



THE NEXUS OF PARTY DEFECTIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: DYNAMICS AND HORSE-TRADING

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Abstract

The paper ascertains the nexus of political defection and its implications for 2019 general election in Nigeria: dynamics and horse-trading. The rate at which political class defects from one party to another portrays political immaturity and ideological confusion in Nigeria. The inception of democracy since 1999 ushered unprecedented hope in the political experiment and this create an opportunity for Nigeria to re-launch a new strategy towards self governance after long years of prolonged military rule. The emergence of multi-party in Nigeria's fourth republic is a breakthrough in the democratic process for self governance. The level of self governance since 1999 raised hope of politicians and citizens to a large extent that democracy has come to take its proper place for a better tomorrow in Nigeria. The way political parties in Nigeria have gone and going as it concerns decamping does not portend good tidings on its electoral process especially the selfish desire of candidates jumping from one party to another. This activity can make or mar democratic process in these forthcoming 2019 general elections. It is on this premise that the paper examines the effect of this defection among party members; and some healthy situation towards this democratic experiment in 2019 general elections. The sixth national assembly attempts to stop this distasteful practice through Constitutional amendment, but this clause which sought to strip party members on defection did not even scale through in the second reading on the floor of the national assembly. In achieving this objective, the paper relies on descriptive analysis and recommends among others; the amendment of the constitution and electoral act to regulate the spate of party defection in Nigeria. Also social re-orientation and political education that imbibe new values and norms in the political system should be in place.

Keywords: Politics, Defection, Elections, Decamping, Cross Carpeting and Political Party

Introduction

The quest for political power ahead of 2019 general elections has triggered defections as politicians across various political divides are moving in their numbers to platforms on which they hope to actualize their respective ambitions. In advance democracies, reasons adduced by politicians for defection from one party to another include divergent views on the operations of the party philosophies, crisis among party leaders reneging on agreements, but recent cases of defection in Nigeria is mainly informed by interest, personality clash and power tussle, while many see it as loss of ideological convictions (Nwaneri, 2018). However,



defection is an offshoot of politics but the manner in which Nigeria political actors jump from one party to another has succeeded in relegating party politics to the background and encourage ascendancy and triumph politics of convenience. The ideology of party is anchored on single interest and in some degrees attempt to aggregate much interest in the society, it is this interest that drives the party members to seek influence in a state by attempting to control machinery of government (Boafo-Arthur, 2003). An average Nigerian politician sees defection as an indispensable feature of democracy and the situation is worrisome because political parties on their own encourage defection based on the philosophy of “more and merrier” this has posed serious threat to consolidate democracy in Nigeria (Mbah, 2011). The unguarded manner in which legislators jump in and out of party negates the wisdom behind the provision of Section 68 (1) (g) of the 1999 Constitution as amended. The section is designed to put a halt on defection at the slightest provocation and proof that any member of the national assembly that decamped shall vacate his seat of which he is a member if the person whose election to the seat was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before tenure expiration for which that House was elected; provided his membership of the latter party is not caused by division in the party of which he was a member or merger of two or more parties or factions by which he was sponsored (Malthora, 2005, FRN, 1999).

Party defection crept in the political context of Nigeria in 1951 and continued up to first republic from 1960-1966, when some members of National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) were lobbied to cross over to Action Group (AG) to stop the former from forming government in defunct Western Region. The NCNC won 42 out of 80 seats in the region’s House of Assembly but one swoop lost 20 of them to AG. This stopped late Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe from being premier of the Western Region. Other defections were that of late Akintola, who left AG due to personality clash between him and late Chief Obafemi Awolowo the leader of the party. Also, there was a disagreement between Azikiwe and Mbadiwe that forced the latter to dump NCNC to form Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (DPNC). It was the same story in second Republic of 1979-1983. The worst heat then was the Unity Party of Nigeria an offshoot of Action Group and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP). Some chieftains of Unity Party Nigeria (UPN) like Enahoro, Akinjide, Ikoku and



Omoboriowo joined the ruling party National Party of Nigeria (NPN), but Omoboriowo, the then deputy to Micheal Ajasin of Ondo State, became the NPN governorship candidate in 1983. In Kano state, late Abubakar Rimi was elected governor on the platform of Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in 1979, later defect to Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) but his attempt for second term in 1983 in NPP failed. The aborted third republic saw a creation of two major political parties of SDP and NRC with different ideological plumes “a little to the left and a little to the right” as identified. More defection could have happened if they survived another round of election, as some National Republican Convention (NRC) leaders were admiring MKO Abiola, the acclaimed winner of June 12, 1993 annulled presidential election. Some chieftains that lost in their states were already horse-trading with Social Democratic Party (SDP) leaders that won elections in their states to decamp to the ruling party.

