

POLITICAL ELITES AND THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work with the title “Political Elites and the Dynamics of Political Conflicts in Bayelsa State, Nigeria”, attempts to analyse and highlight the dynamics of elite conflicts in political process in Bayelsa State. The study covered the eight (8) local government areas in the state with an estimated population size of 2,537,400 persons and a sample size of 400 respondents was derived for the study using the Taro Yamane formula. Simple random sampling technique was used in the choice of respondents that participated in the field survey, while purposive sampling technique was used in the choice of persons that participated in Focus Group Discussion (FGD)/ Interviews. This study found that factions of the elites, conceived political parties as platforms to contest for political power, not primarily to install quality leadership but to ensure the perpetuation of their interests. Political elites also display a high level of indiscipline and perpetuate wide-ranging electoral infractions that results in highly disputed and contentious elections whose outcomes sometimes trigger post election litigation. This study recommended among others that, political parties should have a clear and verifiable membership register so as to discourage the practice whereby party registers are subject to manipulation by the elites. The sanctity of the political party constitutions should be enforced and the elites made to respect the constitutions of their political parties so as to enhance internal democracy in the parties and ensure discipline of members irrespective of status.

Keywords: Political Elites, Conflicts, Political Parties, Elections, Democracy.

Introduction

The dynamics of Nigeria’s politics have always been characterized by political conflicts instigated by political elites, and this has impacted on the direction of the country’s political development. Political conflicts instigated by political elites, have been a prominent feature of the politics of most states of the Nigerian federation. The struggle to control federal allocation that flow into the state treasury, has been at the centre of the project of state capture. As each of the competing factions of the political elites struggle to have an advantage over others in terms of unhindered access to state revenues and resources, political contest assume the character of warfare (Ake, 1996). It therefore, becomes obvious that electoral contest to capture state power which serves as the primary instrument for primitive accumulation of wealth will be vicious. The desperation of the factions of the political class will therefore become vicious in their bid to outwit each other, and this prompt the use of armed thugs and lethal weapons

in the electoral process. In essence, political violence poses grave dangers to the democratic process and the legitimacy of the government in power. The violence is also noticed at the level of party primaries, where parties conduct mock elections to choose their candidates. Because of the culture of violence that pervades the political leadership recruitment process, the party primaries are subjected to high level of manipulations and violence. Naturally, this tendency is carried into the general election HRW (2003),

The primary objective of this paper therefore is to highlight the implications of elite conflicts in the political process and how they affect the democratization process and the confidence of citizens in electoral outcomes, especially in Bayelsa State. However, the following questions are very apposite in pursuing our objectives in this paper.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this work is to have a look at the Political Elites and the dynamics of political conflicts in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

- i. examine why are there political conflicts in Bayelsa State?
- ii. have political parties exacerbated or ameliorated political conflicts?
- iii. what interests does conflict serve and how does it manifest?
- iv. what is the role of political elites in instigating and or sustaining conflict dynamics in the political process?

Conceptual Review and Theoretical Framework

In this work, we reviewed the concepts of political elites and political conflicts, and made use of structural conflict theory so as to highlight how it is used to analyze the nexus between political elites and political conflicts in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

The Concept of Political Elites

Political Elites are individuals or personalities who by virtue of their positions in society, or those who are placed in high and strategic positions in large organizations, groups and movements, are able to exert enormous influence and demonstrate power in a polity with impactful outcomes. In other words, elites are individuals with the ability to influence a political process in a meaningful way and they include politicians, businessmen, top clergies, military leaders, top government bureaucrats, among other notable personalities. The concept of elitism is aimed at finding explanation of why power in every society usually resides in the hands of a tiny group of people referred to as the elites. In essence, in every society, the bulk of societal resources in the economy, financial and commercial sectors, intellectual and cultural spheres are concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals which use them to exercise power over the rest of the population. The basic assumption of the concept of elitism as elucidated by Pareto (1935), is the fact that in every organization, group or society power is usually concentrated in the hands of a small group of persons referred to as the elites. Pareto postulated that in a society where social mobility is unrestricted, it is obvious that the elites would be made up of the most talented and deserving individuals.

