



Research Paper

# Oligarchy and Political Parties in Nigeria: The Financing and Returns Adventure Perspective

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*The use of political parties for political contestations and the formation of democratic governments in Nigeria is facing a major challenge. The inordinate manipulation of party machinery has put the entire political process in a mess. Accusing fingers are directed at the economic and political oligarchs for undue influences on the parties through financing, blackmailing and the inordinate quest for returns. This paper investigated the imports of politico-economic oligarchy on political parties in Nigeria and how the practice contributed to major challenges facing the party system in the country. The study is descriptive and was analyzed qualitatively. Data collection focused on official, online and hardcopy documented evidence. The paper applied Robert Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy" for the explanation. It argued that political parties in Nigeria were financed and formed from top to bottom. Thus, they are reduced to leadership and controls by a few individuals who finance and audaciously manipulate them to get returns (economic and political gains). These generated major problems facing the Nigerian party system. Financing and control of the party machinery and electoral procedures violated laws and dues processes in the conduct of party affairs. The results manifest in questionable party primaries and congresses, unending litigations, inter-party decamping, political violence and proliferation of non-viable parties. Formation of political parties from bottom to top and opportunity for independent candidacy are viable options for redress.*

**Keywords:** Political Party, Oligarchy, Democracy, Political Violence, Party Conflict

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## I. Introduction

The organization of people of common interests for the contest of elections and formation of governments at different levels gives birth to political parties as one of the fundamental bedrocks upon which democratic rule is founded. The Party system and administration are vital to politics and democracy (Yagboyaju and Simbine, 2020). In many states, political parties are formed in numbers while others limit their existence to a two-party system. On the contrary, autocratic rule allows a one-party system that offers the government the opportunity to enjoy one ideological and policy direction in governance devoid of opposition. In democracies, expectations are that the party platforms are viable tools for participant political culture and popular political participation. To a great extent, these expectations are met in some democracies such as Norway, Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada (EIU Democracy Index, 2020). Far from this, the operation of political parties in some states faces major operational challenges. The above democracy index recorded poor political participation and the existence of a hybrid regime in Chad, Syria, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and North Korea. Though Nigeria is rated 100 positions out of 163 countries under evaluation, its situation is similar to the latter because it is rated under the hybrid regime category with Chad and others.

The undesirable condition of political parties in Nigeria is not only pitiable and endemic. Its contribution to democratic challenges and general stringent living conditions of Nigerians is messing up the entire democratic system. The parties are not popularly rooted. They are usually the brain works of a few money-bags who selected their acolytes from across the country and finance the establishment of parties for people to join. Thus, such parties are controlled by their financiers who manipulate subsequent party congresses,

conventions and primary elections imposing their choice candidates on other members of the parties from above. A huge sum of money is invested in the process and reward expected from the party accruing from exorbitant sales of declaration of interest forms, nomination forms, donations and bribery for electoral support. The entire party operations are covertly influenced by the finance and return adventure perpetuated by the oligarchy. The decision of who becomes what, when, and how in the party is tied to these considerations. The escapade is not a child's play. It requires billions and hundreds of millions of Naira – of course not everyone can afford it. The expenditure limit placed on party candidates in the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) is incapable of checking such spending. Campaigns of most successful politicians are financed accordingly and the return mechanism is set in motion for harvests.

This calls for the question “who finances and who receives the returns?” The political, economic, and executive oligarchs in Nigeria are daring in the use of political parties to advance their economic progress. Party finances are seen as viable investments that attract huge returns. Their inordinate quest to make money out of political parties constitutes a major destabilizing crisis in the Nigerian political party system. The saying that “He who pays the piper dictates the tune” applies to the way oligarchs handle political parties in Nigeria. Ideology, free, fair and credible elections, popular political participation, due process, meritocracy and good governance expected from a good political party system are sacrificed on the altar of kleptocratic amassing of party wealth. As outcomes, political parties experience political violence, electoral malpractices, intra-party and inter-party feuds which in turn attract unending litigations among party members, inter-party defection and at worse political murder.

Accordingly, this paper examined the contributions of oligarchy in the challenges facing Nigerian political parties using finance and return adventure thesis as a basis of argument.

