Renewing Nigeria's Democracy: The Role of Political Party System Viability

by

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Abstract

The essence of democracy has been in a discouraging state in Nigeria since the birth of the fourth republic in 1999. Governance, let alone democracy, faces grievous structural challenges in Nigeria. There cannot be 'true democracy' without a capable political party system. The adverse effects and contradictions in Nigeria's democratization in the age of neoliberalism, using the political party system as the main theme cannot be underestimated. The form and character of Nigeria's political parties, most especially since 1999, has raised serious questions on true democracy and democratization process in the country. The history of shared interests, including efforts to promote the country stability and conflict resolution mechanisms is an aberration to political actors/gladiators. Against the background of the foregoing, the study seeks to answer some questions such as; is neoliberalism compatible with democratization, especially in a developing economy as Nigeria's? How do we account for the contradictions in Nigeria's democratization in this age of neoliberalism? How can Nigeria's democracy be renewed via a viable political party system? What can be done to strengthen party system for democratic renewal in Nigeria? However, the major concern of this paper is to explore the nexus between democratic renewal and neoliberalism with the possibility of renewing Nigerian democracy through a political party system that is able to live and recover its potentialities. The paper avers that actionable ways of renewing Nigeria's democracy through a viable political party system is expedient now that the country is at the verge of insecurity and dancing on the brink of collapse. The paper also suggests among other recommendations that the need for a National Conference is long overdue, before it concludes.

Keywords: Democratic Renewal, Party System, Neoliberalism, Demonization, Nigeria.

Introduction

Despite its abundant endowment, both human and material, Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world (Transparency International, 2013). The excruciating level of poverty in the country is closely connected with the deepening crisis of democratization, whose procedures, contents and results have been anything, but satisfactory (Omotola, 2010). Campbell (2013) posits that popular alienation and a fragmented establishment have contributed to Nigeria becoming not only one of the most religious countries in the world but, at the same time, one of the most violent countries across the globe. All these have negatively impacted the institutional design of the country as handed over during independence in 1960. The 'trapping' of the democratization process, as Omotola (2010) argues, cannot be divorced from deficiencies in this institutional design, most notably the form and character of political parties and electoral administration, making it difficult, if not impossible, to regulate the behaviour and attitude of key political actors.

The implication, over the years, is that, the country has had to contend with governments with low capacity for people-driven and inclusive development programme options, hence, undermined the credibility of the current government and left Nigeria's conflicts unresolved. In many of these governments decisions on the type, location and timing of development interventions were a function of the whims and caprices of policy makers who hardly understood the interface between development and conflict, especially in the heterogeneous society of Nigeria. Numerous development projects were poorly and party-based conceived, and as a consequence, impacted negatively on the people. Scholars have argued that ubiquitous patronage and corrupt behaviour fueled by oil money is a root cause of Nigeria's political and economic sclerosis (see Campbell, 2013). Needless to say that development challenges bordering on issues of human rights, political and economic empowerment and inclusion are reasons for the causal factors of the present security threat to the 'infant' democracy in Nigeria. The federal government has failed to provide basic security for its citizens and has lost its control and jurisdiction on violence, party wrangling and power struggle as a result of leadership sit-tightism. No doubt, there is need to defend democracy at this 'teens' stage in Nigeria.

Political party leaders in Africa's 'new' democracies have often constrained for whom citizens may vote by controlling their parties' nominations (see Field and Siavelis, 2008). An increasing number of political parties in Latin America and Africa have adopted primary elections to allow party members to democratically select their candidates (Kemahlioglu et al. 2009). The electoral impact of primaries has been little studied outside the United States, and whether political parties that use more democratic internal procedures perform better in elections in new democracies is an open question.

While some theories suggest that primaries may reconcile factions within a party or select popular nominees with local appeal, others argue that primaries lead to the selection of unpopular extremist candidates and generate intra-party conflict that could destabilize political parties and harm nascent democracies (Omotola, 2010). But these theories assume competition over policy in primaries and provide limited guidance for the analysis of primaries in new democracies where vote-buying and patronage are more important than policy positions in determining the electoral success of candidates.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore how Nigerian democracy can be renewed through a viable political party system. This is important because political parties have been identified as the weakest link in the democratization of many countries, old and young, including some of the so-called consolidated democracies. Nigeria political parties not only deviating from its role of political education and to serve as watchdog for proper development in an 'exponential rate' in the country, but also turn to election making machines. This is true because most political parties were established as election winning mechanisms and by extension, engage in the principle of 'winner-takes-all'. Therefore it is pertinent to examine the democratization hurdles in line with the political theory of neoliberalism.