From 1999 to date, many politicians at the local, state and federal levels have moved from one party to the other, some abandon the platforms on which they were elected into power, while others after losing elections see it as the best option to jump into another party. Cases of these defection trickles in early years of the present dispensation, but it was massive defection ahead of 2015 general elections. It has been noted that before 2015 general election, out of 29 governorship candidates of the then opposition party, APC, 18 of them had one time or the other members of PDP that lost 2015 presidential election to APC. In all these horse-trading, no one dreamt of securing infrastructural development, raise affordable education or healthcare, let alone attain the remote needs of people in their respective locality. Most reveals the implications of some political heavyweights criss-crossing from APC to PDP and from PDP to APC or other parties among governors, federal and state law makers few months to 2019 general elections (Aziken, 2009). Party defection from one party to another in the present 4th republic has brought Nigeria party system to a theatre of mockery and disrepute and this has portray the political actors as people who are in politics for self aggrandizement. A place where party chieftain defect from one party to another and then defect back to their original party in a spate of one term or one month under circumstances that celebrate or disregard for principles. A chieftain in party Y suddenly moves to party Z and begin to contradict everything they had done in party Y, it is a known fact that politicians are paid to remain in their party, negotiations for party allegiance are premised on automatic ticket and



pre-determined political post. Political party defection is interest, as politics in Nigeria remains a game of interest masquerading as contest of principles. The defection trend continued after 2015 and before 2019 general elections with most members of the former ruling PDP moving to ruling APC over the quest to gain power. The PDP chieftains could not patiently wait to rebuild their party after their defeat by APC in 2015 presidential elections. The paper will come up with a framework on why political party defection has become a way to do in Nigeria electoral process. The pertinent question here is to whose interest or will defection change the political face of Nigeria for good? What we experience today is horse-trading and impeachment threat with impunity ahead of 2019 general elections.

Conceptual Explanation

Political Party

Political party refers to any group of politically active persons outside government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who control the operations and machineries of government to determine its policies (Lemay, 2001). Political Parties serve as an index through which democratic governance could be compared in States in that, the structure and operation of party politics in polities serve as measuring rod for determining the fragility or otherwise democratic systems (Omodia, 2010). In this a situation, political parties are structured to perform articulate, aggregative, communicative and educative functions. Such system is likely to be associated with poor political culture tend to make the democratic process so fragile. In a situation where political parties are well structured to articulate, aggregative, communicative and educative functions, such a system is often associated with participant political culture which tends to ensure a stable democratic process (Almond, 2010). In Nigeria, democratic process no doubt is bedeviled with poor party politics as a result of ethnicization of party politics, poor leadership, excessive westernization of democratic concept, party indiscipline, non clear cut party ideologies, politicization of the higher echelon of the military profession among others and worrisomely, lack of internal party democracy (Ntalaja, 2000).

Horse-Trading



Horse trading is a political term used whenever a government fails, a lot of horse-trading goes on before another government is formed. Some of our politicians look like horses, when you are being unfair especially to the horses. It is used to indicate a hard bargaining especially the two bargaining parties' streamline the problem and unofficial negotiations in a clever manner. This bargaining is involved in state, government, body politic, public administration and policy-making (Khammam, 2002). The implications have too many compromises to arrive at some sort of agreement. It involves complex bargaining or other transactions like political vote trading, which is expected that horse sellers capitalize on these opportunities and gained a reputation for under-handed business practices.

