

Relationship Between Political Parties, Democratic Governance, and Sustainable Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

This paper studies the correlation between parties, democracy, and development in Nigeria. The functions of parties in democratic states, notably that of competent leadership recruitment and that of articulating cohesive policy frameworks that translate socio-economic visions into reality, make them critical institutions for sustainable development. Against this background, we examine the role of parties in promoting development in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. This study is important since it investigates the factors that affect parties' ability to pursue cohesive policies for the development of Nigeria since democratization in 1999. Our findings will enrich the current discourse on development, especially the relevance of parties in it. We rely on textual data from multiple sources, including policy briefs, party manifestoes, and other relevant literature on parties and governance. We content analyzed these data to reveal insightful themes and sub-themes about our questions. Our conclusion shows that although parties can promote good governance and development, factors associated with their sociological origins and institutional capacities undermine this ability in the Fourth Republic. Parties' failure since 1999 is partly responsible for Nigeria's current governance and development crises.

Keywords: *Democracy, Development, Fourth Republic, Governance, Nigeria*

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Background to the Study

Democratization in 1999 ushered in the Fourth Republic and launched what turned out to be the longest period of democratic governance in Nigeria since decolonization in 1960. Thus, 1999 was an important milestone in Nigeria's political evolution. It marked when Nigerians' quest for democratization and its corollaries, such as the rule of law and multiparty politics, paid off. The Fourth Republic was birthed and sprung from the ashes of a protracted struggle against extended military rule with its concomitant culture of coups and counter-coups, personalization of political power, and other forms of political violence and economic decay. Liberalization of political power and the institutionalization of electoral and voting principles were, however, not the only appeal that democracy and democratization held, and which led to its clamor in the country. Years of poor economic planning, mismanagement, waste and extravagant expenditure, fraud, and outright looting of the public treasury have weakened the economy (Lewis, 1996). The result was a pervasive level of poverty affecting the majority, a widened social inequality gap, and a teeming population lacking gainful employment opportunities (Kalu, 1996). Weakened and compromised political institutions have helped to ensure unbridled corruption in the public sector, which undermines spending on public goods, especially infrastructure and neglects of rural communities.

In many cases, violent intra and inter-group rivalries between the elites have spiraled out of control and transformed into vicious conflicts and crises of different hues leading to identity politics, the resurgence of ethnic nationalisms, and separatist agitations. The situation was as bad as it was complicated such that by 1999 Nigeria had witnessed what one scholar described as the most systematic use of violence in a civil war in Africa, failed attempts at democratization, and a budding insurgency in the Niger Delta (Olukoshi, 2000). Of course, these were occasioned by, or escalated due to, years of neglect, alienation, exclusion, and repression. Effectively, bad governance became systematically entrenched at both federal and local levels with its various manifestations: collapsed infrastructure, widespread corruption, mutual antagonism and suspicion between the constituent units, and, most importantly, loss of confidence in institutions and instruments of formal authority.

Naturally, Nigerians have reasons to welcome democratic governance with great excitement and expectations. Democracy signaled national rebirth and a renewal of the social contract between the governed and the government (Maier, 2000). Since democracy entails a system in which people elect leaders of their choice and hold them accountable, it is conceivable that most Nigerians would hope for greater political inclusion, equitable distribution of national wealth, respect for the rule of law, and compliance with basic principles of constitutionalism. These constitute the indispensable building blocks of good governance, social justice, and economic development. After about two decades of democratic government and five elected presidents, the anticipated transformation and development have not materialized. Critical sectors of the economy and politics have remained grossly underdeveloped. Several critical indicators of human development have stagnated or sharply deteriorated. Available evidence suggests significant deterioration in vital areas related to social equality and justice, political inclusion and rights, economic opportunities, and the general welfare of citizens (Okey & Offoha, 2021). Overall, the quality of life of an average Nigerian recorded no substantial

improvement over the past two decades of democratic governance. The implication of this situation is double-edged in nature. On the one hand, it showed the government as unwilling or incapable of meeting the basic expectations of the citizenry. This, in turn, created feelings of anger, frustration, disappointment, and indifference. On the other hand, situations such as those produced by anger or indifference threaten social stability and democratic consolidation (Ugbudu, 2020). Certainly, this would make the prospects for an enduring consolidation of democracy in Nigeria quite precarious.

