

**PARTY POLITICS AND CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL  
INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The study examined party politics and challenges of national integration in Nigeria. It utilised a qualitative research technique with the aid of the interview guide. The research population comprised members of civil society organisations; academia; and political parties in Nigeria that were purposively selected. Ted R. Gurr's thesis on why men rebel served as the basis to unravel political violence and conflicts in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed political violence and conflicts in Nigeria are the resultant effects of non-performance of Nigerian politicians. This and among others have stymied national integration in Nigeria. The study concludes and recommended that political activities are expected to integrate diverse ideas and needs in plural states. This can be possible when political leaders see politics as a service to the electorates and a privilege to intensified national integration in any society.*

**Keywords:** *Nigerian Fourth Republic; Party politics; political parties; National Integration; Ted Gurr Theory*

**Introduction**

Modern states have been a challenge with disintegrative tendencies as a result of intolerance among different ethnic nationalities. This has been

demonstrated under the purview of party politics that embodied cabinet formation, ministerial appointment, campaign, nominations and selections of executives, elections, and so on. Party politics as a by-product of political parties' activities are designed to subject and tame ethnic intolerance thereby creating a conference of ideas for national development. Convocation of ideas described one of the primary functions of party politics in modern political parties' functions. By implication, it serves as a mechanism of assimilating plural states or ethnic nationalities into central norms of the government. Vertical and horizontal interactions built on confederation or federal system has strengthened the modern day's government and party politics. In other words, political activities are enhanced through institutional development such as active judiciary system, functional political parties, vibrant civil society organisations, and the unbiased media. One of the primary goals of these institutions is to ensure national integration among diverse ethnic groups and strengthen the laws of the land. Plural states that have existed over three decades with these aforementioned institutions are experiencing irredentism, secession, insurgencies, ethnic militias, terrorism, civil and communal war, just to mention a few.

A growing body of academic literature has addressed these problems that have led to the recommendation of integrative policies and reforms such as the adoption of the federal system, unitary system, creation and annexation of regions and states, yet, the quest for national integration has preoccupied modern states.

Certain questions have been raised why countries are a challenge with disintegrative ideas? Have political parties outlived their usefulness? What systems needed to tackle the problem of ethnic intolerance? What are the factors aiding national disintegration? To what extent can the multi-party system strengthen national integration? Is party politics antidote to nation-building? These questions are begging for answers among academia and political leaders that seem to be debated by supporters of democratic and

authoritative systems. While these two concepts have been sustained and thrive in China (East) and United States (West). But countries in Africa are a challenge with underdevelopment syndromes amidst these West and East ideas. It is on this backdrop, this study seeks to interrogate party politics and the challenge of national integration in Nigeria. However, this study is an extraction of PhD thesis from a study conducted in Nigeria at the Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 2013 to 2018. Findings in this study are revealed based on exclusive interviews with research organisations, political parties' leaders and civil society organisations. Below are facts and extant literature used in the course of the study

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Right from independence till date the Nigerian state has suffered from cohesion problem whereby ethnic nationalities tend to identify with primordial interests than the status quo that define the unity of the country. This manifestation resulted in a bloody civil war of many months and subsequent decried of marginalisation in the various part of Nigeria. In addressing this menace, subsequent governments and political parties have proffered certain integrative mechanisms and commissions towards building a formidable country. State Creation, Federal Character Mechanism, Quota System, National Youth Service Corps, Unity Schools, Niger Delta Ministry, and so on, were recommended by studies and adopted by existing and past governments yet the issue of national integration has become a recurring decimal till date. Consequently, studies in this regard focused more on ethnicity and with little attention to party politics and challenges of national integration in Nigeria, hence, the study.

### **Objective of this study is to:**

1. assess and identify the protracted nature of disintegrative tendency in Nigeria; and

2. evaluate the roles of party politics towards national integration in Nigeria

## **Conceptual Reviews**

### **Party Politics**

Party Politics in this context refers to the activities of political parties in the course of capturing state power and in exercising that power through the formation and implementation of public policy as initiated and executed by political actors (politicians) which direct the affairs of political parties. These activities cut across several actions and decisions taken by politicians during campaign exercise, during Intra and inter-party electoral processes, decisions of the government on political appointments, distribution of powers among levels of government, allocation of resources, etc, some of which may be injurious or supportive to national integration. It also includes the activities of political elites, both as members of ruling and opposition parties, with conflicting interests of either defending government policies even when they are wrong or promoting actions that could destabilize the ruling party and discourage national unity.

### **Theories that underpinned National Integration**

There is a growing body of literature on national integration that has entertained the works of Amital Etzioni, Carl Rosberg, Paden and Edward Soja, Myron Weiner and others. For Amital Etzioni notion of national integration was centred on the strength of a national government to be in charge of weapon and instrument of violence. This definition stresses absolute control of items that marred disintegration and coercive power of the government upon the citizens. Other scholars like Coleman and Carl Rosberg identified the need to decrease progressively the regional and cultural tensions, and discontinuities. They added that national integration revolves around political integration and territorial integration. For them, political integration is centred on bridging of the elites-mass gap in the vertical plane, and territorial integration connotes progressive lessening of

ethnic ties and tensions and discontinuities arising from the region under the horizontal plane to attain territorial political entity.

Myron Weiner identified the point of convergent between and among different groups into a forged territorial nationality that is superior to existing ethnic loyalties, but able to determine what is good for them. This view seeks the convocation of different ideas and creating a balance for all nationalities to be able to interact within the state. This definition shared similarity with that of Leonard Binder that sees national integration as a consensus of a cultural-ideology of a very high degree of embracement or comprehensiveness. A political parties expert, Duverger has seen it as an act or a process of unification of all groups towards a harmonious entity built on the contribution groups in an equal manner. Here the question of fairness, justice and consensus among the existing groups described the concept of national integration. From a sociological perspective, Emile Durkheim described national integration as organic solidarity that strengthened all interests in the national discourse. Here there is absolute support and contribution to the central system that embodied the parts. Jacob and Tenue see national integration as a state of mind of existing groups to live together sharing thoughts and items in the same political community premised on the development of programmes that affect the entity.