However, the case is not so in real life situation as the elites in society are identified to be those most adept at using force and persuasion to manipulate their way into the elite class. Those who also have significant advantages, such as inherited riches and family ties get recruited into the elite class. Pareto (1935), asserted that everywhere there exist an elite class that

governs whether there is democracy or not, it is always an oligarchy that governs. However, the composition of the elites undergoes change over time as new members are recruited and some others disengaged due to the changing dynamics in the power configuration. Developments like the infiltration of some persons from lower classes through changes in their fortunes and material circumstances could provide opportunity for non-elites to move to the elite class, while some elites and descendants of elites who have fallen short of the required standards and qualities could be eased out of the elite power formation. Therefore the rising and falling of elites take place sequentially.

The indications of declining elites is expressed in its inability to effectively defend its position, while at the same time exhibiting greedy disposition and engaged in unlawful appropriation and usurpation of common patrimony. In contrast emerging elites are active, stronger and dedicated in character and have the appeal to connect to some sections of the elite group (Pareto 1968). Elites and non-elites are therefore not a stable category. New elites rise and take the place of the old elites and this process is what Pareto referred to as the circulation of elites. According to Mosca (1939), the assumption of the concept of elites is anchored on the fact that in every society tiny minorities are usually in-charge of affairs, using their material, intellectual, financial or cultural resources to outwit the majorities, and this confers on them some advantages for leadership over the majority. The concept of Elite therefore indicates that society is usually divided into the ruling class which is in minority and the majority that are subject to the ruler ship of the minority.

In essence, the minority wield enormous power to take and impose decisions that are valid on the whole society. In reality, elite concept could be interpreted as a negation of the ideal visions of democracy, which posits that government should be controlled by the majority. However, the elite category is not a homogeneous group as conflicts diffuse its cohesion and instigate dynamics that affect the political process by redefining interests that impact on political outcomes (Higley, 2008). No matter how well or bad, these outcomes may be, the role of elites are very critical in society as they consist of the principal decision makers in the largest organizations, movements and the public sector. The reality or indispensability of elites in society and their influence prompted Michel (1949), to argue that an oligarchy exist in every organization. This is why he proposed the iron law of oligarchy, which stated that every organization has an oligarchy, implying that leadership transforms into an oligarchy, dividing an organization into two parts: the oligarchy, which pursues its own interests, and the majority, who bear the burden of the oligarchy's decisions (Michel, 1949).

The Concept of Political Conflicts

Political conflicts are an inevitable phenomenon in every society, in as much as people have divergent views and opinions on how society is to be governed and how resources are to be allocated. The fact that people do not have unanimity of opinion on issues pertaining to how societal resources are to be distributed, implies that their relationship must have elements of conflict. According to Rahim (2017), conflict refers to a process involving social groups, individuals, organizations with goals, objectives, plans, and aims that are incompatible and divergent, which instigates disagreement with each entity asserting its influence and position in order to gain advantage over the other entities. According to Coser (1957), conflict is therefore a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources, status and power in which the aims of the opponent is to neutralize, injure or eliminate those considered to be in competition

or obstacle to the realization of the set objectives. Park and Burges (1921), contend that fighting is intended to resolve divergent dualism and attain some form of oneness, even if it involves annihilating one of the conflicting parties. From the above, conflict is perceived as something that is unhealthy, dysfunctional, detestable and as such undesirable in the life of a society.

Conflict as it were, is a basic and fundamental phenomenon in the political sphere and it could form the basis for unravelling those aspects of the political process critical in moulding the society positively. In other words with conflict, a better understanding of the socio-political process could be established. Therefore, conflict could become an agent of growth if handled rationally and constructively. In as much as conflict situations exist within the political process, political parties device strategies to respond to, transform and manage these conflicts. Hence the process of competition, co-operation and consensus are part of the same process of conflict identification and their resolution, transformation and management. This aptly describes why parties form coalitions and alliances to pursue harmonized objectives within the political system.

However, it is important to note that a critical dimension of political conflicts in Nigeria is that it occurs within the context of weak State institutions. According to Zolberg (1968), it is apt to view political conflicts as flowing from a set of values, norms, and structures from the traditional societies that were brought together during colonial rule and are yet to assimilate the norms, values and structures of the political institutions that are supposed to guide the interactions between the disparate groups within the same political entity. In other words, the set of values, norms, and structure that are supposed to strengthen the emerging political institutions at the centre did not grow, as individuals and political groups still held on to the values, norms and structure of their traditional background.

