

Accessing the Role of Party Politics in the Nigerian Elections

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Abstract

The Political parties are one of the most important aspects of electioneering. They serve as a platform where qualified citizenship representation can be processed and the aspiration of governmental positions can be achieved. Political parties under a liberal democratic system are expected to deepen democracy by ensuring credible, free, and fair primaries in selecting their various candidates for elective positions that would advance public welfare in line with party manifestos. However, politics within different political parties are intriguing. Politics within and among the various political parties in Nigeria can determine the mood of the electioneering period which can affect the election's winner, leading to either good or bad governance. Adopting a qualitative research approach and the group theory as a theoretical framework the study finds that unavailability and lack of adherence to procedure, nepotism, godfatherism, ethnicity, disrespect for the rule of law, oppression, manipulation, abuse of the electoral system can throw some doubt as to whether political parties can promote credible, free and fair electoral process in Nigeria. The study concludes that the mechanism for a candidate's emergence in Nigeria is to a great extent exclusive of the input of the masses. The study recommends that the Nigerian political system needs to be demonetized, political education needs to be improved through functional basic education, and the economy needs to be strengthened so that individuals are less inclined to enter politics out of laziness or the belief that it is a quick way to get rich.

Keywords: Party Politics, Electioneering, Democracy, Election, Political Parties

Introduction

The foundation of democracy in Nigeria has been the result of elections. Political Parties and their methods of operation, however, must be crucial elements of successful, free, and fair elections for the growth of democracy in Nigeria (Akindoyin & Badru, 2022). The strength and efficacy of political parties in Nigeria are strongly correlated with our elections' level and degree of success, as they are significant tools for a successful election. Elections and their results have always created controversy and problems in Nigeria. In Nigeria, there is a great deal of anxiety and pain that follows practically every electoral process since elections and election outcomes invariably cause crises, and occasionally, widespread instability and the fall of the government.

Therefore, this study's topic is the internal dynamics of political parties and their influence on elections in Nigeria. Nigeria has a multiparty system in place, with 18 officially recognized political parties in the country. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has deregistered other parties for not meeting the country's political party registration

requirements. Therefore, the interaction of Political Parties and how it impacts the electioneering process is the main subject of this work.

Conceptual Clarification

Political Party

A political party is a group of individuals who share a shared goal and set of interests. Their stated goal is to use the party to gain power, participate in the exercise of power, or seize control of the government, according to Yaqub (1992). Similar to this, political parties are structured entities that enable citizens to control and decide the nature and course of public policies and programs, including the overall distribution of resources, in addition to trying to influence them (Paki and Inokoba, 2006, cited in Ajisebiyawo). According to the definitions of political parties given above, they are groups of people who voluntarily join to gain political power and who create their own set of policies based on their ideals and philosophies.

Election

The important process of choosing representatives for the legislative and executive branches of government is called an election. Elections serve as a vehicle for the expression, manifestation, and accomplishment of the people's will. One of the cornerstones of selecting a representative in a democratic system free from coercion or harassment is election (Akindoyin & Akuche, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The "group theory" serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. A group theory examines how individual political actors come together to form political organizations that engage in politics and have an impact on the government. These groups include those that are typically in positions of formal power, such as government agencies and major political parties, as well as those that are not, like voting blocs, interest groups, and political campaigns. In political systems, these factions are always vying for dominance, and the outcomes of their interactions produce governmental structures and policies.

Methodology

The research methodology adopted is qualitative, and a descriptive research design is used to guide the study. The study also utilized a secondary method of data collection from newspaper publications, scholarly publications, and data from government ministries, departments, and agencies.

Roles of Political Parties

Since elections are a necessary component of a functional democracy. Ogundiya (2011) argues that the structure, ideology, organization, and institutionalization of political parties and party politics have a significant impact on how well any democratic system operates. The primary vehicle for the exercise of political power is through political parties, whose viability depends on factors such as discipline, mass mobilization techniques, leadership succession regulations, internal organization patterns, and ideological coherence. Ensuring freedom of rights is one of the fundamental responsibilities of any political party in a democratic process. A nation ought to grant its people the right to vote and to run for office. Being the citizens' representative is one of a political party's other exclusive responsibilities. Every political party is run by what the people of the nation demand.

Additionally, every political party in the world strives for the acceptance of its ideas. Consequently, when individuals select a political party to represent them, they also select the party's values to be propagated throughout the entire country. The people who elected this party are therefore best served by the political policies that the party has put into place. The country's situation is intended to be improved via the policies. Political parties aid in public education. The political party and the government's ideologies must be understood by the populace. People's political consciousness rises thanks to political parties.