From the array of definitions that exist in studies within plural or homogenous states on the concept of national integration. Interests, tolerance and compromises are variables that united scholarly conceptualisations. In other words, national integration is not case found in plural or multi-ethnic states, but the calls for national integration do exist in a homogenous political entity. Views and interests are propelling factors that create disintegration and also integrations depending on how the governors and the governed strike a balance.

There are communities of same ancestral lineage and whose socialisation encourages intra-marriage, yet, there are sharp issues of disagreement leading to communal war. In Nigeria, the case of Modakeke and Ile-ife (two Yoruba communities of the same language, culture and ancestral origin) people in Osun state; and Emede and Igbeide (two Isoko communities of same beliefs, norms, ancestral origin) in Delta state communal war described the inevitability of national integration in all political entity.

The political entity called Nigeria is an embodiment of over 200 beliefs and three major leading ethnic groups (the Hausa/Fulani; Yoruba; and the Igbo). The state was created and annexed by British colonial administrators as at 1906 and 1914 which officially gain Independence in 1960. Communities within the political configuration of Nigerian state are dissimilar and similar which have experienced bloodbath through communal war. This gives credence into why the investigation and the choice of Nigeria as a focus of this study.

### **Overview and Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria**

In developing countries like Nigeria the course for national integration has been marred by different groups such as the activities of the Niger Delta militants against the vandalism of oil pipelines and kidnappings; the agitation of the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) for secession; the O’odua People Congress; and the Boko Haram. At one point in time, these groups have threatened national integration in Nigeria. Leadership failure has been seen as reasons for the emergence of these interests’ organizations and the governments of Nigeria of different tenures have suffered damaging effects. Leadership failure that embodied lack of internal party democracy resulting to party conflicts which led to the using of Nigerian youths for the act of thuggery; hooliganism; and terror during, after and pre-elections administrations. These sets of youths and other concern Nigerians have drawn the attention of subsequent governments in Nigeria concerning the abysmal institutional failure and infrastructural decay but it seems the

situation is getting worse looking at the frequent violence and calls from these groups and others. Here this study identified with the Human Psychological Thesis popularly called Relative Deprivation and Aggression-Frustration Theory. It is on these grounds the study will adopt the Relative Deprivation Theory as an instrument of understanding the causes of internal party crises and its implications on national integration in Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of the states in West Africa that harboured over 10 different types of resources, but the one that has attracted more revenue into the country in recent time happen to be the crude oil. This was made in by Garuba (2006), who argued that the country annual revenue from crude oil resources is about US\$7.09 billion (£4 billion). But much of this revenue has not translated into development in Nigeria. Scholarly works on the effect of abundant natural resources as means for development has been refuted and tied into the narratives of the Dutch disease (Auty, 1997; Auty & Gelb, 2001; Frankel, 2010). But the case of Nigeria is traceable to corruption and institutional weakness. The oil companies have failed in their response to be fair to the Nigerian people especially in the region that this product is been explored (Akpabio & Akpan, 2010). This unwholesome interaction is one of the thrusts of national crises in Nigeria. The Nigerian Fourth Republic is expected to tame decades of institutional weakness and corrects imbalances in the society. But recent occurrences in the polity and the level of social unrest among Nigerians revealed that underdevelopment has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian system. The Nigerian elites especially the ruling class has seen politics as a career and means to end. Elections have been subsumed into the atmosphere of winners take all, and the losers are seen as a problem to the Nigerian society. The Electorates are seen as beggars and the instrument in the hand of political gladiators to realise their selfish goal. The elites have made this possible due to the policy of impoverishment instituted by the ruling class against the masses to expand their political empires.

**Nigerian System: Frustration, Aggression, Anger and Deprivation  
Thesis of Ted Gurr**

Ted Gurr's thesis on why men rebel has been utilised as a means of understanding terrorism; protests; insurgencies; war; and communal clashes (Richardson, 2011; Pettigrew, 2015). There are a dearth of scholarly works on the utilisation Ted Gurr thesis, failure of party politics vis-à-vis social unrest and insurgencies in Africa especially Nigeria. This study covered this vacuum through the assessment of party politics in Nigerian and its implication on her national integration. Consequently, the relative and deprivation notion is premised on denial and reaction. It occurred in party politics when an individual committed his or her resources into an elections or the formation of a government and in expectations of services such as good roads; scholarship and better educational system; better health care services; political education; and shelter. When the government of the day failed to fulfil what was said during elections campaigns or stated in the party's manifestos then aggression, anger and frustration set in as a result of partial or absolute denial (deprivation). This has led to ethnic nationalist movement; ethnic militias; political violence; communal war; and religious clashes in recent times.

Party politics is expected to generate positive effects to all nationalities after elections. In other words, the governours are expected to execute programmes that will alleviate the desires of the entire citizens. This can only be possible when elections and constitutionalism are observed in a society. Citizens of a state tend to be frustrated when their expectations from governments are not met concerning bargains before the elections or there are alterations based on their desires. The book *why men rebel* by Ted Gurr classified this as discrepancy (Saleh, 2013). Most times this atmosphere normally leads to political tension among the governors and the governed leading to the state of frustration and aggression as a result of deprivation or denial. Deprivation in the context of failed promises from the governors



(politicians) made by them during campaigns and non-adherence to the constitution.

The above scenario has been common in newly democratic states that Nigeria is inclusive. Party politics in these states especially in Nigeria after her Independence has been ethnic and elitist driven against the expectations of the electorates. The wealth of the Nigerian state has been channelled to personal gains and self-glorification which attracted a lot of literature among policymakers and academia. This has manifested in the form of political violence and insurgencies in recent time (Ikelegbe, 2014). In Nigeria, the Boko Haram menace in the North, secession movement by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the East, the Niger Delta Militant in the core south, and the arm-robbery cases in the core west are all the resultant effects of discrepancy scheme by the Nigerian politicians. Failed leadership in terms of the high rate of corruptions and underdevelopment in the country are the primary bases why aforementioned groups do what they do in Nigeria. This has brought frustrations, anger, and pain to Nigerians. Party politics is a means and end to national development and integration. This has been systematically designed through the instrument of the ballot system whereby citizens votes in legislatures, presidents and other government officials. The elected officials are expected to demonstrate and fulfilled various mandates or the electorates promises made before the elections and after the elections.

