Article

The Party System and Democratic Consolidation: An African Perspective

Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Political Science (NAJOPS).
2012, Vol. 3(2)
ISSN: 2992-5924

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Abstract

For many years democracy has revolved around party politics so that it is now hardly conceivable to talk about democracy without political parties. Political analysts have identified a number of benefits associated with political parties. In spite of all the benefits of political parties in establishing democracy and fostering democratic culture in a polity, this paper argues that in many African countries, party system functions differently and subverts democracy in a number of ways. Some political thinkers have compared the relationship between political parties with that between enemy armies, a truism with many empirical manifestations in different African states where political parties function as instruments of violence. The long-lasting nature of the unhealthy political situation in Africa calls for a democratic paradigm shift. This paper, therefore, recommends for African societies and any multi-ethnic society a cooperative, instead of a competitive method of government formation - a Cooperative Collegial Democracy - apolitical system which would effectively resolve national questions that continue to afflict different African states and so make it difficult to institute a healthy democracy.

Introduction

In different parts of the world, democracy has been practised with the formation of political parties. The importance of political parties stems from being the breeding ground from where potential political leaders are groomed. In stable and long-lasting democracies, like Britain, local parties are the starting point for careerist politicians who later become either Cabinet members or Prime Ministers. That the party system has some advantages is not in doubt. Some of the identifiable benefits of political parties include, engaging and mobilising the electorate in the political process, simplification of electoral system for voters by curtailing the number of candidates that are involved in an election, serving as an intermediary between the electorate and their elected representatives. An outstanding beneficial effect of political parties on society is that they give voice to a number of groups on a range of issues, especially those issues that might be very controversial and threatening to powerful interests (Miller, 2004). Debates among members of different parties in the House of Assembly or Parliament allow the public to know each party's point of view on an issue and so form a judgement. All the above benefits notwithstanding, attempts to practise the party model of democracy have also wrought havoc in many African and non-African societies.

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Incidents of violence, especially in multi-ethnic societies, stemming from their attempts to practise the liberal party democracy no longer make headlines. This is because democracy-induced violence has been accepted as a democratic norm. Yet democracy actually means people's government and it is exemplified by the presence of order and progress. There is, therefore, no democracy in a society characterised by episodes of violence, especially when connected to democratic exercise. Many African states are multi-ethnic and are naturally more ethnic-conscious than state-wide conscious. This is not, however, intrinsic to Africans whose states were arbitrarily and artificially reconfigured, because in a similar political matrix, the French, the English, the Scottish, the Turkish or the Germans would also exhibit similar ethnic consciousness and cleavages.

In order to institutionalise a healthy democracy in such heterogeneous societies, certain recurrent national questions must be honestly addressed. Tackling these questions may highlight some of the nefarious qualities of the institution of party politics in consolidating democracy in Africa. The place or role of party politics in democracies, therefore, cannot be assumed to be a foregone matter but rather as a major recurrent debate issue in academic circles and among politicians, especially in African countries where democratic consolidation has, hitherto, remained a political illusion. In the following section we shall look at the nexus between the composition of an African society and consolidation of democracy.

The Composition of African Societies & the Institution of Democracy

Why are many African countries finding it difficult to practise democracy without tears? Many African societies are multi-ethnic and so are heavily heterogeneous in composition. Ethnicity is, therefore, a significant factor in African politics. Often the democratic problem in an African society is the problem of ethnic politics. Ethnicism -hyper consciousness of one's ethnic group - is a powerful influencing factor in the practice of democracy in different multi-ethnic societies. Ethnicity is defined as a cultural system denoting group boundaries (Joseph, 1987). An ethnic group is synonymous with the concept nation which implies native or nativity which "indicates a people born into relationships with shared moral values - the source of one mind" (Anyanwu, 2009:86).

The role of ethnicity as an important index of identity seems incontrovertible. In Nigeria, for instance, the annulment by Babangida, a Northern Hausa Muslim, of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections which Abiola, a Southern Yoruba Muslim, won, speaks eloquently about ethnicity as an important political denominator. In this case, Abiola being a fellow Muslim did not count much as his being from a different ethnic group, the Yoruba. Momoh and Adejumobi reckon that the majority of people accept that the June 12, 1993 presidential election was annulled "because Moshod Abiola, the winner of the election, was a southerner and that the Hausa-Fulani, through the military, wanted to perpetuate themselves in power" (Momoh, and Adejumobi, *eds*. 2002:x).

