

Full Length Research

Rise of Opposition Political Parties and Democratization Process in West-Africa

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Accepted 28 March 2018

Since the end of the cold war in the late 1980s, democracy has continued to spread as a “universal necessity” and prerequisite condition for prosperity, freedom and development; in which popular participation, rights and interests of the majority of people seemed to be secured. The recent events in West-Africa, especially in Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia have shown a revolutionary challenge of ruling political parties in these states. This study argued that the resurgence of opposition parties in West Africa has not translated into a better life, development and prosperity in the region. This is borne out of the knowledge of the enormity of problems challenging Africa’s socio-economic and political development in the face of grueling democratic deficit in the continent. The study adopted documentary method of data gathering while relying on elite theory and descriptive qualitative analysis. It concluded that in spite of the rise and electoral successes of opposition political parties in Africa, it has remained doubtful that such change will be able to reverse the stunting impact of democracy in Africa. It recommended more functional structural arrangement to improve the profile of good governance in the States of Africa.

Keywords: Rise, Opposition Parties, Democratization, Process

Cite this article as: Nnorom, K., Nebeife, C. and Odigbo, J. (2018). Rise of Opposition Political Parties and Democratization Process in West-Africa. *Int. J. Polit. Sci. Develop.* 6(2) 60-67

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the cold war in the late 1980s, democracy has continued to spread as a “universal necessity” and prerequisite condition for prosperity, freedom and development; in which popular participation, rights and interests of the majority of people seemed to be secured (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2012). In fact, in the last three decades democracy appears to have commanded so great an operational subscription and adoption among nations of the globe. This spread seems to have also heralded the emergence of multi-party system in many societies of West Africa. Incidentally, it is still doubtful whether such stretch has subscribed to the

dictates of democratic principles in the sub-region.

Undoubtedly, opposition political parties are integral component of multi-partism. While it has existed in every multi party democracy, its relevance, operation and functionality slightly differs from one society to another. Indeed, the operability and capacity of opposition parties to impact on a particular political system is largely dependent on the character of the political system, political values and cultural dynamics of the people and the system. Incidentally, in many African countries being an opposition is a very risky undertaking even after the introduction of a multi-party democracy in the 1990s

(Teshome, 2009). To this end, opposition political parties in West Africa appear to be forced most times to function under severe political constraints imposed by the electoral authoritarian governments (Teshome, 2009).

Consequently, many democracies in Africa tend to have mere opposition parties that are completely and systematically weakened in structure and functions. There seems to be high level of political intolerance and dissenting voices are contained through political repression, limiting the financial capacity of the existing opposition parties while designating huge sums of state resources for dispensing patronage. In this condition, electoral turnovers which have been the hallmark of measuring the depth and profundity of democracy or rather that can reinforce the legitimacy of political institutions and deepen democratic consolidation seem to remain almost non-existing in most democracies in Africa.

Indeed, it is important to note that there seems to be few studies that have focused on opposition political parties in the contemporary West African democracy. This is in spite of the increasing shrinking nature of opposition parties in Africa especially within the context of their ability to influence and capacity to fairly compete with the ruling parties in the sub-region. Thus, scholars such as (Hofmeister and Grabow, 2011; Van De Walle, 2003; Omotola, 2009; Nwanegbo and Anekwe, 2014; Odigbo, 2014) have separately investigated parties in power, political parties and party ideology, finances of political parties and typologies of political parties respectively. Studies on the opposition political parties in Africa since the wave of democratization appeared to have tended to focus on the broader category of civil society (Olukoshi 1998). The studies seem to have generally overlooked the bargaining power of party coalition, its sustainability and the extent it will energize the opposition parties to emerge victorious in multi-party electoral politics in West Africa.