## **II. Methodology**

The paper is descriptive and qualitative. Documented literature was used as the source of data. Indicators were adopted to prove oligarchic influences on political parties and how they constitute a major obstacle to parties and democracy as a system. Mosca's ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’ was adopted as a theoretical framework for explanation. The theory is a political explanation of organizational power developed by Robert Michels, a German-born Italian sociologist. In his 2011 book ‘Political Parties’ he reasoned that ‘all forms of organization, regardless of how democratic they may be at the start, will eventually and inevitably develop oligarchic tendencies, thus making democracy practically and theoretically impossible, especially in large groups and complex organisations.’ Accordingly, Nigerian political parties degenerated into controls by a few money-bags who by their positions of financing the parties developed undue influences on them to achieve returns from their investments. The parties belong to millions of members but their present conditions left controls in the hands of those who finance the parties.

## **III. Oligarchy**

Democracy, oligarchy and their, historically experienced friction, is traceable to the classical Greek democracies (*dēmokratia*) as in Athens, where assemblies of ordinary citizens decided policies and legislations. Just as in contemporary times, the fact that the entire citizenry was entitled to partake in politics did not mean that there were no distinctions in the polity. Thus, powerful and wealthy individuals have continuously connived to overthrow public institutions from time immemorial. This was evident in *Plato's Republic*, where Socrates criticized democracy as the worse form of rule because it offers the political novice the opportunity to partake in public policymaking.

Oligarchy is a political process or arrangement where a few wealthy individuals empowered by their material resources create a condition that places them in conflict and above the larger segments of the society (Winters, 2011). However, it is not a political rule but inevitably intertwined with politics to defend oligarchic wealth and enhance further accumulation. In other words, oligarchs interfere in politics and influence political parties and leadership for their economic interests. Otherwise, their wealth may diminish and wealth redistributed by the political lordship of the masses. Even in contemporary times, one single government policy can change the fortunes of an oligarch. Empirical evidence has shown that oligarchs enable or even deliberately do not obstruct pseudo-democratic regimes in their quest to maintain their grip on power (Kuzio, 2003, Matuszak & 2012 Junisbai, 2012).

Oligarchy is often confused with *elitism*. Elites exert influence based on non-material power while the oligarchs are based on material power. However, oligarchic power can potentially lead to elite power and vice versa. But there is no necessary overlap. Many oligarchs have only material power resources at their disposal, and many elites never amass empowering fortunes (Winters: 2013).

#### IV. Political Party

In modern democracies a political party is a more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting a candidate for elections to control government, and representing such interest in the government (Agbaje, 1999). From a wider perspective, a political party is a more or less organized group of the citizen who act together as a political unit, having distinct aims and opinions on leading political questions of controversy in the state, and who, by acting together as a political group seeking to obtain control of government (Appadorai, 1975). A political party is also a group that is publicly organized intending to form a government to realize certain aims (Dunmoye, 1990). From the point of importance, a political party play a critical role in the establishment and consolidation of democracy across countries and Nigeria is not an exception. In recent times, however, there may be reasons for the near absolute relevance of political parties. These include the increase in the human population and the growing complexity of society. Political parties are almost wholly responsible for the entire process of the survival of democracy in modern society as the medium through which the masses are recruited and galvanized into political participants such as voters, party officials and other elected officers. Notable are the facts that political parties are groups of people with common and aggregated interests, a political unit with the purpose of either forming and/ or controlling government, and promoting those interests so aggregated.

Political parties contribute to governance and use opposition to check the excesses of the government. They also function as intermediaries and mediators between the government and the electorate (Simon, 1962: Lapalombara and Anderson, 2001). Political parties are so powerful that you often hear Nigerian politicians echo that the “party is supreme.” La Palombara and Weiner (1966) classified political parties into (i) one-party, (ii) two-party and (iii) multi-party systems. A one-party system requires every contestant to compete on the platform of the only existing party. This party system was predominant in Communist Party until the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) starting from 1989 and common in authoritarian regimes. The one-party system has become much less common since the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1991. Even in the Peoples Republic of China where the Chinese Communist Party is dominant, eight other dormant parties are in existence. North Korea has up to three parties as of 2019 latest election.

States with two-party systems are usually operated between the party in power and the opposition party. Opposition forms a major check on the governing party by exposing government excesses to create resentment between the people and government and create a possible electoral success for itself in the next elections. On the other hand, a state with a multi-party system offers more political pluralism by providing a wider political space for the citizens to participate in politics. Here, three or more parties exist with one or two more dominant based on their ability to win elections and form governments at different levels. This system is common in the contemporary democratic world, particularly in Western Europe (La Palombara and Weiner, 1966).

