

Ethnicity, Party Politics and Democracy in Nigeria: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as Agent of Consolidation?

Ademola Azeez

*Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, PMB 1515, Ilorin, Nigeria
GSM: 0803 588 8732, E-mail: demazez@yahoo.com*

KEYWORDS Politics. Democracy. Ethnicity. Democratic Consolidation. Political Parties

ABSTRACT Since the enthronement of democracy, especially the western-liberal variant, as the “only game in town”, every tribe and clime has struggled not only to be democratic but also have it sustained and consolidated in line with America (the Apostle of democracy) model. But, with the deleterious implications of ethnicity in Nigeria, which to an extent has had negative impact on our efforts at political stability and development since independence; attempt at democratic consolidation has also been a mirage. Though, with Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the saddle of leadership fore upward of seven years with membership cutting across the climes and sections of the country, a new assessment of party politics and democracy seems to be an interesting thrust for scholars and political observers. This paper therefore examined the capability of the dominant party to aid consolidation of democracy in a heterogeneous and ethnically sensitive Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The ethnic virus has been one of the most important causes of social crisis and political instability in Nigeria; and ethnicity has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall politico-economic development of the country (Otite 1990: 145).

The foregoing statement aptly sum up the deleterious implications of ethnicity for not only political stability and national development in Nigeria, but also the spate of party politics and its possible effects on democratic consolidation in the polity. The pattern of party politics practiced in its over four decades of flag independence has been a critical concern to scholars and observers of the political system, especially as they perused to see democracy and democratic practices in operation. Long years of military misadventure into the political foray in addition to ethnic and regional chauvinism, along with politics of animosity and avarice have together rendered attempts to get the “only game in town” (Przeworski 1991) established and consolidated a mirage.

However, as the fourth republic emerged and a slight deviation from the norm of party politics was recorded with the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) emerging as the dominant party in the country, with membership and origin cutting across the climes and sections of the country, a new dimension to the assessment of democracy and democratic party politics emerged in the

country. To this extent, scholars, observers and professionals have got to understand that the efforts towards democratic consolidation require more than removing ethnicity from our party politics. We have through this piece realized the incapability of the single dominant party, even with every factions of the country in its arsenal to nurture and sustain the hard earned democracy. To this effect urgent actions would have to be taken for democracy to be consolidated in the country, unless it will remain a tall dream and subject of individual optimism and wishes.

According to Bratton and Van de Walle:

Constitutional reform or disintegration of authoritarian rule as well as removal of ethnic politics is not sufficient enough to explain a consolidated democracy, much also depends on the intentions of existing and emerging political leaders and the sincerity of their commitment to open and responsive politics (1992: 29).

With PDP and its leadership in action, what we see has negated all known theories of democratic consolidation, rather a slow dissent into political abyss.

DEFINITION OF S CONCEPTS

Ethnicity

To Nnoli (1978: 5) ethnicity is a “social phenomenon associated with (communal) competition among members of different ethnic groups”. And by ‘ethnic groups’ in turn, are social

formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries and membership especially language, culture or both, with language constituting the most crucial variable in Africa. An ethnic group, however, is not necessarily linguistically or culturally homogeneous, in so far as it often subsumes sub-cultural, linguistic, dialectic, occupational and class differences, depending on the prevailing level of socio-economic development and cultural differentiation (Eteng 2004: 45). Hence, Azeez (2004: 329) sees ethnicity as a sense of peoplehood that has its foundation in the combined remembrance of past experience and common aspiration. It is therefore evidenced as Eteng observed that ethnicity is a derivative of the ethnic group, which forms the basis of its articulation and activation. That is, it is the existence of the group that makes ethnicity possible.

Accordingly however, ethnicity does not exist outside the unit or group that embodies it. To this Enloe (1978: 33) postulated that “ethnicity is looked upon as unreal, an artificial basis of identification and collective organization, conjured up by outsiders looking for an efficient instrument of political and economic control”. It is therefore considered a strategic weapon chosen by a disadvantaged group as a new mode of seeking political redress, or by a privileged group in order to protect its advantages. Thus, Cox (1970: 317) see ethnicity or ethnic group generally as a socio-cultural entity “while inhabiting the same state, country or economic area, consider themselves biologically, culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other and most often view their relation in actual or potentially antagonistic terms” (see also Barth 1970: 10).