This research is qualitative in nature. It adopts historical, comparative and qualitative descriptive method, using content analysis. Data collection is largely based on secondary source. Key informant interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with party executives and members, civil society actors, media practitioners and stakeholders analysis largely of the fourth republic formed the basis of the primary data. This is complemented by secondary sources of data collection, most notably books, Journals, newspapers cum magazines and the Internet. This work consists of four sections. Section one consists of the introduction. The second section deals with the theoretical framework of analysis. The nitty-gritty of this study is contained in sections three and four. Section three traces the perspective of Nigeria's democracy versus neoliberalism, and its (neoliberalism) implication on Nigeria's democratization process. The fourth and final section gives explanation on how to assume democratic renewal through political party system in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

To facilitate the understanding of the discussion that is to follow, it would be expedient to shed light on the meaning and framework of analysis of the three major concepts that remain vital to this treatise, namely, "democracy", "political parties/party system" and "neoliberalism." The idea that democracies are more peaceful than nondemocracies has been part of liberal international thought for more than two hundred years. It is one of those ideas that have seeped from the realm of theory to real-world policy (Doyle, 1997). The democratic peace theory that offers that a democratic society might be less willing and able to wage war against one another or brings agitation have lost weight in the contemporary society.

This is true because for over 14 years of democratic rule in Nigeria, the country has been swimming from one crisis pool to another. Could it be that democratic peace theory misplaces focus on emerging democracy or the theory has no base in a developing society? The commonly cited evidence in support of the theory is the absence of any wars between clearly democratic states. However, skeptics question points to the fact that what they see as convenient and shifting definitions might omit troublesome cases. Democratic peace theory has two major variants which are institutional and cultural (see Baylis, 2011:237). The spread of democracy in Africa, mostly Nigeria, provide a real-world test of this theory because many democracies are geographically close to each other and have long histories of conflict.

Sequel to the above theoretical analysis, it is pertinent to overview the concept of democracy. Democracy has been given multifaceted definitions by numerous scholars, but the acceptable definition by most scholars is the one credited to Abraham Lincoln which describes democracy as "the government of the people, by the people and for the people." Some scholars give a minimalist definition by suggesting that democracy is merely a method by which decision-making is transferred to individuals who have gained power in a competitive struggle for the votes of the citizens (Panicker, 2013). A comprehensive definition could be credited to Robert Dahl, who describes three essential conditions for democracy to function effectively. One of these conditions is a high level of civil liberties. Dahl notes that the second condition is political pluralism, that is extensive competition by contestants including individual or group is required. The third condition has to do with political participation that provides the choice for the electorate to select in free and fair elections. In a political context, an election is the process through which the electorates directly or indirectly elect their political leaders, be it in the executive or legislature which made the role of political party sacrosanct in democracy. In many jurisdictions, the choices of the electorates are restricted to only candidates presented or sponsored by their political parties, while in some other democracies, independent candidates (although not in Nigeria) are allowed such that the candidates are not presented by any political parties. Nigeria does not only embrace democracy as a system of governance in which election becomes a necessity but because the constitution gives room for principle of democracy and social justice (see section 14(1) of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

It is doubtful whether one can validly talk of democracy in the absence of participation, competition, and the guarantee of civil liberties. Democratic governance by interference implies the art of governing the people in line with the tenets of democracy. One of the fundamental elements of democracy is popular election where people have the right to vote and obtain votes. It is through this that people directly or indirectly participate in their government (Macho, 1994). This concept has also been popularized as "good governance" by International Financial Institutions, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) by which they refer to the exercise of political power to promote the public good or the welfare of the people. Conversely, in a democracy that Nigeria is, government should not only be acceptable to the people but also the political powers should emanate from the people that will conform to the popular will.

This will give room for popular democracy (Shehu, 2012). The quest for good governance comes in response to the political uncertainty and arbitraries which accompanied authoritarianism especially military governance. Authoritarianism bred bad governance characterized by misuse of power, the lack of accountability in governance, political regression, suffocation of civil society, denial of fundamental right and arbitrariness. These factors will result in inefficient and over extended strike system whose intervention in economic affairs bred corruption, and acted to discourage or strike private initiative (Risse-Kappen, 1995). In this vein, the development process was arrested and national growth stunted. The argument here is that the development process can only be set in motion when the legacy of authoritarianism is reversed and democracy is institutionalized as an integral component of good governance.