Party Defection

In politics, a defector is a person who gives up allegiance to one state in exchange for allegiance to another, in a way which is considered illegitimate by the first state. More broadly, it involves abandoning a person, cause or doctrine to which one is bound by some tie of allegiance or duty. This is applied often pejoratively to anyone who switches loyalty to another religion, sports team, political party or other rival faction. The term is synonymous with traitor especially if the defector brings in the secrets or confidential information. It involves abandoning a person, cause or doctrine which one is bound by some tie of allegiance or duty. It is the state of having rejected one's political beliefs or your political party or a cause in favour of opposing political beliefs or causes. Okwaraji (2010) assert that party defectors are political prostitutes without political principle, morality and conscience who lack political ideology to champion the course of leadership. The reasons for political defection in the last three republics was as result of personal clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operation of political party's philosophy, crises within a political party, disagreement on party's position, realizing personal ambition and party leaders reneging on agreed issues of political party like power sharing formula. Politicians have consistently defected from one party to another in the Nigeria's fourth republic; some abandoning the parties on whose platform they were elected, while others after losing elections found it best to cross carpet to the party in power. Political party defection refers to the departure of a member from a political party to join another political party, typically because of discontent



in his existing party. Defection is in different nomenclatures as decamping, cross-carpeting, party hopping, party switching, party crossover and canoe-jumping (Malhotra, 2005). Some scholars argued that party defection is caused by political events involving political institutions while others conclude that it is ideological pressure (Nokken and Poole, 2002). In some nations, party defections are not taken seriously whereas, in some countries, such actions are seen as threat to democratic stability. For instance, India enacted laws against defection in 1973, 1985 and 2003. The law provides that a person can be disqualified from parliament for withdrawing membership of his original political party (Janada, 2009). This reduces cases of party defection in Indian polity since is difficult for Indian public office holders to forfeit their position. From the above, party defection refers to one's abandonment of his or her previous position or association, offers and join opposition or ruling party over the issue of political ideology, manifesto and party management. Since 1999 many politicians at the local, state and federal levels have consistently defected from one party to the other. Some did so because the parties on whose platform they were elected will lose elections found it best option to cross carpet to another political party.

Reasons for Political Party Defection in Nigeria

Weak Formation of Parties: Parties formed from second to present fourth republic were formed with the aim of wresting power from the military and so they were not rooted in strong ideological base and common vision. As observed by Tyoden (2000), former President Shagari view that political parties in the fourth republic were created within some weeks and prepared for elections within some days. They lack required socio-political foundations of formal political parties, they were nothing other than electoral machines, put together by individuals to contest and fill the power vacuum available with the impending departure of the military. They lack primary features of political parties. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2000), observed that these parties were electoral coalitions put together to satisfy organizational criteria laid down by transitional authorities, rather than groups that have grown with clear



cut and long term political project. Ake's (2003) & Tyoden (2000), posits that Nigerian politics were dissociated from ideology, social forces and social realities. They belonged to everyone and nobody in particular and this constituted anarchy of ambitions. In the face of this visionless formation of strange bed fellows, it is expected to be characterized with intra-party crises that result in persistent defections.

Lack of Internal Democracy: this describes a wide range of methods to include party members in party decision-making (Aleyomi, 2013). It gives registered party members opportunity to exercise their franchise in selecting delegates to party conventions and candidates for general elections. The amendment of party constitutions and election of new party executives require the inputs of party members through conventions and congresses. It is common in Nigeria that political parties do not practice free and fair elections in nomination of candidates for elections. The results of party primaries and conventions are conducted as mere formalities, the candidates are hand-picked against the wish of the party members, and in some cases names are submit in Abuja without due regards to results from their constituencies. It is glaring not to contest primary election in the same party with an incumbent in any of the parties or contest for any party position without endorsement by the incumbent of the ruling party in Nigeria. Most candidates that stand for general elections are anointed by one or few party godfathers, the popular aspirants are not selected; rather a gullible, naive political neophyte who would maintain asymmetrical relationship with the godfather is anointed. in the course of this, most aspirants who are denied fairness defect to other parties tor realize their political ambition (Ikelegbe, 2014).

Kleptocracy: Most political positions in Nigeria are contested as “do or die affair” because it is a means of having access to national cake and acquiring wealth, not service to the people. Evidence has shown that those who occupied political positions in Nigeria since 1999 stupendously enrich overnight, the effort to probe or prosecute, let alone convict them is futile. The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC) that suppose to act are mere toothless bulldogs; at best they are instrument used by government to victimize opposition of the government. The situation degenerated to a level that when political office holders are accused of any financial embezzlement, the much the government can do is to set up a probe panel. This probe panel



make mockery venture that people who are connected to those in power scramble to be members of the panel because it is a means of cutting their own share of national cake. It is now a tradition to celebrate those who loot public fund to enrich themselves in Nigeria, while the few that left public offices without any wealth are booed as never-do-wells. It is this mentality of primitive acquisition of wealth in public offices that leads to the desperation of political seekers to be elected or appointed in positions to defect at will when their interest is not met in their parties (Lamidi and Bello, 2014).