Party Politics

Simply stated, party politics are activities of political parties in a democratic environment to seek for the control of political offices through stated norms of elections (Olaniyi 2001: 99). To this extent, party politics exist when elective principles are present in a state and by implication under a democratic regime which recognizes the legitimate choice of the citizens to select or elect those to represent them in governmental offices, for example, in the pre-independent era in Nigeria, party politics was not in existence until 1922, when

the Clifford constitution introduced for the first time in the country the elective principle. And with military incursion into the Nigerian polity, all democratic structures and institutions, including the elective principle were banned and dissolved.

According to Okoye (1982), party politics therefore are “activities of formal structure, institution or organization which compete through electoral process to control the personnel and policies of government, and with the aim of allocating the scarce resources in a state through an institutionalized means or procedure”. Hence, the primary objective of party politics is directed toward a single goal of wrestling for governmental or political power.

However, despite the fact that party politics serve some other numerous purpose, outside the primary objective, such as integrative mechanism, feedback mechanism, aggregative machinery or tool, regulatory and promotional roles, its roles are punctured and truncated by various negative activities such as polarizing and widening gap between and/or among ethnic groups, unhealthy rivalry, marginalizing tool, exploitative mechanism and expropriatory role, apart from undemocratic rule.

Democracy

The very first problem with the promotion of democracy through which party politics is operative lies in determining what the term encompasses. Derived from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratia* (authority), democracy could be equated with “the rule by the people”, in contrast with the rule by the few (oligarchy), or the rule by one individual (monarchy or tyranny), or the rule of the gifted (aristocracy) (Cambridge Encyclopedia 1990: 349). However, because *demos* referred to a particular social class, it is more appropriate to translate democracy as the rule of the “many”. Although, any political system can claim to further people’s interest, and a monarchy is a good example, only a democracy allows the majority to rule, and not just benefit (Monga 1996: 19-20).

Designed originally as a type of government in which the people share in directing the activities of the state, democracy has seen its meaning altered or expanded to describe a philosophy that insists on the right and the capacity of a people, acting directly or through representatives, to control their institutions for their own purposes.

Therefore, in terms of meaning and conceptualizations, many writers have spent their scholarly lifetimes teasing out the subtleties and nuances associated with conception of democracy. Yet the concept remains elusive, still highly contested in analytical and ideological discourse. Therefore, definitions are given to the concept according to the personal interest of the writer and the circumstances of the environment. To us here, we have seen it as a phenomenon through which a political system grants civic and political rights to its citizens. More elaborately, it refers to a constitutional circumstance that is designed not only to ensure the free election of rulers into power, but also to ensure that the rulers rule for and on behalf of the people. It is a government based on economic peace and stability of the people, sound governmental structures that control the powers of those who govern, prudence and probity and the rule of law.

Democratic Consolidation

Gullermo O'Donnell claims that a democracy is consolidated when power is alternated between rival parties, support for the system is continued during time of economic hardship, rebels are defeated and punished, the regime remain stable in the face of restructuring of the party system, and there exists no significant political anti-system (O'Donnell 1996: 14). The same is argued by Phillippe Schmitter that a democracy is consolidated when "social relation become social value i.e. patterns of interaction can become so regular in their occurrence, so endowed with meaning, so capable of motivating behaviour that they become autonomous in their internal function and resistance to externally induced change" (Schmitter 1992). He lays emphasis on political culture and social values.

While summarizing the previous definitions, Adam Przeworski concluded that "democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions, a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town; when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions when all losers (of political contest) want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost (Przeworski 1991: 23).

Lastly, a review of recent literature shows that various ideas on benchmarks for democratic consolidation are emerging. Gunther, Diamond-

orous and Puhle (1995) advance the view that democratic consolidation is complete when there has been an adoption of democratic institutions, processes and values by the political class and the masses.