Democracy and good governance are mutually self-reinforcing. Any democratic government that parts way with good governance is not far from unhealthy rivalries and agitations, hence, whither democratic peace theory? The attributes of democracy are presumed to be facilitative of "good governance." Accountability on the part of government officials, transparency in governmental procedures, predictability in government behaviour and expectation of rational decisions, openness in government transaction, free flow of information and freedom of press, decentralization of power structure and decision making should be biding parameters for any democratic government (see Weart, 1998). The expectation is that when these attributes are present in a democratic system of government, such system will be conducive to development. However, the opportunity for political participation, political equality and the possibility of an alternative government will make a state democratic in form. In order for democracy to work successfully, certain additional conditions are necessary foremost amongst these is the widespread habit of tolerance and compromise among the members of a community, a sense of "give and take". The presence of all these will bring the democratic peace theory a reality. To achieve this, the role of capable political parties in any democracies will be sacrosanct and a required decimal.

In practice, democracy is the rule of ignorance. It pays attention to quantity, not quality. Votes are counted, not weighted. A large number of citizens still regard government as something quite apart from the main business of life. In which they have no vital concern, they work and play, practice the professions and the arts, plough, sow, harvest, and sell and forget that they are the governors. There is a real danger in democracy that the citizens may not be sufficiently educated to appreciate the meaning of the issues which comes before them at elections. True representation is secured only if parliament represents every elements and every interest in the nation in proportion to its relation to the whole.

According to Held, (1996) the contending views on democracy reflect 'deeply rooted' conflict about whether democracy should mean some kind of popular power in which citizens are directly engaged in self – government and self – regulation or be conceived as a means of conferring authority on those periodically voted into office.

He noted further that this disagreement has given rise to three basic variants or models of democracy in which citizens are involved as in the ancient Athens. He names these as first, the "direct or participatory democracy," in which citizens are directly involved in governance as in the ancient Athens. The second model is the "liberal or representative democracy" where democracy is viewed as a system of rule of embracing elected officials who undertake to represent the interest and views of citizens within the framework of "rule of law." Held explains Marxist tradition/theory as the third model of democracy. This model is also sometimes referred to as people's democracy. The Marxist theory of democracy seeks to extend equality of all citizens from the political to the social and economic spheres of life. At the economic level this is achieved by the allowing equality in the ownership of the means of production through the nationalization of major enterprises. Equality in the social spheres was achieved through the institution of right to education, pension, medical services, insurance, employment, mother and child care, and in the enjoyment of leisure. These are some of the areas where conflict of interest always set in as a result of the effect of agitations. Could this be the basis why Dode (2010) argues that democracy is a mechanism by which the political system maintains equilibrium?

It is important to examine the concept of political party as it were in Nigeria. In any competitive democracy, a political party is one of the major actors. Political parties are indispensable institutions of democracy because democracy will be an illusion and unthinkable without a political party vitality. Omotola (2010) argues that political parties are reputed and makers of democracy because political parties are by all standards one of the most outstanding and distinguishing elements of modern government. Democratic procedures will be healthy and strictly adhered to if parties are highly institutionalized, not based on ethnic or clientelistic formation, having clear ideology, if there is a congruence between the constitution and the regulatory rules of the system. This is why Omotola (2010) argues that political stability is conterminous with political order and depends on the relationship between the level of political participation and the level of political institutionalization, which can be measured in terms of system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and governmental effectiveness. It means that when political parties or politicians, in any polity, have deliberate political process, committed to the will of people and constitution, and profoundly legitimized among other things, such democracy is unlikely to breakdown. Therefore, it could be said that political parties serve as an index through which democratic governance could be compared in States in such a way that the party politics serve as a measuring rod that determines the fragility or otherwise of democratic process (Omodia, 2010). Also, Omotola (2010) asserts that "the level of institutionalization of political parties and their institutional strengths are, therefore, directly correlated to their ability to perform these and related functions, and by extension, to the strengths of democracy".

It is clear that political party viability (i.e., an ability to live, maintain or recover potentialities with reasonable opportunity for success) is a fulcrum, and therefore, a major factor in the democratic process. The role of political parties or party system in modern democracies cannot be underrated. Political parties provide the connection between politics and society. In this sense they perform four crucial functions.

First, political parties develop policies and programmes. This is the content side of their responsibility (Caton, 2007). It ensures that there are different choices in the political marketplace – not only in terms of candidates but also in terms of ideas. Once in government, a party can start implementing these ideas. Second, parties pick up demands from society and bundle them into packages. Demands are numerous and sometimes conflicting. Parties are able to discuss and evaluate these issues and shape human needs into policy alternatives. In so doing they are an important part of the political process. Third, parties are the main vehicles for recruiting and selecting people for government and legislative office. Fourth, parties either oversee or control government depending on whether they are in government or opposition.