Mwaura, writing from a Kenyan perspective, points to a definite connection between ethnic conflict and political succession - particularly Presidential Succession. A sort of fusion of ethnic identity and politics, he opines, is much more pronounced in a multiparty system and where ethnicisation of politics becomes the driving force the potential for ethnic violence is likely to increase. "As Professor Mutiso aptly observes The ethnicisation of politics in Kenya as a defence against the Opposition focuses conflict not on the political process but rather on the fear of ethnic conflict - thus to challenge KANU is no longer to challenge a political party but to challenge the Kalenjin and the President'" (Mwaura, 1997:23). This may

explain why, in Africa, instead of ethnicity dissolving with the passage of time, it has rather "appeared to acquire increased virulence" (Ukiwo, 2003:1).

In different African societies politics is ethnicised and ethnicity is politicised. Religion also plays a crucial role in African politics. Again, using Nigeria as an example, the election, in 2011, of Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian gave rise to unprecedented methods of violence in the northern part of the country. This social matrix makes it extremely difficult to practise the Western liberal party democracy and expect fruitful results. Even a homogenous society which is more likely to have political stability than a heterogeneous society is torn asunder by party politics.

Some authors, such as Lijphart (1984) see no problem with majoritarian democracy in a relatively homogeneous society. This is because the exclusion of the minority, the opposition, is something temporary since individuals in such a society are flexible with respect to their political orientations and loyalties. For this very reason, the minority (the opposition) can become the majority in the next election. This is not so in a heterogeneous society divided along religious, linguistic and ethnic lines and so the practice of majoritarian democracy in this type of society yields unwelcome fruits. In sharply segmented societies,

> majority rule is not only undemocratic but also dangerous, because minorities that are continually denied access to power will feel excluded and discriminated against and will lose their allegiance to the regime (Lijphart, 1984:22f).

> The majoritarian model eventually leads to disintegration, possibly to a permanent political crisis, and perhaps even to violent conflicts (Hering, 1998).

There is a correlation between the nature of a society and democratic consolidation. Kingsolver has in her work highlighted one of the major obstacles - lack of homogeneity - to fruitful implementation of democracy in an African pluralistic state.

> Two hundred different languages,' he said, 'spoken inside the borders of a so-called country invented by Belgians in a parlor. You might as well put a fence around sheep, wolves, and chickens, and tell them to behave like brethren.' He turned around, looking suddenly just like a preacher, “Frank, this is not a nation, it is the Tower of Babel and it cannot hold an election” (Kingsolver, 1998:167f).

More often than not, the effect of ethnic factor on Nigerian or African politics is neglected in the public and international expectation. My contention, therefore, is that the problem of democracy in Africa stems from the non-context-relevant model of democracy which they attempt to implement. Most African countries have adopted the liberal party democracy. This political system has precisely tended to compound the political problems experienced by many multi-cultural societies. For example, in spite of the benefits of political parties which aid the establishment of democracy and foster democratic culture in some democracies, in many African as well as non-African countries, the party system threatens democracy. One has only to look at a few countries where the use of party political process has institutionalised anarchy instead of democracy, a significant political concept we shall explore next.

Democracy as Government formed by the People

There are discrepancies in the understanding and explanation of the concept of' democracy even amongst democratic theorists, yet all would accept the common denominator: Democracy is a form of government in which the people take the major part in its formation. It means rule of the body of citizens in contradistinction to the rule of the monarchy - monocracy - (one person) or aristocracy (a group of persons). It is a form of government set up through the free participation of the people or their representatives; government that derives from people as opposed to government by imposition. A democratic government is a people-responsive government which responds to the needs of the people, otherwise, it is not democratic (government for the people) but aristocratic (government for the political class).