Although, Weghorst and Lindberg, (2010) have earlier argued that many political parties in Africa and West Africa in particular allegedly lack clear political ideologies, objectives, platforms, and “brand names” and they have had little success in removing incumbents from office. The electoral outcomes in the last decade in West Africa tend to have tilted to the opposite view. The *problematic* of this study is to panoramically investigate the rising dynamics cum coalition sustainability nuances of opposition political parties to determine whether the recent stunning electoral victories by the opposition parties in West Africa can correspondingly engender development and deepen democratic process in West Africa.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The stunting growth of opposition political parties and

democratic woes in West Africa could be analyzed from variety of theoretical stand point. This is mainly because of the multitudes of symptoms arising from inadequate structural arrangement, poor political culture, value deficit, machine politics and devastating ethnic dichotomies among others which tend to induce party instability, sudden debacle and deteriorating democratic output in the West African sub-region. This study takes into cognizance this plethora of problems. For theoretical framework, the study adopted elite theory as the basis of analysis for the failures and the rise of opposition parties in West Africa. The study is guided with the fact that institutions of the state and structures of government are created and operated by human beings and the elites are at the centre of this activity.

Thus, the immediate post colonial regimes in West Africa tend to be more dictatorial and authoritarian than democratic. Over the decades, sustenance of these authoritarian regimes appear to have widened the gap between the West African elites and the people and invariably have provided ample leverage for governance structures to be operated at the whims and caprices of the elites. The political systems in the sub-region are apparently not under the control of the public. This is mainly attributed to the weakening character of state institutions which appears to have established strong personalities rather than strong institutions to oversee for the good of all. Within this context, institutionalization of the people as the real owners of the state, in terms of their legitimate responsibility to determine who represents the state, through credible elections has continued to elude the people. Hence, it has continued to stall democratic process and more importantly the development of the viable opposition political parties that will ensure healthy electoral competition among political parties in West Africa.

The elite theory as developed by Vilfredo, Pareto, Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Jose Ortega Gassat amongst others, hinged on the fact that every society is composed of two classes of people (Varma 1975 cited in Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2015). The theorists lay much emphasis on the ruling elites because of the vital role they play in determining the fate of the rest. In fact, Michels concluded that as a movement or party grows in size, more and more functions are to be delegated to an inner circle of leaders (elites), and, in course of time, the members of the organization are rendered less competent to direct and control them (Varma, cited in Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2015).

In spite of the fact that elitism in West Africa seems to have been more negative than positive in terms of its contribution to party development as well as national development and democratic survival, the recent successes by opposition parties in West-Africa may be impossible without the doggedness of some elites. For instance, in Nigeria, the floundering state of the Peoples

Democratic Party is predicated on multifarious internal conflicts orchestrated by the party elites. According to Nwanegbo, Nnorom & Odigbo (2014), an irreconcilable stance of major political gladiators in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) led to the formation of splinter unit (the defunct New PDP) on August 2013, under Kawu Baraje leadership which typified the degree of disillusionment among the party bigwigs. Although, the PDP has lost its control of the federal government in Nigeria, elitism is fundamental in measuring the degree of successes or failures of the ruling All Progressive Congress Party in the country.

As in so many West African societies, elites tend to represent the driving force for party formation, its finances and indeed the marketability of such party. This self-imposed responsibility empowers the ruling elites in most democratic state in West Africa to determine electoral outcomes, promulgate legislations and create agencies that either stifle the existence of opposition party or narrow its capacity to win elections. In this condition, peoples' inalienable right to effect fundamental change in the political process remains almost non-existing for the past few decades. The level of disillusionment arising from this frustration tends to have resulted to political instability and electoral fiasco in many states in West Africa. For instance, in 2010 former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo rejection of election results accentuated civil strife that threatened to plunge the country into civil war. Recently, former Gambia president Yahya Jammeh was compelled to quit and proceed on exile following his refusal to hand over power to the incumbent President Adama Barrow who won the 2016 presidential election in Gambia.

Indeed, the recent ouster of the ruling political parties in Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia amongst others is a lucid manifestation and demonstration of lost of faith or seemingly alliance between the people, opposition parties and the non-ruling elites. It is also position of this paper that this is not really predicated on the opposition party providing reasonable policy options. However, whether the emergence of the opposition parties will reverse the democratic deficit in West-Africa and indeed Africa in general still remained to be seen. The newly emerged parties are confronted with a herculean task of reviving the deteriorating condition of their states. In achieving this, they must redouble their efforts towards ensuring speedy transformation of their states and people. It is within this context that their coalition with other parties and alliances with the people could become sustainable and thus enhance democratic process.