Nigerian political parties were historically configured along ethnic lines. Major ethnic groups sponsored parties for political participation, governance and protection of their ethnic interests. This is attributable to the multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian state. Such parties operated mainly within ethnic zones and gained control of such areas for political bargains. Those who successfully expanded their party structures to other ethnic divisions operated as national parties and won elections across ethnic boundaries and at the national level.

##### Major Political Parties in Nigerian History

Name	Acronym	Dominant Area
(a). Nigerian National Democratic Party	(NNDP)	South
(b) National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon	(NCNC)	East
(c) Action Group	(AG)	West
(d) Northern People’s Congress	(NPC)	North (Extract from Jinadu, 2011)
(e) National Party of Nigeria	(NPN)	National
(f) Nigeria Peoples Party	(NPP)	East
(g) United Party of Nigeria	(UPN)	West
(h) Social Democratic Party	(SDP)	South
(i) National Republican Convention	(NRC)	North
(j) Peoples Democratic Party	(PDP)	National
(k) Action Congress/Action Congress of Nigeria	(ACN)	West
(l) Congress for Progressive Change	(CPC)	North
(m) All Progressive Change	(APC)	National
(n) People Democratic Party	(PDP)	National
(o) All Progressive Grand Alliance	(APGA)	East

## **V. Democracy**

Democracy is divergently perceived and elucidated in the same manner. What is important is that it is a concept and a practical system of governance that emphasized the supremacy of the people in the rulership of society. It calls attention to popular political participation, constitutionalism, and rule of law, periodic elections, checks and balances, separation of powers, freedom, and liberty, equality, justice etcetera. Dahl (1971) identified eight criteria for understanding democracy: (i) the right to vote; (ii) the right to be elected; (iii) the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; (iv) elections that are free and fair; (v) freedom of association; (vi) freedom of expression; (vii) alternative sources of information; and (viii) institutions that depend on votes and other expressions of preference. Marshall (1992) discussed a social dimension of democratic citizenship and noted that in addition to civil and political rights, democracy can include social rights, such as social services, providing for those in need, and ensuring the general welfare of the people. Democracy is a governance model that meets three basic conditions: competition among individuals and political parties; an inclusive system of leadership recruitment; and the existence of a regime of civil-political rights (Diamond, Lin, and Lipset 1989). For democracy to flourish, it must progressively evolve through different cycles of politics: dismantling of undemocratic institutions, the establishment of a viable system of law (constitutionalism), formation of a democratic government, establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions, quality media, and good international relations etcetera.

Sustainability is another vital ingredient of democracy. It requires a good government citizen's relationship, government's responsiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, authority, due process to sustain. Consultations, dialogue, discussions, reconciliation, diplomacy, persuasion, explanation, understanding, tolerance, endurance, perseverance, and commitment as tools of sustainability in a democracy. Additionally, it must be noted that a viable electoral system is crucial to the survival of democracy in any clime. This system can, therefore, be also said to be the "complex system of rules and regulations that govern the selection of officeholders" (Nnoli, 2003). This is especially true with regards to Nigeria where access to the state and its resource allocating powers is viewed as the means of guaranteeing one's economic security.

## **VI. Oligarchy and Political Parties**

The relationship between oligarchy and political parties is in the formation, financing, and control of the parties. Oligarchs play prominent roles in the registration, financing, general establishment and control of parties. While some form political parties, others hijack the already existing parties through financial influence and their contacts in the political circle. Sometimes, small political parties merge into a stronger one with powerful oligarchs being the brains behind such exercise. They influence elections into party offices planting their candidates as stooges for controlling the parties. They also secure party tickets and finance the election of candidates with conditions of loyalty and financial returns through cash remittance, award of contacts and general promotion of decisions and views of the oligarchs in major state policies. Such stooges in government are used to protect the existence, survival and flourishing of businesses otherwise unfavourable government policies or hostility can jeopardise the survival of any business.

## **VII. The Finance and Return Adventure**

The financing of Nigerian political parties is regarded and strictly treated as an investment demanding every possible return. Those who pay the 'piper dictate the tune' in such a manner it will achieve their economic and political gains. Intra-party intrigues are propelled by the inordinate quest for monetary and political gains. Party forms are sold so exorbitantly that average members of the party cannot afford them. They can only obtain such forms through financing by a super-rich ready to sponsor the all-expensive campaign. This is usually done with a strict agreement for loyalty and remittance of returns as payback. The candidate is reduced to a political stooge to the financier who usually use their influences to secure party tickets for the preferred candidates. These oligarchs emotionally and calculatedly propelled by the quest to get financial returns, do everything within their capacities to achieve victory for their candidates and parties. Such candidates accept some stringent conditionalities for sponsorship, especially at the stage of the contest where withdrawal is no longer a good option.