The history of democracy has been that of struggles for freedom and equality and for equitable distribution of wealth in society. The significance and splendour of democracy have not only been acclaimed in many parts of the world, it has also been recognised as a necessary condition for peace and development. With the seeming inability of the free-market (the neo-liberal prescription) to set in motion the process of development in economically developing countries, the IMF and World Bank and some development theorists (e.g. modernisation theorists) have shifted their emphasis and today insist that economic development is contingent upon democratisation. It may be difficult to argue against this hypothesis, but it is vital to understand what actually these international bodies mean by the term democratisation or political liberalisation. For them it means a competitive party democracy, seemingly unaware of the impact of party politics on some of these countries. It was believed that both economic reform, as prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and democracy, by which they mean multipartyism, would reinforce each other and so bring about a stable process of development. The African experience and experience elsewhere have not attested this to hypothesis; instead the contrary is seen to be obtained. Moreover, the meaning of democracy in different societies is shifting from the orthodox understanding of it being the government of the people and/or the people to a competitive struggle between different ethnic groups (ethnic politics) or between different political parties - a move away from democracy to partycracy - government of the party for members of political parties.

In many contemporary African societies, different ethnic groups see the competitive "struggle to control the state as a zero-sum game in which all the spoils belonged to the victor ... each group saw the capture of state power as the only vehicle for the realization of the right to self-determination for its people, at the exclusion, and often the expense, of other groups. Local, as opposed to European, colonialism has often been the result of such exclusionary practices" (Mutua, wa Makau 1994-1995:1158). This foregrounds the understanding of democracy, in different African multicultural societies, as politics for ethnic security and survival. For a genuine democracy, therefore, to take an effective root in an African society, a number of issues, some of which border on ethnicity, have to be addressed first. These issues we call national questions.

Unanswered National Questions in Plural Societies & Democratic Stalemate

Horowitz raises a number of salient questions on the relationship between politics and ethnicity. Two of them are: (i) On party politics: “Why do political parties in severely divided societies split along ethnic lines, even when that means perpetual minority status for one of them?” (ii) On interethnic accommodation: “What can be done to reduce the severity of ethnic conflict and maximize the likelihood

of interethnic cooperation?" (Horowitz, I985*: xvi*). These are issues of great importance and they revolve around the unanswered national questions.

Instituting democracy in severely divided societies cannot be accomplished if the ethnic question is left unanswered. Acknowledging this truism, Horowitz states, "The rise of ethnic conflict has gone hand in hand with the decline of democracy in Asia and Africa ... (and) the problems of reducing ethnic conflict are at many points connected to the problems of fostering democracy, so much so that success in the one will probably mean a measure of success in the other as well" (Horowitz, I985:*xvii*). For this reason, priority ought to be given first to devising mechanisms that would forestall the threat of ethnic discontent, for democracy, as Horowitz has observed, "cannot survive in the face of serious ethnic divisions" (Horowitz, 1985:681).

Most multi-ethnic states experience political problems mainly because of their failure to address and resolve some of the fundamental national questions especially those concerned with ensuring that no section of the society is condemned to be permanent "outsiders to state power." We will examine a number of these pertinent national questions and the type of political measures that are capable of resolving them.

National questions are key issues in a country's political realm which some authors like Horowitz and Osaghae have rightly argued as requiring resolution before one can speak of achieving sustainable political stability. Osaghae outlines these issues as follows:

1. The national question: how effectively to structure the federation to accommodate the various groups and guarantee access to power and the equitable distribution of the country's resources;
2. The leadership question: the search for visionary and nationally-oriented leadership;
3. The governance question: how to strengthen the institutions and processes of the state, and transform it from a 'soft' state to an effective state (Osaghae, 1998).

Measures needed to address national questions entail having a political structure that practically guarantees equal rights and opportunities to all geopolitical or ethnic groups; ensures and facilitates a smooth, peaceful and less expensive process of selecting political leaders; prevents incompetent and/or discreditable people from emerging as political leaders of the people; ensures political cooperation and forestall political competition which enthrones political violence and disunity; a political structure that promotes inter-ethnic cooperation.

The implication of having such a political structure is that, as has been mentioned earlier, there has to be a paradigm shift of democracy away from the influences of peculiarly African or multi-cultural states' political dynamics - such as ethnicity, religion, political parties and godfatherism - for democracy to thrive. What this means, in effect, is the evolution of a totally different democratic system within which these dynamics are, contextually, incapacitated. It is not by cosmetic political modifications.