But in most African party politics especially in Nigeria, there are two types of politicians that tend to create discrepancy leading to frustrations and anger among Nigerians. The first set, the one that enjoyed popular votes or majority but later failed to execute the promises or the reasons why he or she was voted for, and the second set, are the politicians that used their economic power and technical know-how to buy votes and intimidate voters and acquired political offices by forces. These are the sets of politicians that have paraded the Nigerian political system right from 1960 till date. Looking at the above observation, the theory of frustration, aggression and deprivation

by Ted Gurr revealed why there are protracted crises in the Nigerian political system. In managing this menace subsequent governments have put in place measures, yet, insurgencies and social unrest have become the order of the day. The occurrence of this has been associated with social consciousness and progressive awareness among Nigerians. For some many years, the Nigerian elites have played various types of identity politics. This has been demonstrated in the context of ethnic identity politics whereby failed elites at the national level cajoles his or her nations to fight against the central government. Here demands are made before the government of the day making these elites to be recognised and elevated into the clique or oligarchy of the ruling politicians. This type of politics has resulted in the politics of zoning, state creations, proportional representations, quota system, federal character, and among others, which have not yielded positive effect in the Nigerian system. These mechanisms in some cases have deepened disintegration tendencies in the place of national integration.

The politicisation of ethnic identity has been the line of thought and instrument of subjecting the electorates into perpetuate underdevelopment trapped in Nigeria. The media has been an important means in the hands of the elites to propagate deceptions and remain in power at the expense of the masses. But there is a cycle of reactions and dousing the actions from the masses and the ruling elites respectively. The ruling elites like the Nigerian case are in controlled of the Judiciary, media, security institutions and other institutions that have a huge influence on the masses. The above institutions have been used to keep the electorates in check and render their activism meaningless.

In a related thought by Saleh (2013), economic discrimination and inequality are the most dominant core factors that instigate violence or unrest. This can be intensified when the major ethnic groups tend to impose certain beliefs or an act of assimilating in the whole system. This normally generates minority ethnic identity or chaos leading to the call for referendum or secession. This

line of thought captured the struggle of Niger Delta people in the Southern region of Nigeria. The region has generated over 80% of the country revenue but yet suffered from abject poverty. This has led to the kidnapping of oil workers and vandalisation of oil pipelines in the region which can be classified in terms of frustration, anger, aggression and deprivation orchestrated by the Nigerian elites for many decades.

### **National Integration: Nigeria's case**

Immediately after her independence in 1960, the thrust of leadership fell on the then nationalists that formed political parties and the adoption of the federal and parliamentary systems. The essence of political parties was to give each unit or region the sense of leadership towards building a viable nation-state, and which also reflected in the core values of federalism that was adopted. This choice of systems of government was informed due to the artificial creation and years of ruler-ship by the British colonial masters. The British system or legacy left disjointed societies and disjointed institutions that made the adoption of multi-party system and federalism seem genuine in the eyes of the then nationalists. The multi-ethnic nature was also a factor and precursor to the adoption of the systems. Consequently, the leadership of the country emerged through elections and appointment of candidates into offices. There was the existence of three major parties that have ties with ethnic doctrines and loyalties.

This was evidence how these political parties emerge from the major ethnic nationalities, and this signalled national disintegration. This scenario led to political resentment, fear of domination, and corruption. Resentment in the context of hate speech, fear of domination occurred when the minority ethnic groups that occupied Mid-West, Core South-South exercised fear of domination and internal colonisation; and corruption in the area of rent-seeking and prebendalistic politics. The politics of resentment and intolerance that was evidence in derogatory tones, gestures and utterances by Sardauna of Sokoto in the North against other ethnic groups; likewise Dr

Nnamdi Azikiwe; and Chief Obafemi Awolowo and their kinsmen. Below are comments accredited to the aforementioned leaders in Nigeria:

For Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe from the Eastern part of Nigeria noted in one his speech that: *it would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead children of Africa from the bondage of the ages...the martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver. The Igbo nation cannot shirk from its responsibility.* In response to this Chief Obafemi Awolowo reacted that: *It seems to me the Zik's policy was to corrode the self-respect of Yoruba's people as a group to build up the Ibos as a masterpiece, and this was corroborated by his kinsman of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa group Sir Adeyemo Alakij: The big tomorrow for the Yorubas is the future of our children...How they will hold their own among other tribes in Nigeria* (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe, 2017).

The Northern part of the country also dance into the music and noted that: *it is the southerner who has power in the North. They have control of the railway stations, of the Post Offices, of Government Hospitals, of the Canteens; the majority employed in the Kaduna secretariat and Public Works Department are all southerners; in all the different Departments of Government, it is the Southerner who has power* (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe, 2017).

This atmosphere and coupled with corruption led to the military in politics in a bloodbath coup in 1966 and same year another coup took place among the Nigerian military elites. The first coup enthroned an Igbo man into the title of the head of state from the East, and the second coup catapulted Hausa/Fulani man from the North. At the same period, a popular politician in the West has been charged in the act of treasonable felony. By 1967 the declaration of secession by those in the East was orchestrated by Col. Emeka Ojukwu Dumegwu against the federal government of Nigeria under the leadership of Yakubu Gowon that led to civil war. The war lasted for 2years,

6 months, 1 week and 2 days (from 6th of July 1967 to 15th of January, 1970). Few years after the civil war the Nigerian military ousted Gen. Yakubu Gowon regime in a palace coup on 30th July 1975 that brought in Brig. Murtala Mohammed as the then head of state and in 13th of February, 1976 he was assassinated in an abortive coup led by Col. Buka Suka Dimka. From 1976 to 1979 Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo was considered by the then supreme military body as the head of state after the death of Col. Dimka.