However, after assuming powers, the relationship between the now 'godson and 'god father' the beneficiary and the sponsor respectively may go sour as a result of failure to keep to the agreement and sometimes the 'godfather' may want to exact undue influence on the 'god son' and this may cause a problem in their inter-personal relations. In response to this influence, some power holders may challenge their financiers using their powers and office machinery to defend themselves. In reaction, the godfathers use election results in their disposal to institutes litigations trying to substitutes such power holder with another contender probably the candidate that got the second position in the party primary election. Some engage in making the area ungovernable for the godson to make him return his loyalty. The sole interests in all these intrigues and



squabbles are political and economic gains and the oligarchs struggle for these audaciously. What is special about them is that they mostly operate behind the scene.

The authors are aware that some candidates sponsor themselves but this paper is restricted to financing and returns adventurous perspective. Even those who sponsor themselves struggle for returns. Money is made through the purchase of forms, donations, and bribery. So, when they win elections, they try to recuperate their money and amass enormous wealth through fraudulent means. The above manipulative influences and control of political parties in Nigeria generate the following problems:

### **VIII. Challenges Of Oligarchic Influences On Political Parties**

#### **(a) Poor Ideological Politics**

Party politics is necessarily guided by a set of ethical ideals, principles, doctrines and symbols of a large social group as a political and cultural blueprint for order and proper working of the society. It embodies societal goals and the method of achieving the goals. It involves the choice of form of government and economic system. Political ideology is directional, persuasive and a doctrinal guide for those who stick to it. Unfortunately, the level of ideology in Nigerian politics is poor. It ends at the nomenclature level and names of the political parties: The Progressive Party, the Peoples Party, the Democratic party, the Congress Party etcetera, yet policies and programmes that strictly adhere to these ideas and principles are lacking in Nigeria's party politics. Politics, in Nigeria, is based on personal and group interests and not interested or directed at achieving enduring societal goals and development. Parties campaign and write manifestoes in line with political ideologies but after forming governments, ideology is relegated to the background. All progressive Congress (APC) used 'change' as a mantra during the 2015 presidential campaign, yet such change has been reflected in its policies and action after more than 5 years in power. The socio-economic and political conditions of the country have not changed for the better. Rather they are increasingly moving in the retrogressive and worse directions.

#### **(b) Inter-Party Rivalry**

The struggle for power and resources among political parties is usually stronger between the ruling and opposition parties. Sometimes, the opposition and some other parties can team up and mount a stronger rivalry against the ruling party. The merger among Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and a faction of All People's Grand Alliance (APGA) to form the All Progressive Congress (APC) is typical of political rivalry with the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The parties merged and wrestled power from the ruling party. Propaganda was a major tool used to convince Nigerians to vote for the APC with a "promise of change." The PDP was ousted with enormous pressure to the extent the sitting President, Goodluck Jonathan congratulated APC candidate Muhamadu Buhari even before the official announcement of election results. He claimed that his action was based on his conviction that "his interest did not worth the blood of any Nigerian." Many PDP leaders felt bad about the surrender but the President had seen the danger ahead and accepted defeat to save Nigeria from the post-election violence that could have led the country into an uncontrollable crisis.

Inter-party rivalry in Nigeria is intense to the extent it forced a sitting president out of power. Competition over power and resources is destructive without recourse to due process and rule of law. Politics among parties are 'do or die affairs. Different political intrigues are employed to ensure victory over the opponent. Thuggery, blackmailing, intimidation, deceit, lies, hate speech, propaganda, bribery, threat, frame-up, and conspiracy are some of the instruments of operation in Nigeria's inter-party rivalry.

#### **(c) Inter-Party Defection**

The above instruments of operation and their outcomes have forced some party members who fall victims to inter-party rivalry to denounce their party membership and decamp to other parties. Decamping is a common practice in the Nigerian political party system. Apart from the ill-treatment meted out on the decamping members, most of them decamp out of selfish interest and loyalty to a superior politician or a political camp. Pursuance of party tickets for election is a major interest that propels defection from one party to another. Some of the corrupt politicians left their parties to the ruling party to avoid being probed by the anti-fraud government agencies. As members of the opposition parties and also corrupt former officeholders, governments have the opportunity to tame them through the use of anti-graft agencies to arrest and try them. Joining the government party thus becomes a way to escape the government onslaught.