Berman et al have raised questions as to how democracy can develop in a multi-ethnic society. These authors contend: "Ethnic conflict continues to be the major source of violence ripping apart African states, and the peaceful accommodation of ethnic differences remains key to successful democratic development" (Berman, et al 2004:xiii). They, therefore, argue, and rightly too, that successful

democracies in Africa "will probably neither look like, nor function as facsimiles of, familiar forms of Western liberal democracy, but rather produce distinctive African variants ..." (Berman, et al 2004:xiv).

Research findings and experience of what is happening in the political arenas of different states continue to confirm the position of Berman et al and the validity of Achermann's reflections; "Until now, African politicians have been swearing by the single-party system. Lately, influenced by happenings in Eastern Europe, some are calling for a multi-party system. However, if my reflections are correct, such government reforms will not function much better" (Achermann' 1994:235). This a resonance of Tom Mboya's prediction many decades ago that Africa would continue to be a political mess and a laughing stock of nations if Africans continued to practise the liberal party democracy as bequeathed to them by Europe. In the next section of this paper, we shall explore extensively the concept of the party system mainly from Giovani Sartori's perspective and why the party system seems to be a major obstacle to the consolidation of democracy in Africa.

The Party System: Division and Chaos in Plural Societies

From the 19th century, political parties have been used as a means of instituting and consolidating democracy. This notwithstanding, the place or role of party politics in democracies has been a major debate issue. A political party has been defined as "... a body of men (and women) united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed"' (Sartori, 2005:8). As Miller has noted, one of the benefits of political parties is that they help to give voice to a number of groups on a range of issues (Miller, 2004). But are political parties a condicio sine qua non, for democracy or an indispensable element in democracy.

Sartori distinguishes three different types of party models: (i) one party model; (ii) a two party system and (iii) a multiparty system. In order to highlight the dangers of a one party state, he acknowledges the preference of party-less option over one party model: "... why have one party rather than no party?" (Sartori, 2005:41), he asks. Now the question: If the party-less model can be an alternative to unipartyism, can it also be an alternative to party pluralism? The answer, for Sartori, is 'no' for he considers party pluralism the best of the three models.

Sartori's political discourse on the party system focuses on the concepts of 'parties' and 'factions.' Sartori's theoretical discourse on party system is based on the following three premises:

1. Parties are not factions.
2. A party is part-of-a-whole.
3. Parties are channels of expression (Sartori, 2005:22).

Sartori defines a party system as "the system of interaction resulting from inter-party competition" (Sartori, 2005:39). A party system, invariably, is suggestive of political competition and it seems illogical to conceive of a party system without its inherent corollary, competition.

In order to distinguish parties from factions, Sartori states "that parties are instrumental to collective benefits, to an end that is not merely the private benefits of the contestants" (Sartori, 2005:22) because they are parts "of a whole attempting to serve the purposes of the whole" ((Sartori, 2005:22). Political parties are also seen as "channels for articulating, communicating, and implementing the demands of the governed" (Sartori, 2005:24). But do political parties usually exhibit these tendencies? High-level

corruption associated with politicians, for example, does confirm that parties in some societies deviate strongly from Sartori's normative expectations - i.e. parties as instruments of collective benefits. The experience in some countries shows that this lacks attitudinal reality; politicians generally tend not to behave in the way that shows they are acting for collective benefits.

Another feature of a party system requires further interrogation: the value of institutionalised opposition. If opposition is a necessary ingredient of democracy as Sartori claims, it may not be seen as an exclusive feature of party pluralism. Since opposition, defined here as an active manifestation of difference in opinion, is an inherent property of humans, it is obtainable also in single party or party-less models of democracy. As Dugerger has adduced: "To the extent that factions develop freely inside a single party ... pluralism is reborn within the party and there it can play the same part ...'" (Sartori, 2005:43) other parties play in their interaction with one another. By the same token, in a party-less polity, there can be not only differences of opinion amongst elected political leaders, there can also be other effective sources of opposition - the media, labour unions, students' unions and the people themselves as recent world occurrences (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya etc.) can demonstrate. Often these oppose with more disinterestedness. An institutionalised political opposition with vested interest may not always oppose disinterestedly and so can render democracy dysfunctional, as has happened in some societies. Horowitz explains the decline or 'irrelevance' of political parties in Asia and Africa to hinge on the ability of state bureaucracies to afford "greater opportunity for advancement and influence than party organizations" (Horowitz, 1985:305).