Opposition Party and Democratization: Conceptual Discourse

There seems to be a general perception in the West

African sub-region that joining the mainstream politics and indeed the ruling party will guarantee one's access to state resources. In this regard, component units of state whose leaders assume office through opposition party unhesitatingly defect to the ruling party. This has become the practice especially in most West African societies where extraction, use, allocation and distribution of state resources are centralized. The fact that states play little or no role and in some cases have no control over resources in their domain encourages the process of mainstreaming for favourable allocation.

Following from the above, it can be observed that opposition parties in West Africa exist in the political wilderness of emptiness. They seem to lack every iota of ideology and sometimes completely strangled by the incumbent. At the same time inadequate institutional dispositions and financial challenges tend to constraint their ability to expand and enjoy large followership. So, first major problem confronting the opposition party can be seen from their structural flaws as well as lack of resources.

Essentially, the demise of military regimes in Africa in the late 1990s, consequent upon what was described as the third *wave of democratization*, appeared not to have ended the militarization and centralization patterns of governance structure in West Africa. As posited by Weghorst and Lindberg, (2010) the small and weak opposition parties in several West African countries have made some observers see a return of semi-authoritarianism, or "big man" clientelistic politics even in the context of multiparty elections. The seemingly acceptability of these political structures tend to have not only ridiculed the entire democratic practice but appeared to present opposition politics in a given polity in West Africa as an affront.

Within the above context, the definition and conceptualization of the term opposition party becomes difficult. Thus, opposition party in West Africa may fall short of what its contemporaries represent in developed democracies. Although, its general description as a political party that is not in power remains a broad attribute. But its roles and responsibilities in democratic setting tend to differ largely. Hence, opposition parties are sometimes referred to as *small, weak, effective and strong* parties. Opposition political parties have to do with the political parties or movements that do not belong to the party of the ruling government. In his view, Kiiza, (2005) investigated the role opposition party in a democracy. According to him, these roles include:

- a. Interest aggregation
- b. Promoting responsible and reasoned debate.
- c. Maintaining touch with the voter-citizen and demonstrating the relevance of politics to ordinary people, that is, the oppressed, the marginalized, the disenfranchised.

- d. Opposition parties hold the government to account for its commissions or omissions.
- e. Parties present a viable alternative to the incumbent government by designing alternative ideas, principles and policies for governing society.
- f. Parties act as a training ground for future leaders.
- g. Parties strengthen the culture of democracy within the party and the political community in general (by, for example, promoting open debate during delegates' conferences, promoting intra-party democratic elections and ensuring accountable use of party finances).
- h. Parties work with the Electoral Commission, the mass media and civil society organizations to monitor and improve the quality of voter registration, civic education and electoral transparency.
- i. Opposition parties are the unpaid *but dedicated* principal researchers for the government in power (Kiiza, 2005, p.8).

Generally, opposition party can be described as a minority party or parties that do not have parliamentary majority or exercise executive power. Opposition party is seen as "minority party or parties that do not wield executive powers; the party or parties that act as a check on the government" (Epelle and Enyekit, 2015). Obviously, a strong opposition may be the most effective means of creating checks and accountability in hybrid regimes and, therefore, the most important prerequisite for deepening democratic process (LeBas, 2005, cited in Teshome, 2009). This position is important especially when opposition party is considered to be a pre-requisite condition for entrenching and deepening the democratic values and practice in a society.

Fundamentally, Huntington, (1991) posited that the 'third wave of democratization' moved across Latin America and Eastern Europe, and later Asia and Africa. Thus, since then democratization seems to have become a household dictum around the World. Indeed, in spite of the scholarly explanations, democratization tends to mean many things to many people. Hence, processes and applicable methods at ensuring attainment of what can be described as a complete democratized society have sufficiently varied among scholars and nations. Democratization may be explained as a process of political change that moves the political system of any given society towards a system of government that ensures peaceful competitive electoral political participation in an environment that guarantees political and civil liberties (Samarasinghe, 1994). In their view, (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 17) stated that:

Democratization can be understood as a process subdivided into three phases: (i) the liberalization phase,

when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles; (ii) a transition phase, often culminating when the first competitive elections are held; and (iii) the consolidation phase, when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors. This final phase is essential for establishing durable democratic regimes (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 17).

