



Political Parties and National Integration: An Assessment of the Nigerian State since Independence

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Abstract: The role of political parties in integrating divided and plural societies cannot be overemphasized. This lies on its ability to unite the ruled and the rulers and also to incorporate all the diverse segments of the society for national development. Since modern state institutions alone cannot promote national integration, political parties are therefore seen as the fulcrum for democratic sustenance, nation-building and vehicle for national cohesion. The crux of this paper is to interrogate how political parties in Nigeria since independence have fared in building a cohesive and indivisible nation-state. The paper argues that political parties, in spite of their over ninety years of existence in Nigeria, are yet to play adequate role in integrating the nation. Rather, the poor performance and ethnic inclinations of the parties have culminated in bad governance disunity of the country. The paper thus suggests a restructuring of Nigeria's political parties within the confines of genuine democratic norms, to ensure national integration, stable democracy and sustainable development.

Keywords: Political Parties, Nation-State, National Integration, Sustainable Democracy

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society brought together by the 'accident' of colonialism. Scholars are yet to actually determine the number of ethnic and language groups in Nigeria. While some have estimated it to be between 250 and 400, Hoffman (1974) puts it under 400 (about 394) and Wente-Lukas (1985), combining different sources has submitted that Nigeria comprises fewer than 619 ethnic groups. The dominant groups are the Yoruba in the Southwest, Hausa/Fulani in the North, Igbo in the Southeast and The Ijaws in the South-South. In terms of

size, the first three groups have been controlling the political and economic space of the country since independence until recently, that political power shifted to the South-South. Apart from its ethnic pluralism, Nigeria is also considered to be a multi-religious society, with Christianity and Islam being the dominant religions. Incidentally, its religious groups are closely linked to the ethnic groups.

Prior to amalgamation in 1914, these nationalities have existed independently with little or no contact. Although some anthropological evidences have

revealed that prior to colonial conquest that there were contacts among these diverse ethnic nationalities especially in the areas of trade, but it was the colonial conquest that brought them under a colonial “unity government”. Scholars have argued that the amalgamation was for administrative convenience and economic interest of the colonial lords. Without colonialism, it has been observed that there was no indication that these ethnic nationalities would have come under the same government, since they were all distinct in their own rights. Although Dudley (1982) has argued that with increasing trade relations and imperial activities such as conquest there was the probability a Nigeria State in the future, a position strengthened by Ahmadu Bello (1962) when he argued that the southern extension of the Jihad would have produced a state with approximately the present shape of Nigeria.

Beginning from 1922 and mainly after the Second World War in 1945, the country began to chart a way out of the colonial entrapment. Some of the nationalists who saw the need to manage the country by the indigenous people intensified the nationalist struggles. By October 1960 and October 1963, Nigeria attained political independence and republican status, paving the way for indigenous rule. However, from independence to date, the Nigerian political class has had the major task of evolving a nation out of its

complex diversity. Managing this diversity has become a herculean task. This, most often than not, has often impinged on the inter-group relations and has made national integration a herculean one.

This article therefore examines the extent to which the political parties in Nigeria since independence have developed into a formidable group that could promote national cohesion.

Conceptual Discourse National Integration

The concept “national integration”, particularly in the Nigerian context, is an elusive one. Various scholars have seen from different perspectives such as national cohesion, political integration or national integration. In the view of Morrison *et al* (1972), national integration connotes a process in which members of a social system develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist overtime and the boundaries of the subsystem become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community. To Jacob and Tenue (1964), national integration connotes a community relationship within the same political entity, or a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual progress. Similarly, Schabowsca and Himmelstrnd (1978) see national integration as an identification of the population with

the broader community other than its own group, and the emergence of such bond that does not breach ethnic solidarity. In the same vein, Duvenger (1976) views national integration as the process of unifying a society based on the principle of equitable harmony.

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution as amended recognizes the importance of national integration in a plural society. Chapter 11 paragraph 15 (1) of the constitution states that the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be Unity and Faith; Peace and Progress, while paragraph 15 (2) states that “accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited”. Chapter 11, paragraph 15 (3) of the same constitution also states, *inter alia*, that “for the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to: (a) provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation, (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation and (c) encourage intermarriage among persons from different places of origin or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic ties.