#### **(d) Electoral Violence**

Electoral processes are crafted to lead to the growth and stability of democracy in a country. However, when this process is disrupted with force, attack on electoral participants, and institutions, it is said to be marred with violence. This may result in political instability and when not checked can lead to a more serious crisis

detrimental to democracy. Electoral violence is a broad term that encompasses the various organized act of force or threat of use of force that may harm, intimidate, and blackmail any political participant before, during and after an election with the intent of influencing the outcome of the electoral process. Electoral violence can also be said to be all sorts of violent and non-violent activities such as riots, demonstrations, party clashes, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping spontaneous or not, which occur before, during and after elections (Ogundiya and Baba, 2005). An important feature of political violence is that it may be random or organized and may include delaying an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, misinformation, physical assault, forced “protection”, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination (Fischer, 2002).

The history of Nigeria’s checkered electoral violence goes as far back as to the first republic, especially during the 1964/65 elections. The violent political culture that survived to date is traceable to even the first set of elections conducted by the colonial masters such as the 1959 elections, which had its result contested (like most other elections after it). Ethnicity characterized the country’s electoral and political party foundation from the general elections of 1959, in which the major political parties were structured along ethnic lines. Northern People’s Congress (NPC) for Hausa/Fulani and Northern minorities, Action Group (AG) Yoruba and Western minorities, and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) for Igbos and Eastern minorities.

The electoral violence that followed the 1964/65 general election resulted in widespread murder, arson, looting, kidnapping and a general breakdown of law and order. The large-scale violence was largely responsible for the military coup that truncated the country’s first democratic rule. The 1983 general election was equally chaotic and it was not long before the government of President Shehu was ousted by another military coup on December 31, 1983.

Violence was minimal during the 1999 elections which gave birth to the Fourth Republic. The election was largely supervised by the military pressurized to return the country to democratic rule. The situation was different in the Fourth Republic during the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections. President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration conducted the 2003 elections that secured his second term in office. There were cases of electoral violence in the forms of rigging, thuggery, intimidation and some cases, the assassination of characters and persons who were perceived to be political opponents. This election made the ruling political party, the PDP more powerful in the political landscape of Nigeria. The 2007 general election that followed was seen in some quarters as the worst election. There were irregularities, votes inflated, and some results declared inconclusive (Animashaun, 2008).

Recognizing the fraudulent practices that characterized the election, and the accompanying violence, the winner of the elections, Late Umaru Musa Yaradua instituted an Electoral Reform Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice Uwais to correct some of the ills in the country’s electoral system. This effort led to the electoral reforms included in the amended Electoral Act. The 2011 elections that followed were adjudged to be one of the most credible elections in the country. The U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley and EU Election Observer Mission to Nigeria showered praises on the country on that account (EU EOM, 2011). Some prominent northern politicians communicated in writing to the PDP National Chairman (on 17 September 2010), asking the party leadership to restrain President Goodluck Jonathan from contesting the 2011 elections under the party’s platform. Their position was that the eight-year, two-term presidency ceded to the North by the ruling party was truncated by the death of former President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua in 2007. They warned that failure to adhere to this may have disastrous consequences (Abdallah, 2010, Harwood and Campbell, 2010). Ultimately, President Goodluck Jonathan contested the elections and was declared the winner of the election, resulting in chaos in the northern parts of the country. According to Human Rights Watch (2011), some 800 lives were lost in the post-election violence that followed while about 65,000 people were displaced.

Political Thuggery contributes to electoral violence. It is an act in which hoodlums and miscreants are employed to harass, main and even kill perceived political enemies/opponents. In Nigeria, with many uneducated and unemployed youths, it is relatively easy to get people engaged in political thuggery for a little token. The country’s politico-economic structures are corrupt in such a manner that political offices are so lucrative that politicians want to acquire and consolidate power perpetually thereby making the electoral process an exacerbated “zero-sum-game.”

Consequences of political thuggery include the reduction of political participation at all levels, especially among the female gender. Political thuggery can lead to the militarization of political space, resulting in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), and other dangerous weapons. This can in turn lead to political abduction and assassination.

