
POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: A CASE OF PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC PARTY, PDP 1999 – 2007

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ABSTRACT

Political parties are supposedly the power house in any democratic society. In Nigeria, political parties are captives of godfathers and moneybags who determine who gets selected under the banners of the various parties. The party in power within the study period is the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP. The party's constitution is observed mostly in the breach. Thus, national and state conventions are mere charade. In this horse-trading, democracy takes flight and disreputable characters emerge for elective offices. The paper will employ both primary and secondary source materials especially the PDP constitution, newspapers and magazines and oral interviews of members and non-members of PDP. This paper interrogates the seemingly intractable problem of conducting seamless electoral process, devoid of violence and rigging. It proffers a party system based on ideology that discourages carpet-crossing by politicians. The paper employs the theory of prepedalism in analysing the issues.

Keywords: *godfather, moneybags, carpet-crossing, democracy, power, prepedalism*

INTRODUCTION

Democracy has eluded Nigeria for a long while since the brief experiment after independence in 1960. The men on horseback, the military, have not allowed the tree of democracy to be

nurtured and blossomed in the country. The army has arrogated to itself the guardian of the country's unity and stability. The civilian elites have not helped matters with their recourse to primordial sentiments of ethnicity and parochialism. A strong party system based on ideology has not taken root in Nigeria. The politicians change party just like a man changes his clothes. Elections are marred with rigging, violence and bribery. The return to democratic rule in 1999 had not shown attitudinal change among the political class in Nigeria. The party in power at the federal level and in most states in Nigeria, the People's Democratic Party, PDP, appears to have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing like the Bourbons of France. This paper interrogates the seemingly intractable problem of conducting seamless electoral process, devoid of violence and rigging. It proffers a party system based on ideology that discourages carpet-crossing by politicians; raising the awareness of the electorate through massive and compulsory education up to higher school in Nigeria and reducing the enormous powers of the centre.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Bamidele. A. Sobowale in his work entitled *PDP: Corruption Incorporated* lamented how the retreating military establishment in 1999 hijacked the People's Democratic Party, PDP, from the G-34 and imposed the retired military ruler, General Olusegun Obasanjo on the PDP and Nigeria as civilian president. Sobowale (2011) opined that:

What were uppermost on their minds were the interests of the ruling class and the PDP had to be hijacked to pursue it. They were confident that given the greed of most of the political

class, they would have no difficulty in gaining control of the party. And they were right. It took a donation of N130 million by Obasanjo, money donated by his promoters to set the stage and in no time the G-34, the original founders of the PDP were swept aside.

Thus, General Obasanjo with poor democratic experience was enthroned as the civilian president on May 29, 1999. Rather than nurturing a democratic culture, president Obasanjo's reign between 1999 and 2007 was marked by highhandedness, executive-legislative squabbles and unleashing of military terrorism on Odi town in Bayelsa State and Zaki Biam in Benue State. Military in Niger Delta region was met with full military force instead of dialogue.

Chuba Okadigbo's *The Mission of the NPN* is an attempt to document the emergence of the National Party of Nigeria, (NPN) as a dominant political force during the transition to civil political rule in 1979. The work highlighted how freedom of political association was outlawed during long years of military dictatorship in Nigeria. It was the Committee of one hundred and eleven members of the Constituent Assembly that gave birth to the NPN (Okadigbo, 1981). The NPN strategy of zoning formula or reflection of the federal character principle in nomination for election and parties' offices was a masterstroke in its ascendancy to power. The PDP also applied the zoning formula in elective positions and party offices.

Ben. O. Nwabueze's *Federalism in Nigeria Under Presidential Constitution* discusses the division of power under the 1979 constitution between the Federal and State governments. It enables one to appreciate the problems and conflicts inherent in a federal system, especially in a country where the democratic ideals have not yet taken root. Nwabueze posits that since the inauguration of the Second Republic on 1 October 1979, the relationship between the federal and the state government had been marked by intense rivalry (Nwabueze, 1983). But this was not what the constitution intended it to be. This same acrimonious relationship is observed under the PDP controlled federal government of Nigeria between 1999 and 2007.