In spite of all these provisions however, Nigerians still live as strangers. Although, the constitution has these robust promises in letter,

yet in practice this is far-fetched. When it comes to elections and political appointments, Nigerians are divided along ethnic lines, religion and indigeneship. This is contrary to the essence of political parties, which by virtue of their diverse social base should be one of the tools for catalyzing national integration in multiethnic societies such as Nigeria. Kautsky (1992) has averred that viable political structures such as political parties, trade unions and pressure groups, when they operate effectively, are instruments of integration at the lower level, which in turn serve as basis for a wider and national integration.

Political Party

Several scholars have come up with one definition or another of the concept ‘political party’. Appadorai defines a political party as a more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, with distinctive aims and opinions on the political questions of the state and who, acting together as a political unit, seek to control government (Appadorai 1968). To Adeyemi (1980) political parties are associations formally organised with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and/or maintaining legal control either singly or in coalition or in electoral competition with other similar associations over the personnel and the policy of government of an actual or sovereign state.

Political parties may also be defined by their principal aim which is to

seek power. Thus Joseph Schumpeter observed: "the first and foremost aim of each political party is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or to stay in it". Giovanni Sartori on the other hand asserted that parties are the central, intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that political party is a group of men and women whose intent is to promote public welfare upon some principle on which they are all agreed. A party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power with the major aim of promoting public good.

For Schattschneider, "a political party is first of all an organized attempt to get power". As can be discerned from the various definitions explored, the concept of power ran through all. Power is the ability to influence others to do things which otherwise they would not have done. If the ultimate aim of political parties is to attain power, the question can then be posed, power for what? This power ultimately should be to pursue the interest of the group that formed the party and for public good. Political parties are the fulcrum for the struggle for power and the enunciation of doctrine and programmes for the governance of any society.

Values of Political Party

The major value of any political party should include ideology,

internal democracy and effective performance of certain functions. The functions according to Nwolisie (2013) include interest articulation and aggregation, enhancement of popular participation in politics and government, democratic leadership recruitment and training, campaign for leadership candidates, presenting elected candidates for contesting elections and forming government where victory is achieved, representing and pursuing articulated and aggregated interests when in government, providing ideas for electorate, mobilizing and motivating citizens for politics and elections, and political socialization of citizens.

Theoretical Discourse

In a democratic system, political parties are the organizing vehicles for the struggle for power and the articulation of principles and programmes for governance of the society. They are composed of freely associating individuals who seek to capture political power and use that power to govern the country according to their shared ideas, visions and programmes. By this, they are indeed on course to perform several roles necessary for the maintenance of a system. These are among others, training, socialization, education, political recruitment, consensus building, and so on. According to Apter (1965) political parties through their recruitment practices build the channels of communication between the otherwise hostile and non-communicating groups, bringing

them into sets of relationships on which the state is built. This invariably implies that political parties with their different social base and organizational characteristics should be able to link people in a plural society together in order to actualize a broader societal goal.

Political parties are supposed to be capable institutions for engendering national integration. Hence, March and Olsen (1989:21) see political institutions not in terms of an abstract structure but rather as a collection of norms, rules, understanding and routines. To them, parties are durable institutions with ability to influence behaviour of individuals for generations. This is because individuals make up institutions and institutions are shaped by the activities of its members. In this regard, Leacock (1996) identifies five conditions necessary to constitute a political party. According to him, there must be certain measure of agreement on fundamental principles that can bind people together as a political unit: men and women holding similar views must be duly organized as this organization into a permanent cohesive body enables them to acquire strength to act in concert; people so banded and organized should formulate a clear and specific programme, which they should place before the electorate to win their support and devise possible means to maintain it; they should carry out their policy through constitutional

means by allowing the ballot box decide their fate and claims to form government; and all political parties must endeavour to promote national interest against personal, sectarian or communal interests.