The conflicting interaction between the traditional and the institutions introduced by colonialism which Ekeh (1975), described as contestation between two publics is critical in understanding conflict dynamics in most post-colonial formations. The patterns of conflict, especially in the political space could have implications and consequences regarding the dynamics of civil order and disorder and may affect political parties' configuration and strategies deployed in the contest for power. Political conflict in Nigeria has been marked by ongoing efforts to quell dissent and alter the boundaries of political interaction.

However, the focus of conflict has essentially changed from conflicts over political boundaries to disagreements over political values and allocation of resources, notwithstanding those political engagements that are gradually shifting to embrace civic propensities through the widespread deployment of the social media. A critical question that is relevant within this conflict milieu is what do political parties complain about, how their demands are organized, communicated, and what the repercussions of their approach are. In their 1999 examination of African politics, Chazan, Lewis, et al (1999), identified five major categories of political conflict: elite, factional, communal, mass, and popular conflicts. Every government in the country has been confronted with at least one of these conflicts and how they respond to it, has defined the nature of political settlements and societal responses.

Types of Political Conflicts

Elite Conflicts

Elite conflict refers to contestation by elites from same or different backgrounds in pursuit of divergent policy positions or interests. They contend against each other, promote their individual agendas and raise their voices against directions perceived to be detrimental or injurious to their political well-being. Elite conflict is usually confined to the capital cities and involves the top brass of government apparatus. Conflict within the elites usually revolves around issues pertaining to choice of policy options, political appointments, governmental allocations, among other issues of political value. The purpose of the contesting elites is to ensure that outcomes from the political decisions making process enhance their position in the political structure to enable them influence the course of policy direction and ultimately increase their access to the common political patrimony.

Some of the conflicts manifest in the use of confrontational language, speeches critical of government policies and sponsored media assaults. However, most of these conflicts are resolved through intense lobbying of opponents; and negotiations behind the scenes between the contending parties. Strategies adopted to woo opponent in this political chess game include promises of contracts, appointments, gifts and financial inducements, among other benefits. However, elite conflicts are usually vociferous where the performance of government has been woeful and unimpressive, as the out of power elites may want to capitalize on the existing gaps to strive to replace the non performing elites. In essence, the dynamics of elite conflicts fluctuates according to the nature of demand made by the elites. Where the demands are personalized, the intensity of confrontation tend to be low, and where the demands are generalized and conflicting, the intensity of confrontation tend to be higher. It is important to note that most of these demands are presented in ethnic, class or ideological terms, masking the real objective of serving elite interests geared towards altering the use of state power.

Factional Conflicts

Factional conflicts emanates from the desire by factions in the ruling class to influence the composition of the political power structures in its favour, in order to determine who is in-charge of the official structure of political power in a political entity. Factional conflict is basically wider in scope than elite conflicts and the main focus is to secure a place in the decision-making apparatus, so as to have a say in determining the direction of government business and the disbursement of government largesse and spoils of office. Factional conflicts instigated by elite networks, co-opt different social groups that extends to the grassroots. This kind of political strife between factions of the ruling class, is basically about access to and control of government machinery and it is influenced by rent-seeking behaviour of the elites. Groups mobilized their constituents to contest with other groups for access and control of resources. The intensity of the competition is determined by the character of political group controlling the state apparatus. This mobilization takes place to pave way for access to the centre, increased participation and even take control of the government. Mobilization of support is not confined to urban centres but also takes advantage of local conflicts to penetrate deeply into countryside. Factional conflict, unlike elite competition, has been most noticeable in hegemonic regimes where elaborate patronage networks have flourished (Jinadu, 1979). Factionalism has become the most visible and consistent kind of political confrontation in countries where the struggle for power within and between political parties is fierce and

where elite cohesion is relatively low. It is important to note that factional networks is skewed both horizontally and vertically, appealing to all critical segments of society, with the interest of the elites properly wrapped up in the networks. In other words, the social base of political factions may cut across ethnic and class barriers, it nevertheless still draw and feed on these cleavages. The strength of factional leaders will therefore depend on their capacity to meet the demands of these various interests and identity groups it has tagged along through rent-seeking and prebendal activities (Chazan, Lewis, et al, 1999). The continued existence of viable factions, is dependent on the use of rhetoric that promise access to jobs for supporters, expansion of educational opportunities, wage increase, improved infrastructures, among others.