The Trouble with Nigeria by Chinua Achebe is a political masterpiece written at the twilight of the Second Republic. It was the lamentation of a patriot seeing his country drifting into political oblivion and economic attrition. Achebe blamed the cause of this debilitating state of descent on the lack of capable leader. In his words:

It would be impossible and, even if possible, of little value to attempt a comprehensive picture of the types and scope of Nigerian corruption. I will only say that most people will agree that corruption has grown enormously in variety, magnitude and brazenness since the beginning of the Second Republic because it has been extravagantly fuelled by budgeting abuse and political patronage on an unprecedented scale (Achebe, 1983).

Shehu Shagari: Beckoned to Serve, An Autobiography is the reminiscences of the man at whose table the buck stopped in Nigeria from 1979 to 1983. There were strenuous efforts by Shagari to rationalise policy failures and lacklustre performance in office to hostile opposition. After the collapse of the NPN-NPP accord he lamented thus: “in the absence of NPP’s legislative support, we were now in office but not in power. The NPN was left to its own devices to ensure passage of its legislative agenda” (Shagari, 2001). One wonders whether Shagari expected further romance with the NPP after the abrupt and crude divorce. The party in power must recognise that opposition party is government in waiting. It ought to treat the opposition party as partners in progress and likewise the opposition party must criticise constructively.

This paper covers the period 1999 to 2007 during the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo. It emphasises that interrogating the party system and ensuring that it conforms to the tenets of democracy will lead to sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

FORMATION OF PDP

Modern democracies blossom on competitive party politics. Political parties are organs for ventilating diverse opinions in a society. Thus, groups championing different causes converge under different political canopies, canvassing for membership and explaining their various ideas in such a way as to attract larger membership within the society. In more advanced democracies, we have parties identified as conservative or republicans, liberal, socialist, labour among others according to ideas they espouse and issues they consistently champion. Political parties are like badges into which groups of people in a society are classified. Thus, people of like minds congregate

under one umbrella. Indeed, birds of a feather flock together. Unfortunately, this is not always so especially in new emergent democracies in Africa such as Nigeria. However, some scholars have defined political parties and their functions in various ways: Oyeleye Oyediran (2003) defines political parties as organizations that seek to attract the support electorally, of the general public in a political system. Such associations play a direct and substantial role in political recruitment and are often interested in the capture of political power at local, state or federal levels of government either alone or in coalition with others. Indeed, the utmost goal of political parties is in capturing political power through the electoral process.

Nwolise (1988) has enumerated various functions of political parties to include among others, the following: (a) Spread of political awareness on important public issues among the electorate; (b) mobilization and stimulation of interest of the electorate in elections; (c) observance of electoral rules and regulations as well as constitutional provisions guiding the electoral process; (d) afford citizens the opportunity of participating in the management of the nation's affairs; (e) serve as agencies for recruiting political leadership through attracting people, screening, and nominating them for elections; (f) provide alternative public policies for national progress to the people and (g) provide the most peaceful or constitutional means of changing government in order to promote stability through democratic elections. Indeed, political parties are the power houses of democratic governance and their functions cannot be too stressed.

Nigeria has been in limbo politically since the military regime of General Babangida annulled the June 12, 1993 election. The political class appears to have been discredited with quite a significant number of them dancing in the orchestral of General Abacha's apparent bid to transmute into a civilian president. However, it needs to be stated that few principled politicians and civil society groups stood up during the darkest period of Nigeria's history to denounce the attempt by Abacha to perpetuate himself in power. They banded themselves under the aegis of G-34 and demanded for the restoration of democracy. The demise of General Abacha in June 1998 and the transition programme of General Abdulsalaami Abubakar ignited new hopes in the political horizon. The ban on party politics was lifted in 1998 and the time-table for transition to civil rule in May 1999 drawn up. The political class quickly galvanized and several political associations were formed. Over eleven political associations contested the December 1999 local government elections in Nigeria. Of this number only three met the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) requirements for registration as political parties. These are: Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). The three registered political parties were adjudged to have satisfied some of the requirements such as: (a) Ensure that membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping; (b) a copy of its constitution is registered in the principal office of the commission in such form as may be prescribed by the commission; (c) the name of the association, its emblem or motto does not contain any ethnic or religious connotation or give the appearance that the activities of the association are confined to a part only of the geographical

area of Nigeria, (d) the headquarters of the association is situated in the capital of the federation, and (e) the names and addresses of its national officers are registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission(Nwabueze,2002). Indeed, some of these requirements were difficult for the various political associations to fulfil, thus debarring them from contesting in the 1999 elections into various political offices.