Parties in the developed democracies to a larger extent have always adhered to these principles but the reverse is the case in the developing countries where there are weak institutions and primordial and personal interests tend to override the national interest. In such situations, personal interest is regarded as national interest. The parties are so poorly organized that the will of the leaders of the party are forced on all other members. There is lack of party discipline, clear manifesto and fusion of the party with the leader of the party. Since independence to date, Nigeria has floated different political parties with different nomenclature but with the integrative role of parties not been performed. Can we say that the political parties as an abstract institution have problem or the individuals in them? In answering this question, Machiavelli while alluding to the collapse of the Florence Republic concluded that the soundness of the institutional structure was less important for maintaining a republic than the civic ethos of its citizenry. A people who have become corrupt or otherwise lack a robust civic spirit cannot sustain republican institution and practice (Klusmeyer 1995). For Machiavelli therefore, the welfare of

the republic depends on citizens who are capable of exercising independent political judgment, who are patriotic, respectful of their fellow citizens, disciplined and inspired by the love of honour and glory. Political parties in Nigeria, though prior to independence worked assiduously to disengage colonial powers, but since independence has been more of agent of disintegration than integration. The crop of politicians who received the mantle of leadership from the colonialist rather than pursuing national agenda pursued parochial and primordial agenda. This human deficit is transferred unto the political institutions to create an institutional integrity problem for the country.

Political Parties and National Integration in Nigeria: A Retrospective Analysis

Although some forms of informal political activities had begun in Nigeria prior to 1922 (Agbaje 2005), the first political party to emerge in Nigeria was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was formed in Lagos in 1922 by Herbert Marculay and his associates. It contested elective legislative seats in Lagos and Calabar under the limited franchise system for local representation approved in the 1922 Clifford Constitution. As nationalist activities continued, and with the demise of Herbert Marculay and the introduction of regional principle by the Richards Constitution in 1946, other nationalists' political parties emerged.

The parties that emerged at this juncture included: the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later National Council of Nigerian Citizens) (NCNC), Action Group (AG) (formed from a Yoruba socio-cultural organization, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*) and Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), formed from *Jammah Mutenen Arewa*. The AG and NPC were basically regional parties drawing their major support from their ethnic groups in the West and North respectively. Only the NCNC had and maintained a national outlook but was forced to recede to Eastern Region after its leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who had won a seat in the Western Regional Assembly was prevented from going to the centre by the newly formed AG. This was because representation in the central institution is determined by the Regional Assembly (Osaghae 2002). It would be recalled that during the 1951 Western Region House of Assembly election, Azikiwe's NCNC defeated the Obafemi Awolowo-led AG in the Western Region by securing 35 seats against AG's 29 (Kurfi 1983). The implication of this was that Azikiwe, an Easterner would have gone to represent the Western Region at the centre (Lagos). However, this opportunity was denied him overnight by AG's negotiation and securing of the decampment of 16 legislators elected on the platform of other smaller political parties. Although this action was played

down in the contemporary Nigerian political discourse, however, this singular act dealt a deadly blow on a march towards national cohesion using political parties as a platform in Nigeria.

These three dominant parties could in a way be regarded as nationalist, at least for uniting to fight a common 'enemy' (colonialism) and gaining independence for the country. According to Osaghae (2002) and Yaqub (2003), regardless of the socio-cultural and regional antecedents of these parties, they were able to reduce primordial sentiments among them and their supporters and mobilized them to end colonial rule. But what was noticed immediately after independence was that these 'nationalists' rather than continue to champion national cause that would unite the young nation, began to pursue personal, regional and primordial interests. If these parties had stepped up the unity of purpose with which they eliminated colonialism, perhaps the country would not have been enmeshed in the political crisis that rocked the First Republic.

But what was noticed was that as independence became imminent, the music began to change and primordial and selfish interest began to set in. Power relations and competition for power became the hallmarks of politics and how individuals were organised to contest for power is another ball game. As time went by, rivalry grew among

the political parties with each trying to outdo the other and succeed the departing colonial masters. Although this rivalry actually began with the introduction of the principle of regionalism, but it was a healthy one because it had to do with economic development of the regions. The parties rather than seek national support receded to their ethnic groups for support. Little wonder that from independence to the collapse of the First Republic, there was no emergence of a national party. Hence Ojo (1985) argued that:

there was no doubt that the Nigerian leaders worsened the situation by not evolving a national party that would unite the country. Instead, the three major parties, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the national Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) was regionally based and drawing support from their regions.

