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POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

PARTIE POLITYCZNE I NARODOWA INTEGRACJA W NIGERII: PERSPEKTYWA HISTORYCZNA

Abstract

In a democratic environment, Political Parties are the fulcrum and focal instrument because it set the foundation or the platform for representation in government and politics of a people.

As an institution that continuously seeks the control of state power and authority it then behoove on it to set the agenda of integration so as to synergize the strength of bonding for national achievement. However, this can only be achieved through its policy templates, true process of democratization and a more nationalistic outlook instead of sectionalism amidst others. Nigeria, as a country have been persistently challenged with the problem of achieving a common front due to the myriad of factors that continuously bifurcate every of its fiber or fabrics. Hence, this paper examines the role of political parties in achieving National integration in Nigeria.

After using the primary and secondary sources of data collection analysis it was obvious that political parties have continuously failed in integrating the society due to a strong hold on ethnic divides, corruption, unfulfilled promises, thuggery among other negative portraits. Thus, the paper recommends that political parties should reflect a national outlook instead of been primordial, therefore the independent national electoral commission should not register parties with parochial ideology more so, citizens should be encourage to massively participate in politics so as to enclose the possibility of election rigging.
Keywords: *Political Parties, Integration, Democratization, Nigeria*

Streszczenie

W środowisku demokratycznym partie polityczne są punktem odniesienia i głównym instrumentem, ponieważ stanowią podstawę lub platformę reprezentacji narodu w rządzie i polityce. Jako instytucja, która nieustannie poszukuje kontroli władzy i autorytetu państwa, zobowiązuje się następnie do wyznaczenia programu integracji, tak aby synergicznie zwiększyć siłę więzi dla narodowych osiągnięć.

Można to jednak osiągnąć tylko dzięki szablonom politycznym, prawdziwemu procesowi demokratyzacji i bardziej nacjonalistycznym poglądom zamiast sekcjonalizmu pośród innych. Nigeria, jako kraj, nieustannie stawiała czoła problemowi osiągnięcia wspólnego frontu ze względu na niezliczone czynniki, które nieustannie rozszczepiają każde z jej „włókien". Dlatego niniejszy artykuł analizuje rolę partii politycznych w osiąganiu integracji narodowej w Nigerii.

Po skorzystaniu z pierwotnych i wtórnych źródeł analizy gromadzenia danych było oczywiste, że partiom politycznym nieustannie zawodziła integracja społeczeństwa ze względu na silne trzymanie się podziałów etnicznych, korupcję, niespełnione obietnice, przestępczość i inne negatywne czynniki. W artykule zaleca się, aby partie polityczne odzwierciedlały poglądy narodowe. Niezależna krajowa komisja wyborcza nie powinna rejestrować partii tylko „o ideologii zaściankowej". Należy zachęcać obywateli do masowego udziału w polityce, tak aby ograniczyć możliwość fałszerstw wyborczych.

Słowa kluczowe: *Partie polityczne, integracja, demokratyzacja, Nigeria*

Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.

Since the artificial creation of Nigeria by the British colonial masters through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914 the country has continue has continued witness a continuous search for national integration as there have been repeated bid for the secession of the country by various shade of interest and bid.

The maiden secession bid was in February in 1966 when Isaac Boro, Sam Owamro and Nottingham Dick declared an illegal Delta people Republic and sought to defend it militarily (Tamuno, 1977:577).

These acts led to their arrest by the Nigeria army and finally condemn to death by the federal high court for treason and later got pardoned in 1967 (Etchie, 2015).

In May 1967, the people of the eastern region (Ibo) of Nigeria under the leadership of the military governor of that region, lieutenant colonel Odumegu Ojukwu, declared the formation of a new country known as the Republic of Biafra. This led to a bloody civil war which lasted for about three years (Anunu, 2015).

The Niger Delta Region got a takeoff from there on militia activities which birth the conflict between the Ogoni and the oil companies which escalated with high demands for compensation and accumulated royalties as well as immediate stoppage of environmental degradation (Okperi, 2010).

The end of that struggle gave room for the kaiama declaration in December 1998 which disrupted oil supplies and production and led to the Odi Massacre and killings of the Ijaw fraction of Nigeria by the federal military (Kaiama, 1998). There was relative peace until March 2016 which birth the rise of various militia groups in the region such as the movement for the emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Reformed Egbesu boys and the Niger Delta Avengers among others (Odomero, 2016).

The relative end of the crisis in the region gave a rebirth of the agitation for the creation of the sovereign state of Biafra speared headed by Nnamdi Kanu of Abia state.