The People's Democratic Party, PDP was an amalgam of different associations – some opposed to General Abacha's self-succession agenda, some military apologists while others were retired military officers interested in protecting their interests in the emerging civilian regime. The party also has a large number of surviving Second Republic politicians with significant following across the land. But the striking thing about the party was also a large number of contractors and nouveaux-riches of doubtful reputation. These new men of power brought with them a new phenomenon, godfatherism that appears to be the epicentre of PDP. The godfathers in PDP virtually dominate the party decision-making process, thereby relegating ordinary members of the party to stooges and rubber-stamps. Thus, PDP which was formed in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja on July 28, 1998 by leaders of different political associations with the intent "to defend the sanctity of electoral democracy, enunciate an enforceable code of conduct among political office-holders and establish a moral social order guided by the core values of performance, probity and justice (*The Constitution of the People Democratic Party, n.d*)" in Nigeria is today a caricature of this noble aspirations. To appreciate how far PDP has abandoned its objectives, a brief highlight is necessary: (a) ensure genuine restoration, permanent entrenchment and practice of democracy,

the rule of law, equity and social justice; (b) ensure that only competent, dedicated, patriotic and creditable candidates are sponsored for elective offices at all levels of governance; (c) eradicate illiteracy in our society and to promote learning and research, science and technology; and (d) build a political culture in which all Nigerians are equal members, where each contributes according to his ability, where no one person dominates and where, no political party belongs to one individual (*The Constitution of the People Democratic Party, n.d.*). The PDP constitution like the Nigerian constitution of 1999 contains checks and balances against undemocratic practices but the practitioners between 1999 and 2007 hardly paid heed to some of the provisions of the party's constitution. Let us consider some actions that went against the grains of democratic practices in PDP.

THE PDP JOS NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1999

Of the three political parties registered by INEC, PDP had the greatest chance of winning the presidential election in 1999. The party's constitution which recognizes the principles of power-shift and power-sharing, rotation of key political offices and an equitable devolution of powers to the geopolitical zones of the country, made it very attractive to the mass of the people of Southern Nigeria who had vehemently protested the domination of political power by the Northern Civil-cum military establishments. The annulment of June 12, 1993, presidential election perceived to have been won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola from South West, by the northern dominated military regime of General Babangida, once more brought to the fore the ethnic cum regional imbalance of power equation in Nigeria. The Southern political class capitalized on this injustice to fan the

embers of northern domination. The gullible southern Nigeria masses easily swallowed the bait and agitated for a power shift. Although there is hardly any difference in terms of addressing the debilitating economic condition of the masses between the so-called southern president and their northern counterpart, yet, the ordinary people have been made to believe otherwise. The Nigerian political class is interested in who presides over the sharing of the national wealth rather than how to revitalize the economy on the path of industrialization and upgrading the decaying social infrastructure.

Thus, the PDP top hierarchy in collusion with the retreating military dictators zoned the presidency to the south or rather to the southwest geopolitical zone as a measure of placating the people for their “sins” in cancelling the June 12, 1993 presidential election presumed to be the freest election ever organized in Nigeria. This was the beginning of the unwholesome undemocratic steps taken by the PDP in the run-up to the presidential primaries of the party in Jos. Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, ex-governor of old Kano State, and one of the founding fathers of the PDP, rejected the zoning arrangement of the party and indicated interest to contest the party’s presidential primaries. He donated the sum of ₦2 million as requested by the party from all presidential aspirants to assist the PDP in financing the local government elections. In a letter by PDP national secretary, Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo, to Alhaji Rimi, the party shut its doors against aspirants outside southern Nigeria. In the words of Dr. Nwodo:

I therefore regret to inform you that you cannot contest the presidential primaries scheduled for Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th

February 1999 in Jos, Plateau State. Accordingly, the Director of Finance has been instructed to refund you your ₦2,000,000 (two million Naira only) donation (Vanguard,1999).

Even though power-shift is explicitly written in the PDP constitution, democracy demands that dissenting voices should not be stifled. Indeed, the idea of zoning or federal character as entrenched in the Nigerian Constitution by the political elite only enables them to be recycled in government. This had done more harm to the country's quest for good governance and progress.