In 1977 a constituent assembly was formed to draft a new constitution which came to be in 1978, the period that coincided with the ban on political parties was lifted. Between 1979- 1983 about six political parties dominated the political scene. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by a Yoruba-man; National Party of Nigeria (NPN); Greater Nigerian People's Party (GNPP); Nigeria Advance Party (NAP); Movement of the People Party (MPP); and People Redemption Party (PRP). These parties were not different from the first Republic political parties that were operated within ethnic and religious ideas. Elections were conducted and the issue of irregularities and electoral fraud marred the system of electoral administration and political scheme repeated itself in the second elections conducted. The civilian leadership of the then administration was characterised with heavy corruption allegation. This and among others led to the civilian administration to be toppled by the then Nigerian military that brought in Gen. Mohammed Buhari as head of state.

Political parties in the First and Second Republics demonstrated below the standard which was subservient to their ethnic nationalities and downplayed national identity and patriotism. The era of Gen. Mohammed Buhari marked another dictatorial leadership that led to the militarising of the Nigerian federation. In 1985 his regime was overthrown by a coup led by Major Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) and other members of ruling Supreme Military Council (SMC). IBB rule as president of the country from 27th

August 1985 to 26th 1993, and in 1993 was the year that the ban on political parties was lifted leading the formation of two major parties. The National Republic Convention (NRC); and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were formed that cut across the major ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The system was seen as two-party configurations that attempted to strengthen national integration in the country which seem to be the best system in Nigerian party politics. The formation of these two parties appeared to be non-ethnic grounded and unbiased to most analysts.

The presidential elections voting behaviour was not limited to a region or ethnic group rather votes were harvested from the then existed regions by the presidential candidates. Based on the popular resort on the media and electoral observant, Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the Social Democratic Party led in the election and secured a good number of votes over Alh. Bashir Tofa of the National Republic Convention. But on the 23rd of June, 1993, the election result was annulled after several court order and reports from international bodies to declare who won the presidential election. This period was another dark era in the history of Nigeria that justice and light were autocratically suppressed without redemption from any quarters.

National protest against the annulment of the presidential election and as at July 31, 1993, the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) announced an interim National Government that comprised members of the two parties (SDP and NRC) together with some military officers. Yet, the demand for justice by Nigerians heralded the political scene whereby chronic human activists made demands upon the then ruling government to declare the winner of the 12th June 1993 presidential winner. The Nigerian government then engaged in a radical clamped of those making demands upon the government. In 17th of November, 1993, the head and leader (Chief Ernest Shonekan) of the interim government tendered his resignation, and General Sani Abacha assumed the mantle of leadership.

The Nigerian military stylishly orchestrated palace coup that seems to be the resignation of the Interim leader. The values of National integration have eroded in this period arising from military gladiators and self-centred interests. Conferences, meetings and calls were made in recognising the 1993 elections but the then military dictator seen it as the act of disloyalty against the power of the federal government. Series of arrest were made, detained and most organisations were proscribed. On September 30, 1996, five political parties were recognised and allowed to fixture in the coming elections under the controlled of by Gen. Sani Abacha. They are Committee for National Consensus (CNC); United Nigeria People's Convention (UNPC); National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN); Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN); and Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM). These political institutions solely picked Gen. Sani Abacha who transmuted as one party flag bearer and same year more states were created in order accommodate more interests as means to national integration amidst of denial of the mandate of the Nigerian people.

This consensus of political parties was seen as a rape on democratic institutions in Nigeria by democratic bodies and individuals. On May 5, 1998, the European Union described the political drama and the transition process as shameful and undemocratic. Ever before, and before this time the United Action for Democracy (UAC) led a massive protest that led to several Nigerians death. As at May 1998, the Group of 34 popularly known as G-34 that comprised of multi-ethnic coalition sent a communique to Gen. Sani Abacha about the over overwhelming consensus from the then political parties as unlawful and doesn't promote the essence of democratic values. Yet, Abacha proceeded with his plans and on June 8, 1998, Gen San. Abacha dies mysteriously which led to another military in the person of Gen. Abubakar Abdulsalami assumed the position of head of state of the federation. The following month, Chief M.K.O. also died after several pains from the detention and this sparked a heavy riot from all the parts of the

country. This incidence shocked the national integration of the country and there were general beliefs that the Nigerian state has collapsed after several ugly occurrences.

On October 19, 1998, about 9 political parties have emerged through the transition government of the Gen. Abubakar Abdulsalami different from Gen. Sani Abacha's five political parties that threatened national cohesion. The All People Party (APP); the People's Democratic Party (PDP); and Alliance for Democracy (AD), these were the officially recognised parties that contested the 1998 presidential election. The PDP was elitist in nature arising from the G-34 crops of ethnic elites coalition; the AD was more of Yoruba-based political parties, and the APP seems to be national but not as the PDP. On February 27, 1999, the presidential election was conducted and the candidate of the PDP, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo won the presidential election and another civilian government was inaugurated. From all available indications party, politics in the inception of the Fourth Republic was inclusive in terms of regional representation of the Nigerian elites during the formation of the government. But certain attributes were dominant in the personalities that served as president and the period of terms in office. The emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the candidate of the PDP and finally won the presidential election arises out of the solemnly displayed by the Nigerian elites towards the Yoruba nation as compensation after the death of Chief M.K.O. Abiola through Gen. Sani Abacha detention. This also strengthened national integration in Nigeria. The first four years of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo leadership entertained more Nigerian ethnic groups and this was possible how the PDP sprang up from the G-34. The Senate president slot went to the Eastern part of Nigeria, the Vice president came from the Northern part of the country and Mr President from the Western part of Nigeria. This configuration and other prevailing variables aided national integration after years of darkness the country experienced from the military leadership.



Party politics and the bid for national integration at the beginning of the Nigerian Fourth Republic brought hopes and aspirations to Nigerians. But this hopes and restoration of greatness were dashed when politicians particularly the PDP arms saw party politics as an instrument of self-glorification, personal career and not service to the electorates. This characteristic instigated ethnic militias, regional militancy and insurgencies, Islamic fundamentalist popularly known as Boko Haram, youth unrest, more of arm-robbery in the street, and girls' exploitation. This situation was aggravated when elections reflected only the will and mandate of certain oligarchy in the country against the majority. Electoral violence, intimidation, thuggery, and so on marked several election in Nigeria. Citizens' votes and voices were not properly recognised in party politics in Nigeria within the 16 years of PDP leadership and other opposition parties in Nigeria.