This alone witnessed a lot of killings in the eastern part of Nigeria (Wikepedia, 2015). However, the survival of that tension was crisscross by the resurgence of the Boko haram and the Islamic State of West Africa People whose ideas are to create an Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria (Okpebo, 2014).

These chronicles underscore the consistent search for the soul and survival of Nigeria as a Nation. But it is pivotal to mention that the role of political parties in integrating divided and plural societies cannot be overemphasized because it is the platform for the floating of governance and the management of all societal segments in order to enhance national development. Political parties are fulcrum for democratic sustenance, nation building and vehicle for national cohesion.

Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.
The place of national integration of a country cannot be overemphasized because it is the string that connects productivity, development, technology as well as the economic boom of a state which gives stride for her honor and favorable disposition among comity of nations. For Nigeria as a country there exist a common fight for the preservation of its corporate existence through the creation of several institutions and the idea of modern state in achieving a united front. It is safe to mention that political parties as one of the integrative institutions cannot be left out. Hence, the paper seeks to x-ray the impact of political parties as instrument of national integration since their creation from epochal days of independence.

Aims of paper. **Methods**
The aim of this paper is to examine the role of political parties in achieving National integration in Nigeria.

The paper utilized the methods of qualitative and syntheses of scientific literature as it rely on secondary data. Generally, data were drawn from relevant published books, journal articles and newspapers and were content analyzed in relation to the scope of the paper.

Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. **Discussion**

Historical Background of Political Parties in Nigeria

In discussing history and evolution of political parties in Nigeria Ujo (2000) classified political parties into four generations. The first generation of political parties includes the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) formed in 1923 and 1936 respectively. These parties were localized in their base and their interests were narrow in tone to the colonial masters' demand. This perhaps limited tribal politics in that era (Saliu, 2008). The second generation consisted of those parties that emerged in 1945 and the end of the first republic. The groups are: the National council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC), the Northern People Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMB) and the Northern element Progressive Union (Ujo, 2005). These parties aim were to wrest power from the colonialist but their formation pattern was ethnic based and the personalization of their founders. The third generations were the parties of the second republic (1979-1983).The constitutional and political reforms of the second republic change the definition of political parties from a structural notion to a functional one with conditions such as national outlook, internal organization, recognition and registration by the electoral body. The third generations were sponsored by the Abacha and Babangida regime which witness some levels of national outlook and integration probably because they were financed by the regimes (Okpah, 2010). For instance the SDP political party has a muslim-muslim ticket of Mushood Kashimawo Abiola and Babangana Kingibe as his vice president yet Nigerians voted en mass for them without religious consideration. The fourth generation has its take off after the death of Sani Abacha in June 1998. The transition to civil programme of the Abdusalami administration lasted for eleven months the shortest in history and then there was the real take off of the republic with the sprout of over sixty political parties.

Theoretical Framework

The place of the elites in the formation and the internal functioning of political parties make the elite theory more appropriate as a framework of analysis. In political science and sociology the elite theory is a theory of the state which seeks to describe and explain the power relationships in contemporary society. The theory point that a small society or minority consisting of members of economic elite and policy planning network holds the power and that this power is independent of a state democratic election process (Wikepedia, 2009). The classical elite theorists are Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, with others like C. Wright Mills, Floyd Hunter, G. William Domhuff, James Burnham, Robert D. Putnam and Thomas R. Dye developed their views about the theory. According to the elite theorist, all sufficient large social groups will have some kind of elite group within them that actively participate in the group political dynamics. Elite are educated to govern and so the actions of the elite have consequences. To be really effective, an elite group should possess three qualities namely: group consciousness, coherence and conspiracy (Mahajan, 1988:800). These elite are divided into two categories: strategic elite and segmental elite. The strategic elite are those who claim to exercise wide influence over the entire spectrum of social set up.

The segmental elite are those on the other hand who have strong influence or responsibilities only in a sub-domain of society. Though, both draw their elite status from either or a combination of both factors: heredity, excellence in arts and literature, position in the ruling class or party or bureaucratic hierarchy, material influence and physical prowess. The strategic elites are more important (Mahajan, 1988:820).

Upper class or Aristocratic are some of the synonyms for elite indicating that the individual in question has a relatively large degree of control over society's means of production (New Politics Network, 2005). Since the stringent measures by Independent National Electoral Commission for party registration allows only the wealthy to fund parties, political god fathers emerged to sponsor those they can benefit from whether they are competent or not. Thus the elite dictates the parties paste and impose candidates on the electorates.

The Concept of National Integration

The difficulty of attempting a precise definition of the concept of integration has led to the adoption of three basic approaches: structural, cultural and maxian. Though, none of the approaches are mutually exclusive. Here, integration is viewed of the extent to which part interact and complement each other in other to constitute viable whole.