Unfortunately, the transition programme being midwived by the military was also manipulated by them to produce a desired result. The country's political health had been over-heated and the military dictators were afraid of disintegration of Nigeria under a weak civilian ruler. Although some southern presidential aspirants had indicated interest under the PDP, indeed nurtured the party into a force to reckon with, the military high commands were not convinced. Astute politicians like Dr. Alex Ekwueme, former vice-president of Nigeria, Jim Nwobodo, former governor, Senator Francis Ellah, Chief Philip Asiodu, retired permanent secretary, Chief Don Etiebet, former minister of petroleum was in the race for the PDP presidential primaries, they were not favoured by the military junta in Nigeria. Rather, the former military head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo, who was serving jail term for treason against Abacha's government, was released from prison, granted state pardon which was swiftly gazetted to pave way for him to be enthroned as the next civilian president (Ochereome, 1999). What was worse, the civilian political elite appeared to have been

compromised into acquiescing in the eventual enthronement of General Obasanjo. The Jos PDP national convention was a mere formality. The Jos convention arena became an avenue for horse-trading, intrigues with many of the delegates selling their conscience for money. Nobody cared about the manifestos of the presidential candidates, as the highest bidder got the votes. A Newspaper report summed the bizarre scenario thus:

And the way money was exchanging hands was indeed, vulgar. Crisp Naira notes, sometimes running into millions were often times handed over to the facilitators for onward delivery to the targets (Vanguard, 1999).

The outcome of the national convention was a landslide victory for General Obasanjo. He polled 1,658 votes as against his closest rival Dr Ekwueme's 521 votes. As Ochereome Nnanna aptly noted:

there is no doubt that Obasanjo got the ticket, probably as part of a script which had as its opening paragraph his own release from jail while many of his co-convicts still languish. The script was played out neat in Jos. In other words, there was hardly anything that Ekwueme could have done to upstage the collaboration of the giant political North (both the serving and retired generals and politicians), the middle Belt and other parts of the country which had been mobilized to enthrone him (Ochereome,1999).

It is intriguing that most of the experienced politicians did not see anything undemocratic in the way and manner General Obasanjo was foisted on the party by the outgoing military government. Credit must be given to some politicians who opposed Obasanjo based on his antecedent as a military dictator being projected to superintend our nascent democracy. In a recent interview, PDP pioneer national publicity secretary, Aniete Okon, opposed the enthronement of Obasanjo because as a former military ruler whose pronouncements were tantamount to law, it would be inconceivable for him to conform to the tenets of democracy where an inconsequential councillor could disagree with him without his taking offence (Akpa & Akaeze, 2010).

Interestingly, such fears started manifesting as soon as General Obasanjo got elected into office as a civilian president. President Obasanjo did not believe in the supremacy of the party or rather a division between the party executive and the executive arm of the government he presided over. His concept of an executive president was far-reaching and omnipotent. That accounted for the frosty relationship he had with the national assembly throughout his eight years in office. Shortly after he was elected president, on March 3, 1999, he opined that PDP would have to be reorganized. He told the protem national executives of the party to subject themselves to the electoral process if they wanted to remain in office (Abu, 2003). Indeed, President Obasanjo wanted to impose his favoured candidates on the party, thereby controlling the PDP effectively. At the party's national convention of November 20, 1999, Barnabas Gemade, the anointed aspirant, won the chairmanship of the party. Chief

Sunday Awoniyi, who lost to Mr. Gemade alleged that the election was manipulated. In his words:

so deliberately incompetent were the proceedings of the convention and so despicable were the manipulations that even if I had been declared winner, my conscience and principle would have compelled me to reject the victory as flawed and immorally obtained (Abu, 2003).

Unfortunately, what informed some members of PDP to object very vigorously over the candidature of General Obasanjo, whose military training had been conditioned into giving orders with absolute compliance started to rear its ugly head.

Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, with acclaimed largest membership lacks internal democracy. At the national level, Obasanjo's personality predominated while at the various states controlled by PDP the governors prevailed. PDP is not a party standing on good foundation. Members are not equal and that accounts for the dominance of godfathers and moneybags who actually finance the party and dictate who gets what. Unlike African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, PDP is held together because they control the centre and more than two- third of states governors in Nigeria. In 2007 /2008, the rank and file in ANC thwarted what they perceived to be injustice by the then sitting president, Thabo Mbeki, against his deputy Jacob Zuma. Mr. Jacob Zuma was elected ANC president in the face of opposition by President Mbeki. Eventually, Mr. Zuma was elected as president of the Republic of South Africa. In Nigeria, delegates to PDP national convention allow themselves to be

intimidated, manipulated and coerced into voting for candidates sponsored by the president. Most Nigerian politicians are susceptible to corruption and that appears to make a mockery of our aspirations to democratic tenets. As Anietie Okon has rightly observed:

things were being done with impunity. You had manipulations. It is on record and also an embarrassment that since 1999, the PDP had not, especially at the centre, conducted its internal elections with the basic and acceptable norm of transparency. No, it was the other way around, that is, of this person being supported by this or that person. Somehow, people were coerced or intimidated to step down (Akpa & Akaeze,2010).

Every national convention of PDP is acrimonious because things were never done according to the rule of law or even in accordance with the PDP Constitution. Members of the party were not allowed to exercise their free will in the choice of election of national officers. Loyalty of national officers were always called to question and under Obasanjo's presidency party leaders were accused of "hobnobbing" with other party members the president considers rivals or critical of his administration. At the PDP national convention of November 10, 2001, Mr. Gemade and Dr Nwodo, both national chairman and secretary, were replaced with Audu Ogbeh and Vincent Ogbulafor. President Obasanjo accused Gemade of hobnobbing with General Ibrahim Babangida, former military president and the Awoniyi group earlier suspended from the party (Abu, 2003).

For democracy to thrive and be sustained in Nigeria, everybody must speak out against injustice and undemocratic practices. It appears as if the general populace enjoys the whimsical behaviour of our leaders while allowing the victims' pains to fade away from our collective memory. The most appalling is the apathy of the leadership of PDP in the face of dictatorial tendencies of the president and governors. Due to the way, the party leaders had emerged between 1999 and 2007, coupled with the zoning arrangement of PDP, it was always easy for President Obasanjo to replace them. Mr. Audu Ogbeh was again used and discarded when it became convenient to do so. As Ben Nwabueze correctly asserted:

The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) which, being the ruling party, is the concern, not of its member alone, but of all of us as the ruled, have been almost completely subjected to the autocratic thumb of the president, as attested by his manipulation of the election or rather selection of the party's National Chairman and National Secretary, the holding of state congresses of the party, etc. This manipulation lies at the root of the problems in the PDP. A ruling party in a democratic polity should not be run along autocratic lines. (Nwabueze,1999)

It appears as if PDP is the civilian wing of the Nigerian military, where retired generals continue to rule the nation. This may account for the "stability" of the nascent democracy and the undemocratic tendencies of the party.

“MONETISED” DEMOCRACY AND GODFATHERISM

Democratic governance presupposes an enthusiastic citizenry participation in the government of the country. This urge to serve is often selfless, borne out of patriotic fervour and the desire to see the nation take its pride of place in the comity of nations. However, since 1999 and with the political dominance of Nigeria by PDP, politics and political participation appear to have been “monetized”. Party delegates at state and national conventions are induced monetarily to vote for the highest bidder. Candidates for elective offices are sponsored by godfathers on the premise of good return on their investments. This political horse-trading has retarded democratic growth of the country. National conventions are mere formality as winners are known in advance. Thus, the 2003 national convention of PDP was marred by monetary inducement, intimidation, blackmail and victimization. The incumbent president Obasanjo and his main challenger Dr. Ekwueme were alleged to have given each delegate between ₦110,000 and N200,000 (Abu,2003). This monetary inducement is the bane of Nigerian politics. The politicians who borrow so much money to bribe the electorate to get elected into public offices felt no obligation to deliver democratic dividends to the people. As Ray Ekpu has aptly pointed out:

The PDP and ANPP conventions where delegates were given large sums of money over and above their transportation and accommodation allowances are a case in point. The people inevitably get tempted with money from politicians at election time. They are happy to collect the booty

because they know that the politicians may not fix their roads or provide them with water or may not even stop by again until the next election. (Ekpu, 2003).