Negotiation, trade-offs and backslapping, lobbying, instigation of strikes, among other political tools, are very critical in factional political engagements. Factional conflicts are usually ignited by elite groups and therefore, have elitists thrust and usually escalates during electioneering seasons. During these periods, benefits and gains are accessed, scores are settled, and new alliances formed or existing ones jettisoned. In as much as factional conflicts can occur without regular electoral contests, it has nevertheless thrived in countries where elections are held periodically or where some recycling of elites is possible through the ballot box (Sisk & Reynolds,1998). Factional conflicts are dynamic in nature, as they intensify if demands are not met or recede if demands are resolved. The outcomes of factional conflicts are always skewed in favour of the elite group.

Structural Conflict Theory

The phenomenon of Conflict in society was first given clear theoretical elucidation by Karl Marx, who contended that the stratification of society into classes confer privileges on some to the exclusion of others and this makes conflicts inevitable in society. In essence, the basic structure of conflict in society, according to Marxian thesis is indicated along the lines of those who own and control the means of material production and those who does not have, but work for the owners of the means of production for their sustenance. This division characterized all civilizations from the feudal society to the present capitalist epoch. The structural conflict theory therefore posits that social classes exist in every society and the classes are engaged in a struggle over the control and appropriation of societal resources. Because of the inequities in society caused by the skewed ownership and distribution of resources, social exclusion, deprivation, injustice, marginalization, economic exploitation among others, are bound to exist and this obviously trigger conflict (Smelser, 1976). The structural theory of conflicts therefore indicates that conflict is produced as a result of the social structure of society which encourages tension when the various social categories and groups compete for scarce resources. However, Ralph Dahrendorf (1959), noted that social conflict is rather the consequence of the struggle for power by the elites or interest groups in society and not necessarily conflict between those who own the means of production and those who do not.

Here are some insights into the political elites and the dynamics of political conflicts in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

State legitimacy: Political elites in Bayelsa State face challenges in establishing legitimacy, which can fuel conflicts. Citizens' perception and evaluation of the rightfulness of the state and its institutions play a crucial role in this legitimacy.

Identity-based conflicts: The state has experienced identity-based conflicts, with groups contesting the capacity and legitimacy of the Nigerian State. These conflicts are often rooted in demands for recognition and protection of distinctive ethnic and political identities, reflecting a desire for inclusion.

Ethnic and religious dimensions: Conflicts in Bayelsa State have ethnic and religious dimensions. The state's political elites must navigate these complex issues to address the underlying grievances and promote peaceful coexistence.

Resource control and allocation: The state's wealth, largely derived from oil, creates tensions around resource control and allocation. Political elites must balance competing interests and ensure fair distribution to mitigate conflicts.

Governance and institutional legitimacy: Strengthening governance and institutional legitimacy is crucial. Political elites must prioritize transparency, accountability, and effective service delivery to enhance the state's legitimacy and reduce conflicts.

Violent conflicts and development: The prevalence of violent conflicts in Bayelsa State hinders sustainable development. Addressing the root causes of these conflicts and promoting peaceful resolution mechanisms is essential for the state's progress.

In summary, political elites in Bayelsa State face numerous challenges in managing political conflicts. Understanding the complex dynamics, including state legitimacy, identity-based conflicts, ethnic and religious dimensions, resource control, governance, and institutional legitimacy, is crucial for addressing these issues and promoting peace and development in the state.

Methodology

This study covered the eight (8) local government areas of Bayelsa State, namely Ogbia, Yenagoa, Ekeremor, Sagbama, Nembe, Brass, Southern Ijaw and Kolokuma/Opokuma LGAs. The eight LGAs have an estimated population size of 2,537,400 persons based on 2020 population projection. Taro Yamane formula was employed to derive the sample size of 400 used for the study. Tools of descriptive statistics were used in the computation and analysis of data gathered from our field survey. Simple random technique was employed in the selection and distribution of respondents of questionnaires, while participants for interviews were selected purposively because of their knowledge of the issues involved in the research. However, out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, only 315 representing 78% were retrieved from the field.

