POLITICS OF MERGER OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA: THE PAST AND PRESENT EFFORTS TO EVOLVE TWO MAJOR PARTIES

Nwankwo Jonathan Chidi
Department Of Political Science
Caritas University, Amorji-Nike, Enugu

Abstract
The dissolution of a number of political parties in Nigeria into one party- the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2013 ahead of 2015 election re-enacted an already existing trend in Nigerian politics referred to as politics of merger of political parties. This paper examines this trend in Nigeria’s past and present political dispensations and concludes that the present merger of these political parties into APC may not likely provide Nigerians alternative to the PDP governments that have ruled the country for 14 years now, because of some obvious reasons. The paper recommends that given the level of primordialism and selfish partisan interests in Nigerian politics, the only way to establish an alternative government to the PDP rule is through a constitutional amendment that would entrench only two party system with limited opportunities for cross-carpeting by politicians. This would make the two parties have equal balance of power equilibrium to govern Nigeria interchangeably.

INTRODUCTION:
Political parties, like other democratic institutions such as the executive, legislature, judiciary and electoral body, are no doubt vital and indispensible agencies of democratic system of government. The relevance of democratic institutions of which political parties are one, in fostering democratic etiquettes, values, norms, practices and procedures is probably what Schumpeter had in mind when he defined democracy as “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the people’s votes” (Schumpeter, 1967:269). In other words, democracy thrives well within an environment with framework of established and registered political parties, electoral body and other political institutions which enforce the standard practices of the system. Indeed, without political parties, the process of enthronement of democratic government would be selective and non-competitive.

Since independence, Nigeria has had four different democratic dispensations described in our political lexicon as the 1st Republic spanning between 1960 – 1966; the 2nd Republic 1979 – 1983; the 3rd Republic 1992 – 1993; and the 4th Republic 1999 – to the present. A republic
operationally defined as a self-governing entity based on elected government. In each of these Republics, the governance of Nigeria, at the federal level, has always been dominated by one political party that won election at the inception of the Republic, until the interruption of such dominance by military intervention in politics. One would have expected that in a multiparty democracy like ours, general elections in the country would have been so keenly contested by two major political parties, either individually, or in coalition with other parties, such that different parties rule the country interchangeably. This has not been the case in Nigerian party politics.

As a matter of fact, party politics in Nigeria since 1960 has been characterized by intrigues, manipulations or maneuvering, alignment and re-alignment of political groups and forces to achieve the political objectives of having two major parties of equal strength, unseating the party in power, winning election and political power to control the state and make authoritative allocation of resources of the Nigerian state. The desire by politicians to evolve two mega parties, capture power and be involved in government has led to a trend in Nigerian politics described as politics of merger of political parties or coalition of parties whose sole aim is to upset the dominant political party in power and provide credible alternative platform to govern Nigeria.

This paper is, therefore, designed to examine the processes of merger of political parties in Nigeria in the past and present dispensation of Nigerian politics and why these attempts have failed to produce two dominant political parties for the country, one, ruling at a time while the other, a party in opposition, with the capacity and possibility of providing alternative government to the people.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATION

Political parties operate in democratic societies where political recruitment of political office holders is anchored on the platforms of political parties. According to Burke political party is a body of men (people), united for promoting the national interest upon some particular principles in which they are all agreed (Burke in Nwankwo, 2005:206). Put differently, a political party is an organized group of people who share the same political ideology and who seek to control the government in a state in order to put their ideology or programmes into practice.

To achieve this objective, political parties as organizations sponsor candidates for political offices under the organizations’ name or labels. According to Janda et al (2005:239) true political parties select individuals to run for public office through a formal nomination process, which designates them as the parties’ official candidates. This activity distinguishes political parties from interest groups. In furtherance of the objective of winning the control of government, political parties establish structures and map out strategies that would enable them to win election. These include the establishment of parties offices nationwide, organizational structure, caucuses, campaign strategies backed up with well articulated ideological oriented party manifestoes capable of winning the votes of the electorates. These measure are undertaken to ensure that parties do not loss their deposits because in a multi-party democracy characterized by zero-sum game where winners take all, exclusion from power, to use the words of Harold Laski, is also exclusion from the benefits of power (cited in Akinyeye 1997).
In democratic societies, three types of party systems exist, notably, one party system which is not too popular, two party system and multiparty system. However, most democracies have a multiparty system in which three or more parties have the capacity to gain control of government separately or in coalition (Patterson, 1994:295). Yet other democracies developed or evolved into two party system from two dominant parties in a multi-party system. Examples are Great Britain where Labour Party and Conservative Party have dominated the nation’s political elections and United States where the Republican Party and Democratic Party have held sway in their politics inspite of the existence of other parties.