ETHNICITY AND PARTY POLITICS IN NIGERIA: THE HISTORICAL PAST

The scourge of ethnicity had been a common feature in the country's drive towards achieving democracy and its attendant party politics. It is a fact that Nigeria's national identity has been at odds, since the colonial era with the appeal of more exclusive ethnic identity. For example, in pre-independence Nigeria, party politics and party formation assumed an ethnic completion, even as it metamorphosed into the post-independent first republic. The Action Group developed from the political wing of the cultural association of the Yoruba educated elite, the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*; the NCNC was closely allied with the Ibo state union and played a significant role in the internal affairs of the party, while NPC was founded by the Fulani aristocracy. In the smaller ethnic groups, a local political party was often indistinguishable from the cultural association (Sklar, 1963). And more significantly, the division of the country into three regions for administrative convenience by the Richards constitution of 1946 led to the development of strong regional feeling. The consequence of this was such that by 1953, the major political parties in Nigeria – NCNC, AG and NPC, were associated with the major ethnic groups and the three regions, Western, Eastern and the Northern regions. To further crystallize the tripartite ethnic cleavages, the party leaderships were structured accordingly, viz: the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello led the NPC of the North; Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe held the ace for the Igbos NCNC, while Chief Obafemi Awolowo led the AG in the Yoruba West, each representing their ethnic/regional divides.

It was however, the absence of well-organized, strong, visionary and purposeful cross-national political parties with the organizational depth and durable popular support for democratic effectiveness and legitimacy that led in part to the collapse of the first republic.

However, the 1979 constitution that ushered in the second republic made regulations which were intended to make political parties national in outlook, even including their operations. But,

party politics and formation defying all hindrance were seen to follow ethnic dimension, even in line with their operations in the first republic. Save the death of Ahmadu Bello of the NPC, the new political parties that were registered had their leaders replicated as it were. Hence, Obafemi Awolowo retained the leadership of the AG metamorphosed UPN, while Nnamdi Azikwe maintained the control of the Igbo nations by leading the NPP – an affiliate of the old NCNC. The remaining two minority parties, GNPP, PRP and later NAP were not different as they equally took on their ethnic colouration and affiliation.

Meanwhile, party politics had its worst experience in the third republic when the military hold sway. Generals Babangida and Abacha manipulated and decided the formation of political parties. Hence, by the time Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) were registered by the Babangida government. The formation and establishment was for a particular personal agenda of the self-acclaimed President. The annulment of the generally acclaimed freest and fairest June 12, 1993 elections attested to the general's personal ambition. Yet, ethno-religious cleavages were visible in the membership and composition of the two parties. While SDP favoured the southerners, NRC was a party for the Hausa/Fulani north.

The five parties of the Abacha regime: Congress for National Consensus (CNC), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) were formed only to adopt their sole benefactor General Sani Abacha as their consensus presidential candidate, for him to actualize his transformation from the military Khaki to civilian babariga as did by his friend Blaise Campaore in Burkina Faso among others. No wonder the parties were referred to as "five fingers of a leprous hand" by late Chief Bola Ige (Sunday Herald, Sept. 6, 1998: 9). According to Nwankwo (2001) the parties were so referred because "of their praetorian origin and not so subtle imposition, these parties had no authority of their own, no mind of their own, and no identity of their own".

However, the sudden death of Abacha on June 8, 1998 marked the end of the transition programme of self-succession. Thus, marking the beginning to the emergence of the fourth republic, through the General Abdulsalam

Abubakar – led short and brief transition programme. At the end of the usual alignment and realignments as well as merger, 26 political associations sought for provisional registration, only nine parties were provisionally registered. After the Local Government elections, three political parties amongst them well fully registered to contest the elections. They are the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP) later known as All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). Yet, by 29th May 1999 when the democratic process was concluded with the installation of the PDP government with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerging as the executive president of the federation; the ethnic colouration of the past experiments still manifested in the present. With ANPP considered as a party predominantly occupied by the Hausa/Fulani and AD as the direct successor to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group and Unity Party of Nigeria, and as a result dominated the six Yoruba speaking states of Lagos, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo until 2003 when it lost all the states except Lagos. The ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was however seen to have deviated a bit from the usual ethno-religious dominated party politics of the past with their membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria.

However, to what extent has this deviation served as an advantage to the consolidation of the hard-won democracy, to the extent that a reversal to autocracy and absolutism that were witnessed under several military regimes of the past will not occur again? This is where our touch light shall be beamed in the next section of this essay.

PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP) AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

The genesis of the PDP could be traced to a civil society organization, formed in late 1997 with the aim of enlightening citizens about their right and obligations in a militarized political atmosphere. The society, which later transformed into a group of 34 was made up of mostly antagonists of the General Sani Abacha's self-succession plan, including eminent Nigerians from both the North and South of the country. It is the only party that can boast of retired soldiers, business moguls, members of the dominant class, among others (Omoruyi 2001). This can be seen

from the composition of factions existing within the party fold. These include, the PDM faction of Yar' Adua to which Atiku belong. The NPN faction included Awoniyi and Ekwueme, the military faction in which past military actions were to be protected in a new civilian dispensation, include Babangida, Rasaki, Marwa etc. The power – seeker faction, who looking at the “calculation” felt that PDP was the party to be, if they were to drink from the national treasure. There are also quite a few people in PDP, who remain nameless, belonging to all the factions. They are the proverbial “opportunists”. The president has once described the PDP.

... as an amalgam of interest groups held together by the fact that the party is in power and therefore, by the resultant strong expectation of patronage (The Comet, January 14, 2004: 14).

The obsession of the politicians in PDP fold, apart from ousting the military was to show that the political class could cohere into one formidable force. However, if this was desirous at the time, it was soon to prove the undoing of the PDP. For even as the political class verily cohered and presented a formidable front that wrestle and became the dominant party in the country, the party became a collection and amalgam of strange bedfellows. Most of these strange bedfellows were to desert the PDP with the registration of more parties and the expansion of the democratic space; which gave expression to the various tendencies that hitherto congregated in the party, allowing each to go its separate way.

The separation however led to the emergence of a single authority that is coming from the presidency under the able control of Mr. President (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo).

Governance and party politics in the country in the last six years of democracy in Nigeria has been reduced to the rule of the president, with him as the focus, the beginning and the end of everything. The Governors and every other political office holders operate as if they were under the command of a General in Aso villa, Abuja. And back in the states, the Governors are mini-emperors, they are lords and masters with access to the state treasury and with the powers to favour whomsoever please them.

We could therefore, ask ourselves a simple question: what is democratic about the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)? Apart from the fact that the party installed 28 governors and many other operatives in both the executives and legislative

arms at the various levels in the country (the method of installation was everything but democratic as unfolding events after the elections justified e.g. Anambra, Ogun, Bayelsa states etc), there is nothing democratic about the party. The country is like a conquered wasteland, and the ruling PDP makes a point of stressing how it “captured” many states in the election. Military lingo is all the rage in the political discourse in the land. Democracy thus becomes an appendage to paradoxically justify the rule by force that is the order of the day.

A few illustrations and actions from the ruling party, whose main office in the presidency will attest to this fact:

One, the present national executive of the party were personally handpicked by the powerful president after the unceremonious, even humiliating sack of the former executives led by Chief Audu Ogbe, who committed the unpardonable crime of having a mind of his own. This is contrary to the ethics of democracy where leaders are to be appointed, selected or nominated with the consent of the people through an election, even into organization that have one or two things to do with the people. Having got away with blue murder at the national level, the president and his new found strategists descended on the states and sacked any state executive perceived as being disloyal to the president.

Ordinarily, the issue of loyalty to the president does not even arise because the PDP constitution does not recognize the president as a functioning of the party. But the carpetbaggers operating under the wings of the president have so mixed up the whole structure that the drafters of the PDP constitution cannot recognize the present structure, which has Colonel Ahmadu Ali as chairman because it is unknown to the constitution they all burnt the midnight candle to fashion out. To the extent also that the chairman is unknown and unpopular among the powerful names and politicians that initiated moves that led to the formation of the party.

The only passport to fame of the chairman who was a retired colonel was the decimation of the population of students during the *Ali-mungo* struggle for the democratization of education under Obasanjo's watch as Head of State in 1978. Obasanjo went to exhume Ali from political oblivion to “take over” the PDP chairmanship. Like his godfathers, Ali knows in his heart that he

could never have become the party chairman in a free and fair contest. At the time of his appointment, he was a political paperweight. Even now, his total colourlessness makes him a hard sell in any kind of contest. This is the man with the presidential mandate to cut the founding fathers of PDP to size (not the least is the vice president Atiku Abubakar and remakes the party in the image and likeness of the imperial president (*New Age*, Wed. October 12, 2005: 9).