Unfortunately, political parties often fail to perform these roles adequately or with sufficient credibility. Some are fundamentally weak and rely heavily on the personal appeal of their leader. If parties are not properly connected to society, they will remain distant from voters' concerns. So unfortunate in Nigeria, where candidate selection is based on nepotism rather than on merit, democracy is tied with regional interest and by extension, not only negates national interest, but also, hinders national integration (Eme and Anyadike, 2011). It is argued that the changing role of parties can be attributed to an ideational transformation (Caton, 2007) by which parties have gradually come to be seen as necessary and desirable institutions for democracy, and that this has contributed to a changing conception of parties from voluntary private associations towards the political party as a 'public utility' for democracy. Recent developments of democratization, even as 2015 approaches, provide indisputable testimony of such a conception of the relationship between parties and democracy. Underlying the political crisis, party wrangling, parties merger, disengagement from partisan politics, increasing dissatisfaction with and distrust in parties and politicians, problems of accountability, responsiveness and legitimacy about the contemporary performance of existing parties and party politics/system, there are deeper and more fundamental disagreements about the meaning of democracy and the actual role of political parties in Nigeria, rest upon the normative assumptions of what is valuable about democracy and democratization (Bartolini and Mair, 2001). These shortcomings become a concern when they start to impact adversely on the functioning of democracy.

In order to distinguish generally between parties which are contributing to democratization and those which are not, Diamond and Gunther's distinction between pluralistic and proto-hegemonic parties is of paramount important to this study. While the pluralistic type accepts the winning of free and fair elections as the only legitimate way of achieving their objectives. Proto-hegemonic parties further try to prevail over opposition groups inside the party by excluding them from access to leadership positions. By contrast pluralistic elites aim at internal hegemony by democratic means and by refraining from excluding alternative groups from running the party (Diamond and Gunther, 2001:16-17). And by extension, the proto-hegemonic type strives towards the replacement of the existing pluralist society with one that is suited to its goals. Accepting these two types as the general starting point raises the question of how to differentiate between them.

Lindberg (2004:66-70) proposes a variety of indicators, which can be used to judge the democratic quality of elections. Some of these have been taken and modified to examine the democratic quality of parties both at the level of Nigeria's intra-and inter-party democracy. The table below shows the assessment of parties' acceptance of democratic norms.

	DEMOCRATIC/PLURALISTIC	UNDEMOCRATIC/HEGEMONIC
INTRA-PARTY LEVEL		
Alteration of leadership	Democratic alteration	None/undemocratic
Leadership election	Elections by delegates	Appointments by leader
Peacefulness	Internally stable	Threatened by splits/non-accepting of election outcome
INTER-PARTY LEVEL		
Accepting of defeat	Yes	No
Electoral conduct	Fair/tolerant	Use of intimidation and threats
Rhetoric	Issue-based/accepting of other views	Aggressive

Source: *Sabatian Elischer (2008:181)*

From the above table, at the level of both intra-and inter-party democracy, it is crystal clear that the quality of democracy or the otherwise is at the mercy of what takes place during leadership modifications or changes, and the acceptability of the outcome of elections. This means, by extension, that democratization is connected with how leaders were made (either were they democratically elected or appointed by the 'big-wigs' in the party?) and how people accept the outcome of elections (Elischer, 2008). We can conclude here that the degree of internal party stability is an outcome of democratization process and its acceptability. Candidate selection procedures serve as an important indicator for democratic consolidation/process (Aleyomi, 2010; 2013). It is sad to say that in Nigeria that data for democratic elections of both intra and inter party elections, most especially in the fourth republic has been a mirage. Rather, party systems in Nigeria context constitute an important mechanism used by some ruling classes to consolidate and advance their sit-tightism.

From the above framework of analysis, one can assert that part of the reasons for undemocratic elections in Nigeria mostly in the fourth republic can be linked with the emergence of neoliberalism. Thus, it is necessary to conceptualize neoliberalism. "Neo" literally means new, therefore, neo and liberalism could then mean talking about the new kind of liberalism. The theoretical question from this analysis is what was the old kind of liberalism?