Godfatherism: The Nigerian political organization is full of political prebendalism, whose mode of operation is patron-client relationship or “patronage politics” which Igwe (2005) view as a type of political society characterized by condescending autocratic rule and the arbitrary exercise of power in favour of friends, relations, allies and other persons whose loyalties have to be purchased with money, without due process in violation of constitutional provisions. Okolie (2006) observed that godfathers in some countries are motivated by their resolve to control public policies in favour of their concerns, in Nigeria; the primary motivation is to control state treasury. The godfathers in Nigerian politics are concerned with appropriation of government contracts, political appointments and plundering the coffers of the state. They are privileged to decide the political faith of aspirants to political offices and as such those that are not only seen, but confirmed to be “loyal” cannot be “given” ticket as the flag-bearer of the party. This is to ensure that the godsons will be accountable to them when they get to the office. As a result of the foregoing, some aspirants defect to other parties where they do not have such powerful figures that would frustrate their political aspirations.

Failure to Party Ideologies and Manifestoes: Once elections are over, the interest of the common man is no longer in opposition party’s agenda; they would be struggling to be part of unity government if offered by the ruling party. For instance members of ANPP, after 2007 general elections abandoned the party and presidential candidate to be part of unity government as introduced by the ruling PDP. The presidential candidate of the then ANPP Muhammed Buhari was persuaded by his party leaders to drop his case against the ruling party despite the irregularities that characterized the election (Gabriel, 2012). After a futile struggle to secure justice from judiciary, Buhari dumped ANPP and formed CPC as a “solution to the debilitating, ethical and ideological conflicts in ANPP. The activities of



Nigerian political parties since 1999 has shown that right from the formation period, parties are composition of people from diverse opinion; the founders of these parties share nothing in common than intra-party crisis. Omoruyi (2002) assert that the action of the parties does not fit into their composition but as mere instruments of transition from military to civil rule. Also, Adebayo (2008), posits that starting from the origin of the first three political parties (PDP, APP, AD), the then ruling party (PDP) was a mixed bag of persons with different ideologies that is conservative, radicals and progressives who misunderstand themselves with regular feud. The then AD was a Yoruba-based party, formed just to see that power returned to South West. The compositions of APP former ANPP are set of politicians who served during Abacha regime. This explains why the current dispensation witness more intra-party conflict than the previous ones. Olaniyan, (2009) agrees that the tussle for power and control of party machinery become the order of the day since 1999 as some members parade themselves as founders of the party, the major roles in the formation of the parties ended being dictatorial. In PDP, for example, the former national chairman, Audu Ogbe lamented that there were individuals who did not see themselves as being members of the party, who rather sought to own the party and dictate to the party. The crisis in PDP prompted Simbine (2004) to argue that the party is run as factions and caucuses with many bigwigs posing as Board of Trustees members and others as chieftain of the party. The collision among these groups manifested in frequent change of party leadership, within eleven years PDP had six chairmen, out of which none of them completed his term. In the same vein, the rift within APP now APC led to expulsion of twelve strong members in October 2002. The crisis in AD split the party into two camps and later led to the exit of prominent members of the party. The runaway group formed a new party, AC which metamorphosed to ACN and finally merge with CPC, ANPP with faction of APGA to become APC that won 2015 general elections.

Constitutional Deficiency: Section 177 of the 1999 Constitution states that a person shall only be qualified for election into the office of the governor of the state if he is a member of a political party and sponsored by a political party. This Constitution fails to state that such a person cannot leave that party after achieving electoral victory. In respect of senator, House of Representative members and state legislators, the 1999 Constitution specifies in section 68 (1) (g) and (2) and 109 (1) (g) that a state or federal lawmaker must vacate his or her seat



after defecting to another political party which he is a member if the person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party before the expiration of the period for which that house was elected; provided that his membership of the latter political party did not divide the political party of which he was previously a member or a merger of two or more political parties or faction by one of which he was previously sponsored. This provision has been explored by elected politicians to defect from their political party to another. It is evident that the Constitution stipulated that one can leave a political party on the ground of factional crisis within a given political party, it did not define division. It is as a result of this constitutional flaw that elected official defect to other parties at the slightest provocation (Ikhariale, 2015).