However, according to Komolafe (2010), political parties carry out a variety of other tasks in addition to being involved in elections, including advocacy, research, mobilization, policy creation, education, and concept contestation. According to Komolafe, political parties in most nations accomplish several goals, such as advancing competing ideologies, planning issue-based campaigns, influencing the government in policy discussions, and bringing up official debates on subjects. To provide an opposing force to the ruling party, Komolafe claims that opposition parties "form alliances and develop working partnerships based on similarity of ideas."

Overview of Party Politics and Elections in Nigeria

The politics of Nigeria's political parties since the country's independence have created conflict during electioneering, casting doubt on the validity of the country's elections. Political party politics have been fascinating and tense since the establishment of political parties in Nigeria in 1923. As a result, the way these parties choose their leaders and candidates has affected the results of subsequent elections in Nigeria. In Nigeria, political parties and heated elections are nothing unusual. The "rosy" relationship began during the colonial era when candidates for political office and their supporters viewed elections as a "do or die" situation in which everyone should make every effort to win.

The 1951 elections were unsuccessful in the history of Nigerian party politics and elections, they were mired in controversy. As a result, Mr. Bryan, a former lieutenant governor and later the governor of Northern Nigeria, admitted to his involvement in election manipulation, which allowed the Northern People's Congress to win 90% of the vote. The issue created by that one act was enormous and was spearheaded by "lunatic fringe" anti-British parties like the Middle Zone League and the Northern Elements Progressive Union, as well as organizations like the Action Group and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon. Such favoritism of one political party over another resulted in the Northern Peoples Congress becoming the dominant force in government after independence.

Rather than exhibiting improved electoral behavior in the 1964 and 1965 elections, the political parties executed an unfinished task through an unparalleled character deficiency, which ultimately led to the First Republic's abolition. The two main alliances for the election were the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA). According to Adeniji (2010), there were allegations of violence, manipulations, and malpractices during the first national general election following independence in the North, West, East, and Lagos. As an example, the UPGA demonstrated in the petition to the then-President of the Federation that the NPC/NNA had perfected a plan to return its candidates unopposed by detaining the UPGA and other opposition candidates to keep them from submitting their nomination papers by the deadline. The NPC was able to return 60 of its candidates unopposed in this way.

The 1965 Western Regional Election was rigged more severely than the 1964 election. Because of a fraudulent election, the NNDP, which was in power in the West, aimed to keep its position of authority. The NNDP honed its rigging technique with the help of its

designated returning officers. Returning officers either flatly refused to accept the nomination papers of opposition candidates for various technical reasons, or they left their positions after accepting the papers from government candidates. Recalling officials who had accepted nomination papers from rival candidates occasionally had their appointments revoked, replaced, and then refused to accept new nominations because the previous papers were invalid.

With these strategies, the NNDP was able to return 16 of its candidates unopposed; however, during the election, a significant number of ballot papers were unlawfully acquired by government agents. Even in cases where an opposition candidate triumphed despite all of these obstacles, the results were simply overturned, and the government candidate was declared winner on government-owned radio. Unfortunately, the military politicians later hijacked what the politicians had failed to put to their advantage, bringing an early end to the First Republic. An optimistic assessment of the return of civil democracy in 1979 was based on the lengthy military interregnum and the enthusiastic expectation that political parties and politicians would have learned their lessons, but in vain. Despite being overseen by the military, there were certain manipulations during the elections, which led to related controversy. The heat and confusion created by lawsuits against it, in which the legal interpretations of two-thirds of the 19 states of the union were crucial, is something that one may not quickly forget. The parties were adamant about misinterpreting the constitution to protect themselves, especially the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

In addition to demonstrating the extent of electoral decay in the whole country, the 1983 elections used even more terrible manipulation techniques to minimize the serious mistakes made in the preceding elections. By use of its national "landslide Victory" slogan, the ruling NPN intimidated, bought voter cards, manipulated voter registration and registration processes, massively rigged elections, and, of course, deported people, teaching other political parties the need for "auxiliary precautions." Strong NPN opponent Alhaji Shugaba was kicked out of the country by the NPN-led administration because he was an illegal alien, allowing the NPN to formalize its bid for readmission. As a result, when the results were announced, opposing political parties and even individuals outside of the party fiercely opposed them. This led to the military seizing control of the government and the ascension of General Buhari as the Head of State.