The term 'neoliberalism' is a political philosophy whose advocates support and its model espouses for economic liberalization, free trade and open markets, privatization, deregulation, and decreasing the size of the public sector while increasing the role of the private sector in modern society, by extension, eliminating the principle of democracy – popular participation and concept of the public good. According to Harvey (2007) neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political and economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Scholte (2000) conceives neoliberalism as an ideology based on the conviction that market forces will deliver prosperity, liberty, democracy and peace to the whole of mankind. From the above definitions, neoliberalism is set of ideas and practices centered on an increased role for the free market, flexibility in labour markets and a reconfiguration of state welfare activities. Based on definitions enumerated above, it is clear that neoliberalism is essentially a political economic philosophy which posits that optimal economic system is achieved by given free rein to market participants privatization, free trade and the shrinking of government intervention in the economy (see Osimiri, 2013).

One of the functions of government in any society is to protect the rights and equality of all (people) before the law and not otherwise. Liberalism is a political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the *individual* to be the central problem of politics. Liberals typically believe that *government* is necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others; but they also recognize that government itself can pose a threat to liberty. This is why government is at best a necessary evil (Van de Walle, 2007). The problem, then, is to devise a system that gives government the power necessary to protect individual liberty but also prevents those who govern from abusing that power. Liberalism has a close but sometimes uneasy relationship with *democracy*. At the centre of democratic doctrine is the belief that governments derive their authority from popular election, but liberalism, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the scope of governmental activity. Liberals often have been wary of democracy, then, because of fears that it might generate a tyranny by the majority (neoliberalism), one might briskly say, therefore, that democracy looks after majorities and neoliberalism after unpopular minorities. The question that comes to mind is, whither the democracy and its dividends in Nigeria under the present democratic dispensation?

Political Party and Neoliberalism: The Nexus

A democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good. With an increasing disconnect between citizens and their elected leaders, a decline in political activism, and a growing sophistication of anti-democratic forces, democratic political parties are continually challenged.

Democracy in Nigeria is associated with the pattern of colonial governance in the state. It could be recalled that decolonization as envisaged by British in what later became the Nigerian state was viewed as a gradual process of constitutional transformations that would give greater freedom to the Nigerians in form of participation in governance through party politics before the attainment of political independence in 1960 (Omodia, 2010). The debate between democracy and neo-liberalism has dominated mainstream international relations and political economy. Whereas neoliberalism is hardly a major issue in the West (Lamy, 2011:114-129), the effect of neoliberalism is clearly obvious in Latin America and Africa, most especially in Nigeria where the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. This is partly because the transition to neoliberalism in most African countries has been an essentially authoritarian, non-participatory process. Neoliberlaism has contributed to increase sense of insecurity among marginalized communities globally in which Nigeria is not free from (see Panicker, 2013). The historical development of liberalism over recent centuries has been a movement from mistrust of the state's power on the ground that it tends to be misused, to a willingness to use the power of government to correct perceived inequities in the *distribution of wealth* resulting from economic competition - inequities that purportedly deprive some people of an equal opportunity to live freely.

Democracy as imposed from the state is restrictive and selective, and stands in striking contrast with the grassroots democracy practiced by community organizations. Native communities practice participation, solidarity, and redistribution which to some extends refer to a true democracy. Neoliberalism, has therefore introduced new concepts such as self-centeredness and individualism in communities or societies. Various communities in Nigeria have traditionally enjoyed participation and equality. However, democracy as imposed by the state breaks down the norms of community life and encourages paternalism, patronage and political manipulation and by extension, citizens are taking part in political processes of the capitalist system (political neoliberalism). Capitalist democracy or hybrid regime practice in Nigeria has limits and it tolerates improvement if only the privileges of the powerful i.e. rich are not threatened. Certainly in this kind of political system, it will be very difficult to improve true democracy in Nigeria without political organizations having the quality or reasonable chance of being successful as political parties. The process of transition to neoliberalism has been essentially authoritarian and non-participatory. The proponents and practitioners of neoliberalism speak of making the country governable rather than speaking on how to expand democracy and maintain unity in diversity.

One of the major democratization hurdles in the Nigeria fourth republic is that elections do not necessarily produce representative governments in all governmental levels. In oil-rich but poverty-ridden Nigeria, election has become "a do or die" affair in the sense that popular participations in both party primaries and general elections have been jettisoned, instead Nigeria is now in the era of 'anointing' candidates both at the party level and during the general elections. Votes are not count and even when they are counted, they are not weighted.