Cases of Party Defection within 2015 and 2019 General Elections

The alliance of political forces of the opposition hue in the build-up to 2015 general election portend a grave danger for PDP, the behemoth which PDP typified at the time, had imprudently and lightly treated the ill-omened development and paid dearly for it. The PDP was brought down in prostrate surrender to the supremacy of the rainbow coalition of opposition parties that formed APC today on which Muhammadu Buhari clinched his historic victory over Goodluck Jonathan. The defeat of an incumbent president was novel in the annals of the nation's presidential elections. Indisputably, the defection of five governors of Rivers (Rotimi Amaechi), Kano (Rabiu Kwankwaso), Adamawa (Murtala Nyako), Kwara (Abdulfatah Ahmed) and Sokoto (Magatakarda Wammako) as well as Speaker, House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, was the crown capping of the intricate political dynamics, calculations, permutations and treacheries that conspired to expose the under-belly of Jonathan's presidency. Jonathan's incumbency factor, his seeming sure-footed candidature, his custody and superintendence of the sixteen year old power heritage of PDP family he contested, suffered collateral damage. The tsunami which 2015 general election exemplified, swept off many PDP candidates for other elective offices. The strategic natures of the public offices occupied by five governors and the speaker had added gravitas to their decision to exit PDP. Jonathan have committed the original sins of scorning zoning arrangement and renegeing on his purported unwritten promise not to seek re-election in



2015. The overwhelming Boko Haram insurgency in northeast zone and corruption in the nation's public finance rendered Jonathan presidency helpless. His administration was portrayed as incapable of protecting the lives and property of the citizenry. The citizenry had been benumbed by the incessant mindless maiming and killings by the insurgents, nothing was more expedient than a change of leadership (Agbese, 2014, Blueprint Newspaper, July 26).

It was a clear two-horse race between northern Muslim and southern Christian that 2015 presidential election approximated, the choice of Buhari by a vast majority of the electorate was conversely the rejection of Jonathan. The outcome of the election was the product of the inter-course between essential popular support for Buhari and the factor of integrity that popularized his brand. Basically, the Buhari factor had in few weeks of his inauguration as president, produced a domino effect in apt summation of its wider chain reactions. It should be pointed out that Buhari also enjoyed critical support for it to sustain its historic pre-consciousness that has created and defined a certain "idyllic" northern electoral base from where he usually gets about ten million secured votes. The fact that the votes could not clinch for him the presidency in 2003, 2007 and 2011 underscores certain limitations. His outlook was provincial until 2015 when utilitarian political strategies were deployed to transform him into a national, nay cosmopolitan brand via the public relational strategy funded by some southern APC leaders. A further limitation in 2019 may be the presentation of a northern Muslim presidential candidate by the opposition. Some other influential politicians who defected from PDP to APC largely added their essential bootstraps to the momentum that sustained the Buhari phenomenon in its vast flourish. Consider former vice president Atiku Abubakar, who has defecting from one party to another from 2006 till date of PDP, AC, APC is now in PDP as at November 24, 2017. former governor of Kwara, Senator Bukola Saraki, who would later emerge as the senate president in 2015, former governor of Nasarawa state, Senator Abdullahi Adamu and former national chairman of PDP, Senator Barnabas Gemade (Ibrahim, 2014). Most of the defectors especially from the ruling parties at the national and state levels later returned to their various parties lend credence that there is no indication that the recent exodus in the ruling party would align with what seems to be a noticeable awful



character of Nigerian politicians or that there is any chance of return at least for now (Okunloye, 2019, Official naija news).

Today, ahead of the crucial 2019 general election, the 2014 historical defections that culminated in the defeat of Jonathan are being witnessed. Atiku, Kwankwaso, Gemade, et al, are back in the PDP, more defections are expected to take place in the next few weeks. Senate President Saraki with 15 Senators and 37 House of Representatives members from APC at their respective plenary sessions to PDP. Former President Obasanjo-inspired African Democratic Congress (ADC) received two senators and four representatives defectors from APC to raise the stakes and ignite high-wired politics that would define the shape, content and texture of the political alliances and the 2019 presidential race (Okunloye, 2019, official naija news). The Benue State governor, Samuel Ortom defected from APC to PDP with 10 out of 18 APC members in State Assembly, 13 out of 24 local government chairmen and 276 councilors equally joined him, he has 22 members out of 30-member house behind him. Governors Tambuwal of Sokoto state and Ahmed Fatah of Kwara state equally came back to PDP from APC.