Conversely, the coming in of another party (the All Progress Congress, the APC) under Gen. Mohammed Buhari (Rtd) as at 2015 signalled another bundle of hopes and confidence. But the first four years of the APC under President Mohammed Buhari and other opposition parties seem not to be different from the style of the PDP. The role of party politics towards national integration in the Nigerian Fourth Republic is still much in doubt as a result of neopatrimonialism or rent-seeking style of politics in Nigeria. However, more of this has been revealed below from the exclusive interview received during the fieldwork.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative approach in the investigation through the means of an interview guide. The population of the study comprised the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP); All Progressive Congress (APC); All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA); Transition Monitoring Group (TMG); CLEEN Foundation; Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja; Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, Lagos; National Institute for Policy

Journal of African and Global Issues Quarterly (JAGIQ) Volume 1, Issue 1, 2021 and Strategic Studies (NIPSS); Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Bayero University; Social and Governance Policy Unit, Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Ibadan; Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria; National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA), Ondo town; Centre for Human Development (CHD), Ibadan; Claude Ake School of Government, University of Port Harcourt; Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD); and Nigerian Academics that was purposively selected. Some names were mentioned in the course of the findings and transcription. Permission was given to this effect.

### **Interview Guide**

1. What are did you understand by the terms Party politics and National Integration?
2. To what extent has party politics aided national integration in Nigeria?
3. What are the issues that have threatened national integration in Nigeria?
4. What are the remote causes of those factors as earlier mentioned?
5. What are the ways national integration can be build

### **Discussing of research findings**

Party politics entails the leadership of the ruling political class within legal institutions and outside the institutions. For Olaniyi argued that *Party politics are activities of political parties in a democratic environment to seek for the control of political offices through the stated norms of elections* (Olaniyi, 2001:99 cited in Azeez, 2009:2). National integration occurred when certain norms and feelings are created by the ruling class to bring different nationalities into acceptable identity by all. This can be attained when there are functional political parties with strong and identifiable ideologies that considered the needs of diverse ethnic nationalities in the country like ours. Also, the media in all her dealings should be unbiased, fair and transparent to the public; a free and independent

judiciary; vibrant civil society organisations; active and educative population.

Political parties are legal institutions that strived to captured votes through strategic campaigns aim to win elections and control the government. Primarily political parties are institutions build national interests through the process of articulation and aggregation of interests (NIPSS, Interview, 2018; CLEEN Foundation, Interview, 2018).

Party politics has influenced the togetherness of Nigerians on two occasions. The first one was the nationalists fight for independence; and the second one was the incidence that engulfed the June 12, 1993, presidential election. Nigerians from all quarters were united to demand the winner of the election and it sprang into the coming in of the first president in the Fourth Republic. The Fourth republic sets new agenda, happiness and dreams for Nigerians to deepen democracy and national integration. But the political class as it was in the first and second republics displayed self-centredness; parochialism; and ethnic hatred to each other which endangered Nigerian democratic stability and national integration.

The above observation also revealed the views of one professor of Political Science in his article who stated that the Nigerian state has witnessed poor party politics as a result of lack of internal party democracy, *ethnicisation* of party politics, poor political leadership and lack of clear cut party ideologies (Omodia, 2010). He added that the aforementioned factors have snowballed have threatened the survival of the Nigerian Fourth Republic, and by extension national integration. The analyses above also reflected the summation of Giovanni M. Carbone in his investigation on African politics identified that *African parties have often conveyed the image of patronage and tribal politics* (Carbone, 2007:8). In a study by Babangida (2002) cited in Adeleke and Charles (2015), revealed the effect of ethnic politics as follows:

Wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnically inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestment of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy; and increasing gaps in social relationship among ethnic nationalities including structural suspicions and hate for one another. Ethnic nationalism is equally responsible for the uprising of ethnic militias across the country.

The feeble nature of political parties in Nigeria has marred all the basic elements of institutionalization, which has further eroded patriotism among Nigerians. Recruitment and other functions of political parties in Nigeria are tilted and controlled by the elites for personal gains. These have made political parties not to perform and contribute to national integration in Nigeria.

The above observations were also buttressed by some respondents who identified poor institutionalisation of party politics as a huge barrier to national integration. That the masses are detached from the political system and this has stymied good governance in Nigeria.

Extrapolating from the above discussion, national integration in a plural society is the attainment of a sense of community among the diverse groups within its territorial extent with adequate means of accommodating and resolving their particularistic differences. The major problems of national integration which have been identified as mass-elite conflict, inter-ethnic conflict and territorial boundary problems continue to constitute serious impediments to the achievement of a cohesive society.

Consequently, the Nigerian situation manifests and presents two of the identified problems. There is a gap between the elite and the masses of the people as a result of the disparity in the social and economic levels of the classes. But this inter-class gap per se is not at the moment injurious to

national cohesion. The most serious problem has, however, been the unhealthy suspicion, rivalry and conflict among the ethnic groups. Nigeria has many ethnic groups with three large ones. Each of the three groups was in terms of geographical extent and population strength capable of existing as an independent nation. The heightening of inter-ethnic conflict could, however, be ascribed to colonialism. Though many factors ranging from ethnic to cultural divergences pose serious difficulties for integration and national unity, this is not to say that in pre-colonial times, there had been no form of cooperation among the various

### **What are the issues that have threatened national integration in Nigeria?**

Currently, the Nigerian system is facing insurgencies leading to the burning of houses and killing of Nigerians. This killing cut across all ethnic nationalities but some part of the country especially the Igbos have felt that is a plot to drive them from the Northern part of Nigeria. Also, the several killing carried out by herders against Nigerians has been classified as Fulani/Hausa agenda to Islamised and Fulanised Nigeria. These incidences have threatened national integration in the country leading to a call of the referendum by the Indigenous People of Biafra led by Nnamdi Kanu. In the core South-south, there are issues of pipeline vandalisation due to lack of development, and while the region has been the main economy stay of the country.

