

Political Nomadism as an Antithesis of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Reflections on the 2015 and 2019 General Elections

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Abstract

Twenty-one years after the return of democracy from its forced exile, it is still struggling to find its feet in Nigeria's political landscape. Several studies have variously interrogated the dynamics of democratization in Nigeria in relation to other variables, including rudimentary party politics, albeit peripherally and perfunctorily. Reflecting on the 2015 and 2019 general elections and the political build-ups to them, therefore, this paper argues that the nature and character of defections and re-alignments did not only make a caricature of Nigeria's electoral democracy, but has reduced the act of defection to mere political nomadism. It contends that in advanced democracies, party defection is rare, and when embarked upon, is usually for the purposes and on the basis of propagating and defending abiding principles and political philosophies to which one is convinced; and not for primitive political opportunism as the case is in Nigeria. Following the analysis of data collected via documentary method as well as the deployment of the Post-colonial State theory, the study found that political opportunism rather than altruism was the predominant objective and fundamental impetus behind the nomadic defections that played out in the 2015 and 2019 general elections, and that this has fundamentally undermined democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends, among others, that INEC charges political parties to adopt clear cut ideologies in addition to prevailing over political office holders who wish to switch political parties to first resign from such current positions.

Keywords: Democratic consolidation, Elections, Ideology, Party defection, Political nomadism.

Introduction

The first vestiges of what might be labelled 'democratic' governance in Nigeria were uprooted by the military on 15th January, 1966. This was followed by a bout of authoritarian military interregnum that eventually yielded to democratic civilian pressure on 29th May, 1999. It has been observed that once a political society that had lived under any form of authoritarian cum undemocratic system of government manages to free itself from such repressive regime and all of its excruciating paraphernalia; the next and immediate option it pursues is usually to democratize. Democratization, itself, is a process of adopting,

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imbibing and secularizing the fundamental values and principles of democracy. That political arrangement under which the most supreme of all decisions affecting the citizens and residents of a political society are made by the people themselves, either directly or indirectly through their elected representatives, best captures the overriding import of a democracy. Hence, participation of the people remains an essential ingredient of that “government of the people by the people and for the people” (democracy) in the immortal words of Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address of 19th November, 1863.

Be that as it may, democratic transition is not analogous to democratic consolidation. While the former has come to be more or less associated with transition from a military or any other dictatorial and authoritarian regime to a civilian regime wherein some of the nominal, but seldom functional, indicators of democracy are present, the latter envisages a consistent procedural institutionalization and habituation to the ideals of democracy. In terms of relative political practicality, it is easier to attain democratic transition than to attain democratic consolidation, and without the latter, every self-acclaimed democracy is a farce, and embodies all the inherent possibilities of relapsing into somewhat ‘democratic authoritarianism’.

Having attained a default democratic status in 1999, the Nigerian state was, and is still confronted with the mounting necessity of consolidating her fledgling democracy. The relative newness of Nigeria’s democracy and the political attitudes of her political players are not unconnected to the pathological maturation of her democracy. The nation’s democracy, needless to say, is archetypal of an unconsolidated democracy in which “all elements constituting a consolidated democratic regime are in place, but relations among them do not form a coherent structure typical of mature democracies” (Wasilewski, 1996, p.1).

As Akubo and Yakubu (2014, p.1) rightly observe, “mainstream rhetoric in Nigeria media and popular discourses of the polity is often centred on the claim that Nigeria is ‘consolidating its democracy’”. The practical realities on the ground, however, contradict this claim. Between 1999 and 2007, Nigeria seemed to be building and experimenting, struggling to extricate itself from or (at best) attaining a balance between the vestiges of military rule from which it emerged and democratic governance which it was currently professing. It was hoped that after building democratic institutions such as political parties and electoral institutions, the country’s nascent democracy would experience consolidation with eventual transition of power from one civilian regime to another. Indeed, the country witnessed political power transition from one democratic government to another in 2007 and 2010/2011, albeit from political actor of one political party to other actors of the same political party. However, efforts towards consolidating the country’s democracy have been regrettably jeopardized by the gale of defections which have rocked the very foundation of the major political parties in Nigeria since the periods leading to 2015 and 2019 general elections in the country. The objective of this current study is to demonstrate that, far from consolidating the democracy, Nigerian political actors, who ordinarily should be the custodians and indeed at the vanguard of the consolidation desideratum, have regrettably armed themselves with shovel, spade and mattock to the reprehensible end of burying same in the graveyard of political nomadism. The central argument of the paper is, therefore, that the trajectory of the nation’s democratic

consolidation—“the process by which a new democracy matures in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock” (Wikipedia, 2009, p.1) — has come under the paroxysmal attack of mindless exercise in objectionable political nomadism with its concomitant arsenals that are unhealthy to democratic consolidation.