Although PDP national convention is usually televised live, many people still see through the veneer of deceit and manipulation. The contestants grumble openly about the way the proceedings were tilted to favour a particular candidate. The 2003 national convention was dismissed by Dr. Ekwueme as a mere charade and rejected the result. He complained that the ballot papers with serial numbering defeated the purpose of secret balloting since it made it possible to know the way individuals voted (Abu, 2003). If the idea behind the serial numbering of the ballot papers was to identify how each delegate voted, then the essence of secret ballot is defeated. The beauty of democracy is in confidential voting; where the identity of every voter is protected under the canopy of secret ballot. Anything short of secret ballot in a democracy exposes many people to reprisals, intimidation while denying others the courage to exercise their franchise.

Indeed, many elected officials in Nigeria are captives of the new phenomenon called godfathers. There is hardly any state that the so-called godfather is not breathing-down on the governor. Godfathers inundated governors with demands for reimbursement of their electoral expenses on them. As Paul Obi-Ani (2010) asserts most succinctly:

In Nigeria, democracy has been hijacked by godfathers and money-bags without the consent of the vast majority of the people. Election

period is akin to communal warfare where godfathers and money bags parade openly with their private armies while the Nigeria security forces look the other way. Election results are routinely falsified, opponents assassinated or maimed and an orgy of violence unleashed on the people without any fear of penalties or punishments for the perpetrators. This scenario is made possible by the phenomenon of godfatherism and the vaunting ambition of inexperienced politicians who desperately want to ride on the crest of the popularity and contacts of the more experienced politicians to power.

The godfathers also demand that their protégés be appointed commissioners. In Oyo State, Chief Lamidi Adedibu was godfather of governor-elect Ladoja while in Edo State, Chief Tony Anenih exerts such influence in the state. In Kwara State, Dr. Olusola Saraki, the godfather to Governor Mohammed Lawal, fell out with him and drafted his own son, Dr. Bukola Saraki to contest against Lawal as PDP candidate and won. In Anambra State where Chris Uba emerged as the godfather in 2003 election boasted about how he sponsored the governor – elect, Dr. Chris Ngige. According to Chris Uba:

In Anambra PDP today, I am the highest financier. As a businessman, I spend my money supporting people who will give Anambra people good governance and by 2007 if these people perform well, anybody I bring will be supported by the people (Ojewale,2003).

The syndrome of godfatherism requires detailed explanation as is often confused with such terms as mentorship, financier and benefactor. A mentor is a senior person desirous of guiding a junior to acquire expertise and competence in the same profession or vocation. But a benefactor is someone who puts his resources at the disposal of the beneficiary. Such resources would include goodwill, support and finance. While a financier, bankrolls one without overtly identifying with the political views of such a person. The godfather appears selfish and deceptively philanthropic working for other people sometimes for exaggerated political recompense. The godfather is not in the business of philanthropy. In fact, it is the intention of the godfather to rule by proxy. Money-bags are politicians who deploy money to hijack political positions and decisions. Thus, the dividing line between a godfather and money-bag is thin as they both aspire to be the power behind the throne or de facto rule (Obi-Ani,2010). The problem with godfathers has to do with party financing. PDP has limited financial base just like all the other parties in Nigeria. Membership fees are so small to undertake the crude politics of thuggery and ballot-box stuffing. So, wealthy individuals elect to sponsor candidates in return for juicy contracts and other privileges. As Richard A. Joseph (1987) contends that, prepedal politics occurs in a society where the elites corner the state resources for private ends or for sectional interest rather than for national endeavours. This epitomises the politics of PDP at both national and state levels between 1999 and 2007. There is need to enforce the regulation on party financing as it breeds godfatherism and electoral fraud. And as Marcin Walecki (2006) has observed:

Every democratic system has to regulate the flow of money into politics. Unregulated political financing presents certain problems for modern liberal democracy. It fails to guarantee that candidates and political parties compete on equal terms.

Democracy is built and sustained on equity and justice. Anything that gives an undue advantage to a candidate is undemocratic. PDP should act as guardian of true democratic practice in Nigeria but it gives vent to dictatorship, injustice and intimidation. The 2007 presidential primaries were characterized by intimidation, manipulations and arm-twisting of opponents. According to a Newswatch report:

Few days before the primaries, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, was used against perceived formidable presidential aspirants. They were harassed and intimidated by the EFCC at the behest of ‘powers from above’ in order to rubbish them and scuttle their chances of emerging victorious at the convention (Onyekwere,2006).