Consequently, this paper seeks to achieve three fundamental objectives. Firstly, it explains the current intriguing conundrum of democratic governance and development, which Nigeria battles primarily due to the nature of party politics that has characterized democratization and democratic rule since 1999. The reason for this is clear. Generally, parties aggregate and articulate public interests and, most importantly, serve as the bridge that connects the governed with their government. It is logical, therefore, to expect parties to champion good governance and development in democratic societies. Second, the chapter demonstrates that the nature of party politics, which appears to have impeded good governance and development in Nigeria, is a symbolic manifestation of the nature, character, and outlook of the type of political parties that exist and operate in the country's political space. It is accepted that capacity to function effectively is fundamental to the operations and activities of parties in democratic states. Where parties are weak and characterized by inchoate social ideologies and a fickle membership base, parties would likely be unable to perform their expected functions successfully.

This situation has a significant impact not only on the abilities of parties to govern effectively but also on the long-term development and consolidation of democracies. Although this may appear more acute in developing democracies, it is important to note that it is not limited to them. It also affects advanced and consolidated democracies. Third, proceeding from the first and second objectives, we interrogate the connection between political parties and the quality of governance and state of development obtained in Nigeria since 1999. The purpose is to show that this connection is quite significant and that the apparent failure of parties to govern effectively and spearhead Nigeria's development is fundamentally due to their weak and noninstitutionalized nature and capacity.

Achieving these objectives, however, calls for an innovative engagement with literature and other related materials from varied sources. It suggests the need for a creative methodology and approach that accepts parties' centrality in untangling the development *problematique*, especially in third-world democracies such as Nigeria. Data on critical indices of governance and development is readily accessible on various online databases. Data on parties is available and accessible from their respective websites, constitutions, manifestoes, and other documents and statements from their leaders and other relevant stakeholders. Additional figures and statistics necessary for helping us to achieve our objectives are readily available from government agencies, notably the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Together these will provide an interesting mix of information based upon which definite conclusions on the linkage and the impact political parties have on democratic governance and development in Nigeria could be made.

The significance of the questions which this paper interrogate is twofold. First, it constructs the much-needed framework for unravelling the complexities of governance and development in emerging democracies. This would help students of democratization and development to appreciate the nexus between important political institutions and how the outcome of this interplay shapes the overall trajectory of growth. Second, it is also significant as it develops a new approach that blends the conceptual with the methodological and offers insight into the indispensability of parties as critical drivers of democratic governance and development. Existing perspectives and approaches to the study of political parties are dominantly institutional. As useful as these perspectives are, they are severely limited in their analysis of democratic states that are substantially matured. Complementing these with a functional angle would, we hope, help to provide a more robust understanding of the importance of parties in establishing the nexus between democracy on the one hand and good governance and development on the other in developing democracies in general and Nigeria in particular.

Parties, Democratic Governance, and Sustainable Development: A Framework for Analysis

Questions about democratic governance and development have always interested social scientists. Scholars have investigated the linkages between democracy and development and how important institutions such as political parties generally affect this nexus. Anthony Downs (1957) was among the prominent social scientists to have focused on deconstructing this relationship. Even before Downs, however, distinguished scholars such as Roberto Michels (2016), Elmer Schattschneider (1942), and Maurice Duverger (1964) have pioneered the study of political parties as critical institutions of democratic governance. Due primarily to the nature of their functions, these scholars and many others have argued that parties are indispensable to the proper and effective working of democratic governments. Elmer Schattschneider, famous for his work on political institutions, was, for instance, so enamored with parties that he categorically dismissed, as practically impossible and politically unwise, democratic governance without the mediating power which the presence of parties imposed based, essentially on their functions. He says, "Modern democracy is unthinkable save within the framework of party politics" (Schattschneider, 1942).