Party politics in Nigeria has been turned into a game beyond analysis of battles and defections; very few people have bothered to ask how any of these political games and schemes benefits Nigerians. As for service, or any desire to improve the lives of constituents, this features least of all. The same people give or take a few names, which defected in 2015 from the PDP, are the same people who have defected from APC. Nigerians celebrating such behaviour hints at a fair weather friend's mentality of people who are only interested in the self-aggrandizement and patronage which they can only get from being present whenever they believe the national cake will be shared, in the ruling party of the day. According Buhari (2018), some people are celebrating because a small group of people are defecting; they believe their demands for subsidized living is not satisfied such as state sponsored contracts, patronage, opportunities at the expense of the society. The defectors have their different reasons especially APC leadership under Oshiomhole exerted to engage and deal and pacify but those that could not be pacified decided to jump over. The defections has energized 2019 presidential race, this has been common occurrence on the eve of a general election in Nigeria. It is the beginning of windows, doors and rooms for consultations and resolutions



because our party APC minds and cares for all members in or out of office. “Biblically: if you loss one sheep out of hundred, preserve 99 and go and search for the lost one sheep”. The oppositions are building around the strategic hub of PDP to couple a countrywide coalition force to dislodge APC and Buhari in 2019 elections, but there is a religious commitment to 2019 anti-APC campaign (www.officialnaijanews.com,2018). The political mission is benefiting from the near apostolic zeal by Obasanjo who has successfully mobilized and has continued to follow-up on his consultations with the Yoruba leaders of south-west zone on the need to effect a change of what he described as incompetent and nepotistic leadership. Former president Babangida, forcefully weighed in a proposal for young generation of leaders to step in the saddle of governance in Nigeria. The political elite and the hoi-polloi have their grouses against APC government just as they had against Jonathan in 2015. It is the struggle for power and interests, but for the hoi-polloi, it is welfare issue, hunger and weak purchasing power occasioned by bazaar-canteen economic mode. Jonathan did not survive 2015 elections because his candidature was largely damaged. Will Buhari’s candidature, supported by the forces of APC leaders and members nationwide, escape indictment by the coalition of forces massing against him? While the oppositions appear upbeat, the APC leaders believe that Buhari factor is solid to win 2019 (www.officialnaijanews.com, 2018).

Defection and its Implications in 2019 General Election in Nigeria

As 2019 general elections approaches, Nigerian politicians are moving camps, divorcing and marrying new political suitors and erecting new shades to ply their political trade. Defection, the choice name for this seasonal movement of camps is at its peak period presently and this is so because the 2019 election is just around the corner. For politicians, this is a critical moment when their fates in the coming election are decided. How well the parties meet one’s hope and desire informs whether he stays or moves camp. There is no more to this than this unceasing foraging for greener political pastures. The gale of defection is here again, not that it had stopped before now but this is the seasons for it; when a fresh election knocks at the door and politicians take stock and prospect to the future. Just like in football terms, this is the peak of the transfer window, nothing is wrong with this because it is embodied in the freedom of association which is an essential provision of our laws (Oparah,



2014 www.saharareporters.htm). In 2015 elections, Nigeria had 40 registered political parties. Ahead of 2019, there are now 68, with 33 more being considered for registration. The ones to beat this time around will be the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). This party was created ahead of 2015 through a merger of what were then the country's four biggest opposition parties. Its growing ranks were further boosted when several figures from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), in power at the time, crossed the floor. In the election, the APC enjoyed an historic victory and ended the PDP's political dominance, which had lasted since 1999. But since those heights, internal rivalries have come to the fore and prevented it from emerging as a cohesive force. The APC continues to run as an amalgam of the interests that created it in the first instance, with intra-party disputes emerging at both federal and state levels (Amin, 2018, Vanguard Newspaper, July, 25).