Democratic government is almost inseparable from party politics. There is a consensus among democratic theorist that a modern nation state cannot practice democracy without at least two political parties that regularly contest elections. As a matter of fact, the difference between democracy and political parties is so thin that many people have defined democratic government in terms of competitive party politics. The true is that democracy is impossible without parties (Janda, etal (2005).

Janda and his colleague further assert that:

Without political parties, voters would confront a bewildering array of self-nominated Candidates, each seeking votes on the basis of Personal friendships, celebrity status, or name recognition. Parties provide a form of quality control for their nominees through the process of peer review (Janda et al (2005:239).

The implication of operating a democratic system without political parties, solely on independent candidature, is frightening; it means people will be governed without a compass or programmes usually provided by political parties. The policies of such independent candidates in position of authority will be subjected to personal whims and caprices; issues that catch their fancies without considering whether they are of benefit to the people are given priority attention. You cannot have an independent candidate without ideology or programme of action and expect genuine democratic government. This probably explains why no individual has won election in democracies outside the platforms of political parties.

It is in recognition of the indispensability of political parties to representative democracy and contestation for political offices that have led party analysts to outline the role of political parties as veritable instrument of democratic processes and development. These roles include the followings:

i. They help to recruit political leaders into political offices by nominating and sponsoring candidates for election.

ii. They provide political education and training useful for governance to politicians. These are usually done through lectures, symposia, manifestoes, and other social programmes of political parties.

iii. They formulate collective goals for the society in the process of seeking power which is usually presented as party programmes of government.
iv. Political parties help to articulate and aggregate the interest of various groups of people in the society.

v. They provide information to the masses on important and current issues in the country which elicit their participation.

vi. They help in the formation of government with definite political agenda for the people. (Agbajie 1999)

vii. They serve as source of unity, by uniting people of different ethnic groups within a country.

viii. They also provide healthy opposition to the ruling party which creates room for good governance.

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

It is generally agreed that the first political parties in Nigeria, properly so called, made their appearance in Nigeria political history following the introduction of elective principle, and competitive partisan politics by the Clifford Constitution of 1922. According to Akinyele (1997), the first of these parties was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) formed in 1923 by Herbert Macaulay to take advantage of the 4 seats allocated to Nigerians in the Nigerian Counsel created by Lord Lugard in 1914. Before this time, the early 20th century witnessed the emergence of political associations in Nigeria which served the purposes of interest agitations, and expression of aspiration of Nigerians in their relations with British colonial government. Examples of these political associations are the Peoples’ Union formed by Dr Obasa and Randle, and the Lagos Aborigines Right Protection Society (LAARPS) formed by James Johnson, Mojola Agbebi, Sapara Williams, for humanitarian purpose. These parties not only tried to resist the imposition of British rule but also checkmated British exploitative taxation policies such as water rate, capitation tax and land expropriation (Ijioma 2002).

However, with the emergence of NNDP in 1923, political activities in Nigeria took a new dimension from serving as means of ventilating grievances to partisan politics. This party won all the four seat in the election conducted in 1923, 1928, and 1933. The emergence of Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936 as a new political party took the wind out of the sail of the NNDP. The NYM dominated the election of 1938 & 1940 before it was torn apart by ethnic rivalry and internal bickering and acrimony which broke out among its leaders.

