition may not be perceived as one of the traditional roles of political parties, it remains one of the most inevitable aspects of any democratic society. Functional and effective political opposition is an important attribute of a vibrant, dynamic and inclusive democratic system. The opposition party in a democratic system has the task of representing the interest which may have been overlooked by the ruling party, provide unavailable information to the government about public reaction

to a particular government policy and provide criticism and useful alternatives to government policies (Apter, 1970).

Conclusion

The Fourth Republic in Nigeria, which began in 1999 after the end of military rule, has had a significant political landscape. However, political parties face several challenges, including the proliferation of political parties, which currently have over 90 registered parties, which can lead to weak parties and vote-buying. Party defections, where politicians switch parties for better opportunities, have also contributed to instability in the political system. This can result in party losses and the rise of "party hoppers." Party funding, where parties are largely funded by wealthy individuals, has led to some parties being too dependent on their sponsors' whims and caprices. Party discipline, where party members disregard discipline and work against the party's interests, has also contributed to weak and divided parties. Party ideology, which lacks clear ideological positions, has also been a major challenge. This lack of clear ideological positions makes it difficult for parties to differentiate themselves from rivals, making it difficult for voters to make informed choices. To strengthen the democratic process in Nigeria, the government, political parties, and civil society organizations must address these challenges. By doing so, political parties can play a more effective role in the Fourth Republic.

Recommendations

To address these problems and ensure the development of political parties, the following recommendations are suggested:

- i. To ensure limited 'healthy' internal rivalry and conflict, the party must provide a level playing field for all party members to contest any post or to seek party nominations for any public office.
- ii. To achieve the above, the party must limit individual donations to its coffers. This would prevent the dominance of wealthy political moguls from taking over the party.
- iii. Limiting individuals' donations suggests that the party must provide other tangible and reliable sources of funding. Thus, since the party has the largest membership following, it should develop an articulate policy manifesto as a way of motivating members to identify emotionally with it, consequently committing themselves financially to the course of the party.
- iv. To reduce the manipulation and machinations of money bags holding the party to ransom, the mandatory contribution from the salaries of office holders should be scrapped. This would make the party more independent and strengthen its internal democracy.

References

1. Adebayo, P. (2008). Political parties: Formation, development, performance and prospects. In Ojo, E. (ed) *Challenges of sustainable democracy in Nigeria*: John Archers.
2. Adeyemi, L.O. (2022). The challenges of democratic governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 6 (2), 23-34.
3. Adom, T. (2017). *The Seventh Benue State Assembly 2011-2015*. Chenemite Publishers.
4. Agan, A., Adzaigba, T. & Vihimga, T. L. (2019). The 2019 General Elections and the politics of party defection: Implications on democratic consolidation. *Nigerian Journal of Administrative and Political Studies*, 5 (1), 129-142.
5. Ajogun, C. (2013). The political economy intra-party opposition in Anambra State. *ANSU Journal of Politics and Administration*, 1(1)165-177.
6. Alfa, B. & Eikojonwa, R. (2019). The politics of defection and power game in Nigeria: Insight from 7th Lower Legislative Chambers. Available at: www.jist.org. Accessed on 3rd June, 2022.
7. Asogwa, O., J. (2020). Role of political parties and its effect on Nigeria political system. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies (IJMSSPCS)*, 3 (2), 56 –70.
8. Awofeso, O. & Irabor, P. (2015). Party cross-carpeting in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Cases and Causes. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 6 (3), 12-26.
9. Badejo B., Agunyai S., & Buraimo S. (2016). The politics of defection and power game in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Research*, 2(2), 11-25.



10. Dilly, C. (2005). *Democracy and the electoral process in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University Press.
11. Dode, R. O. (2010). *Political parties and the prospects of democratic consolidation in fourth Republic: An Appraisal of the Interconnections*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
12. Dosumun, A. (2015). *Political parties and party system in Nigeria*. Conference Organised by Dosunmu Mandate, Lagos.
13. Egboh, E.A. & Aniche, E.T. (2015). The state, political parties and crisis of internal democracy politics. *Journal of Administrative Studies*, 4(1), 24-30.
14. Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Promulgation 1999 No. 24. Abuja: Government Printers.
15. Hall, P. A. & Taylor, R. C. R. (1996). *Political Science and the three institutionalisms*. MPIFG Discussion Paper, 96(6), 1-32.
16. Jibo, M. (2014). *Elites politics in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria 1993-2014*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
17. Kura, S.Y. (2011). Political parties and democracy in Nigeria: Candidate selection, campaign and party financing in People's Democratic Party. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13(6), 21-35.
18. Mbah P. (2011). Party defection and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, 1999-2009. *Afro-Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 2 (3): 23-34.
19. Mohammed, I., Aisha, Z. & Saidu, G. (2018). Politics of inter-party defections in Nigeria: Whos' interest? *African Journal of Management (AJOM)*, 3(2), 114-135.
20. Nnoli, O. (2003). *Introduction to politics*: SNAAP Press.
21. Norris, P. (1997). Choosing electoral systems: Proportional, majoritarian and mixed systems. *International Political Science Review*, 18(3), 297-312.
22. Ojo, J. (2018). Party Primaries of tears and blood and sorrow. *The Punch*, Tuesday, October 10.
23. Okosisi-Simbine, T. (2005). *Political vagrancy and democracy in Nigeria*. Monograph Series No.11, NISER, Ibadan.
24. Olaitan, B. (2015). The role of political parties in Nigeria's democratic consolidation. *The Guardian*, Lagos.
25. Olanrewaju, J.S. (2015). Political parties and poverty of ideology in Nigeria. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 1-13.
26. Olorok, F. (2018). 2018 Primaries among the Worst in Nigeria- INEC Chairman, *The Punch*, December 1.
27. Omorunyi, N. (2002). *Party switching and the goals of membership in the US Congress: The cases of Arlen Specter*. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, paper prepared for WPSA, San Francisco, CA.
28. Peters, B. G. (2000). Managing horizontal government: The politics of coordination. *Public Administration*, 7 (6), 291-311.
29. Scarrow, S. (2005). *Political parties and democracy in theoretical and practical perspectives: Implementing inter-party democracy*. Washington, DC: NDI.
30. Stokes, S.C. (1999). Political parties and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 243-267.
31. Wilhelm, H. & Grabow, K. (2011). *Political parties functions and organisation in democratic societies*. Singapore: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.