

Institutional Engineering and Party Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract : Political theorists have identified ethnicity as an obstacle to democratic stability in deeply divided societies. Nigeria belongs to the categories of problematic states labeled divided or deeply divided societies, as such post-independence politics is characterized by ethnicity with its ruinous effect on democratic governance and development. Institutional Engineering, the purposive manipulation of the electoral rule relating to party organization and the electoral formula has been established in comparative political studies as a policy measure for managing ethnicity in order to stabilize politics in divided societies. This paper examines the use of electoral engineering tools in managing ethnic politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study is guided by rational institutional theory. Secondary data on electoral rules and disaggregated results of presidential elections were collected from archival documents. Data were subjected to content analysis. Institutional changes in electoral rules have promoted the development of inter-ethnic bargaining and compromises within the party system. Presidential Electoral Formula aided the emergence of national rather parochial parties. Electoral engineering tools moved Nigerian Politics from ethnic parochialism to inclusion and accommodation. These innovations should be strengthened to enhance democratic stability.

Keywords : Nigeria, presidential-elections, ethnic politics, institutional engineering

Conference Title : ICIPAP 2018 : International Conference on International Public Administration and Politics

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : October 08-09, 2018