Sweeping generalizations such as these were not specific to Schattschneider alone. Other scholars reached similar conclusions. For instance, Maurice Duverger, another famous social scientist, shared this interesting sentiment. Duverger not only accepted parties as inevitable in liberal democratic states, but as a mark of their indispensability, he recommended the demarcation of a separate discipline dedicated to the study of parties (Duverger, 1964). Stasiology, the field he advocated for, focused on the typologies of parties and the patterns of their evolution, transformation, nature of their organizations, and performance in democratic states. Over time, scholars of comparative politics, political institutions, and democratic studies have generally accepted parties as the necessary evil that democratic states have to live with. Writing in the post-Cold War era when the democratization wave surged and swept many authoritarian regimes in Africa and Latin America, scholars including Driver (2011), Mair (2008), Randall (2007), Randall and Svasand (20002), Katz and Mair (1995),

LaPalombara and Weiner (1966), and many others have acknowledged this significance which parties have upon the democratic process.

Before analyzing the relevance of parties to democratic governance, it is important first to interrogate the relationship between democratic governance and development. It is important to note that this relationship has never been contested. It only became reinforced by the significance that governance exerts on the development process. Although it has many definitions, governance is about collective decision-making and policy implementations. There are two approaches to understanding the concept of governance. The first approach is minimalist in nature and conception. It reduces the whole gamut of governance to a process through which specific principles interact to achieve an organization's pre-defined goals or objectives (Kooiman, 1999). The thrust of this conception is on the nature of institutional and other legal dynamics that determine the principles which ensure proper governance. The inadequacy of this approach is in the fact that it omits to note how power and authority are obtained and exercised for the general good of society. Mercifully, the maximalist approach to governance has identified and addressed this flaw by offering a more elaborate conception (Kooiman, 1999).

Under this approach, governance is how "political power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development." As is clear to all, governance is, in any case, about properly managing human and material resources to ensure a better and qualitative life for all citizens. Judicious utilization and allocation of human and material resources in any given community are, thus, critical not just to the discourse on governance but also to the trajectory of its security and sustainable development (Peters, 2014). World Bank stresses the linkage between public sector management, accountability, the legal framework for development, and transparency as critical components of good governance, especially in developing states like ours with emerging economies' long-term development.

The scope of governance, whether democratic or otherwise, is therefore quite broad and encompasses "the traditions and institutions by which authority is exercised." Of greater interest, however, is the quantum of issues to which these traditions, practices, and institutions respond, such as i) the entirety of the process through which governments are appointed, removed, and sanctioned; ii) the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies for the security and development of the people; and iii) the respect which citizens and other public officials have for the institutions and laws that govern economic, political, and social interactions among them (Peters, 2014). These issues, it is important to note, reflect upon the fundamental objective and the relationship between the government and the governed. In Africa, it is sad that few governments perform creditably well. Most provide poor illustrations of the concept of good governance. This failure is evident in the difficulties and other challenges that inhibit development, creating conditions that birth and nourish instability and insecurity. It is important to recall what is pointed out in the introduction that any government's capacity to govern well depends on several factors, including the capacity of its leaders, the resources available, and the nature of existing institutions and bureaucratic organizations. We should add here that the failure of a

government, however, always has a significant effect on public opinion and, in many cases, results in the erosion of legitimacy.

To understand the linkage between governance and development, we must first deconstruct the concept of development and consider it objectively devoid of ideological debates and polemics. Although it has several definitions, the idea appears, perhaps on how it is often invoked by scholars and policymakers alike, to have some common features or characteristics which transcend ideological leanings and assume global acceptability. For instance, it is accepted that among its important features, sustained human empowerment supported in the context of human security, higher level of literacy, reduced levels of social inequality, poverty, and dependence among members of any given society are quite prominent. Scholars such as Seers, who engaged with the concept decades ago, appeared to have resolved the disagreement which inheres in our understanding of development by aligning it with the fundamental aspirations of members and values of the society. For scholars such as Seers (1972), development should thus be seen as a prevailing condition with a pronounced absence of social inequality, reduced levels of poverty, and near or total unemployment. This conception succinctly captures and regards development as a condition with an evident "quantitative growth, qualitative improvement, and expansion in the capabilities, capacities, and choices of individuals, groups or states" (Mirakhor & Askari, 2010, 1).

This transformation signifies enhanced capabilities and reduced challenges. And quite obviously, speaks volumes of the policies and other measures introduced or being promoted by the government, specifically to achieve this condition of significant quantitative growth and qualitative transformation in the lives of members of any given state. Therefore, an appropriate question at this juncture is where parties feature in this nexus; and, most importantly, how do they promote sustainable development while deepening democratic governance?