The issue of indigene and settler syndrome in Nigeria is a barrier to National integration. Citizens whom migrant to another part of Nigeria cannot participate fully during elections and partake in political offices. You can only see such cases Lagos state. During the era of state creations, some persons have been denied their benefits due to the question of who is a real citizen or native of a particular place. *Some people are regarded as 'settlers', even though "they might have been born, lived, schooled, worked and paid their taxes in the place for decades, yet they are not recognized as indigenes"* (Okonkwo *et al*, 2015). As Ojo *et al* (cited in Okonkwo *et al*, 2015) have

observed,...The creation of new states and local governments immediately fuel pressures for discrimination against new classes of so-called ‘non-indigenes’, that is Nigerians resident in states or local governments other than their own.

This thinking is against the provision of the Nigerian *constitution*. .....religion is another issue here in Nigeria both in the political appointment and other activities in Nigeria. There is hatred among religious groups in Nigeria which has resulted in crises during President Goodluck Jonathan Ebele administration in the country. This has been properly documented in the work of Obasi (2010), who stressed that:

since the return to civil rule in May 1999, there have been well over 100 religious and ethnic conflicts resulting in great losses of lives and property, the most recent of which are the series of conflicts that started from Maiduguri on February 18th, spreading to many other cities in the country (Potiskum, Kontagora, Enugu, Onitsha, Bauchi, and Katsina)” (Saleh, 2010). This identity crisis replicated itself in other parts of Nigeria. As Obasi has succinctly argued, “the conflict among Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo in the Delta region, Zango Kataf in Kaduna State, Tiv/Idoma in Benue State, Modakeke/Ife in Osun State, Umuleri/Aguleri in Anambra State, Shadam in Plateau, and many areas fit in neatly into the permanent strangers’ phenomenon in Nigeria”. It is, therefore, within the ambit of reason to argue that “...rather than promoting national integration, the reorganizations (creation of states and local government areas) provoked an unprecedented orgy

of protests, demonstrations and riots involving tens of fatalities” (Obasi, 2010).

The discussion of this section has shown that the elites’ roles in national integration are numbed, trapped, and caged by ethnicity. This is correct because history has shown that the success and failure of any nation or people is largely a reflection of its elites approach to national development. In solving the problem of ethnicity and indigenous issues, the ruling elites have introduced different integrative mechanisms to enhancing national cohesion and peaceful coexistence on grounds of the incompatibility of federalism. The failure of federalism as an integrating mechanism led to the introduction of such integrative mechanisms as Unity School, National Youth Service Corp, Federal Character, State Creation and Rotational Presidency and they were thoroughly discussed and analysed. The above-listed variables are part of the issues stressed in the works of Anifowose (1999), Clerk (2000), Tyoden (2000), Elaigwu (2000), Babalola (2008), and Dele (2016). These studies have made salient recommendations for deepening national integration.

But despite these integrative mechanisms, in recent studies have revealed that there are growing waves of political resentment leading to the call for secession and social unrest in the country (Ezeibe, 2015; CITAD, 2015; Ejekwonyilo and Khanoba, 2017; Ikelegbe, 2014). Other scholars like h Osaghea (2004), Oni and Ayomole (2013), have argued against the aforementioned variables and stressing the importance of the constitution. That all Nigerian political system needs can be found in the constitution that revealed the basic rights and obligations of the federating units.

An executive member of APGA Mbaso observed that:

I think Nigeria as a developing country has done seriously well. Right from 1960 till date, our way of thinking and party formation has drastically changed. The set of party politics we encountered as at various republics tell

that we have gone far. The issues of challenges are normal in nation-state like ours despite various insurgencies and youth unrest we remained one and is good to our democracy and development of our identity as one nation. Although our leaders, still revolved around primordial and prebendalistic politics I believed for the next 20 to 50 years we will be more united.

He further added that:

Leadership succession is the problem facing Nigeria since 1960. The mode of transfer power from one government to another is always accompanied by tension. This tension is anchored on the fact that leaders are imposed. The problem has been attributed to the persistent interruption by the military, since 1960. With the inception of democracy in 1999, there was positive hope about leadership succession in the country, but the reverse was the result as all elections conducted were seriously accompanied by tensions, fraud, rigging, intimidation leading to voters' apathy and this has distorted the progress towards nation building or national cohesion in Nigeria.

On same notes a member of National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA), Ondo town argued that:

One of the major problems of Nigeria is the issue of politics of exclusion and marginalization. Nigeria has been battling with this problem right from independence because the country is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa with sharp ethnic identities which have been a big challenge to her democracy and national integration but



successive governments and political parties have initiated institutions such as federalism, multi-party system but it seems nothing has been done. This can be associated with the insincerity of political actors in the system

Subaru (1998:31 cited in Olanrewaju, 2015), also alluded to Hassan's position when he opined that Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with over 250 ethnic linguistic groups, some of which are bigger than many independent states of contemporary Africa, and this is not unconnected with the adoption of federalism and this has *not been a remedy to manage Nigerian society because minority agitation against marginalization remains unsolved*. For Akin from one of the civil society organisation equally stressed that:

Party politics in the area of policy implementation in Nigeria has been a challenge to national integration. For instance, the South-South question in Nigeria represents a high profile case in terms of minority marginalization; it became public knowledge with the discovery of oil in Olobiri in commercial quantity. Not only that, the South-South agitation in Nigeria is primarily based on the quest for resource control as a result of oil discovery in the region while the conflict in Niger Delta has its roots in the increasing protest of the region against their political, economic and environmental disenfranchisement. The Militias have become increasingly violent both towards one another and towards civilians; kidnapping victims which include not just oil workers, but also children and other people who are not associated with the oil industry. But Nigerian politicians have underplayed these issues with bias mind and politics of segregation, hate speeches have become the order of the day which has threatened the national cohesion

Also supporting the views held by Akin, Jega (2003:27 cited in Olanrewaju, 2015) stressed that there is a problem of national disaffection by the Nigerian

electorates in various elections and party politics as a result of economic hardship and political violence perpetrated by the political bourgeoisie (selfish leaders) in the system. According to him:

Under conditions of economic crisis and subsequent structural adjustment, there has been a swift decline in the ability of the Nigerian state to provide for the basic socio-economic needs of the people. Similarly, there has been the increased exclusion of a segment of the elite and the bourgeoisie in the offices, and an acute marginalization of the majority of the population from the benefit of development projects and socio provisioning. All these have led to an increasing crisis of legitimacy of the state. As the state experience, a process of decomposition and composition and disengages from critical socio provisioning; only the constituent groups have tended to rely on the identity-based struggle for access to the state and the resources that it controls to protest exclusion and oppression as well as to demand basic right and socio-economic provisioning.