The military junta took turns to rape Nigeria and run an unrealistic succession plan particularly Gen. Ibrahim Babangida administration, whose transition plans created the two political parties called Nigerian Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). The conscription of Nigerians into these two parties by military fiat led to the elections of June 12, 1993, in which Chief Moshood Kashinmawo Abiola (MKO) was annulled. The annulment of the June 12 elections by Ibrahim Babangida constitutes a violation of the sanctity of the ballot box and the will of the Nigerian people. According to Idowu (2017), the 1993 election violation triggered the crisis and political upheaval that impacted so negatively on Nigeria that no one can in his or her true sense state that Nigeria has overcome the June 12 arrogant mistake to date. Thousands of lives were lost because of poor management of elections. It augured well for no one. With the annulment of the June 12 election, Nigeria and Nigerians continued to suffer brutalization at the hands of the military until 1999 when civil rule returned on May 29th. 1999 led by a retired military man and former head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Because of the military's strong presence during the 1999 elections—particularly that of Abdusalami Abubakar, the then-head of state, who was genuinely committed to the military's

return to the barracks rather than the democratic process—it is possible that the 1999 elections were less contentious than the 1983 ones. Yet, it could not be claimed that this dedication was demonstrated in the 2003 elections held by President Obasanjo's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) administration. All the elections represented was a democratic deficit and a spectacle of shame. The results as declared by the INEC were challenged by 29 of the registered political parties, who either ran for office or abstained from it, claiming the results were rigged.

Election observers from both within and outside the country noted numerous anomalies that defined the proceedings and declined to declare them free and fair. While others called for "mass action" to put pressure on a government devoid of a popular mandate to step down, several political parties and their candidates chose to contest some of the results before the various Election Petition tribunals. The European Union Observers' study, which also detailed extensive election-related misconduct in several Middle Belt, South East, and South-South states, contributed to this. The numerous instances of election violence and the variety of electoral malpractice fuelled long-standing concerns that the electoral system's fundamental institutional flaws would ultimately lead to the collapse of the democratic experiment (Ibrahim, 2007).

Even though the 2003 elections were terrible, they demonstrated the PDP's stronghold over Nigerian politics and its determination to deny the opposition any room, not even democratically. The 2007 elections were a complete and unprecedented break from recognized democratic norms. Because of its conspicuously poor planning, Ibrahim (2007) has earlier warned that it appeared as though a scheme was being developed to hold either unsuccessful or no elections in 2007. But Yar'Adua of the PDP emerged victorious with 69.82 percent, ahead of Buhari of the ANPP with 18.7 percent and Action Congress's Atiku Abubakar with 7.47 percent (Ibrahim 2007). In the past, elections were managed and voting took place, which made them beautiful. However, in the 2007 election, there was essentially no voting at all. Nigerians turned up to vote in the majority of areas, but they were unable to do so because there were either no electoral officers present or no voting materials where they were.

In the fourth republic, the 2011 election was the fourth election overall. It happened just a year after President Yar'adua passed away. Within the ruling PDP, there was intense discussion and disagreement about whether President Goodluck Jonathan should run for office again in 2011 or whether a candidate from the North should take his place as the party's nominee. After much back and forth, Jonathan was granted a ticket to run for president in the PDP in 2011, but he was only allowed to run for one term.

It is noteworthy that, in comparison to previous elections held throughout the Fourth Republic, the 2011 elections represented a significant improvement. But it is not without flaws. Even though there was significant electoral fraud in the fourth election, it was generally peaceful and some voting procedures were barely followed.

The political landscape was heated before the 2015 elections due to a few issues that surfaced inside each political party. For instance, the Muslim-Muslim ticket controversy nearly caused division within the APC. Some officials within the PDP also believed that since it was a northerner's turn to run, President Jonathan Goodluck shouldn't pursue the position. These and numerous more factors contributed to the intense political atmosphere. For instance, APC spokesman Lia Mohammed stated in a press conference in response to rumors that the PDP had prepared preparations to import jammers to jam the nation's card readers on election day (Daily Post, March 17, 2015);

“PDP has placed an order for 75,000 pieces of card reader jammers at the cost of \$200 per piece, bringing the total cost to \$15 million, adding that the jammers will be air freighted to Nigeria the following week”

After losing the election, President Goodluck Jonathan ordered that the election should not be challenged in court and accepted defeat against all odds long before INEC announced the results, which helped to calm down the post-election atmosphere.