The political parties are not democratic both intra and inter (Burnell, 2004). Security apparatus are not performing to improve democracy in the country. Almost all the major actors in democratic process play low in the wave of democratic progress. Nigeria is yet to emerge with political parties that would enhance sustainable democracy in the county. This is Quite a legitimate apprehension not because the parties interpret political competitions in terms of "survival of ethnic entities," but because one, they lack any clear ideology, and two, because there is much room for political brigandage. Winner-takes-all syndrome in politics promotes the principle of neoliberalism – the rich to grow richer and the poor to grow poorer (Adebayo, 2006; Olagunju, 2000). The spasm of strife needs to be reduced and totally overcome for democracy to be consolidated.

The inability to democratically manage political parties has, unfortunately, been a major source of intra-party conflicts, which often degenerate into larger conflicts threatening democratic stability. The recent split of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) over the election of the Chairman of Nigeria's Governors Forum (NGF) and attendant democratic, developmental and security implications, especially in Rivers state, as well as the democratically suffocating politics of succession within the PDP in the aftermaths of the Yar'Adua's health crisis and eventual death in late 2010, are notable examples. The worrisome and unhealthy to the country's democratization process is the factionalisation of the PDP into 'New' PDP and 'real' PDP. This is a crisis that has bedeviled the political movement in the country. This cannot be said as a family affairs as the ruling party called it because it has negative effects on the polity of the country being the ruling party. All these facilitate distractions and hamper on economic, political and social development to the generality of Nigerian. So calling PDP intra-party wrangling a 'family affair' is a political statement erroneously made. While these are most recent, also in the past years, there have been a number of quarrels involving top chieftains and factions of the parties (see Aleyomi, 2013). For instance, the feud between former President Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice Atiku Abubakar had destabilizing effect on the succession politics of 2007. Today, one of the main political questions is whether President Goodluck Jonathan will run for a second term in 2015. This is a question that formed one of the grievances of the aggrieved seven governors refers to as the 'G-7' that tore the PDP into shreds. The northern wing of the party is considering selecting a northern candidate to run in 2015. The south-south faction of the party, led by President Jonathan, is trying to counter this move. The factionalisation of the hitherto united Governor's Forum, into three camps, namely the Rotimi Amaechi camp, Jonah Jang camp and PDP Governor's Forum Camp, largely from the same party, represents the most recent example of intra-party anomalies in Nigeria.

A significant part of the problem seems to be lack of proper perception of the issues in its nature and forms. The essence of democratic rule is to hold opinions and express it, but this focus seemed totally lost in Nigeria. Opinions of others are negatively perceived, leading to violent interactions in other political arenas. This has made Nigeria's political culture to be perceived by others as a game for the rascals.

It also portrays Nigeria's democratic practice as uncivilized. More importantly, there are questions and challenges central to this among which is the challenge to sustain and maintain democratic values. The question arises therefore in the words of Baker (2000) that, "how much internal violence a nascent democracy like Nigeria can sustain or whether the violence itself can be sufficiently contained for democratic institutions to float above it relatively untouched". Democratic roots cannot be firm unless a mechanism is found to reduce the incidence of intra party conflict (Aleyomi, 2013). The nature of political society and its economic structure, among other factors, speaks volume about the political parties and their attitude towards contest for control of political power (Tyoden, 1994). For any political society to have strong democratic orientation, the onus is on the political parties to hold strong democratic ideals. Nigeria, it may be argued, is yet not a democracy, but democratizing or better still, a society in transition from hybrid regime to democracy (Shehu, 2012). This may give clues as to why there were pre and post election disputes and petitions before the various election petition tribunals between 1999 and 2007 and the low level of disputes and petitions before the tribunals arising from the 2011 general election. The model of Nigeria's democracy could be referred to as 'democratism'. This is a situation where a country has democracy in theory but undemocratic in practice, a democracy without democrats.

Democratic Renewal via Political Party System

While the task of renewing Nigeria's democracy in the age of neolibralism will be, without any doubt, a daunting challenge that will, of necessity, cut across several institutional, behavioural and attitudinal foundations of democracy, experiences under the fourth republic (1999-Date) suggest that the political party system seems the most problematic and crucial. For, as studies have shown, these are not heady days for Nigerian political parties (Omotola, 2009). This is because despite all pretences to the contrary through their manifestoes, as much as the superficial classifications as the "left" and "right", "progressive" and "conservative", Nigerian parties seem to be bereft of clear ideological commitments. The result, as Omotola (2009) argues, is the relegation of politics of issues to the background particularly under the fourth republics, and in its place the ascendancy of identity and money politics. The situation has also accentuated the rising magnitude of political vagrancy on the basis of selfish and parochial interests, the high level of party indiscipline, absence/weakness of party cohesion and internal democracy, and the high mortality and turnover of party leadership (Aleyomi, 2013). Notwithstanding, there is need to fight for a 'new' democracy, democratic renewal, a new human paradigm shift and a new type of civilization that will empower and include everyone in policy/decision making.