Sartori, however, disagrees with the equation-relevance of intra-party opposition and competition, arguing that in a single party polity the state and party reinforce and duplicate each other and make power autocratic. In this context also, the problem is, who will govern the party itself. This is not the case in a multiparty polity where "a party governs so far it is responsive to, and takes the part of, the governed ...” (Sartori, 2005:44) and where power is democratic. Sartori has, no doubt, raised important points, but are these enough to justify institutionalised opposition which, in some societies, is a synonym to enemy and has thus reconfigured electoral arena as a 'warfare zone' “with attendant anomic consequences” (Momoh, and Adejumobi, 1999:114). The understanding that 'opposition' is an essential quality of democracy brings us to another significant point raised by Sartori and that is, the subject of electoral competition.

For Sartori, what makes a polyarchy ‘democratic’ is electoral competition and free election. Though, in making this assertion, Sartori puts the word democratic in parenthesis, it is still pertinent to ask: Can there be democracy without electoral competition understood in its conventional sense? Accustomed to the liberal model of democracy, it may be tempting to answer in the negative. Yet, there can be other forms of democracy which may not have competition' as their essential feature.

Inter-party competition in liberal democracy, Sartori thinks, has been subjected to rough handling. He offers some of the reasons why some people are sceptical about party competition: "Competitive behaviour results," he says, "in emasculation, in collusive behaviour, and in diverting attention from fundamentals to trivialities" (Sartori, 2005:45) and sometimes exacerbate conflicts and divisions. For this, "the collective goods or benefits resulting from mechanisms of competition are always suboptimal..." (:45). These shortcomings should not make one lose sight of the benefits of political competition in party pluralism.

Some of the benefits of competitive structure, Sartori points out, "stem primarily from the principle of 'anticipated reactions', from the anticipation that the consumer will or might react" (Sartori, 2005:195). Competition amongst parties influences and elicits reaction from political consumers (the voters). The party which does better in the competitive struggle gets more votes. Another advantage of a competitive structure, whether in the realm of economics or politics, is that it "defends the public" (Sartori, 2005:195). The public also have choice amongst political competitors as they have in the market economy. As noted by Horowitz, "... parties are a vehicle for choice by voters" (Joseph, 1987:298). However, the benefits of competition in the economic sphere outweigh those obtainable in the political arena, a point which Sartori duly acknowledges thus:"... competitiveness is more important and more surely beneficial to economic than to political competition" (Sartori, 2005:195). This admission, nevertheless, does not sway him away from confidence in the salience of the benefits of political competition to society. For this reason, he raises the following questions:

1. Do the shortcomings of electoral competition counterweigh or even cancel out its benefits?
2. Do the shortcomings of inter-party competition weigh more than its positive by- effects as stated in the competitive theory of democracy outlined by Schumpeter? (Sartori, 2005:45).

The above two questions can be treated as one question. Results of democratic exercises in different multi-cultural societies can help in the assessment of the positive and negative effects of inter-party competition. It suffices to say, however, that for Schumpeter the relationship between political parties is similar to that between enemy armies (Schumpeter, 1976). For those who are more sympathetic with Schumpeter's view than with Sartori's, it is obvious that the shortcomings of inter-party competition would for them weigh more than its positive by-effects, knowing that in the fight between enemy armies each side sustains casualties. Though one may eventually secure a victory, it can be seen as a Pyrrhic victory. Victory, yes, but one with devastating cost to the army itself or the state in general.

Sartori is not alone on stressing the importance of party pluralism in a polity. Indeed, James Bryce is eloquent in his view about parties being a prerequisite in democratic politics. He writes: “Parties are inevitable. No free large country has been without them. No one has shown how representative government could be worked without them” (Sartori, 2005:21). This last statement is a challenge which has been addressed elsewhere (Ezeani, 2011). Just as Schumpeter, Bolingbroke, making a subtle distinction between party and faction, denounces a party system. '"Government by party ... must always end in the government of a faction ... Party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties'" (Sartori, 2005:5). Bolingbroke's view seems to capture the political realities of a number of countries, especially in Africa. In fact, in deeply divided societies, whether in Africa or other places, the party systems' propensity to aggravate ethnic problems instead of constraining them calls into question its usefulness in such societies.