The outbreak of the 2nd World War (1939-45) and the political awareness generated by it predisposed a number of political parties which were more dynamic to come into existence. They were the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) formed in 1944 by Dr Azikiwe considered to be a party with national outlook, having drawn members from every party of the country; the Action Group (AG) which metamorphosed from pan-yoruba cultured organization Egbe Omo – Odudua, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Northern people congress (NPC) which transmuted from Jamiiya Mutane Arewa formed by educated Hausa-Fulani elements in Northern Nigeria. Each of these unions started as an organization for mutual help among people from the same homeland. Later on the unions became political parties in 1951. But unlike the NCNC, the AG and NPC were limited in their national spread, most of their members were drawn from the people of their regional or ethnic background. These parties NCNC, AG and NPC dominated Nigerian polities between 1940s and 1966.
Between 1962 and 1966, some splinter political parties emerged from the intra-party crisis in AG, NCNC, and NPC. These break–away parties were United Progressive Party (UPP) formed by Chief Akintola and his supporters when they broke away from AG as a result of personality and ideological differences between Chief Awolowo and Chief Akintola later the UPP dissolved into the Fani Kayode led new NNDP. Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Malam Aminu Kano which champion the course of the talakawas or less privilege Hausa people in the Northern Nigeria and the United Middle Belt Congress led by Joseph Tank which came out to protect the interest of minorities of middle belt are break away parties from the NPC dominated by Hausa- Falani Oligarchy.

However, with military incursion into Nigeria politics from 1966 came series of transitions to civilian government which gave birth to political parties of each transition period. The General Gowon’s military regime which lasted between 1966 -1975 was over thrown by General Muritala regime for not complying with the 1974 handover date the regime promised Nigerians. The new regime promised to handover power in 1979. Although Gen. Muritala could not accomplish this task before he was assassinated, General Obasanjo who succeeded him kept the promise of his predecessor. Five political parties were registered to take part in the transition elections. They were the Nigerian Peoples Party(NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo , the National Party of Nigerian (NPN) led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the People Redemption Party led by Malam Aminu Kano, the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. The NPN won the controversial elected to form government at the national level. The other parties secured state elections for their efforts.

At the end of the first four years of civilian government following the transition, the military juntas led by Gen Mohammadu Buhari toppled the NPN government in 1983 which had won election and was about to embark on a second term of its governance. Before he could settle down to rule the country his regime was sacked by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida whose regime promised to handover power in 1993. Rather than register the 13 political associations or some of them that were qualified for registration as political parties into existence, the National Republican and Convection (NRC) and the Social Democratic party (SDP) were decreed into existence for Nigeria. These parties had Alhaji Ibrahim Torfa and Alhaji M.K.O Abiola as presidential flag bearers respectively for the 1993 presidential election. The SDP won the election but the election was annulled by Babangida regime without any justification reasons.

Gen Abacha took power in November 1993 from Ernest Shonekan led interim government, put in place by Babangida regime before he stepped aside, following the crisis generated by the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election. His sudden death in 1998 put an end to his deceitful transition in which he tried to transform himself from military head of state to civilian president. General Abdulsalami Abubakar who succeeded Gen Sani Abacha in 1998 inaugurated another transition to democratic government which gave birth to the political parties of the president dispensation. Today Nigeria has about 50 registered political parties among which are the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), All Progressive Grand Alliance, (APGA), All Peoples Congress (APC) etc.
THE MERGER OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA PAST AND PRESENT EXPERIENCES.

The experience of merger of political parties in Nigeria dates back to the nation’s independence period. Before formal independence on Oct. 1st 1960, parliamentary elections were held to elect the first post-independence national government. The 1959 elections held to usher in this government were inconclusive because there was no clear cut winner. The NPC won 142 seats, the NCNC 89 seats and AG 73. None of these parties including NPC with 142 was able to meet $2/3$ majority seats required to form government alone. There was therefore the need to form a coalition government which would enjoy a comfortable majority in the House of Representative. The alternatives were an AG/NCNC alliance or NCNC/NPC alliance or AG/NPC alliance. Ultimately, it was an NPC/NCNC alliance that carried the day. This was the first merger of political parties in Nigeria political history.

As Akinyeye (1997) has noted, while the coalition government NPC and NCNC held the reins of power at the centre, the AG remained in insignificant opposition. The NCNC was the junior partner in the alliance while the NPC dominated the government and moved swiftly toward the destruction of the opposition in the West.

Thus, the alliance of NCNC with NPC which was already controlling more than half of the seats in the House of Representative further widen the gap between the coalition parties and the party in opposition. Perhaps an AG/NCNC alliance would have created balance of political strength between NCNC/AG of the Southern Nigeria and NPC of Northern Nigeria and even alienated NPC by forming government. But that was not the case; a faction of the NCNC could not come to terms with an AG/NCNC alliance because of the ethnic politics instigated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo which excluded Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of NCNC from forming the government of Western region in 1952. The leadership of NCNC was therefore paying AG back with its own coins.