Linking party politics with internal colonialism, an officer from the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Shamsudeen observed as follows:

Party politics has taken the dimension of internal colonization and exploitation by one ethnic group against the others in Nigeria. But with the growth of democracy, democratic institutions and education, some of the members of the dominated or “internally colonised” ethnic nationalities begin to question their memberships to the larger political community (national identity); they question why they should cooperate with the other ethnic nationalities in the country and or, see themselves as one (national

integration) when their slots of national resources are being taken by “non-indigenes” in their midst, and why the other ethnic regions are developing at their own expense by harnessing the natural resources found in another ethnic region, this is a big challenge to national integration in Nigeria. In other words, the rise of Militancy, Avengers and other ethnic militias especially in the south-south region is as a result of failed policies in Nigeria.

Similar views were also expressed by Akwara *et al* (2013) who remarked that: *they question why their indigenes are not found within the corridors of power in their natural ethnic regions and at the national level, and why they should continue to support the governments at all levels, and therefore employ all possible means to bring the governments to be responsible and accountable.* This has led to the proliferation of ethnic militias that terrorize the citizens across the country; and the adoption of different legal frameworks that challenge national laws in some parts of the country.

Conversely, Olanrewaju (2015) observed that the crisis in the Niger Delta is not unconnected with the problem of marginalization in terms of economic resources and political affairs. Despite the fact, the region produces 80% of Nigerian income; the region suffers seriously from poverty and low economic empowerment. However, the state further suffers a legitimacy crisis as excluded groups emerge to demand their portion of the national cakes. In Nigeria, national integration is the main problem in the process of nation-building. This is largely because the country is divided along with ethnic and religious diversity. This has been one of the most complex problems facing the country since independence.

These contradictions can only be resolved through a discussion of the “national question” in the various countries. An officer from Transition Monitoring Group, Babalola views on the challenges of national integration is stated thus:

Challenges of national integration are of various dimensions. Meanwhile, free and fair elections and the principle of zoning are the major problems of national integration in the country. The principle of zoning adopted by PDP somehow works but it has deepened the politics of divide. That is before elections, the elites within their regions or ethnic zones tend to create a sense of sharp division to get certain resources into their personal affairs and this system of party politics has disengaged Nigerians from the polity, I mean the masses, the governed, this is a big challenge to national integration because people that ought to serve as instrument of driving the goals of the nations are disenfranchised within the political process

In supporting the view above Ogbeide (2012), indicated that Nigeria has failed in several elections in the country, reports from across the country show that the mandate of the people has been abused, traumatised and brutalised. In effect, the evidence of several elections demonstrated that INEC visibly deficient in logistic and preparations for elections. Nigerians could no longer afford to tolerant this level of vulgar disenfranchisement which is a blatant rape on the will of the people and this has negative bearings on national integration. Similarly, a member from the CLEEN Foundation posited that:

A large number of political parties lack internal party democracy. Candidates are predetermined before the elections. Typical of this was last Ondo State governorship election and other elections in the country. Generally, monetary politics and godfatherism pose challenges for national integration. When democratic values are not at play then national integration will be rhetoric

In a different view, a respondent added that:

The problems of the state of origin instead of the state of resident and good governance are issues serving as

a challenge to national integration. This situation has disenfranchised Nigerians in a different part of the country who are not in their ancestral land (state of origin). It is on these atmosphere politicians have intensified politics of hatred between and among ethnic groups in Nigeria. This scenario has derailed political parties their primary function of national integration in the country, nepotism, sectional, elites and ethnic interests have become the nature of party politics in the country

This situation which contradicts Edmund Burke's and other scholars' understanding of political party 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*" (Edmund Burke cited in Clark, 2000). An official of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) views the challenges of national integration as follows:

All the political parties are ethnic or regional party except PDP and APC. Majority of the political parties in the country are ethnically and tribally established. But these major parties lack good leadership virtues and their internal management have created unresolved grievances and crises which have divided Nigerians into different factions and camp. Within PDP we have Sherief faction, Jonathan's factions, etc., likewise in APC Bukola Sarake's faction, Bola Tinubu factions and Buhari factions, *this is not funny*, this is why political parties in Nigeria and their leaders cannot integrate Nigerians.

Another school of thought has situated this argument on colonialisation which has led to the merging different ethnic groups into a country. After the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates, Sir Frederick Lugard, the then Governor-General, created Nigerian Council. Sir Clifford

in 1922 introduced a new Legislative Council as stipulated in the new Clifford Constitution. This new Legislative Council was however restricted to the Southern Protectorate while the North was governed by a proclamation from the Governor (Clark, 2000). Buttressing the argument above Olusanya (1980 cited in Clark, 2000), argued that:

Failure of Sir Clifford to fully integrate the North and South was the most unconvincing act. The result was that the failure added to the challenges of national integration in later years. This is because the arrangement only served to perpetuate ethnic parochialism. Thus, the 1914 amalgamation of the two protectorates created merely administrative and not national integration. And after the departure of the colonial masters in 1960, ethnic elites consolidate their powers and this has been transferred to various Republics in Nigerian party politics

Richard Constitution of 1946 merged North and South. However, this also had some inherent loopholes which did not augur well for any meaningful National integration. The most salient of these was the establishment of Northern, Western and Eastern Provinces, each with a House of Assembly or Regional Council, consisting of members elected by the Native Authority. These came to be compounded by other problems which in the end made instability inevitable, and in the long run, did not augur well for national integration. In a different argument, Oluwafemi one of the respondent equally added that:

One of the greatest challenges to integration in the Nigerian state is the Niger-Delta question. The principle and theory of integration demand the removal of barriers to integration; it means equating or ensuring the development of all parts in the integration equation. But the case of this region poses the greatest challenge... the problem of youth restiveness arising from unemployment, poverty and lack of proper education. These variables constitute a big issue in Nigeria and which have bearings with the

failure of leadership or party politics in the country. Those who allied with certain values such as the Boko Haram ideas and kidnapping business, seen this involvement as a means of survival. Since those that they entrusted their mandate has failed them especially on good policies and its implementation. The quest for 1958, 1960 and 1963 pattern of revenue allocation remain in the minds of those in the Niger Delta... a robust federal system should build and allow each region to develop in it pace but successive governments have reversed the permutation and this has created a problem in our federal structure... this is where the Niger Delta question arises

On this issue, Ehwarieme & Cocodia (2011); and Darah (2012), stressed and stated that in 1958 the allocation of revenue from mining rents and royalties was in order of 50% to the area where a mineral was mined, 20% to the central government and 30% to a Distributable Pool Account. The region that earned 50% also shared in this 30% based on equity. This progressive provision was included in the constitutions of 1960 and 1963. However, this principle has been distorted in the present allocation formula, hence the region or zone which produces the wealth of the nation, now seem to receive the least governmental intervention. This situation has led to militancy and the quest for 'resource control' which may deny other regions of enormous resources they currently enjoy while contributing minimally to the wealth of the nation. Differential levels of development which constitute the problem of regional integration in Africa has the same effect to national integration in Nigeria (Ehwarieme & Cocodia, 2011; Darah, 2012). In a similar note, a respondent named Nworga observed that

... issues such as Boko Haram, quit notice, secession, militancy, hate speeches, employment, leadership failure these are some of the issues threatening Nigeria unity or what you called national integration. The issue of hate speeches and secession have eaten deep into the Nigerian political system. Nigerians

don't see themselves as one. The issue of hate speeches started in the days of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Tafawa Belewa and Obafemi Awolowo. Different derogatory phrases and sentences were used that marred the unity of Nigeria then. Even, one of the prime factors that led to the civil war was as a result of suspicious and the fear of superiority of one ethnic group over the other.

Orji, one of the respondents added that:

... the major challenge of national integration in Nigeria happened to be the attitude of political leaders towards issues affecting one region or ethnic group. The Boko Haram insurgency wasn't taken seriously at the initial stage during President Jonathan/Sambo Administration. What I'm saying is that ethnic and regional politics is still much alive in Nigeria political system and a country that is divided along ethnic or regional interest cannot consolidate national integration. The ongoing hate speeches in the country, secessionist movement, quit notice and the unrepentant activities of the militancy and Boko Haram have been linked to party politics of ethnicity and regionalism. These actions have impacted negatively into Nigeria's integration....the politics of dividing the country into South and North or Geopolitical zones connotes regional or ethnic interests and this not healthy for the country. However, the APC government has put in place mechanisms to checkmate the activities that encourage and promote ethnic divides especially on hate speeches and the APC government is very meticulous in its appointment. The Nigerian military, the National orientation agency, etc. have been strengthened to ensure national integration.



On the same bases, Adeseke of the PDP from Ondo state likewise observed that:

... the activities of Boko Haram, weak institutions to tackle corruption, the health of the president, quit notice, secession, militancy, hate speeches, employment and inflation; these are issues serving as a challenge to national integration. That's why some of us are calling for the restructuring of the Nigerian political system and if the Buhari's administration continues in this manner on the pretence on the fall dollars and blaming past administration in their woos then Nigeria is on the path of collapse or disintegration....

Equally an academic from Edo University has added that:

... and these activities of these individuals have threatened national integration in the past and have given a negative image to Nigeria in the comity of nations.

Nigeria's political parties have worsened the Nigerian political system, the issue of the ceremonial primary election, automatic ticket, the syndrome of party's founding fathers, zoning have caused a setback to the enthronement of democracy and if there are no institutions to consolidate democracy and then the question of national integration is irrelevant and unattainable. If the people have to be incorporated and play an active role in their polity this will signal national integration and this can be done through selfless leadership and patriotism.

From the above revelations, the study has identified that the elite's interest and the roles of party politics especially within political parties have affected the quest for national integration. These were justified through the information given by respondents during the course of the fieldwork. And

works of scholars such as Ikelegbe (2014), Omodia (2015), Egwu (2014), Ayoade (2008), Okonkwo *et al* (2015), have identified that issues such as internal party democracy and the problem of lop-sidedness of Nigerian federal system have given birth to divided politics which has affected the quest for national integration.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

This study utilised a qualitative technique through the means of an interview guide. Ted Gurr thesis *why men rebel* was used to reveal the implications of party politics' failure in Nigeria. This study identified that due to the unperformed nature and failed promises of the Nigerian politicians in respect of the provision of a better education; and other critical infrastructures. This has created porous society and political erosion which has given birth to insurgencies; social unrest and ethnic militias. This and among others have served as a barrier to national integration in Nigeria. Subsequent governments have attempted to tame the menace through the provision of federal character, creation of Niger Delta Ministry; amnesty programmes; poverty eradication programmes; state creations; and so on. Extant literature in this study has identified that these recommendations and policies have instigated disintegrative tendencies rather national integration. Respondents in this study have revealed that most politicians are greedy and regarded public office as personal gains after elections. Politicians see political offices as business empires to regain expenses spent during elections. This has created diversion of public funds to private use. Public offices have given birth to patron-client politics; patronage; neopatrimonialism and rendering the masses empty and destitute against their electoral mandates. This has been the thrust of disintegrative tendencies in the Nigerian political system.

### **Recommendation**

Best practices in the context of African values and culture that buttressed selfless services to the entire citizens should be encouraged in the act of party politics in the country. There is a need for active political engagement and

aggressive political education to sensitise the masses the essence of national integration as a means for national building. Institutions should be reorganised for active performance towards national integration.

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