In multiparty democracies, opposition parties, as has been pointed out by Schumpeter, are seen more as bitter enemies of the incumbent party rather than interest groups, which they opine deserve nothing but total annihilation, a truism with many empirical manifestations in different African states where political parties function as instruments of violence. The political context, insofar as human welfare is concerned, is more important than a scholarly justification based mainly on theoretical enumeration of the advantages of a party system. The value of inter-party competition, therefore, is not to be predicated on plausible

theoretical arguments but on its empirical reality; what are the outcomes of political competition in a given society, especially in a deeply divided polity as one gets in Africa?

Horowitz has postulated that party systems in the form of multi-ethnic and nonethnic parties "are unlikely in Asia and Africa" (Joseph, 1987:303) because of either deep ethnic and/or religious cleavages. What is prevalent in these continents, it follows, are ethnically based party systems. Since ethnic party systems seem to be intrinsic in the political configuration of the societies in these geographical zones and since they (ethnic party systems) are incompatible with and inimical to liberal democracy, what would an expert political scientist suggest to these societies?

Moss in his book, The Collapse of Democracy, pointed out the basic requirements of democracy. He sees democracy as (i) a method of taking political decisions, "of compromising and reconciling interests, (ii) the best method for reducing political violence and for creating a broad social consensus within which conflicts can be contained" (Moss, 1975:7). To what extent is party democracy the best method for reducing political violence and for creating "a broad social consensus within which conflicts can be contained," especially in Africa? As Dahl states, "conflicts involving subcultures ... (are) too explosive to be managed by ordinary parliamentary opposition, bargaining, campaigning and winning elections" (Lijphart, 1968:175).

If the conventional political competition is to be avoided in the politics of deeply segmented societies because, as some believe, of its destructive tendencies, the logical end, one may argue, is a discontinuity with a party system. Consociationalists do score some points when they raise the issues of political violence in their campaign against liberal democracy's claim of being "the final form of human government" as articulated by Fukuyama, and so the best of all democratic models. Fukuyama (1989, 1992) thinks that the human race has reached "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution (with) the universalization of Western liberal democracy" (Fukuyama, 1992:2).

Had Fukuyama contended that democracy, without the appendage liberal, represents the final phase of humankind's political history, he may not be far from the truth. Without doubt, democracy is the best form of human government in comparison with monarchy or aristocracy. What is contentious in Fukuyama's theoretical assumption is liberal democracy. Has liberal democracy proved itself to be the best form of government in all societies where it is practised? Attempts to practise liberal democracy in some places like Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast or Nigeria, has led to "the collapse of society" (Maier, 2002). Some social analysts are of the view that Nigeria, for instance, is a failed and collapsed state. Osaghae (1998) describes it as a "crippled giant." (Osaghae, 1998).

One may find it difficult to fault democracy either as hitherto the best form of political system or an embodiment of cherished human values; what is objectionable is to equate it to liberal form of democracy. For Fukuyama, therefore, to claim liberal democracy is the final form of human government is a demonstration of ideological triumphalism in light of the relationship between "the West and the Rest" (Chinweizu, 1975). Not only is Fukuyama's theory of democratic finalism without a solid foundation, belief in it is fatalistic; it closes the door of human mind to democratic innovations. It also ignores the fact that democracy is context sensitive. While, for instance, consociational democracy may work in a country like the Netherlands, liberal democracy seems -unworkable there. In African or Asian context, empirical evidence abounds which shows that party politics is so destructive and distractive a 'game' as to be allowed in the serious business of governance. Moreover, since political competition is seen to be

akin to warfare amongst enemy groups, it seems logical to consider adopting a cooperative model of democracy.