Following from the above, democratization processes are sustainable when minorities are not only protected but are given equal competitive opportunities as legitimate members of a political community, saddled with the responsibility of political prosperity of the community. As can be seen, democratization will crumble if the majority rules through the coercive use of state apparatus and oppression of minority populations. Interestingly, thriving democratization endeavors beget improved economic prosperity, political stability, and the unhindered development of civil society in a particular political system.

Indeed, at the centre of the litany of West Africa's democratic process and development woes is a crisis of governance that engulfs several states in Africa and particularly the West-Africa. Indeed, within the last three decades when the trend of democratization extended its influence to virtually every society, the process of democratization in West Africa has remained undoubtedly unenviable. For instance, in Nigeria, military regime in the 1980s till late 1990s ensures that the state besmirched attempts at instituting a democratic society. Yet, its emergence and operation since 1999 is fraught with internal squabbles, political instability and other socio-economic and religious crisis. Although, it may be argued that such crisis is not unexpected since the system is evolving a new paradigm of political culture.

Understandably, just as in Nigeria, Gambia also seems to have witnessed negative improvement within the last few decades. What could be described as a consolidated "single party authoritarianism" under the regime of former President Yahya Jammeh appear to have encouraged the centralization and poor performance of state agencies. In the same vein, Ivory Coast within this period endured severe political turbulence prior to the 2010 elections. The emergence of the opposition candidate (President Alassane Dramane Quattara) as the winner of the presidential election plunged the country into political instability. In fact, French forces were used to eject former President Laurent Gbagbo out of office. On the other hand, Ghana has made more progress in their bid to democratize but not without shocks and setbacks. These challenges can easily be explained from the perspective of economic setbacks confronting the Ghanaian state. Although there seems to be variations in which progress and setbacks were recorded in these states, the implication has remained the same. The more the state and its institutions in West Africa struggle to

democratize, the more it modifies itself to an increasing pattern of stultifying democratization process.

West-Africa as the Fulcrum of Democratic Growth in Africa

Political events in West Africa in the last decade tend to show that authoritarian as well as dictatorial regimes may probably cease to exist in the continent in nearest future. In spite of the huge challenges confronting the operationality, functionality and the practice of democracy in Africa, it is evident that the current effort by civil society groups and people's commitment may definitely change the tide of dictatorship in West Africa. In fact, there seems to be apparent disillusionment by the majority of people in West African sub-region regarding the character and performance of state managers in the continent and the woeful state of many societies in Africa. Secondly and also very important is the place of Africa generally in the comity of Nations that is undoubtedly unenviable. Indeed, domestic leadership slides inspire popular uprisings that engulfed the North Africa beginning from Tunisia in 2010 which ousted three notable leaders in the region (Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi) with more regimes under severe pressure from groups and civil society (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2012). For them, the downfall of these regimes seems to have raised the hope of democratic change.

Recently, some states in West-Africa appeared to have proved or demonstrated the fact that the sub-region may not necessarily wait for another century before democratization and indeed consolidating democracies become achievable. For instance, the electoral successes of formerly opposition parties like All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nigeria, Rally of the Republicans (RDR) in Ivory-Coast, New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana and United Democratic Party (UDP) in Gambia lay credence to this assertion. Arguably, the emergence of these opposition parties have not reversed the deplorable records of democratic practice or what can be described as the seemingly democratic deficit in the West-African region, but the outcomes of the elections tend to have guaranteed a electoral turn-over which is central and hallmark of democratic consolidation.

Undoubtedly, the elections in these four states have remained a landmark for democratic growth and survival in West-Africa and Africa in general. The elections are historic in several respects. First, it is largely seen as true reflection of peoples' will. The extent of credibility of these elections signals people's quest to improve and ensure accountability in the public conduct of elections. Secondly, it is a departure from the prevailing pre-determined elections in West Africa. Indeed, the elections seem to have initiated the process of institutionalizing the people as the ultimate owners of state power. As can be

seen, opposition parties in the West-Africa have won presidential elections in four states within the last one decade. These parties and their nations are listed in table 1.

Following from the above, it is very conspicuous that Ghana's democracy appears to be more stable and seems to have been consolidated than others within the West African sub-region. In fact, within the context of Huntington's electoral turnover as prerequisite condition for democratic consolidation, Ghana can be adjudged to be a consolidated democratic state. Thus, Huntington (1991) concept of "two turnover" test in which a group that wins power at the period of transition loses a subsequent election and to turn over to another election winner and the same reoccurs at another time too, seems to have become ideal in Ghana.