However, by 1962, the alliance between NPC and NCNC had become a marriage of strange bedfellows and the political intrigue and manipulation in the relationship manifested by NPC flagrant violation of one understanding or the other threatened the very existence of the nation in the subsequent years. According to Olukoju (1990) the ethical reason for this was the ability of the NPC to garner support outside the alliance such that it could practically dispense without its partner – the NCNC. This predisposed the NCNC led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and AG led by Chief Awolowo to bury their ethnic differences and look forward to forming or merging of their parties as a counterpoise to NPC.

As part of the preparation for the 1964 Federal elections in the First Republic the NCNC and AG consummated their understanding by forming what was known as United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) as a counterpoise to the Northern People Congress (NPC) which similarly established Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) with Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNPP) and others. Again, the NPC led NNA dominated the political scene. The UPGA merger failed because the leaders of the merger did not reach a compromise on the choice of who would lead the party (Oyeweso, 2013).

In the second Republic (1979 – 1983), there was a merger of political parties which included the political gladiators of the time. They included the “beautiful bride” of Nigerian politics, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigerian Peoples Party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity
Party of Nigeria, Mallam Aminu Kano led People Redemption Party and the Great Nigerian Peoples Party led by Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri. These great men came together and formed the Peoples Progressive Alliance against the dominant and ruling party in Nigeria at the time – the National Party of Nigeria. But they could not reach an agreement on the leadership structure of the alliance. It appeared that in the first and second Republics, Dr. Azikiwe and Chief Awolowo did not forget the bitter political experience they had between one another between 1951 and 1956 (Oyeweso, 2013 ibid).

The military government of General Ibrahim Babangida which came into being in August 1985 realized the importance of two viable political parties in Nigeria to provide alternative government hence in his maiden broadcast to the nation on his transition he spoke of the need for a viable political order which must be strong enough, de-emphasis the re-emergence of the kind of politics of insensitivity, intolerance, gross indiscipline, mismanagement and formation of political parties along ethnic lines which characterized the nation’s past political activities (Vanguard, 1996).

According to Mba (2001), in furtherance of these laudable objectives, the regime inaugurated a 17 man Political Bureau headed by Dr Cookey to organize political debate on the country’s Political future and make recommendations. The Bureau made a countrywide tour to garner the people’s view on what should be the country’s future political order. The Bureau recommended two strong political parties formed on the basis of ideological interests rather than ethnic agenda. Consequently the government lifted the ban on political activities and thirteen political associations were formed and sought to be registered as political parties to take part in the transition programme. However, after proper consideration of the applications of these political associations, none of them was eligible for registration, having been formed with ethnic colouration; hence the government instead formed two political parties for the people – the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) by the order of the military head of state, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida.

These parties had capitalist and socialist ideological orientations and manifestos respectively and were intended to bridge the gaps of ethnic and primordial interests which usually formed the basis of formation of fragmented ethnic based parties by politicians and thereby creating two parties capable of winning election any time. The government directed politicians to join the parties on equal terms based on their ideological inclination. Unfortunately, after the rigorous option A4 electoral process adopted by the electoral body – the National Electoral Commission (NEC) under the Chairmanship of Prof. Humphrey Nwosu, the election adjudged to be the most free and fair in the electoral history of Nigeria was annulled by the regime without any justifiable reasons. By this singular action, the regime not only unwitting destroyed its good intention of giving Nigeria two party system with balance of power equilibrium but also terminated its programme of transition to the 3rd Republic.

In 1999 following the transition to the 4th Republic initiated by Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar Military regime, three political parties were registered and contested the 1999 general elections. The parties were Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) of all the three political parties, only PDP had national outlook embracing people from different parts of the country, the other two parties – ANPP and AD had some ethnic connotation, the AD being predominantly a party for the west
(Yoruba) and the ANPP dominated by the North (Hausa-fulani element). This created opportunity for the PDP, the party with national followership to win the election that year.

As 2003 general election drew near, attempts were made by politicians to register more political parties. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the electoral body of this dispensation refused to oblige this request. However, following judicial intervention, the electoral body was compelled to register the new parties (Obi and Obikeze, 2003). Among the new parties were the United Nigerian Peoples Party (UNPP), the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), National Conscience Party (NCP), Justice Party (JP) etc. These parties were minor political parties, with limited followership, and were formed to pursue ethnic agenda and some other primordial interest. This further fragmented the political space and left PDP as the only dominant Party.