Parties as the Linchpin between Democratic Governance and Development

In liberal democratic discourse, parties perform a set of functions within the political space. For many scholars, these functions legitimate their existence or serve as their *raison d'être* (Driver, 2011). Whether in or out of government, for parties to be taken seriously, they must provide mechanisms for recruiting and training competent political leadership to fill necessary elective and appointive positions in the political system. They must also develop robust platforms for mobilizing support, articulating policy choices, and forming governments. But recruiting leadership and forming governments are not the only vital functions of parties. Since they compete for support among voters, parties must be able to articulate coherent alternative public policy options and pragmatic programs consistent with their ideologies and vision for society (Randall, 2007). Over time, constructive opposition has been added to the list of functions of parties, especially for those not in power. Irrespective of regime type, parties must be able to promote political participation and hold themselves accountable for their policies and decisions in office. Taken as a whole, these functions constitute what could aptly be described as the linchpin linking democratic governance to sustainable development (Mair, 2008).

There are, of course, those who would question the reality of this relationship. Parties have, over time, evolved into behemoth political organizations promoting the interests of their founders and leaders to the detriment of the wider public (Katz & Mair, 1995). This practice was not peculiar to the developing democracies. It also exists in advanced Western democracies where parties pander to the dictates of big businesses and special interest groups (Katz & Mair, 1995). The only substantial difference between parties in advanced and developing democracies is the subtleties that manifest within the party organization while pandering to those special interests. What is vital to the consolidation of democracy and its ability to qualitatively transform the living condition of the majority of citizens in any given political system is the capacity of parties to recruit committed, passionate, and competent persons into their ranks; and to sponsor these persons for elective and appointive positions.

To answer our questions, we must concede that parties occupy a central place in the matrix linking democratic governance to sustainable development. This model is universally acknowledged and inheres in all liberal democracies. To a significant degree, we argue that parties' role in promoting development is as prominent as their role in deepening or undermining democracy. They encourage growth through the kind of governments they form and the policies and programs they promote. We contend that development or lack thereof in multiparty liberal democracies depends upon the existing parties' capability to channel their resources effectively and efficiently towards performing leadership recruitment and training, policy formulation and articulation, and promoting political inclusion and accountability functions. As we have demonstrated, these functions crystallize into sustainable development. It is important to quickly add that the urgency for parties to perform these functions to promote development is significantly higher in developing democracies such as Nigeria than in developed ones. The reason for this is clear. Advanced democracies have had the opportunity to institutionalize parties and party politics due mainly to uninterrupted evolution. The opposite is the case in Nigeria, and others like it. Parties have had a disrupted history of growth and development, significantly affecting their prospects for institutionalization and capacity to perform their functions properly.

Democratic Governance and the Challenge of Institutionalizing Functional Parties in Nigeria

Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1999 amidst great expectations at home and upheavals abroad. With a population of about 50 million people, with decolonization, the country became the largest democracy in Africa. But the period of its independence coincided with great changes unfolding within the continent, mostly occasioned by the rapid and steady wind of decolonization blowing over most of Africa and Asia. Independence for Nigeria, like for other African states, was a time to build strong and viable institutions, translate citizens' yearnings into better living conditions, and improve economic and political development prospects. However, Nigerians' struggle for independence was non-violent, unlike others, such as the Algerians and Kenyans. Still, expectations about decolonization and democratization were remarkably high among them. The nationalists' leaders, and later the politicians, presented self-rule and constitutional order to the people as the panacea for the ills of underdevelopment and exploitation imposed by colonization (Meredith, 2006).

In Africa, without exception, political parties emerged from this fog of decolonization as the most visible agents for democratic transition and development, social change and transformation, and sustainable economic development (Katsina, 2016). As the most important institutions in the days preceding and succeeding independence, parties in Nigeria, while mobilizing support and sympathies from voters, made promises and developed programs to expand the political space, promote inclusion, unite the people, deepen democracy, and attain sustainable development. They formulated ideas and promoted public policies that championed the country's and people's socio-economic progress and development. However, the failure to internalize the fundamental principles of democratic theory and practice among the elites sadly truncated the democratization process six years after independence (Katsina, 2016). While politicians were the major culprits for this failure, parties became the major victims. Their growth and development became arrested by intermittent military rule such that by 1999 when the Fourth Republic was inaugurated, none of the parties that operated in the previous republics survived, for whenever the military struck, parties were among its earliest targets for proscription.