In an interview with *This Day* of August 28, 2005, the party chairman, whose mandate is to democratize the party in the face of an enduring democracy had this to say about the situation in Ekiti state, where the house of assembly controlled by the party was threatening the then state deputy governor, Chief Abiodun Aluko, before his eventual removal, with impeachment after the party headquarters has asked them to halt the move, Ali said:

If the lawmakers disobey the party, we can sack the whole state house of assembly and the governor from the party. There are plenty of people that can come into the party and fill the positions (emphasis mine).

These are tendencies from the party leadership that should be of concern to all stakeholders whose interest is to see democracy in the country nurtured and consolidated.

Secondly, the fight against corruption, which serves as one of the basic goal of the party, its executive and the president, is narrow, selective and episodic. It is to be noted that it is only President Obasanjo and perhaps Nuhu Ribadu, the head of the EFFC who incidentally is doing his job, that has been most articulate about the campaign against corruption (after the incarceration of the ICPC). For President Obasanjo's aides, associates and appointees, and members of the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP), it is business as usual; government remains a source of easy wealth and an arena for primitive accumulation. In the states and local councils, there is virtually no talk about transparency and accountability. This is so because the anti-corruption project is not the product of any grand party vision, or a contract with the people, rather it is articulated more as a personal project of the president, and because it lacks disciples, it is short through with contradiction. In the long run, it would be realized that it is corruption that has grown taproots in the corridors of power, not the opposite. Even, at the level of the party, it is easy

for the chairman to nominate his wife and son for choicy board appointments, so that the resources of the nation and its control will not elude any of his household. This is equally true of the "democratic" Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Thirdly, except in a few states, what ought to be a simple revalidation of its members across the country turn out to be a nightmare for the governing (PDP) and an unmitigated embarrassment to Nigerians. It is either registration cards entrusted to party faithful are hoarded with a stealthy abandon or a fraction of members, thought to be formidable and loyal to the vice president is testily and deliberately frustrated from registering. The climax of this chicanery is the (in) famous imbroglio between Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and Senator Jubril Aminu -who the party entrusted with the coordination for a number of reasons - over the revalidation exercise in Adamawa state (*New Age*, Friday, Oct. 21, 2005).

If the PDP, which touts itself as the largest political party in Africa, should make a mess of a simple and innocuous exercise such as a revalidation exercise, what capacity does it then have to govern a complex polity such as Nigeria? With PDP revalidation of members replete with fraud and gerrymandering, one wonders the expectation at the polls in 2007 when it holds sway and with INEC tethered to its apron strings. Democracy becomes elusive and evasive in as much as we thrive on cutting corners and excluding and marginalizing legitimate players from a level field.

Fourthly, the cost of living under the PDP – led government is now outrageous for literally all families in Nigeria, save those connected to the favoured network of the power elite. Everyday, people in government *parrot-phrases* about embarking on reforms for the future benefit of Nigerians. The reality is that as things are going now, most Nigerians would be dead before the dreamed benefits will start, if ever to manifest.

President Abraham Lincoln of the United States famously defined democracy in his immortal Gettysburg address as "government of the people, by the people, for the people", but what we appear to be practicing in Nigeria is more like "government of the IMF, by the IMF, for the IMF". People who manage our economy obviously do not set so much in store for the Nigerian people, whence the everyday push to satisfy the World Bank and the Bretton-woods

institutions as opposed to the real needs of the citizens of this benighted nation. The so-called debt relief that was celebrated to the high heavens by the authorities has since been exposed as a brazen scam to siphon off the \$12 billion accruable to Nigeria via oil windfall. Nigerians must per force continue to hurt so that the foreign masters of our leaders can be appeased (*New Age*, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005: 8).

Moreover to make things even more confusing there is talk or speculation of extending the tenure of the political stalwarts beyond the ambit of the Nigerian constitution, which they swore to uphold. The constitutional review exercise is inadvertently being tailored to favour this primitive agenda. Even though, the culprits are yet to own up to their plans, yet, the atmosphere is charged towards this, with people having divergent views, depending on their affinity with them. It is all in the sphere of Nigeria's practice of democracy that the goal posts can be extended at full time or in the course of play or in the dead of night. The Irish poet wrote in *The Second Coming*: "the best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity". Characters such as Senator Arthur Nzeribe who was there to justify every whim of the disgraced General Babangida and later shifted into the Abacha rigmarole is today justifying every move of the Obasanjo regime, from the fuel price hike to the extension of tenure, all in the name of belonging to the same ruling PDP.