Incidentally, citizens in states like Nigeria, Gambia and Ivory Coast have recently dissipated much energy and strength in fighting and dismantling a seemingly consolidated single party rulership. These states have been under a single ruling party for more than a decade. Thus, while states like Gambia and Ivory Coast have one dictator each in their single party in a decade of dominance, Nigeria had three presidents from one party in more than one and half decade of PDP dominance. The Table 2 shows the years these states were under one political party rule.

The Table 2 scenario obviously indicates that in spite of the establishment of democratic practice in these countries within these periods, there seems to be lack of institutionalized multi party system to the extent that voters are able to choose between alternative parties. Beyond this, is the issue of the electorates or peoples' capacity to cast a vote on the basis of the parties' performance in preceding elections rather than patronage and rent-seeking influenced voting or without recourse to any form of inducement which seems to be absent in these three states prior to the 2015 and 2016 elections. It is important to note that the opposition parties won the elections does not mean an end to this challenge but may have may have improved the situation to a good extent.

However, Ghana appears to have defied every hurdle and indeed resisted severally infectious democratic slide back in Africa. Since the return to democratic governance in 1992 in Ghana two political parties have won presidential elections in seven general elections. In 1992, the Progressive Alliance, a coalition of the National Democratic Congress, National Convention Party and Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere won the election. The party later metamorphosed into the present National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NDC won again in 1996 but lost to New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2000, 2004, the NDC grappled power again in 2008, 2012 and lost to NPP in 2016.

In all, the ostensibly improvement in democratic practice in West-Africa is of huge significance. First, just

Table 1: Opposition Political Parties that won Presidential Election in the Last Decade in West Africa

COUNTRY	NAME OF PARTY	YEAR FORMED	PARTIES MERGED WITH	YEAR WON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION	YEARS AS OPPOSITION PARTY
Nigeria	All Progressive Congress (APC)	2013	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)	2015	Two (2) Years after merger with long time opposition parties
Ivory-Coast	Rally of the Republicans (RDR)	1994	Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI) and Movement of the Forces of the Future (MFA)	2010	Sixteen (16) Years as opposition party
Ghana	New Patriotic Party (NPP)	1992	NIL	2000, 2004 and 2016	Won the presidency first in 2000, 2004 but has been in opposition since 2008 when it lost to NDC before reclaiming the mandate in 2016
Gambia	United Democratic Party (UDP)	Coalition 2016	United Democratic Party (UDP), People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS), National Reconciliation Party (NRP), Gambia Moral Congress (GMC), National Convention Party (NCP), People's Progressive Party (PPP), Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress (GPDP).	2016	Coalition 2016

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 2: Parties and Years of Dominance in Ivory-Coast, Gambia and Nigeria

S/N	STATE	PARTY IN POWER	YEAR	PRESIDENT
1	Ivory Coast	Ivorian Popular front	2000-2011	Former President Laurent Gbagbo
2	Gambia	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction	1996-2017	Former President Yahya Jammeh
3	Nigeria	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	1999-2016	Former President Olusengun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar Adua, Goodluck Jonathan

Source: Compiled by the authors

like the 2011 revolutionary upspring in the North Africa, the democratic growth in West-Africa can potentially redefine the peoples' acceptability of democratic values, practice and efforts at deepening democracy in the continent. Thus, Ghana has been steadfast and unfaltering in the drive towards institutionalization of the people and growth of democracy. Recently, the efforts in Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Gambia to ensuring alternating power among parties may suddenly awaken others to join the crusade for deepening democratic process and norms in West Africa.

Party Coalition and the Sustainability of Opposition Parties in West Africa

Party coalition has been a focus of interest of several scholarships in most developed democratic states. Its utility in some parliamentary democracies tends to encourage research on the relevance and usage of party coalition. Thus, party coalition seems to be explained as a legal agreement for cooperation among political parties on common political agenda and for the purposes of survival and competition with other political parties in a political community. Earlier, party coalition or coalition government was a pre-dominant feature in the parliamentary democracy such as Britain. However, the prevailing spread of democracy since late 1980s underscores the present trend in which party coalition exists in virtually all presidential and parliamentary democracies.