These rivalries culminated in the eventual collapse of the First Republic and eventual military take-over in 1966. After several years of military rule, party politics resumed in the country in 1979, ushering in the Second Republic. The 'framers' of the 1979 constitution were careful in the clauses added to the constitution especially with regards to electoral matters to avoid the pitfalls of the First Republic. This was done to forestall the emergence of regional or ethnic-based parties as

was the case in the First Republic. Political parties were constitutionally mandated to be national in name, formation and operations (Vide SS 201-209). The codification of an otherwise voluntary action became an important determinant of both intra and inter-party relations. The ingredients of the party code include:

1. official party registration by the electoral body (s. 202);
2. periodic elections of officers and in compliance with federal character principle (s.203);
3. party aims and objectives must conform to the Fundamental Objectives and Directive principles of State Policy (3.204);
4. account for all its assets and liabilities, disclose their sources and submit its books or records of financial transaction for audit (ss.205-206);
5. prohibition of quasi-military organizations (s.207);

These provisions were aimed at solving the nagging Nigerian problems of North-South dichotomy, thereby engendering national integration. Similarly, the 1979 Constitution prohibited carpet-crossing. Section 64(1:9) of the Constitution states that a member of the Senate or of the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if,

Being a person whose election to the House was

sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that house was elected.

This was done to ensure discipline and accountability of the elected officials to the electorate and their political parties. The constitution further provided that a person for the candidate of the President of the Federation was expected to score at least two-third of the total votes in at least two-third number of states in the federation before being declared winner. In all, five (5) political parties were registered to contest for the election. These included National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and People's Redemption Party (PRP). The sixth one with the name National Advance Party (NAP) joined the race to contest the 1983 elections (Agbaje 2005). By the end of the presidential elections in 1983, the country was thrown into the debacle of determining the actual interpretation of the constitutional provision of two-third. The dream of the government to have a national party was jeopardized again as most of the parties that emerged were more or less the offshoots of the parties of the First Republic. The NPP (Nnamdi Azikiwe), PRP (Alhaji Aminu Kano), NPN (Alhaji Shehu Shagari) and UPN (Chief Obafemi Awolowo) had the same values, leadership and orientation of the defunct First

Republic parties, namely, NCNC, NEPU, NPC, and AG (Agbaje 2005). Although the leader of NPN is different from the original leader in the First Republic, but its emergence could be traced to the Hausa/Fulani platform, which was more or less the regrouping of the old NPC stalwarts. Similarly, the location of party offices and officials reflected the region, which the leaders of the parties hailed from. This manifested in the outcome of the results of the elections. For instance, NPP won most of votes from the two Igbo states of Anambra and Imo; UPN won most of the votes from the Yoruba states; and the same was applicable to the NPN in the North (Osaghae 2002:124-125). There was high level of inter/intra-party conflict. There was mistrust and fusion of religion into politics. So it was difficult for parties that could not maintain internal cohesion to achieve national integration. Apart from the NPN that had its members cutting across ethnic boundaries, other ones had ethno-regional outlook. Hence, rather than forging national cohesion, political parties promoted national polarization. This deep-rooted crises and unhealthy rivalry among the political parties necessitated the military taking over again and bringing to an end the Second Republic.

This era of military incursion into the Nigerian body-politic marked the second phase of military rule, which lasted from December 31, 1983 to May 29, 1999. This long period witnessed endless democratic

transitions and series of military coups and counter coups. According to Osaghae (2002) between 1960 and 1996, there were no less than ten officially known coups in Nigeria. All these were successful and involved change in regimes. Two were unsuccessful but bloody (1976 and 1990) and three were nipped in the bud and the officers involved were either jailed or executed (1986 and 1995). There were also rumours of unreported coup plots and executions of convicted officers within these periods (Osaghae 2002).