Findings

Table 1: Mean Response on Political Elites and Political Conflicts in Bayelsa State

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Lack of clear ideological focus in political parties can be a source of friction among political elites.	87	150	50	28	315	2.9	0.89	Agreed
Disagreements over persons that should hold positions in the political parties can cause conflict.	145	160	10	0	315	3.4	0.56	Agreed
Desperation for power by political elites create conditions for political conflicts	150	165	0	0	315	3.5	0,50	Agreed
The lack of internal democracy instigated by political elites cause serious conflicts in the political parties	135	150	17	13	315	3.3	0.75	Agreed
Elites resort to vote buying, rigging of election, and other illicit acts to get votes during election affect the democratization process	171	144	0	0	315	3.5	0.50	Agreed
The political elites bid to capture political power have promoted antagonisms and division between identity groups	95	80	80	60	315	2.7	1.10	Agreed
Average Mean Score and Standard deviation						3.32	0.72	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 shows the response of respondents on how the lack of clear ideological focus in political parties can be a source of friction among the political elites in political parties and disagreements over persons that should hold positions in the political parties can cause conflict. Furthermore, respondents also indicated how desperation for power by politicians can create conditions for intra and inter party conflicts and the lack of internal democracy can cause serious conflicts in the political parties. Respondents also indicated that elites resort to vote buying, rigging of election and other illicit acts to get votes during elections, affect the democratization process. Also, the elites bid to capture political power have promoted antagonism and division between identity groups. The average mean of 3.32 that was indicated from the mean ratings for the items measured is higher than the reference mean of 2.5. This indicates that the respondents agree that the referenced items are responsible for conflicts in political parties in the State. In addition, the average calculated values of the examined qualities had standard deviations of 0.72 indicating that the responses from the respondents were similar and this implies that their thoughts on the statements posed are homogeneous.

Discussion of Findings

The issue of conflicts in political parties have attracted the attention of scholars because of the effects these conflicts have in the polity they occur (Tyoden, 2013; Ijere, 2015; Nwali, Nwogbaga & Nkwede, 2020; Tsaro, Egobueze & Nwaoburu, 2021). Factors responsible for conflicts in parties may differ from one polity to the other (Giovanni, 2007), and in this study the following factors were identified as responsible for conflict in political parties in Bayelsa State. The lack of clear ideological focus in the political parties was identified by the respondents as a source of friction in the parties. This finding was validated by Basil & Ogan (2019), who argued that the lack of a clear cut ideological orientation in political parties in Nigeria, is implicated in the problems that have bedevilled the political parties, as membership of parties is not informed by belief in well defined and articulated ideological underpinnings but by narrow interests influenced by self interests, ethnic, religious affiliations among others. In other words, political parties that could have been an association of people with common interests and values, turn out to be an agglomeration of strange bedfellows, and this a primer for conflicts in the parties. Contending in the same direction, Aleyomi (2013), asserted that ideology is a critical foundational element in a political party and political parties in Nigeria seem to lack a clear ideological focus and according to Strickler and Davies (1996), ideology is akin to planks upon which public policy direction and engagement of the party rests. The lack of clear ideological focus is indicated by the incessant and unprincipled carpet-crossing by politician from one party to the other. Furthermore, disagreements over persons that should hold certain positions in the political parties, are also implicated in conflicts in political parties. This finding is validated by Kura (2011) and Aleyomi (1996), who contended that conflicts in political parties are observed to have erupted when candidates for party positions or elective offices, are imposed by a section of the party elites contrary to the guidelines provided for that purpose, as most cases of defections are attributed to this factor. In the same manner, desperation for power by politicians creates conditions for intra and inter-party conflicts. This is validated by Ikyase & Egberi (2015), who contended that the desperation by politicians for political power manifest in political violence especially during elections thereby creating serious challenges for the political process. Furthermore, the lack of internal democracy is also attributed as a major cause of conflicts in the political parties. This finding is validated by Ojukwu & Olaifa (2011), who argued that internal democracy is very critical in enhancing viable democratic culture within a political party and its breach by party elites, creates the conditions for conflicts to occur. According to Ajisebiyawo (2015), lack of internal democracy results in weak governance institutions, that are implicated in inconsistencies and instability in government policies because those in public positions are not accountable to the party or electorate but to the elites that used the weak institutions to secure their positions.