For the 2019 election, things took a more debatable shape before and after the elections as a result of some internal party wrangling. The election was a major contest between the ruling party APC and the major opposition party, PDP. Furthermore, two (2) factors made the election intriguing, firstly, the candidate of the PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was a founding member of the APC, and he had just left APC to contest in the 2019 Presidential election, and secondly, both candidates of the two (2) major political party (APC and PDP) are one of the strong men from the Northern part of the country. Hence, this made the electioneering period to be dominated by intra and inter-party dirty politics.

Due to these factors, among many more, there was proof of election manipulation during the 2019 general elections, and the court cases that followed made clear that the election code of conduct was broken. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the PDP candidate, has responded to the 2019 elections as follows (Punch, February 2027, 2019):

“If I had lost in a free and fair election, I would have called the victor within seconds of my being aware of his victory to offer not just my congratulations, but my service to help unite Nigeria by being a bridge between the North and South”

In the context of the 2023 General Elections, party politics and its effects made this election the most divisive in Nigeria’s history since the country's 1960 independence. According to Ogunbanjo (2024), The APC was still the party to beat, but the PDP, the main opposition party, had a major rift in its ranks due to its intriguing and unbalanced party politics, as a result, significant PDP stakeholders either worked against the party, sided with the APC, or left to join another political party, which gave rise to Peter Obi, the formidable candidate for the Labour Party. These actions not only increased the level of competition in the pre-election period, but also fostered hate speech, ethnic and religious prejudice, and—most importantly—greater pressure on INEC. Three (3) major political parties—the LP, the PDP, and the APC—each fielded well-known candidates from different ethnic groups, zones, and tribes in the 2023 presidential election, marking the first time in the fourth republic's history that this has happened.

It should be mentioned that the candidates for the PDP and LP had expressed no faith at all in INEC and its procedures before the polls. They believed that the ruling APC had rigged the electoral process, and the electoral umpire had become unreliable and dishonest. On January 9, 2023, the PDP stated through Debo Ologunagba, its national publicity secretary (Punch, January 10, 2023):

“We have been talking about this to the press, we have stated this a long time ago, and people said it was a false alarm. The security and the president, Major Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (Retd) promised the whole world that there would be free, fair, and credible elections should remember that nothing short of free, fair, and credible elections will be acceptable.”

The Labour Party (LP) expressed its dissatisfaction with INEC and the electoral procedures in a statement issued on October 12, 2022, which was facilitated by Doyin Okupe, the Director General of the Peter Obi – Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed campaign council organization (Vanguard October 13, 2022).

“the INEC has no choice but to act fearful, impartial, fearless, and patriotic umpire in the 2023 general election. We say this is your biggest test in recent history and you have no choice but to act as a fair, impartial, fearless, and patriotic umpire in the coming elections.”

Having said and done all of the above and much more, it is important to remember that the results of the general elections in 2023 were challenged up to the Supreme Court and that they continue to be the most hotly contested, controversial, and polarizing elections in Nigeria. Following the Supreme Court's decision on October 26, 2023, regarding the 2023 presidential election, the losing parties, the PDP and the LP, issued a press release denouncing the polls and INEC (Punch October 27, 2023).

PDP in its statement said:

“It is indeed a sad commentary for our democracy that the Supreme court failed to uphold the provisions of the law. Instead, it trashed the expectation of the majority of Nigerians who looked up to it as a temple of Impartiality to deliver substantial justice in the matter regarding the case’s laws and facts.”

Causes of Party Politics and Contentious Elections in Nigeria

Just a cursory understanding of history is necessary to acknowledge that the peculiarities of Nigerian political parties are a result of the distinctive political landscape in that country, where a multitude of variables have contributed to the undemocratic practices of political parties during elections. Examining these issues is both fascinating and illuminating.

Since no one can provide what he does not have, the parties' lack of internal democracy is largely to blame for their incapacity to comprehend the necessity of democracy in Nigerian society as a whole. These parties respect democratic ideas only on paper, as seen by the appalling and undemocratic way they conduct internal affairs. The issues brought about by the parties' incapacity to organize legitimate primaries to select candidates for elections are issues that one cannot quickly ignore. For example, the choice of PDP's Obasanjo over Ekwueme in 1999 and the nearly handpick method of President Obasanjo on the choice of Yar'Adua despite opposition in 2007. In the 2010 Anambra State gubernatorial election, the choices made by Charles Soludo (PDP), Uche Ekwunife (PPA), Andy Ubah (LP), and others fell short of even the most basic democratic standards. This implies that the party and those imposing the candidate will do everything within their power to ensure his election when the candidate is neither well-liked nor imposed. Election fraud becomes the sole means by which the more cunning con artist prevails when other parties follow suit, escalating political tensions.