It has to be noted that consociational democracy was developed to correct the perceived inequity inherent in the majoritarian principle of liberal democracy (Lijphart, 1968 and Ukiwo, 2003) and to counter the negative effect resulting from unhealthy political competition. Taking this into consideration, Cooperative Collegial Democracy, which is being advocated for African nations, has been designed to be a party-less and cooperative political democratic model in nature. It hinges on the belief that political cooperation is a structural imperative for an African society to develop and progress. Unlike liberal forms of democracy, it is cooperative instead of competitive. There seems to be a justification in having much faith in the philosophy of social reconstructionism which holds that it is "only through co-operation that the problems that are before us can be brought under control" (Enoh, 1996:199) and not by political competition which, unlike competition in the economic sector, produces undesirable results in different African societies.

The Cooperative Collegial Democracy is collegial because, instead of using the mass, it operates with a group/college made up of representatives of the people. Its logic is that a small group or college of representatives is much more suited to and so is vital in identifying potential talent within their ranks. The new system is also democratic because it is the people, starting from the lowest unit (stratum or ward) of society, who select their representatives and not political parties. It is considered as a political model that is capable of liberating the ethnic groups or nations in any society from the domination of others which impairs their development and alienates them from both the state and other ethnic groups. Some of the main features of this model include:

i. It is a party-less model;
ii. It is a bottom-up form of government;
iii. each of the aggregate units of the polity enjoys a substantial degree of autonomy;
iv. Election/selection of representative is essentially cooperative as opposed to being Competitive;
v. Representatives of different units form the federal or central government;
vi. Each unit can easily recall and replace their representatives.

The reason for the recommendation of the Cooperative Collegial Democracy model is further based on the outcome of attempts to implement party democracy in some societies. For instance, Kennedy has the following report on the December 2007 Kenyan election:

> Since Saturday, at least 202 people have been killed in riots that flared from the shantytowns of Nairobi to resort towns on the sweltering coast, according to accounts from police, morgues and witnesses. The bloodshed is a stunning turn of events in one of the most developed countries in Africa, one with a booming tourism industry and one of the continent's highest growth rates (Kennedy, 2008:1).

Mwakugu of; the BBC News, reporting about the bodies of the Kenyan victims of the democratic election in the mortuary in the Nyanza Provincial Hospital in Kisumu notes, "They had been brought in after a

night of violence, blamed on the disputed presidential election" (Mwakugu, 2008:1). More than 1,200 people were reported to have been killed and 350,000 were displaced (The Universe, 2009:12).

Often, it is the ordinary people whose welfare is claimed to be the reason for political elections, not politicians, who are the principal victims of political violence. In a similar incident, Fisher writes about the uncertainty of Pakistan elections after the murder of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, an opposition leader for the 2008 presidential elections. "At least 58 Pakistanis have already died in mob fury triggered by Bhutto's assassination during a political rally" (Fisher, 2008). All these images and incidents of violence and killings across the world are not a credit to liberal party democracy. Both the material and human cost of practising the liberal democratic model, especially in Africa, have been enormous. It is in view of this that a reader can appreciate the following words attributed to Tom Mboya of Kenya: “Will democracy survive in Africa? To those who think that democracy will survive only if the colonial institutions are preserved, I have this to say: You will all be disappointed” (Ezeani, 1987:xvii). These words were uttered more than half a century ago. Till today the political experiences of many African states have, as though to confirm Mboya's 'prophecy', been, to say the least, 'disappointment'.

So, what is a better alternative political system for Africa or multi-ethnic societies? Contrary to Sartori's position, I have no equivocation in putting forward a party-less and cooperative system. Though Sartori does not define what a party-less polity is, he, nevertheless, makes a point that a "party-less polity cannot cope, in the long run, with a politicised society" (Sartori, 2005:37). By a politicised society he means "a society that both takes part in the operations of the political system and is required for the more effective performance of the system" (Sartori, 2005:37). Before one can firmly conclude whether a party-less polity can or cannot cope with a politicised society, it is necessary to have, at least, a working definition of what a party-less society is: A polity which forms its government without the medium of political parties.