It was during this second wave of military rule that the country first experimented with a two-party system of democracy. Initiated by the Babangida regime, there emerged the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with a "little-left" ideology and National Republican Convention (NRC) with a "little-right" ideology. This, according to the administration was done to foster national unity and development. The membership cut across all the ethnic and religious boundaries. Unlike the parties of the First and Second Republics, election was to be devoid of ethnic or regional sentiments, just as was the case of the Western Region House of Assembly Election of 1951. In the ensuing presidential election in 1993 between Mushood Abiola and Babagana Kingibe (a Muslim-Muslim ticket and a Yoruba presidential candidate of the SDP) Bashir Tofa and Silvester Ugoh of the NRC were swept off in a landslide outcome in favour of the

SDP. According to Yaqub (2003), SDP won in Christian-dominated regions of the South, notwithstanding the fact that the counterpart NRC had a Christian and Igbo from the Southeast as its running mate. SDP on the other hand lost to the NRC in some core Muslim-dominated areas such as Bauchi, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger and Sokoto States despite the fact that it had Muslims as its candidates. But this laudable project could not see the light of the day because of the insincerity of the Nigerian military leader of the time, General Ibrahim Babangida which led to the annulment of the election, which was widely adjudged at home and abroad as the best election in the country.

The crises that erupted as a result of the annulment of the election made the military government of General Babangida to step aside and hand over power to Chief Ernest Shonekan who led the Interim National Government (ING). The idea of handing over power to Chief Ernest Shonekan a Yoruba was a calculated scheme to pacify the Yoruba, whose son, Chief MKO Abiola had been denied electoral mandate. It is instructive to note that given the events which played out during the struggle for the actualization of the June 12 election mandate of Abiola, the two parties created by the government might not have engendered national integration as has been argued in some quarters. With the military annulment of the June 12 election, it should have been

expected that the whole country would rise to demand justice from the military government over the stolen mandate. But rather than having a robust struggle against the military, the struggle was seen as a Yoruba affair while the other ethnic groups withdrew to their shell. Even some ethnic groups especially the Igbo saw it an opportunity to take a revenge on the Yoruba ethnic group for failing to assist them during the thirty-month Nigeria/Biafra war. To worsen matters, Chief Abiola's running mate, Kingibe of Hausa/Fulani extraction sold out as he accepted an appointment to serve under the Abacha-led military junta that overthrew the ING. So, in this second opportunity, the political parties also failed to act as instrument of national cohesion.

Although some political activities took place during Abacha's five-year reign, but they were not done to engender national integration but to perpetuate Abacha's attempt at transmuting into a civilian president. In order to achieve this desire, he floated the idea of being adopted by all the five major parties, in what Bola Ige had branded as "five fingers of a leprous hand". This agenda could not however materialize because of Abacha's sudden death on June 8, 1998. His demise paved the way for the emergence of General Abdusalami Abubakar as the new Head of State. The Abubakar administration did not last long as the country was already tired of military dictatorship as there also

was mounting international pressure on Nigeria to democratize. So the government embarked upon a short transition to civil rule programme.

Political Parties and National Integration in the Fourth Republic

The journey to the Fourth Republic began in 1998 following the death of General Abacha. But could we say that the political class had learned any lesson from the failure of the previous Republics? Well the events that played out during this period will explain. The Fourth Republic deviated from the aborted Third Republic by adopting a multiparty democracy similar to the defunct First and Second Republics. After

Political parties are the vehicle for organization in the struggle for power in a democratic system. In fact, there is no democracy without political party. This is because of the constitutional and expected unifying roles of political parties in inter-group relations, particularly in a plural society. Be that as it may, the political parties in Nigeria since independence have not done much towards nation-building. Apart from 1954 that they all agreed to end colonial rule, all other efforts towards national integration have remained a mirage. Even the much acclaimed 1954 consensus was not actually to achieve national integration but rather to achieve a parochial interest. The then political elites schemed to replace the outgoing colonial masters and to enjoy the perks of office like the outgoing colonial masters. This

actually played out during the politics of the First Republic as each of the so-called nationalist leaders tried to outsmart the other in order to control the centre and when this could not be achieved, they resorted to primordial instruments. It was also evident in the Fourth Republic when the Sharia legal code was used as by the Northern politicians as an instrument to galvanizing political support not minding the effect on the general polity. In spite of the constitutional provisions, especially the 1999 constitution as amended, sectional interest has continued to override national interest and these impede efforts towards building a cohesive nation. alignments and realignments of the political associations, three political parties- Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All Peoples Party (APP) were registered to contest in the 1999 general elections. One of the Parties, PDP tried to maintain a national outlook with its membership cutting across all the states of the federation. The APP could manage a semi-national outlook, while the AD tended to maintain the Southwest as its stronghold.