This disrupted the growth and development of parties, and party politics had consequences. Some of these consequences, as time revealed, have had long-term negative effects on the nature of parties and party politics that subsist in subsequent democratization attempts, including the present Fourth Republic. Firstly, their process of institutionalization was abruptly frozen, and the opportunities that existed for their steady and even-paced development were irredeemably lost. Since then, the process of party formation has become haphazard. Politicians with different ideological hues often find themselves lumped with other characters of dubious origin in parties championing the same cause. Related to this abrupt disruption of institutionalization was also the difficulty that parties encountered in developing cohesive and coherent programs, outlooks, and policies to attract voters' support. The result of this was a disproportionately low-level polarization within the party system. The parties, both major and minor, became hardly distinguishable from one another. They became undifferentiated in terms of organizational structure. They espoused the same ideas, parroted similar pledges, and made party-switching unimaginably easy (Katsina, 2016; 2013).

Although the Fourth Republic, formally inaugurated on 29th May 1999, was the longest stretch of the democratization period in Nigeria's political history, the impact of the previous mishaps that curtailed the growth and development of parties appeared to have caught up with the parties of the present. It has incapacitated their abilities to demonstrate even the faintest idea about their functions and obligations as critical institutions of democratic governance. Thus, what we have today are undifferentiated and chaotic mass groups that possess neither the gravitas nor the discipline and organization to effectively deepen democratic governance and promote the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. Two decades of democratic rule in Nigeria have not altered parties' experience from serving as mere vehicles for conveying politicians, usually with the deepest pockets or widest connections, into power (Katsina, 2016). Within this period, they have effectively turned into briefcases in the hands of party leaders and elders, both euphemisms for party financiers, to horse trade and retain political clout in the country. The parties reveal no clarity in ideology or

vision and command fickle loyalty from an unreliable support base. Given this situation prevailing in Nigeria, a pertinent question is to what extent has this affected the sustainable development of Nigeria over the last two decades of democratic rule?

Parties and Sustainable Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Failure of Democratic Governance

Already a robust framework for measuring development has been provided by Dudley Seers (1972). While analyzing Seer's conception of development, we have identified three vital indices as valid measures for determining the level of development in any given society or state. The indices are the general poverty levels, unemployment, and social inequality between and among all social classes. In the following paragraphs, we measure these indices vis-a-vis democratic governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. We contend that the overall picture from this analysis is sufficient to give us an idea of the degree to which parties as agents of democratic governance have contributed to the development of Nigeria or otherwise since 1999.

Poverty Levels in the Fourth Republic

Over a hundred million Nigerians live in abject poverty and squalor. A recent report by the World Bank projected that another 7 million would cross this line and become poor before the end of 2023 (The World Bank, 2023). In a country of about 220 million people, to have about 130 million as multidimensionally poor is horrific (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). But this is not all. The remaining number of citizens is not doing any better. If we consider figures from the NBS, Nigeria's official statistics agency, we see a picture in which nearly 30 per cent or the remaining 90 million people lives in relative poverty. When we consider an elementary definition of relative poverty as the condition in which things that make life comfortable are not readily accessible to the people, then we can say that only about 20 per cent of Nigerians have access to decent living standards. Figures from the past have shown a rather steady and alarming increase in poverty levels in Nigeria since 1999. For instance, figures obtained from the NBS from 2002 to 2003 show lower levels of abject and relative poverty in Nigeria concerning GDP per capita (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Rather than remaining where it was; evidently, poverty continued to rise under different democratic administrations in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic despite dramatic improvement in revenues.

Several reasons have been adduced for this situation. However, the most valid in our view was the series of neoliberal economic policies and measures promoted by successive governments since Obasanjo's in 1999. These policies saw the removal of subsidies on social services, including education, agriculture, and petroleum products, and the deregulation of the economy and privatization of various national assets. Repeated failures of successive governments to curtail corruption, arrest wastage and extravagance, and plug sources of leakages of public finances meant that corruption, bad governance, and mismanagement had transcended partisan affiliation and have become rampant under different administrations. The failure of the PDP to maximize the groundswell of support it enjoyed in the early days of the Fourth Republic to push for public service reform, promote accountability and ethical governance, and combat corruption compounded the problem of underdevelopment. The

APC government's failure to reverse the rot, despite its campaign mantra of change, means a further deepening of the developmental crises in the Fourth Republic, such that Nigeria competes with India for the inglorious title of the world's poverty capital (CNN, 2018).