Of the 30 presidential aspirants, virtually all of them stepped down for Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, the governor of Katsina State and President Obasanjo’s anointed candidate. Despite strong indications that Yar’Adua was not medically fit to contest the election and withstand the rigours of the office, he was goaded into the race. During the presidential campaign, Yar’Adua had to be rushed to Germany for medical check-up and there were strong rumours that he had passed away. It was alleged that

Obasanjo was the only PDP leader who was convinced of the wisdom of the Yar'Adua's choice. President Obasanjo had to deny several insinuations that he deliberately foisted Yar'Adua on PDP so that in the event of his demise, power would return to the south with the Vice – president, Goodluck Jonathan acceding to office (Ajaero,2007). It is a pity that what ordinary Nigerians knew and feared about the poor health of Umaru Yar'Adua came to pass when he died in office on May 5, 2010. Had President Obasanjo not manipulated the proceedings that enthroned Yar'Adua, the political crisis that afflicted the country between 2009 and 2010 could have been averted.

Conclusion

Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, is one of the most fortunate political parties in Nigeria, having been in power at the federal level for over ten years. Yet the party is not built on a solid foundation. Between 1999 and 2007, the party cannot be classified as being democratic. The leadership of the party had been hijacked by the executive – president at the national level and the governors at the state level. The PDP conventions are acrimonious because of the undemocratic nature of the proceedings. Delegates are induced monetarily to vote for particular candidates “anointed” to national offices of the party. Governors are blackmailed and the EFCC used against most of them because they have skeletons in the cupboards. Even when they recognize that a particular candidate vying for the office of the president is not the best material they are harassed and coerced to support the candidate in order to protect their honour.

Funding of the PDP had to be regulated. Donations to the party should be declared open without strings attached. Through this

way the unbridled influence of godfathers and moneybags would be whittled down. The present situation whereby godfathers threaten and blackmail elected state officials is most unfortunate. PDP can institutionalize true democracy in Nigeria. With two-third of state governors belonging to the party and the control of the federal government, the party is best placed to eliminate electoral fraud, thuggery and violence during elections. But PDP can only achieve this if it internalizes the tenets of democracy within its house. Undemocratic practices have robbed the party of credible members who cannot continue to endure the transgression of the party constitution. There is need to eliminate all forms of undemocratic practices to strengthen the party and enthrone true democratic practices in Nigeria.

The People's Democratic Party, PDP, must also ensure that elected party members fulfil the promises made to the people. Nigerians are increasingly becoming aware of their rights and expectations from their representatives at both the Federal and State levels. A good party must interface with its supporters and from time to time showcase its achievements. Every promise fulfilled must be effectively communicated to the electorate via radio, advertisement, newspapers, billboards and more recently through the social media. The PDP has transformed the country by making mobile telephony affordable and accessible throughout the country; it has also enhanced workers' wages, built roads, more universities across the country. However, it has been poor in communicating its achievements to the Nigerian people particularly in preventing ambitious military men from undermining our democracy through *coup d'états*. PDP should strengthen its publicity arm and emphasise its achievements

through effective communication to the people in order to remain dominant in Nigerian political spectrum.

The PDP can be ideologically strengthened. Most of its leading lights are conservative and capitalist minded. Its manifesto should address its Capitalist Conservative bent. The programmes of its elected officials should pursue strong nationalist economic agenda. It should be bold in persuading its large followership that this is the path to follow to grow the economy of Nigeria. Through this way some members who are liberal or lack any ideology will find it difficult to win the party's nomination and quietly leave the party. This would foreclose the issue of carpet-crossing of elected officials of the party in the future. Gradually Nigeria would evolve ideologically suitable political parties like in the United Kingdom where the Conservative and Labour Parties predominate or like the United States of America where the Republican and Democratic parties ideologically divide the society into conservative and liberals as the case may be. Through this way, elections in Nigeria will be issue-based; the party supporting resource control, state police or devolution of powers and all others shall be known. This should be the thrust of the People's Democratic Party, PDP.

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