Lastly, as if democracy and the efforts towards its consolidation mean nothing to the ruling party and its chieftains, the relentless march towards the breakdown of the government and the nation started slowly with civil and religious upheavals without much attention paid by the rulers. With every episode of unrest came the increasing realization by planners and executors of riots that strife was not as expensive as imagined. They could always predict that the government would treat the matter with kid gloves. Because the law and government were lax in tackling civil disorder firmly and harshly, rioters and their sponsors became emboldened to pour into the streets at the slightest limit of provocation.

Apart from acting shy of taking firm actions to put down revolt, whenever it managed to stir itself, the government often employed double standard. There are some crimes and criminals that are above the law no matter how liberally and expansively it is interpreted. Thus, when a

Salisu Buhari forges certificate, he is reluctantly and gently eased out of office, quickly pardoned and then exalted far above measure to an agency that supervises educational research and development. And, when a self-confessed brigand, Chris Uba, boasts of his unlawful activities, even in the presence of top government officials, he is sent away with a minor rebuke. "Naughty boy", they say to him. And when also some sponsored hooligans went raining bullets at the chairman of Ado Ekiti Local Government, Taye Fasuba, the federal government invited the protagonists to lunch. Here, in short, crimes are settled amicably to the grief of the law abiding.

Nothing however exposes the double standard posture and the authoritarian tendency of the president (cy) than the impeachment saga in Akwa-Ibom. The president and his cronies were ready to bend rules of propriety and dump the constitution in their determined bid to rescue the former Deputy Governor who was impeached for official corruption, conduct, unbecoming of his high office, gross insubordination and other offences. Invariably, the presidency decreed that the constitution be put aside since "the matter was a family affair". The House must reverse its decision despite the provision of the constitution on such. To him, his party and the government, the constitution is valid and relevant only to the extent that it supports their position on any given matter. When there is a conflict between their jaundiced opinion and the constitution, it is totally predictable that they will resort to self-help (*New Age*, Wed. July 13, 2009: 9).

Be that as it may, a most disturbing and frightening move against the stability of the country and consolidation of its democracy is the ethnic rebellion hatched by the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra (MASSOB). Their method of ethnic identity to address the inequities and inequalities in the Nigerian federation as it affects the Southeast was taken too much, but with government maintaining its feeble and indecorous approach to scuttle it. To print a different currency, flags and emblems and manufacture memorabilia, and then issue directives and orders, that, by the present social and political structure, are alien to the laws and constitution of the land, is taking matter too far. Coupled with the uprising from the Niger Delta people, the system is moving towards anarchy and eventual collapse. While the agitators are doing their worst, the state governments (mostly

under the PDP umbrella) have both colluded with them and connived at their methods and aims. The federal government on its own was at a loss. It tried repression, it didn't work, it tried dialogue, this also refused to work, and then it started pussy footing on one spot. Perhaps it is immobilized by the realization that it had similarly tried both methods in the past, especially in the Niger Delta and failed to come up with any success. So it will continue to dither until someone in government can snap everyone out of the dangerous stupor.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS CONSOLIDATION

In the last few years of democracy or democratic experiments in Nigeria, Abati has made us to realize that Nigerians have learnt some sober lessons about democratic rule (*New Age* Friday, October 21, 2005: 10). One, that civilian rule does not necessarily guarantee democracy. It is possible to have autocrats in civilian clothing that may be just as bad, if not worse than the military. Two, to achieve democratic consolidation in Nigeria, a fundamental restructuring of the country, a re-orientation of the basis of nationhood ought to be the starting point; otherwise every good intention will be hobbled by the extant weak foundation. Three, the Nigerian political transition process has not yet ended, indeed the national question remains unresolved and it would be a grand delusion to assume that when public officials dig boreholes, tar roads, provide telephones, or junket around the world under the cover of diplomacy, then progress is being made. Four, a proper connection still needs to be established between democracy and development, with the people at the centre of that connection. And five, the country is desperately in need of good men and women in the corridors of power, men and women who would behave like citizens and who will be prepared to reduce the empire of the self and provide useful service to the community.