. The incumbent President Buhari is the front runner to be the party's flag bearer in 2019. However, aside from his mixed record in office, his advanced age of 75 and ill health could arise as an issue. Many are asking whether he will be fit to govern if re-elected, especially given that he spent several months of his first term receiving treatment in London for an undisclosed ailment. The main opposition PDP has faced similar infighting to APC since 2015. After the election, the party faced a bitter legal battle over the leadership of the party with Ahmed Makarfi eventually confirmed as the party chairman. Since then, PDP held a national convention in which new officials were elected. Some regions were marginalized, however, and the party has yet to calm concerns about the state of its internal democracy or shed its reputation for corruption, which it developed over its 16 years in office (Hassan, 2018, Insiders' Newsletter, March 26).

Several candidates lining up to bid PDP's presidential nominees are former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who recently crossed over from APC to PDP is a serial defector. At 71, his age and unproven corruption allegations remains the albatross around his neck. Other aspirants from the PDP include governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose, Governor Ibrahim Dankwabo, governor Waziri Tambual, former governors of Kaduna and Jigawa, Ahmed Makarfi and Sule Lamido respectively. Along these two big parties, Nigeria could, for the first time see a powerful third party emerge in 2019. The most popular phrase in the country today is "third force" and various groups attempt to harness the appetite for an alternative to



APC and PDP. 30 opposition parties have joined forces under the banner of Coalition for a New Nigeria (CNN). Former president Obasanjo has set up the Coalition for Nigeria Movement (CNM). And groups such as the Nigerian Intervention Movement, Revive Nigeria and Emerging Leaders Summit are trying to jostle for position. regarding the presidency, the likes of motivational speaker Fela Durotoye, former deputy governor of CBN Kingsley Moghalu, and founder of the online whistle blowing site Sahara Reporter Omoyele Sowore have all expressed their intention to challenge the main parties' candidates. At the same time, citizen-led groups are also making their voices heard. The Red Card Movement and Bring-Back-Our-Girls campaigner Oby Ezekwesili, is calling for APC and PDP send forth. Meanwhile, Not Too Young to Run Movement is demanding the inclusion of young people in the political space. Unfortunately, there is less momentum behind efforts seeking to enhance the participation of women in politics. Less than 6% of Nigeria's lawmakers are female, one of the lowest proportion in Africa, while more marginal parties may make space for women and youth to lure voters, the same is likely to be less true of the big parties (Onabale, 2018, Sun Newspaper News, July, 27).

Resource challenges: one of the most reliable sources of funding political parties is party membership dues. In Nigeria, the culture of having "party financiers" as few members of the party who by that status take over the party structure makes it difficult for one to argue that any political party in Nigeria has sustainable base. If those financiers decide to withhold their supports and finances, just like some PDP governors did at the height of their intra-party clash in 2013, the party finance crumbles. Some credible resource base for political parties is returns from investment; no political party in Nigeria has such resources not to think of sustaining it. For government and opposition party, contributions from members in political positions form the source of funding, complementing and sometimes constituting part of the major financiers.

Strong opposition is commonly held beyond government, the existence of credible, strong and challenging opposition is important for the sustenance of democracy. The recent defection by a section of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressive Congress (APC) ordinarily ought to drive Nigerian democracy to such situation of balance needed in any normal and established democracy for the practice in the country to



consolidate. Looking at the equation of the elected officers in the country before and after that defection, one would understand that it really was a very significant development in the position of Nigeria party politics. It was a defection that saw five (5) state governors, Eleven (11) Senators and Thirty-Seven (37) members of the House of Representatives joining the APC to create a rather balanced power equation among the government party and opposition, giving the posture of an increased possibility for a change in the next general election. Thus, Nigeria might be presenting a democracy with two consolidated parties that would place democracy on a competitive ground. Some thick clouds cover both PDP and APC, making the picture unclear. One basic consideration to determine if the parties, PDP that has being in government for over sixteen (16) years now and APC have major differences. It appears that virtually all political parties in Nigeria have very fluid nature, they are not established on any principle, it is formed, reformed, changed, merged, demerged and disintegrated. The party's sustainability can be measured by the level of adaptability, adequate resource, mechanism for internal conflict resolution, and continuous process of self reincarnation through positive leadership and injection of new ideas (Wanjohi, 2003). It can be measured in terms of the size of its core membership as well as the character and organizational capabilities of its core leadership.