It is within this framework that national integration is considered as involving a process of holding tightly together the various nationalist or ethnic groups and institution dovetail manner through bonds of contrived structures, non and values.

National is also conceived as interims of degrees. Under this framework, generally, there could be vertical integration, for instance of social classes in the society as well as horizontal integration, e.g. the integration of ethnic groups.

The operation definition of national is the harmonious coexistence of diverse social groups (Bello, 1987).

However, Usaru (2001) conceptualize national integration as the unity of the various ethnic groups on nation in such a way that they see one another as brothers and sisters devoid of tribal sentiments, nepotism and all other vices that brings polarization.

This means the coming together of Nigerian citizens to speak with one voice, appreciate the circumstances of their nationality, contribute meaningfully to the development of their country and jointly protect the sovereignty of their country. It is a sought of action that means collective responsibility to swim and sink together in genuine of brotherhood and sisterhood.

Challenges of Political Parties and National Integration

Most challenges faced by political parties are quite enormous which ranges from leadership problem, ethnicity, sentimental employment, inflated promises; confuse zoning system, thuggery and hooliganism among others. As a problem with leadership political parties are yet to have or create formidable leader of astute political aura whose ideas are not contested by members of the parties.

This situation gives rise to different dimensions of confusion and cross carpeting from one party to the other. The hurried amalgamation done by the colonial government continues to impend us a nation because leaders didn't meet to socialize and agree on common nationhood before we became a people.

This created the existence of narrow political conception and primordial interest from the leaders who took over from the colonial officials and this continues to whittle down the struggle for national integration (Elvis, 2012).

Ethnicity: In spite of the shapeless prosperity and modernization which the country appears to have maintained through the recent expansion of oil revenues, Nigeria political culture is still build around ethnic exploitation and tribal sentiments in arriving at policy decisions thereby disrupting national unity and oneness. (Omoruyi, 1980).

Sentimental Employment: This is another form of ethnicity manifested in actions, parties through their officials or representatives who are in power employ people according to party line and ethnical background instead of reflecting a national outlook to create stability and integration of the country. Even in the areas of education, it is an historical fact that the West and East were more exposed to western education than the North.

As a consequence, in trying to remedy the situation preferential treatment are always given to the North. (Akinkuotu, 1999).

Confuse zoning system: political parties operate on a zoning pattern that gives rise to power sharing among dominant ethnic group.

This system fuels up series of debate and acrimony which create rivalry among Nigerians as different shape of interest that gives unrest in political system are evidently seen even before tenure expiration and another life circle of politics is reached (Eregha, 2006).

Thuggery and hooliganism: Since the creation of political parties in Nigeria election violence through the activities of thugs and hooligans.

The annulment of the June 12 presidential election of 1993 and the continuous crisis rocking elections in Nigeria has placed us to the outside world as unserious people and an economy that is not secure for any meaningful investment. According to the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR, 2019), the recent 2019 general elections witness 626 persons killed across Nigeria within six months between the start of the election campaign and the commencement of the general and supplementary elections.

Inflated promises: it is no news that political parties give untenable and unconceivable promises which are never meant after gaining power. This is due to selfishness, parochial interest, corruption and poor attitude to work (Olayele, 2010).

Generally, from historical analysis, political parties' formation in Nigeria till date has been in line with regionalism and ethnical focus instead of a more national outlook and approach. This alone with other associated factors has created the impossibility of achieving national integration through it.

Conclusions

This paper x-rays the integrative role of political parties since inception.

It is widely acknowledged by several scholars that political parties were formed in accordance to ethnic lines and fashions which perpetually continues to divide the fabrics of national integration than cohesion. Evidences have shown that they lack the internal cohesion to carry out programmes as a result of activities of godfathers.

Other emerging problems such as thuggery, unfulfilled promises and a lot have continue to dwarfed them from a more cohesive agenda.

Recommendations

The paper seeks to recommends that political parties in Nigeria should be highly institutionalized instead of been left in the hands of few barons who dictate the tone of the party. Constitutional amended and reforms should be carried out to close loopholes in the nation's electoral activities and institutions.

This will help to mitigate electoral malpractices experienced. Constitutional reforms should all suit the basis for party candidacy and regional representation so as to highly reduce the rate of disaffection among various sections in the country.

Political parties should have strong ideology and value orientation as a major core. Thus political parties formed to suit parochial interest and ambition should not be registered by the electoral umpire.

Citizens should be widely involve in national politics so as to enclose the opportunities for nefarious act and attempt to swindle electoral results or outcome.

As a process of participation they should dictate the type of political parties that should have access to power through the strength of their permanent voters and peaceful protest when necessary. This will eradicate business as usual syndrome of political parties in Nigeria.

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