Unemployment in the Fourth Republic

Unemployment is a socio-economic problem common among societies struggling with weak economic and industrial bases. Available data has shown that unemployment trends are not limited to developing economies of the global south (Uddin & Rahman, 2023). The global north's industrial powers also struggle with unemployment challenges, especially among the urban youths. Unemployment, generally, is a product of socio-economic and political choices, policies, and practices that stifle economic development, trade, and industrial sector, while entrenching poverty and limiting opportunities for gainful vocations (Bakare, 2011). In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, unemployment figures are quite dreadful. The percentage of youths without gainful employment opportunities is enough to be declared a national disaster. From 1999 when the PDP government of Olusegun Obasanjo was inaugurated, to 2023, when the APC government of Muhammadu Buhari completed its term of eight years, the number of unemployed in Nigeria had, sadly, risen exponentially.

For instance, statistics from the NBS over fifteen years have shown an astonishing ability for unemployment to be resilient in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The figures increased sharply over two decades, even as the economy supposedly expanded. However, the informal sector, which has always been the country's most reliable source of employment opportunities, shrank within this period. Other factors, such as population growth, may account for the disproportionately higher levels of unemployment in Nigeria since 1999. A plethora of poor economic policies and political decisions that placed Nigeria on a neo-liberal pedestal by successive administrations have created a bipartisan arc in which the political class committed to disempowering and disrobing the citizens. For instance, the privatization program introduced by the PDP under Obasanjo and apparently endorsed by APC under Buhari seemed to have contributed to the closure and selling of various national assets (Adaramola & Dada, 2020).

Since the notion of attracting foreign investment turned into a chimaera, hitherto valuable national assets that have been left to decay have now been stripped of any value, with hundreds of thousands of their employees laid off. Other associated neo-liberal policies, such as deregulating the power sector meant that electricity was no longer cheap or available, forcing thousands of local industries to shut down, further escalating the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. Nigeria became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as part of the neo-liberal inclination of all our major parties. It subscribed to various trade regulations and protocols, opening our local industries to competition from better-placed global partners. This affected the activities of domestic sectors and disincentivized production. These have negatively affected employment trends in Nigeria over the past twenty years.

Social Inequality in the Fourth Republic

Inequality, according to Koh (2020), "refers to the phenomenon of unequal and/or unjust distribution of resources and opportunities among members of a given society." Scholars such as Jasso (2015) tend to characterize inequality into two broad categories: inequality between persons and inequality between sub-groups. The first usually takes the form of differences or consequential gaps in income and wages and access to quality education, while the second is often in the form of differences in terms of opportunities for upward social mobility for members of a particular social group. Although inequality is hard to measure in contexts such as Nigeria's, its manifestations and effects are not difficult to determine. Peichl and Pestel (2015) suggest that the best approach to explaining inequality in the social system is to attach a definite and clear referent. Thus, we should discuss inequality in terms of social constructs or variables. Therefore, to speak of inequality is to talk of structured, unjust, and unjustified disproportionate distribution of values and resources or access at the personal, sub-group, or group levels in terms of political inequality, social inequality, and income inequality (Muller & Seligson, 1987).

In Nigeria, all indices for measuring political, social, or economic inequality point to a society in which existing gaps have dramatically widened (Archibong, 2018). Income inequality is, perhaps, the most glaring. Income and improved living conditions are both products of economic growth and development. Societies like Nigeria that have experienced economic growth without corresponding development are likely to experience excessive concentration of wealth at the top and heavy deprivation at the bottom, which often results in the middle class's evisceration, leaving only the upper and the lower classes. As pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, a stream of policies pursued by political parties in government since 1999 has led to the near collapse of the economy, thus creating the conditions that nourish and sustain social inequality, poverty, and unemployment (Umukoro, 2014).