The existence of vibrant political parties is a sine qua non for democratic consolidation in any polity (Dode, 2010). Little wonder sections 221, 222 and 227 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Electoral Law spell out the expected roles of Nigerian parties as much as they are in existence. Omotola (2010:137) avers that the drafters of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria envisaged the possibility of adopting political parties as a basis of conflict and consensus in Nigeria. Unfortunately, Nigerian political parties practically disregard the constitutional provisions of their conducts but merely honour them on paper. In recent times, the way and manner Nigeria's political parties conduct themselves may clog up their capability to sustain democracy. Political parties are more of personality rather than participation, could the aphorism 'the bigger the size of the family, the deeper the problem within' be the message the split of the ruling Party (PDP) are saying to Nigerians. The unhealthy and incongruence party merger (of defunct Action Congress of Nigeria-ACN, Congress of Progressive Change-CPC, All Nigerian Peoples Party-ANPP and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance-APGA) is a pointer to lack of ideology, culture of impunity, and selfishness, they raise more questions than answers to the protracted political/democratic problem in Nigeria.

To ensure the well-being of all is a principle of democracy. Unless such a thing is actually achieved in real life, conflicts will remain between those who have their every need fulfilled and others who cannot fulfill their basic needs. In a society split into classes with a rich minority and a poor majority, it is no consolation to conclude that a middle ground exists (Bains, 1992). This argument about a middle ground is presented as an ideal solution. In fact, the middle is the source of the new poor. Those in the middle strives the hardest to keep their heads above water yet many finally fail. In spite of any rationalizations to justify the status quo, the truth will prevail that the conflict in a society split into classes can only disappear if the well-being of all is guaranteed. This is the aim of democracy so that the people at the opposite poles do not wipe each other out. The aim of democratic renewal is, first and foremost, the well-being of all, in line with the focus of this study, can be achieved through political party system viability, i.e., where there is an ability to live, especially under certain conditions and maintain or recover potentialities with a reasonable opportunity for success.

The acceptance of intra and inter party democracy is one of the ways for democratic renewal in Nigeria. It is important to embrace the basic tenets of intra-party democracy in such a way that questions like life chairman or life patron, imposition/selection of candidates should never arise (see Omotola 2009). Not only that, democratization of party funding, that will enhance transparency and accountability in the administration of the party, such that the party does not rely on a few wealthy individuals only for its financing, and the adoption of inclusive, democratic processes for the holding of party conventions and the selection of the party's candidates, that is, the use of primaries cannot be overemphasized as the strategic management in addressing pre-election violence in Nigeria.

Party internal nomination of candidate to run for any election with an overwhelming acceptance and tolerance of the result of such nomination will go a long way to ensure peace within the party. Tolerance begets peace and peace in turn integrates development (Aleyomi, 2010). The acceptance of such party nomination in any primaries depends to a large extent, on how disputes arising from pre-elections are settled. The degree of internal party stability is an outcome of this and by extension consolidates democracy. A relatively smooth electoral transition could be conducted in an atmosphere in which voters feel confident that their votes are secure and that criminals will be held accountable, whereby political parties resolve leadership disputes through dialogue and negotiation, and in which politicians do not exploit social, economic, and religious grievances in their bids to secure a victory (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010).

The study of voting behaviour highlights the role of ethnicity in party politics (Elischer, 2008). Ethnicity in Nigeria's party politics is a major analytical yardstick besetting democratic sustainability. There should not be misconception of forces of identity like ethnicity and religion are no doubt bases of mobilization in Nigerian politics instead of ideology. Omotola (2010) argues that there is nothing wrong in political parties drawing their ideologies from ethnicity and religion. But he claims that the difference is that in advanced democracies like Germany, the real identity is well-known. Unfortunately, Nigerian political parties suffer from *poverty of ideology* because it is difficult to identify any political party ideology. It is sad that the road map for party operations with veritable tool for mobilization, identification and democratic means of conflict management, as a guide to individual action, formula of operation and judgement is missing in all the registered political parties in Nigeria (Omotola, 2010; Aleyomi, 2013). It might be argued that parties have manifestoes from which their ideological inclination can be garnered, such manifestoes have always proved deficient and insufficient in reality because the manifestoes of various parties in Nigeria's fourth republic, compared with their counterparts in the first and second republic, are similar and hardly could they be differentiated. Poverty of ideology in party also affects politicians' altitude this is the reason why Carothers (2006) posits that parties are 'in deep trouble'. These send wrong signals to the citizens and make confidence in the parties declined. Nigeria's parties are briefcase and artificial. The controls of these political parties are covertly and/or overtly in the hand of an individual or group of individuals, and by implication debar parties from actualizing the roles they were *ab initio* established to perform let only consolidating democracy.