In a similar vein, the military interest again overwhelmed this era as the departing military government seemed to have been favourably disposed to the PDP and in placating the Southwest for the June 12 injustice, settled for a retired General from the Yoruba ethnic group, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. While the PDP

favoured the emergence of General Obasanjo, the APP and AD formed an alliance against the PDP during the presidential election with a new name the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) with a Yoruba presidential counterforce, Chief Olu Falae. At the end of the election, Obasanjo of the PDP won. Again, it was expected that given the the long years of military rule, that these parties would have cemented their collaboration and forged ahead in national cohesion. But the unfolding events revealed that little or no lesson was learnt. The parties more than ever widened the polarity in the nation by appealing to different primordial sentiments, which have continued to undermine the unity and progress of the nation.

During this period, there has been revival of the old wounds, with the North seeking the full implementation of the Sharia legal code in all the Northern states, while the South-South continually and lousily agitated for constitutional amendment to allow for resource control. In the Southeast, there was a revival of the Biafran Movement. Kidnapping, political assassination and ritual killings were all over the place with little regards to human life. Studies have linked most of these nefarious activities and the reemergence of ethnic militias to the 'do or die' approach to politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Politicians wish to cling to power by all means- legitimate or illegitimately. The selfish interest of

the Nigerian politicians has continued to breed mistrust, rivalries, alignments and realignments since the end of the 2011 general elections. In more recent times, the nation has been under intense heat from the Islamist movement, Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati wal –Jihad popularly known as Boko Haram, which initially started as a group of foot-soldiers for some politicians in the Northern part of Nigeria and soon got hijacked by international terrorist organizations (Ajayi and Indahi, 2015).

As this mistrust, rivalries, alignments and realignments continued, some people who were not favourably disposed to the different party policies have decamped and joined other parties or formed another party where they felt that their interest would be best protected and promoted. The formation of new political parties led to the astronomic increase in the number of political parties. This at a point brought the number of registered political parties in the country to over fifty. Although, given the poor performance of most of the political parties after the 2011 general elections, there had been deregistration of many of them, some have not been able to meet the criteria by INEC and cannot field presidential candidates for the 2015 presidential elections, while some rather endorsed the major candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) ahead of the general

elections. Today, intra and inter-party conflict has become a common feature. The question is, can a polarized party promote national cohesion? The parochial interest of the political elites rather than integrate the country has brought more problems. The Northern Nigeria is a no-go area now because of the insurgent activities of the Boko Haram group. Their activities have led to the loss of many lives and properties, kidnapping is still ravaging the south east with assassination of prominent politicians unabated, militarization of elections and impeachment of political foes is unabated. All these boil down to lack of structure to engender national cohesion within and among the political parties (Ajayi and Indahi, 2015: 1-2).

Virtually all the political parties in the country are suffering from internal crises occasioned more by lack of internal democracy. This has made it easy for politicians just as it was in the First and Second Republic to easily and readily navigate from one party to the other just to get voted to power; led to rise of splinter groups and exit of key members to other existing , or formation of new ones. All these have promoted national instability and unhealthy party system.

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Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, it is suggested that political parties should enshrine in their constitutions, codes that will promote national integration to complement the national constitution. Since voting is done on the basis of residence and not ethnicity or other primordial sentiments, then none should be denied of the opportunity accruing from it on account of place of origin or religion. The constitution needs to be amended such that opportunities in the country can be achieved by means of residency and not ethnicity or other primordial sentiments. Although the country just concluded a national conference in 2014, but any conference which fails to discuss and amend the structural imbalances in the country, especially the North-South dichotomy will be far from achieving national cohesion. There should be value reorientation. Nigerians need to see themselves as equal, important and partner in progress rather than a threat to one another. To this end, religious leaders should inculcate in their adherents values that promote national unity. The political class should base their campaigns on issues that promote nation building.

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