The substance of our contention, thus far, rested on the inability of parties that formed and populated the Fourth Republic to channel democratic governance towards the sustainable development of Nigeria, despite repeated promises and abundant human and material resources. Consistent with our assertion that any attempt to understand this failure must consider parties as active agents of democratization and development that have significantly failed to perform their fundamental functions in the political system, we now review some of these functions with immediate relevance to the questions raised and show how their failure in this respect further compounded an already bad situation.

Candidate selection, leadership recruitment and training are among the vital functions of parties in democratic states. One of the unique principles of democracy is how it opens up the process of leadership recruitment in the political system such that prospects for wider cooptation is excessively high. Closely related to this, is the opportunities which parties offer for deepening leadership training for the potential leaders and candidates selected. Available evidence has shown that parties in the Fourth Republic have not been quite diligent in performing these vital and inter-related functions of leadership selection, recruiting, and training (Katsina, 2016). The practice that subsists since the early days of the Republic was

one that focuses more on loyalty and primordialism of potential leaders. Consequently, leaders in elective and appointive positions have emerged not because they were the best, but because they were most loyal to the party leaders or were from the right ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups or sub-groups. This practice had watered down the quality of governance since leaders lacked the necessary skills, competence, resourcefulness, and stamina to lead effectively and efficiently. The effect on democratic governance is quite clear. It undermines democracy and retards sustainable development.

The parties' failure to develop and articulate cohesive ideologies and other relevant programs for socio-political and economic transformation of the country further reinforced and sustained the perennial failure of leadership in Nigeria. Without any cogent ideologies and programs or plans of action, leaders at all levels were left by their parties to improvise and draw their own governance agenda, which in most cases was as unrealistic as it could be. The leaders lack focus and operate governments that are foggy in vision. Part of the problem which this absence of synergy between parties and governments create is the problem of policy and project continuity during transitions. We experienced this with the privatization of public refineries undertaken by Obasanjo and later reversed by Umaru Musa Yar'adua despite being from the same party. The problem is even more acute at the state level where successor governments tend to become immediate enemies of their predecessors even when they belonged to the same parties. Thus, reversal of policies by governments with seeming inability or unwillingness of parties to mediate is another major failure to perform expected functions. It not only affects the process of sustainable development but also that of democratic consolidation since practices like these deepen existing fragmentations among the political elites and stress the political institutions.

The inability of parties, especially those in opposition, to provide constructive alternatives, check the excesses of the ruling parties at the federal and state levels, and champion ethical governance and greater political accountability is another great minus in the menu of their functions. This failure is often attributed to their poor level of institutionalization. Elsewhere, we have noted how military rule disrupted efforts to evolve and operate strong, ideological, and financially viable parties. The effect of this disruption manifests in the party's inability to enforce discipline among party members, propose acceptable policy alternatives, and provide constructive opposition while out of power. As they stand in the Fourth Republic, parties lacked internal cohesion and often operate under dubious legitimacy. Their programs and manifestoes are poor caricatures of each other. They offer no new ideas on governance or development while repeating stale mantras uncritically. These issues reviewed here are fundamental and have great impact on democracy and development. The consequences of parties' failure to function effectively and efficiently is mind-boggling and always appears in citizens' increasing loss of confidence on the democratic project. It creates disillusion among citizens and births legitimacy crisis with political leadership and institutions. As it were today, poverty, insecurity, bad governance, corruption and general state of underdevelopment prevail because parties have failed as agents of democratization and development.

Conclusion

The objectives of this paper were to interrogate the nexus between democratic governance and sustainable development and show the significant role which political parties play in this regard. Focusing on the Fourth Republic, we showed that parties were unable to promote development through the vehicle of democratic governance. Their failure in this respect, we argued, was essentially because of the poor institutionalization which denied them the ability to perform their functions credibly, efficiently, and effectively. Thus, in order to launch Nigeria on the pedestal of sustainable development, parties operating in the Fourth Republic must be able to attain an appreciable level of institutionalization as it will protect them from encroachment by unscrupulous politicians and give them the chance to develop robust platforms for leadership selection, recruitment, and training. Parties must also design cohesive social ideologies, programs, and manifestoes to mobilize support among voters and to guide policy formulation while in power. Most importantly, parties must promote ethical governance and political accountability whether in or out of power. Without these, we noted that Nigeria's sustainable development under democratic governance would simply remain a mirage.

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