The issue of intra-party rivalries, in which certain party power brokers inside the parties are at loggerheads, particularly over the selection of party candidates, is closely tied to the aforementioned. Ibrahim (2006) points out that their most current research indicates that the four main political parties in the nation were deeply involved in violent internal conflicts. Party leader assassinations began as 2007 drew near. Three candidates for governor were

assassinated in June and August of 2006, largely because many political parties were run by political "godfathers" who controlled party nominations and campaign outcomes with violence and money. These "godfathers" also used their preferred tools to suppress candidates who attempted to follow their path. They therefore increased the degree of electoral violence and complicated free and fair elections. This was confirmed by the Babalakin Commission on the 1983 elections, which stated in its report that "mostly, men of influence who see funding of political parties as an investment that must yield rich dividends dominated political parties".

Political parties in Nigeria undoubtedly dangle on the precarious border of ideological deficiencies. Parties' political views are streamlined by ideology, which also establishes the standard for how they should behave in certain situations. They act before, during, and after elections without adhering to the fundamental principles of the mixed economy, social democracy, capitalism, welfare, liberalism, socialism, and other ideologies that have absorbed them. This makes it challenging to identify any distinct differences between Nigeria's current political groups. Without proper ideological definitions, parties behave beyond their bounds which could be conflict-generating.

Membership in Nigerian political parties runs short of general expectations because parties are meant to have people of like minds convinced of a particular way to acquire and manage state power. The parties are a collection of individuals with varying backgrounds, beliefs about how to seize and wield power, and ideological inclinations, if any. Some people are completely unaware of these. Furthermore, there is a great deal of ideological and personal diversity among party members, which helps to explain why members take diverse positions on issues that ought to concern the entire party, like elections.

Interestingly, no political party in Nigeria has a manifesto that is specific to the needs of the Nigerian people. Even those who assert to have one—such as the PDP, APC, and LP—do not take joy in displaying it to the public with the conviction and pride that it demands. For instance, at the time of their formation, the PDP and the APC were status quo parties. Other than intending to fill open positions at all federation levels in 1999, they had no policy positions (Omoruyi, 2001). The PDP's Umaru Yar'Adua's Seven Point Agenda is unable to provide a detailed explanation of how such admirable goals could be accomplished. This defect might not be isolated from the agenda's inefficiency. It's also quite challenging to make definite differences between the parties. It should be recalled that Olu Falae, a prominent member of the AD and past ANPP presidential candidate, had boasted that he wrote the manifesto for both the PDP and the AD. The AD once accused the president of stealing their poverty alleviation initiative during the Obasanjo administration, which led to needless tensions. Conflicts of this nature have the potential to make political parties more desperate in their interactions with one another both before and after elections.

The winner-take-all political system in Nigeria is detrimental to the nation's ability to hold peaceful elections. Political posts and the "spoils of office" are traditionally awarded to members of the winning party; losing parties are rarely taken into account. The fact that Nigeria is a nation where politics is viewed as a full-time job and a significant investment that cannot be compromised does not assist with this. As each party and its members plot to win elections at all costs, this trend heats the electoral landscape. In modern Nigerian politics, it is even a maxim to "let the opposition go to court" and do whatever it takes to win.

Impact of Party Politics and Contentious Elections in Nigeria

In actuality, Nigerian political parties have not aided the Nigeria project. Their acts and inactions from the colonial era to the present have continuously raised doubts about their ability to carry out their expected roles, particularly in a volatile and underdeveloped emerging democracy like Nigeria. Since 1999, political parties' roles have remained ambiguous because, according to Omoruyi (2001), the country's political parties are still looking for a purpose. Since 1999, the so-called political parties in Nigeria have frequently contributed significantly to the issue. Our political parties are always determined to win elections by any means necessary. This explains why the culture of violence, intimidation, and other forms of rigging, rather than waning, continues to proliferate and develop more sophisticated. These days, interference in elections with computer manipulations takes precedence over election rigging.