Political Violence: The most damning record of political parties on clean slate is the persistence of violence in our political system (Ibeanu, 2013). Apart from elections conducted by the colonial government and the military, others such as the 1964, 1983, 2003 and 2007 elections were plagued by violence and crises. The 2011 elections was particularly plagued by incidents of violence that included theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of properties and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem and chaos. More incidents of electoral violence have included assault on electoral officials and voters, hijack and seizure of election materials, attacks on security officials and violent clashes between rival thugs and sympathizers of political parties. The major parties in Nigeria to some degrees involve in mobilizing and deploying armed groups during party registrations, primaries and general elections. Some parties have loyal armed groups that are fairly known in some states and communities that are deployed to protect their interests (Ikelegbe, 2014). The breeding and



use of thugs has assumed has assumed a multiple-layered dimension, both the opposition and the ruling parties now breed thugs. Also, within the parties, leading aspirants now maintain hordes of people mostly male who perform sundry acts such as errands, guards and harassment of political opponents. Individual thugs, cult groups and armed gangs hire out their services to party leaders, who arm and pay them for specific violent roles during primaries and general elections. Politically motivated assassinations have been a major feature of the struggles for power and resources within and between political parties, other forms of violence are violent attacks on the properties, campaign, party offices and supporters of opponents (Ikelegbe, 2014, Daily Trust, 2014).

Most political parties do not practice internal democracy because their leaders hardly emerged democratically hence the rising culture of political violence and assassinations especially in some sections of the country. Internal party democracy in political parties also refer to the levels and methods of including party members in the decision making and deliberation within party structure (Kari and Uchenna, 2011). The most elementary aspects of political development in a democracy are the convention of party congresses and the conduct of transparent and successful party primaries to elect leaders and candidates (flag-bearers) respectively. Since 1999, the trend has been that party primaries among virtually all political parties in Nigeria are usually pre-determined with party godfathers having the final say in the selection of both party leaders and candidates (Simbine, 2014). Lack of internal democracy and poor governance in the political parties as indicated by non-inclusive system of participation and decision making, lack of opportunities for broad input, absence of well defined structures, rules and processes, denial of individual and group rights and weak mechanisms for redressing grievances (Ikelegbe, 2013). Obviously, political godfathers are always unwilling to allow internal party democracy, expectedly, this leads to internal party crisis and frequent decamping of aggrieved politicians to other political parties where their aspirations can be accommodated (Simbine, 2013). The activities of political parties in Nigeria are a paradox because the principles expected like internal coherence and discipline are lacking in all. These principles eluded political parties in Nigeria instead it became the total opposite of what should be obtained; the absence of internal party democracy today stands as a major stumbling block to nurture participatory democracy in Nigeria. The flagrant



abuse of internal party democracy has been identified as the primogeniture of party crisis either because of the wrangling it brings in the party affairs. Most internal party conflicts witnessed among political parties in Nigeria are either directly or indirectly linked to the problem of intra-party democracy, and this has bedeviled the development of political parties and sustainable democratic consolidation in our country (Ukajeje, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As our democracy evolves and we continue to reflect on ways to get the best out of those who govern us, we will need to thoroughly review party conduct and the laws governing political parties in Nigeria, not to curtail freedom of association but to tackle the problematic way of doing things which hinders true progress in Nigeria. Politicians defect from one party to another not on the basis of ideological disagreement, but on selfish interest. The trend of baseless defections among Nigerian politicians makes mockery of Nigerian democracy, negates the values of opposition parties in democratic system, invalidate opposing views and reduce the efficacy of alternative democratic choices. Party defection if not checked, could move Nigeria into a system without viable opposition to serve as watchdog to the ruling party. Party defection is linked to political culture and suggests the emergence of new political culture to build on new values and virtues, to reinforce the democratic practice in Nigeria. It is also worthy to note that the nature and character of political parties can frustrate members seeking to defect. Democracy is built on ideologically sustained political parties and the extent to which this is derailed can exert negative influence on democratic stability and consolidation.

The role of civil society groups, non-governmental organizations and pro-democracy groups in reversing this democratic confusion. The paper recommends the amendment of constitution and electoral laws to regulate the alarming rate of defection among politicians in Nigeria. Sustaining Nigeria's democracy requires a social re-orientation, consistent political education and mobilization based on democratic culture directed towards inculcation of new values in the political system.



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