However, during the 2003 general election, the AD of the South west and the ANPP of the north forged APP-AD alliance. The alliance aimed at beating the PDP at the presidential poll but at the end of the day the alliance could not win the election against the PDP. Also in 2007 General election the AD and other parties in western Nigeria came together to form the Action Congress but little was achieved as it made no impact on the presidential election. Again the PDP recorded a landslide victory. The All People Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy fielded Chief Olu Falae as the presidential candidate of APP/AD alliance against the PDP presidential flag bearer Alhaji Shehu Yardua. Yet, it did not achieve the objective of providing alternative platform for governance in Nigeria. The PDP thus, continued its one party dominance of Nigerian government in a multi-party democracy.

Also, in the run up to the 2011 general elections, efforts of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) which was an off-shoot of Alliance for Democracy (AD) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) to forge an alliance against the presidential candidate of PDP met a brick wall. Thus, while ACN fielded a former Chairman of Economic and Financial Crisis Commission (EFCC), Malam Nuhu Ribadu, as its own candidate; the CPC presented Gen. Muhammadu Buhari as its flag bearer. The rest is now history. Based on this experience, many political pundits are skeptical about the workability of any political merge ahead of 2015 election. But, the concerned stakeholder in ACN, CPC, and other parties planning to merge are optimistic things would work out well.

The leader of CPC, Gen Muhammadu Buhari, speaking in the same vein about the impending merger said:

For ACN and CPC, it is not an alien issue, it is a continuation of what we started in 2011. Time was against us... This time around, we started early to build on the foundation we have laid in 2011. I assure you that all those who are consistent, that are concerned with this system of solidifying democracy should know that the only solution (to PDP domination) is the merger (Buhari in Omoniyi, 2013).

In 2013, as a build up to 2015 General election, four major political parties out of about 50 political parties in the country after series of consultations, planning and gestation period, merged and registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as political party with the name All Progressive Congress (APC). The Constituent elements that formed the
APC merger are APP, ACN, CPC, APGA. These parties sacrificed their partisan identities to create a larger one capable of assuming leadership at the national level. The essence, again, is to provide a party as big as PDP with national outlook as the alternative platform to the electorates in the 2015 presidential election. Nigeria now has two major political parties –PDP and APC, while two minor parties also exist the Labour party controlling Ondo State and All Progressive Grand Alliance controlling Anambra State. The other parties outside these ones merger are inconsequential as they cannot win election in the wards let alone national election.

**THE FAILURE OF THE MERGERS TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE.**

As can be seen from the analysis above, several efforts have been made since 1959 General election that ushered Nigeria’s first indigenous government, to form political alliances, linkage and partnership that would bring about two parties with balance of power capable of winning election and providing alternative government to Nigerians. These attempts have always failed to materialize as one party has often held the reins of power until it was forced out by military intervention in politics. This was the case between 1960-1966 when NPC dominated the govt. of Nigeria and the NCNC/AG merger into political party –UPGA could not stop NPC; the situation was the same during the 2nd Republic when NPN reduced Nigeria to one party state, while the NPP, UPN, PRP, GNPP merger could not stop the party from winning election twice until the military struck in 1983.

History repeated itself in the 4th Republic when PDP emerged as only the dominant party in the country. For the past 14 years the party has ruled this country. It has prided itself as the largest political party in Africa and has also boasted that it was going to rule the country for the next 100 years. The previous attempts by other parties to merge and provide alternative government through the merger of APP/AD failed to stop PDP one party rule .The question therefore is: what are the reasons for one party dominance of Nigerian government at the national level since independence.

One obvious answer to this question is the prevalence of ethnic politics which has its root in the ethnic difference between two nationalist leaders from Igbo and Yoruba ethnic extractions ---Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The first nationwide election held in Nigeria in 1952, Zik’s party –the NCNC won the majority seats in both Eastern and Western houses of Assembly. According to Barkindo et al:

This meant that the NCNC won in both the Igbo and Yoruba areas. This did not please the Yoruba nationalist (Awolowo). So, overnight, the majority of them who won the election on the platform of NCNC into the Western House of Assembly crossed over to the Action Group… The NCNC was thus reduced to a minority party in Western Nigeria (1994:217).