The evolution of party politics in Nigeria has not been aided in any manner by the parties' incapacity to conduct elections in accordance with electoral laws. Party actions in the run-up to, during, and following elections have in the past caused enormous problems that ultimately resulted in the fall of democratic administrations. Emergent regimes' demise and dissolution of parties were the outcome. Parties are therefore among the biggest casualties of any democratic termination. When something like this happens, the parties break up and never fully regroup because new parties are founded during the next democratic transition without taking into account the previous ones. The trend continues unchecked as new parties start over in every aspect. The NNDP, AG, NPC, and so forth in the 1920s; NPP, NPN, and UPN, etc. in the 1980s; SDP and NRC in the 1990s; and PDP, APC, and LP, etc., in the present. This structure hinders the development of party politics over time and via experiences. It is understandable that political parties in Nigeria, regardless of government, act immaturely and lack historical perspective. Parties have developed over time in developed democracies, drawing from years of experience gained via trial and error techniques. This helps the system not only endure but also thrive and expand in that direction.

Although political parties teach aspiring politicians how to govern democratically throughout the world, it is impossible to say the same about Nigeria without bringing up some contradicting points. Crucially, the parties involved have all but mandated that anyone aspiring to assume leadership roles in the future complete an unofficial apprenticeship or tutelage program under a party stakeholder who will eventually serve as their godfather or leader. This explains why members of Nigerian political parties so frequently refer to one another as "my party leader." In addition, after winning elections, candidates that emerged from unfair primaries (candidate imposition) mainly cared about advancing their interests and the interests of their godfathers, families, tribes, and loyalists, which further solidified nepotism and polarized the state. It becomes challenging to launch programs and policies in such a setting that are free of prejudices against the majority of people based on kinship, party affiliation, or allegiance. According to Chinedu (2022), godfatherism in politics causes politicians to prioritize appeasing their political godfathers' whims and caprices over sustainable growth. This situation just makes Nigeria's anti-democratic practices worse and further impoverishes the populace. This has frequently occurred in the realm of administration; two recent instances are in Rivers State, where the current governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, is facing up against his godfather, Nyesom Wike, and in Benue State, where the current governor, Hyacinth Alia, is facing off against George Akume, his godfather.

Opposition politics is essential to democracy everywhere, but in Nigeria, it is hampered by the divisive electoral process and the party in power, which views these as opportunities to

use all of its tools, including the power of incumbency, to strangle the opposition parties out of existence. Nigerians, on the other hand, always support the winning party and embrace cross-party groupings as popular democratic norms. It is evident that the APC, which bills itself as the "largest party in Africa," has nearly succeeded in intimidating other political parties out of existence. Nigeria might soon become a one-party state based on the party's current direction. This poses a serious threat to democracy. Promoting opposition politics is crucial for Nigeria's democracy to survive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, from the perspective of group theory, it was vividly observed that the mechanism for a candidate's emergence in Nigeria is to a great extent exclusive of the input of the masses. This no doubt has led to the recycling of political actors, and when new candidates emerge, they are merely representing the interest of a political group (godfathers) thereby maintaining the status quo of social relations between political elites and the people. It has not helped that law enforcement is powerless to detain and prosecute party members engaged in electoral violence and manipulation. As a result, the relevant agencies ought to be empowered by the relevant laws. It is intolerable that the police are currently unable to formally punish electoral offenders. This could account for the irony that violators are arrested after each election, only to be released the following day.

Recommendation(s)

- i. The choosing of political leaders through an inclusive and transparent process could potentially curb the problematic social connections surrounding governance. This may be accomplished in a setting with a developed political culture, free and fair elections, and political players who see themselves more as servants of the people than as rulers. To do this, the political system needs to be demonetized, political education needs to be improved through functional basic education, and the economy needs to be strengthened so that individuals are less inclined to enter politics out of laziness or the belief that it is a quick way to get rich.
- ii. Corruption in elections should be severely punished for those who do it. This demands that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which conspires with political parties to manipulate elections, be reorganized. Employees of the Commission engaged in election malpractice ought to face consequences beyond termination. The Commission should also have complete financial and decision-making independence.
- iii. Reforming political financing is necessary. Nigerian politics offers a lot of incentives, which is one of the main reasons why so many politicians are eager to accept positions. Many people may be deterred from committing crimes to gain power if politics is made less appealing and politicians are paid substantially less.
- iv. The finest practices for handling electoral defeats and wins should be taught to the party's leadership and members. Periodic workshops, conferences, and seminars could be one way to do this. Another issue in Nigeria's electoral process is the delay in the dispensing of electoral justice. It is best if these requests are handled as soon as possible.

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