It is not just the individual parties that need help but whole party systems which have yet to become institutionalized. Political elites pretentiously compete for power and when their pursuits are threatened for whatever reason, it result to what Omotola (2010) describes as "the push and pull effect" of the struggles which weaken the party institutionalization and solidarity. Nigerian parties have been victims of such push and pull effects/forces. There is need to institutionalize the Nigerian party system for social capital culture to be infused. Any institution or organization (political party inclusive) that lacks social capital may find it difficult to function maximally.

This has been another critical problem to political parties in Nigerian most especially in the fourth republic. Social capital is a mechanism for social harmony and peace building. The observable fact of social capital includes among other: social trust; norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems; social cohesion in communities and associational life; mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, reciprocity and other networks of civic engagement that facilitate coordination and communication through which information about trustworthiness of other individuals and groups (including opposition parties) can flow, tested and verified (Anifowose, 1999; Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). Social capital is a tool for democratic renewal in Nigeria and describes the relations that bind communities and parties together through a sharing of trust. The adequate use of social capital will not only reduce gross indiscipline among Nigerian parties but also arrest the menace of indiscipline in Nigerian political system, and strengthening democratization process.

When all the problems are taken into consideration, it becomes abundantly clear that during this period of democratic renewal, what is most essential is to have the working people occupying the centre-stage. Far from ruling out the immediate struggles, this presupposes that the people must sacrifice something to defend their interests, to orient themselves in such a way that their advanced positions are the ones implemented. In the course of this, they will ensure that they come to power. It is important, to salvage this situation, to address the character of Nigerian state by interrogating why acquisition of power remains sacrosanct. This could be as a result of over-concentration of power and resource at the center. If this is true, the state needs to decongest the center at national and individual state levels of their overbearing influence and control of resource. This will not only reduce unhealthy competition for power by various groups but also enhance the emergence of political leadership that is truly nationalistic, detribalized, sacrificial, and knows what to do, when and how (see Omotola, 2010). Such leader will use power in the interest of all. More so, among various political parties, emphasis should be on the value of unity, tolerance and discipline through socio-political education and reengineering. Here the role of all major actors of democracy (political party, civil society, electoral commission, pressure/opinion groups) are needed in sensitizing, mobilizing, and educating the masses through a process of social mobilization. This will make any reform targeted at the party for democratic renewal to have good effect. And while carrying out theoretical work and engaging in building the practical movement for democratic renewal, the need for action and the need to carry out analysis must not be confused. A call must be a clear-cut call for action, well thought out, paying attention to who will respond. A call cannot be mixed up with analysis. Analysis, however, must not be done behind closed doors. It is work that should involve everyone. This is the area where the call for national conference in Nigeria at this political era is expedient to resolve all nagging issues in Nigeria. By making a clear distinction, it is possible to make appeals to the people to come forward for the solution of immediate problems, while at the same time, organizing them for democratic renewal. Not minding the shortcomings of political parties in Nigeria, as relevant as democracy is to all, a non-productive political party system is a slippery road to chaos, and thus, to many, not negotiable.

Conclusion

The analyses of this study have to pinpoint the problems of neo-liberalism in Nigeria and how to renew the democratic virtues, rebuilding traditional institutions system of justice, law and 'new' democracy in the country. The study has tried to bring to fore the illusion of party unity among the country's political parties with more emphasis on the fourth republic. And also, the study expedites actions on how to ensure democratic renewal and sustainable development in Nigeria with scientific inquiry that through proper political orientation, the masses would say no to political violence that can emanates from misuse of liberalism.

Consequently, the work of democratization must be viewed an ongoing process and democrats everywhere are to be involved in struggle to consolidate and extend the realization of democratic principles. Several conditions are thoughts to be conducive to the germination, growth and sustenance of the democratic system. First, it has to be desired by the people who must also be prepared to strive and sacrifice to attain it. The citizens must be willing to tolerate opposing views and show respect for the lives of other people. While the majority must act in tolerant way, the minority must learn to accept the decisions of the majority. In effect, for democracy to thrive, it is necessary that the people be broad – minded and have a liberal disposition. The recognition of these paradoxes has led, not only, to the call for the broadening of the notion of democracy but also to incorporate socio-political and economic advancement of the masses.

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