Sartori rejects a party-less model on the grounds that it "leaves the society out of reach, out of control, and no modernised regime can afford ... to settle on this unsafe and unproductive solution ... (and) in a politicised society the no-party solution is, in perspective, ephemeral" (Sartori, 2005:37). First, on Sartori's number one grounds of rejection of a party-less model: In political terms, modernisation ostensibly means for Sartori adoption and practice of partyism, especially multipartyism. Such a political philosophy implies that newism (modernity) ought to be embraced over and above pragmatism, for Sartori fails to address the crucial question of the non-feasibility of a party system in different societies. But it seems illogical to embrace modernity of any type, political or economic, simply because of its quality of newness when what it offers may be harmful to the state that adopts it. Moreover, a modern way is not always better than a traditional way, a truism which a number of modernisation theorists fail to admit. For instance, while a military dictatorship can be considered a modern political system and democracy a primitive system, traceable to the ancient Greeks, the former is not preferable to the latter. Modern societies clamour for democracy in spite of its property of antiquity.

A party-less democratic practice may be ancient in origin, but is still current in practice, though, as has already been stated, the character of antiquity does not obviate the utility of a thing. Neither does newness (modern) equate to usefulness or being better. The American States of Minnesota and Nebraska, for instance, still elect their state legislatures on a party-less platform, a practice which is truly a genuine

case of "politics sans parties" (Sartori, 2005:75). The Minnesota-Nebraska experience does illustrate the possibility of running democracy on a non-party basis.

On the number two grounds for rejection of a party-less model: Sartori seems to have much confidence in the efficacy of a multiparty model, and without prerequisite discussions on the nature and functionality of a party-less polity, rejects the model because he assumes it leaves society out of reach and control and makes it unsafe and unproductive. Probably, guided by this understanding, Sartori thinks of a party-less polity as deserving "of little interest" (Sartori, 2005:36). This is problematic in view of a plethora of scholars who think that party system has not only failed but also has deleterious effects in different societies and so suggest something different for these societies which, in essence, means its opposite: a party-less model. Sartori and the school of thought which uphold the hypothesis that party pluralism is the best, seem to be unaware of the life reality that what may be the best in one environment can be the worst in another. For this reason, of unawareness, we sometimes give in to the fallacy of over generalisation.

Whether it is possible to form a government without the instrumentality of political parties and whether a polity that operates a party-less model can be described as democratic or not and unsafe and unproductive, as Sartori would like his readers to agree to, are some of the issues explored in Cooperative Collegial Democracy for Africa and Multi-ethnic Societies - Democracy without Tears. From this work, it can also be seen, contrary to Sartori's view, that a party-less polity can actually be a politicised society where the main arena of politics and action is not the centre but the basic units, the people. What is advanced in the work is opposed to the liberal competitive party democracy, a system of democracy the practice of which makes it possible for blood to flow and for the living to shed tears.

Conclusion

Sometimes the overarching attention to scholarship makes one to try to strike a balance between optimism and pessimism even when there seems to be no solid basis to anchor optimism in the absence of needed drastic measures. This applies to the institution and consolidation of a healthy democracy in African societies. In a situation where politics and conventional methods of election into political posts have been reduced to instruments of violence and warfare without any prospect or guarantee of abating, re-engineering a more functional and relatively violence-free electoral system seems a categorical imperative. While optimists may think otherwise, pessimists, like Peter Ustinov would argue that “The point of living, and of being an optimist, is to be foolish enough to believe that the best is yet to come” even when nothing is changed by people living in the society which requires change.

For African and other multi-ethnic societies to enjoy a functional and healthy democracy means a development of a range of democratic mechanisms of participation and elections that are at variance with the neo-liberal model. The failure to adopt a context-relevant political system, with stringent anti-corruption laws and measures, will continue to impact negatively on the consolidation of democracy in African societies and on the economic and social life of the people, thus-rendering their states dysfunctional in perpetuity. The role of party politics in democracies, therefore, cannot be assumed to be a foregone matter but rather as a major recurrent debate issue in academic circles and among politicians, especially in countries where democratic consolidation has, hitherto, seemed a political illusion.

Cooperative Collegial Democracy, whose nature and operational mechanisms are discussed in the main work and proposed for African states and any multi-ethnic polity, is a party-less, peaceful and overtly fair political method of government formation which is imbued with the qualities needed to resolve national questions, constrain the incompetent and corrupt from emerging as people's political leaders, ensure competent leadership and establish a functional and ideal democracy in a multi-ethnic society. But will contemporary African states that seem to shy away from endogenous innovative ideas give it a trial?

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