#### **(e) Multiplicity of non-viable political Parties**

From the colonial era, Nigeria ran a multi-party system based mostly on ethnicity. By the 1959 general election, the multi-party system in Nigeria had three regional and ethnic-based parties: i) Northern People’s Congress (NPC), ii) Action Group (AG), and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC). The political misadventures of 1965, particularly in the elections of the Western region eventually snowballed into

the coup d'état on January 15, 1966. The outcome of this was the promulgation of Decree No.1, 1966, the suspension of the 1963 Constitution and the banning of all political activities. The ban was lifted after 13 years by the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime on September 1978 by Decree No.25 signed by the then Head of State, Gen Olusegun Obasanjo.

Nigeria experimented with the two-party system in the early 1990s when the then military junta, General Ibrahim Babangida literally crafted and funded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). Perhaps the experiment may have been considered a success if he had handed over power in what was considered the best election in the country. The two-party system made for unification and the acrimony associated with religion and ethnicity was minimal. From 2003, the formation and registering of political parties were liberalized and 50 political parties were registered. This was an improvement obtained in 1999, when the government of General Abdulsalam Abubakar registered three political parties namely: People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD), and All People's Party (APP).

To redress the grievances of the people of the west for the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election that was widely believed to have been won by Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the 1999 Presidential election was contested by two Yoruba men. The presidential election was carried out under two parties, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo ran under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Chief Olu Falae contested under the joint ticket of Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All People's Party (APP). Currently, Nigeria has 18 registered political parties after the de-registration of 75 political parties formally registered. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at a press conference in Abuja Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 announced the de-registration of the parties. The body claimed that they did not satisfy the requirements of the Fourth Alteration to the Constitution. These refer to failure to win at least 25% of votes cast in one state of the federation in a presidential election or one local government of a state in a gubernatorial election or one ward in a chairmanship election (Shaban, (2020).

Such political parties were proliferated based on individual and group selfish interests and not based on ideas supported by the public good. Such interests may include collecting monies from more established parties in return for support, advertising political aspirants and/ or doing a spoiler game against party candidates likely to win an election. It, therefore, becomes obvious that there are many unviable parties in Nigeria, with no structure or ideology but set up strictly for individual political gains. This explains why INEC de-registered 75 of them. The existence of numerous non-viable political parties contributed to the confusion in the political space of the country. It over-clouds the scene with too many interests struggling for power and resources and weakened national cohesion for ideological, economic and political development.

#### **(f) Intra-Party Conflict**

One of the problems with the electoral process in Nigeria is how political parties run their internal affairs. Internal processes for selecting and electing officeholders are marred by manipulations that result in undemocratic election results. Although most parties would claim internal democracy, the truth is that their democratic values and practices are questionable. (Mbah, 2011) buttressed this point contending that political parties in Nigeria have been challenged with non-democratic practices since 1999. They are characterized by primary elections without acceptability, unending litigations, dialogues without a general agreement, and the majority without decision. When a popular candidate is denied a party's candidature through undemocratic manipulation of the party machinery, concerned party members and voters may shy away from the pools, vote for another party or in some cases decamp from the party. Aggrieved aspirants on many occasions organized their supporters and decamped to other parties. The former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, the former Senate President, Olusola Saraki and Senators Orji Uzo Kalu and Rochas Okorochoa belong to this category. Such decamping as a result of the intra-party conflict. Each individual and sub-groups plot and scheme to dominate others and occupy party and government offices. Such intrigue does not take the general interest of the party and society as a priority. Sometimes, it contributes to failure in elections due to a lack of unity and cooperative coordination of general planning and strategies of the party. It breeds hatred and generates tension in the Nigerian party system and society in general.

### **IX. Conclusion**

Political parties in Nigeria are controlled by the invisible hands of the economic and political oligarchy. This results from top-bottom formation and sponsorship of the parties and candidates, a practice, regarded as an investment that must attract returns. It constitutes an obstacle to the progress of the parties because the oligarchs adventurously manipulate them to achieve financial and political gains. For them, party financing is an investment that must yield returns by all means. The practice subjects party candidates to stringent repayment conditionalities and political loyalty. Some of the candidates challenge their 'godfathers' when they get powers while others suffer the loyalty syndrome. Daring and inordinate influences on parties result in intra-party and inter-party conflicts manifesting as questionable party primaries and congresses, unending election litigations,

inter-party decamping, political violence, the proliferation of non-viable parties, and inter-personal squabbles. Formation of political parties from bottom to top and opportunity for independent candidacy are viable options to control oligarchic infiltration of political parties and hindrances to party progress.

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