In West Africa, the stretch of military interregnum contributed to the dearth of literature in political party coalition especially in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s. Indeed, the democratization programme that began in the early 1990 has accentuated the practice of political party coalition in several political environments in the sub-region. In fact, Kadima, (2006), averred that political party coalitions have increasingly become a significant feature of contemporary West African politics in both presidential and parliamentary systems. He further analyzed reasons for the formation of coalitions and levels of government where coalition tend to occur in Africa. According to him:

Some party coalitions were formed for the purpose of either strengthening the governing party or creating a viable and stronger parliamentary opposition. Others were aimed at ensuring that partner parties did not compete with each other in their respective strongholds. In some cases, especially at local government level, coalition or multiparty governments were formed to ensure that the business of government was carried out (Kadima, 2006, p. 15).

However, in spite of the above, it is important to note that while party coalition is essential, experiences in West Africa show that most of the coalition arrangement tends to collapse. This can be attributed to the fact that forming

party coalition is a more complex task that involves a political culture of inter-party bargaining and compromise. Indeed, the degree of extremity, fragmentation and polarization of party systems from the formative stage underlies party's inability to compromise critical issues that smoothens party coalition in West Africa. For instance, Teshome, (2009) argued that opposition politics in Liberia remained ineffective due to opposition parties' fragmentation, and their failure to form coalitions. Generally, in West Africa, the opposition parties tend to have suffered a great deal from the phenomena of factionalism and fragmentation.

It is important to note that factionalism and fragmentation of opposition parties in West Africa can be explained in two folds. First, the self induced factionalization of opposition parties which ensures that opposition parties are factionalized perpetually which disrupts its ability to grow or form viable opposition or coalition with other parties. In this context, party leaders are the cause and sometimes may have pursued interests capable of plummeting them into an irreconcilable stance. Second, is externally induced factionalization by the ruling party which provides the ruling party the opportunity to remain the only political option in a political system.

The above problems associated with opposition party tend to stall its existence and viability as political alternative. However, such challenges may not override the general notion that party coalition enhances democratic process globally. In several societies, the extent of its sustainability is dependent on the degree of political freedom, development and value orientation. Experiences in West Africa show that the growth of democracy works in tandem with the growth of opposition party coalition. For instance, Teshome, (2009) argued that the formation of coalitions is the only hope for opposition parties to increase their chance to successfully challenge the incumbents. For him, there are fairly sufficient evidences in Africa to substantiate this claim: the 1997 and 2002 elections in Kenya, the 1993 election in Malawi and the 2005 election in Ethiopia are all the best example of opposition parties' coalition that was able to oust the incumbent party (Teshome, 2009).

Recently, opposition party coalition was instrumental to the dismantling of a seemingly consolidated one party dominance in Ivory-Coast, Nigeria and Gambia. The defeat of the Laurent Gbagbo's led Ivorian Popular Front, the Peoples Democratic Party in Nigeria and the Yahya Jammeh's led Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction in Gambia may not have been possible without opposition party coalition. Undoubtedly, the utility of party coalition has effectively checkmated the rising incidences of one party "authoritarianism" in West-Africa and indeed Africa. Obviously, sustaining party coalition is central in the democratization process. In this regard, party leaders must evolve mechanisms of conflict

management to scale down the persistent intra-party squabbles. In fact, intra-party crisis has remained a major hindrance of opposition party development. Also, formation of parties with clear ideological content is essential, hence it will ensure dynamism and enhance the capacity of the party to negotiate and compromise during coalition.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the rise of opposition political parties and democratization process in West-Africa. The recent events in West-Africa, especially in Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia have shown a revolutionary challenge of ruling political parties in these States. It is evident that the deepening of democracy and democratization programme in Africa can only be successful if the trend of opposition coalition continues. This study has argued that the resurgence of opposition parties in West Africa appears not to have been translated into a better life, development and prosperity in the sub-region. Perhaps, the sustainability of their coalition in most cases tends to be problematic especially after securing State power. This paper identified intra-party crisis as a major challenge to the sustainability of opposition party and its ability to merge with others. It is therefore, suggested that party leaders must evolve ideological ingredients at the formative stage of the parties and ensure that mechanisms of conflict management are utilized to scale down the persistent intra-party squabbles in most opposition political parties.

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