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was to form government in Western Nigeria as the premier of the region, but owing to this development influenced by Chief Awolowo, Zik was denied the opportunity. This was the genesis of the frosty political relationship between Zik and Awo which
affected the political alliances of their parties in the 1st and 2nd Republics and by extension their ethnic groups relations. Since then politics of ethnocentrism and division has characterized and defined Nigerian politics. This is in sharp contrast to the role of political parties as agents of bridge building across ethnic divides and national integration in a multi-ethnic nation like ours.

The struggle for political power among the leaders of the parties that formed alliances made them to be strange bed fellows. It was always difficult to arrive at a compromise on the flag bearer of the merged political parties. This has often led to division and eventual collapse of the mergers shortly after their inaugurations. The current merger of ANPP, ACN, CPC, and a faction of APGA into APC is likely going to face similar problem when the party will choose its presidential candidate. The struggle for the presidential ticket of the party may polarize the fold and weaken its collective zeal and resolve to get power or provide a strong alternative to the governing party and that may be its albatross or death knell. The group that is not favoured in the presidential primaries may likely pull out, as has been the tradition in Nigerian politics, rather than stay to work towards the party’s victory at the polls and its growth. This trend in Nigerian politics has weakened the strength and development of political parties, especially merged parties, into mega parties capable of providing alternative government to the people.

Ideologically, the political parties that formed mergers in Nigerian political history have always been parties with different political ideologies. The result is that the mergers become marriage of strange ideological bed-fellow. For instance, in NPC/NCNC alliance in 1960, the NPC was a conservative party for the Hausa-Fulani aristocrats while NCNC was a liberal party; they failed to work together. In 1964 General election, the NCNC/AG and others alliance, the NCNC was a liberal capitalist party while AG was a radical party with socialist ideology. Again, they failed to work together. In the 2nd Republic, the NPN/NPP alliance wobbled until the end of the first term in office due to differences in the programmes of the two parties. The NPN, the major partner in the alliance dominated. The subsequent NPP/UPN attempted merger in 1983 election failed because of ideological differences, primordial interest and ethnic considerations. In the present political dispensation, all the main stream political parties are bereft of ideologies. Nigerian politicians of the present age only subscribe to ideology in their discourses, when it comes to practical realities, they are no ideologues. They do not play politics of principles. That is why some self-acclaimed ideologues would abandon their parties to join the ruling party (Baba 2013). All parties share similar ideology and yet their mergers may not yield sustainable fruit because of personal obsession with power by politicians. This explains the relative ease with which politicians move from one party to another.

Significantly too, this prevailing tendency by politicians to cross carpet from one party to another takes its toll on the strength and development of merged parties into mega parties. According to Aturu (2013) Nigerian polities permits pluralism to the extent that if you are victimized in your party or loss election ,you can defect from one party to another. The high rate of these defections affect party cohesion and by extension, the capacity of the merged political parties to develop and grow into a formidable opposition parties capable of providing alternative government.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian politics is characterized by ethnic politics and pursuit of personal interest and not service to the nation. The mission of Nigerian politicians is essentially driven by self –
enrichment at the expense of the people. As a result of this obsession; they lack principle and therefore do not remain faithful to their parties when the going is tough. Since the Nigerian constitution allows for freedom of association, this provides the pretext to defect to the ruling party were they would have access to power and wealth and thereby stifling the growth of the merged political party. Success, as the saying goes, is a child of many parents while failure is an orphan. The bandwagon political migration of everybody into the ruling party creates perpetual one party rule in each epoch of Nigerian democratic experience. Democracy is not about free and fair election and majority rule alone; it is also about alternating of parties to form governments which also provides opportunities for fresh policies which rekindle the prospect of strengthening democracy. The rule of one party for a long time has the tendency to become the rule of a faction of the party and absolutism. This trend could be reversed if Nigerian constitution is amended to allow only two party systems to thrive and also a legal framework put in place to make it difficult for politicians to cross carpet from one party to another. That is cross carpeting should only be allowed on certain condition like expulsion; if a politician is not expelled by his party, his defection should not be allowed. It is by so doing that the two parties will have equal balance of power to rule Nigeria interchangeably. Nigeria is not yet ripe for multi – party system. The danger in multi–partism is the certainty of the vigorous expression of primordialism by different ethnic groups that made up the Nigeria state. Let us build more united Nigeria and strong democracy through two party systems because of its potentials for national integration and democratic consolidation.

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