In the same vein, the statement credited to the Vice President Atiku Abubakar that led the powerful PDM after Yar' Adua's death into PDP is instrumental as we conclude this piece:

Nigeria has experienced decades of military and authoritarian rule which have left deep imprints in our political culture. Consequently, our political elite have become used to the centralization, concentration and personalization of political power – the central defining

elements of modern despotism. The consolidation of democracy however requires the institutionalization of political power which due process and rule and regulation replace the exercise of personal power. Individuals come and go but institutions endure... Most elections are "rigged" before they occur because candidates are eliminated through various methods. These included subverting party constitution and rules, corrupting party officials to disqualify or annul the nomination of some candidates and other illegal methods of distorting the wishes of the electorate (*New Age*, Fri. Sept. 9, 2005: 8).

What a way to eulogize the attributes and character of the ruling party in Nigeria, the largest party in Africa – the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Though, the emergence of PDP as a single dominant party has deviated from the normal party politics, but in itself it is a stride towards authoritarian one-party rule, which is undemocratic. For this paper therefore, a form of consociational democracy is advocated for the polity. Consociationalism encompasses a variety of democratic policy mechanisms that temper zero-sum majoritarian practices with cooperative agreements arranged between representatives of rival segmental groups, rather than crippling and subjecting them apolitical. Through the use of non-competitive mechanisms, power sharing, and consensual decision making, the integrity of existing segmental group is perceived, which primacy is placed on the maintenance of national unity (see Williams 1991: 97-99 & 116-118). With Nigeria's federalism as the mechanism, a pragmatic and an overarching spirit of tolerance finds expression in achieving this consociational democracy, politics of animosity and acrimony will give way for unofficial compromises adopted even in the midst of policy implementations. This is because consociational democracy reflects "a rational and purposive response to the facts of pluralism and interdependence" (Lijphart 1985: 3-15).

REFERENCES

- Azeez A 2004. The Dynamics of Ethnic Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: A Prognosis. In: Duro Oni, Suman Gupta, Tope Omoniyi, Efurosibina Adegbeja and Segun Awonusi (Eds.) *Nigeria and Globalization: Discourses on Identity Politics and Social Conflict*. CBAAC: Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., pp. 327 - 342.

- Barth F (Ed.) 1970. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Bergen Oslo: Universitets Forlaget.
- Bratton M, Van de Walle N 1992. Toward Governance in Africa: Popular Demands and State Responses. In: Goran Hyden, Michael Bratton (Eds.): *Governance and Politics in Africa*. Boulder & London, Lynner Rienner Publishers, pp. 28 - 36.
- Cambridge Encyclopedia 1990. Cambridge.
- Eteng IA 2004. Ethnicity, Ethno-Class Relations and Crisis of Nigeria's Enduring 'National Question' and Political Instability. In: Duro Oni, Suman Gupta, Tope Omoniyi, Efurosibina Adegbija, Segun Awonusi (Eds.): *Nigeria and Globalization: Discourses on Identity Politics and Social Conflict*. CBAAC: Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., pp. 37 - 81.
- Gunther F, Diamondourous E, Pulile H 1995. *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern European in Comparative Perspective*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Lijphart A 1985. Non-Majoritarian Democracy: A Comparison of Federal and Consociational Theories. *Publius*, 15: 3 - 15.
- Monga C 1996. *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher.
- New Age, September 9, 2005, Lagos. New Age, October 12, 2005, Lagos.
- Nnoli O 1978. *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Nwankwo A 2001. Political Parties in Nigeria. www.allafrica.com.
- O'Donnell G 1996. Illusions about Consolidation. *Journal of Democracy*, 7: 14.
- Okoye M 1982. *Party Politics and Election: Historical and Functional Analysis*. Lagos: Malthus Press Publisher.
- Olaniyi JO 2001. *Foundation of Public Policy Analysis*. Ibadan: Sunad Publishers Ltd.
- Omoruyi O 2001. *Parties and Politics in Nigeria*. Biston: Biston University Press.
- Otite O 1990. *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Shaneson C.I. Ltd.
- Przeworski A 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitter PC 1992. The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 35: 16.
- Sklar R 1962. *Nigeria Political Parties*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Sunday Herald, September 6, 1998, Ilorin.
- This Day, August 28, 2005, Lagos.
- The Comet, January 14, 2004, Lagos.
- Williams DC 1992. Accommodation in the Midst of Crisis? Assessing Governance in Nigeria. In: Goran Hyden, Michael Bratton (Eds.): *Governance and Politics in Africa*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, P. 97.