The study's conclusion found that political parties resort to vote buying, rigging of election, and other illicit acts to get votes during election and this affect negatively the democratization process. This fact was validated by respondents interviewed that vote buying and rigging of elections, are indicators of a flawed electoral practice engaged by the political parties that instigate conflicts in the political process. This notion is validated by Ovwasa (2014), who argued that vote buying has impaired the essence and value of democracy in the country and encouraged the looting of public treasury by those who corrupted the electoral process by buying the votes of the voters. The influence of money politics have been a contentious issue in the electoral politics as a huge war chest is required to prosecute the process of campaign

and other logistical needs for elections. The findings of the study indicated that monies are given to voters on Election Day to sway their votes, and this is validated by Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2015). who reported that vote buying was carried out by the political parties in the 2015 general elections in Bayelsa State. Voters were given between five Hundred naira and thirty thousand naira, to cast their vote for preferred candidates. Also, illicit payments were extended to electoral officials, who were paid various sums of money by candidates and their parties. Community leaders were also not left out in the illicit transaction, to influence voters on election day. Yakubu (2020), contended that this practice of inducing voters is influenced by the widespread poverty of the voters, and apathy and the 'I don't care' attitude of the voters on who emerges and the intense competition among the political elites to capture power at all cost. This mode of contestation by the political elites for political power, affects the democratization process as the voting process is no longer determined by choice based on party programmes and policy options but simply on the ability of the candidate and party to procure the votes. This fact was clearly implied by Huntington (1991), when he noted that only open, free and credible elections can promote democracy and any activity outside this framework, will obviously instigate democratic recession. This argument indicates that vote buying has the tendency to devalue democracy and effectively promote authoritarian disposition in the governance process.

The political elites bid to capture political power, have promoted antagonisms and division between identity groups. This assertion is validated by Jackson & Tokpo (2021), who posited that the minority ethnic groups in the state are marginalized and discrimination against by the major ethnic group in the area of sharing of political offices and other appointments. Some respondents interviewed indicated that the ethnic configuration of the state usually comes into play during elections with expressions like some belonging to "Core Ijaw Speaking groups and others as "Non Core Ijaw" groups. The later refer to the Nembe, Akassa, Ogbia and Epie/Atissa language groups found in Nembe, Brass, Ogbia and Yenagoa LGA's, as against the mainstream Ijaw speaking groups found in Southern Ijaw, Sagbama, Ekeremor, Kolokuma/Opokuma, and parts of Yenagoa LGA's. This categorization of non-core Ijaw instigates ill feeling among the language groups so referred, who are considered as not having the requisite votes to pursue their political objectives without the support of the 'core Ijaw group'. This is validated by Leach, Brown & Worden (2008), who contended that political elites in dominant ethnic groups in a polity, tend to engage in ethnic politics in order secure undue advantage over the other ethnic groups by appealing to ethnic sentiments that stir up feelings of superiority, fear or panic in order to secure or hold unto political power perpetually.

Conclusion

The incidence of vote buying has virtually destroyed the culture of people going out to vote for preferred candidates for the programmes and policy options they canvass. People now vote for those who can afford to pay more. This situation has completely challenged and undermined the democratic process. This perverse political behaviour by the elites, has corrupted the electoral process and encouraged violent political engagement, especially during electioneering campaigns and on election days. The study indicated that because the institutions of state has been compromised, the capacity of the security agencies to arrest and prosecute electoral offenders is greatly hampered, while the independence of the judiciary is also called to question because of some of the judgments that are perceived to be politically

biased. This study indicated that political contestation becomes acrimonious within the context of the winner takes it all politics, as the various factions of the elites become aggressive and violent in their quest to capture political power.

Recommendations

1. Political parties should have a clear and verifiable membership register so as to discourage the current practice whereby registers are subject to manipulation by the elites at the expense of the ordinary members.
2. The sanctity of the political party constitutions should be enforced and the elites, made to respect the constitutions of their political parties so as to enhance internal democracy in the parties and ensure discipline of members irrespective of class or status.
3. Government should ensure a sustainable democratization process through the enforcement of an unbiased, strong and effective conflict resolution mechanism in the political process.
4. Government should play a neutral role and not enmeshed itself in partisanship, thereby frustrating the Electoral Management Body and Security Agencies, charged with specific roles in the electoral process.

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