Theoretical Underpinning

The import of a theoretical framework is to situate a study within its proper perspective. Consequently, we adopted the Marxist theory of the postcolonial state as a framework of analysis. The theory of postcolonial states analyses the main aspects of colonialism and their pervasive effects which have persisted remarkably on the hitherto colonial territories, even after the end of the colonial rule. The Marxist theory of postcolonial states points out the legacies of colonial era, particularly in the economic field, which reproduce the unequal relations between the metropolitan centres and their ex-colonies, as well as between the indigenous bourgeoisie class and the masses. The theory derives from the writings of Karl Marx and his followers such as Vladimir Lenin (1984), Claude Ake (1975), Eme Ekekwe (1986), Hamza Alavi (1979), Miliband (1977), etc. According to them, the postcolonial states have the following attributes: (a) The postcolonial state is purely an instrument of the ruling class which perpetuate class domination. (b) The state is both the source of economic power and an instrument of accumulation of economic power, thus, the domestic ruling class see state power as a means of primitive accumulation. They do this in alliance with certain external forces. (c) The postcolonial states are rentier states, parcelled out to the persons that use the state power for selfish ends.

Hamza Alavi (1979) in Fadakinte (2013, p.278) argues that the postcolonial state is the product of “the historical specificity which arises from structural changes brought about by the colonial experience and alignments of classes and by the super structures and alignments of classes and the super structures of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context and secondly from radical realignments of class forces which have been brought about in the postcolonial situation”. Thus, the postcolonial state possesses an outstanding feature of being characterized by relatively and highly over developed state apparatus/institution. And this is because the origin of the state is rooted in the metropolitan countries, which, having dominated the classes in the colonies became overdeveloped and autonomous with a strong bureaucratic military. In other words, the apparatus of state was transplanted from the metropolitan state. Again, the super structure in the colony is therefore “overdeveloped” in relation to the structure in the colony, for its basis lies in the metropolitan structure itself, from which it is later separated at the time of independence (Alavi, 1972).

Theorizing on the woes of the postcolonial African states, Ake (1975) argues that the development of the state in Africa remains at a low level of the primitive accumulation with massive intervention of force in the labour process. Consequently, because of the low level of the development of the state, it is unable to mediate the struggle between classes and the struggle within the dominant class. Thus, the struggle to control, and the use of state power, becomes warfare. Consequently, power is over-valued and security lies only on getting more and more power. As a result, there is hardly any restraint on the means of acquiring power, on holding it and on using it. Hence, there is a bastardization of the

democratic structure of the state because political competition is done without norm, value, principle and philosophy; and is carried to the extreme thereby turning political competition into warfare and the political class thus operates in a state of siege (Ihonvbere, 1989; Schraeder, 2004).

Like most postcolonial states, the Nigerian state lacks the capacity to moderate and curtail the excessive struggles between and amongst the various contending groups it harbours. Apart from the ethnic and religious group struggles, the Nigerian state also contends with the problem of powerful political parties with more powerful individuals. The struggle between and amongst these political parties and/or individuals to rule by all means (legitimate or illegitimate), which would automatically translate to economic and wealth accumulation, accounts for political nomadism in the country which in turn accounts for the failure to adequately consolidate the country's democracy. In other words, these powerful politicians switch parties purely for self-aggrandizement while the political parties accept such powerful individuals for the political and economic relevance their membership would attract to the new party. Like every nomadic herdsman, whenever these political party nomads switch political parties, their followers go with them. This phenomenon ostensibly played out in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Conceptual familiarization/ Literature review

The great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, gave the most enduring premise upon which debates, argumentations, and indeed, scholarly enquiries should be conducted, when he stated *inter alia*: "*initio desputandi est definitio nominis*", which loosely translates that, for argument of whatever kind to be meaningful, it should start with the definition of terms. This section is in keeping with the above Aristotelian injunction.

Political nomadism Until comparatively recently, the term "nomad" was used mostly in agriculture to designate a member of itinerant people who moved seasonally from place to place in search of food, water or pasture for their livestock. With time, it came to be associated with people who wander from place to place. In politics, the term describes politicians or political actors who shuttle from one political party to another, not with reasons that border on ideological principles or policies but on sheer opportunism. Like the Nigerian Fulani herdsmen, their interest in the current political soil (political party) is transient, ephemeral and short, depending on the length of time the pasture and water (political opportunities) can tarry. Just as the nomadic herdsmen have no interest in cultivating and developing the land for further yields, the political nomads have no business in nurturing and developing the party for robust institutionalization. Kaminski (1994, p.149) captures it most lucidly when he averred that nomads "take over or create institutions for the sake of expediency, use them, and abandon. They do not invest in them nor do they consider them strategic assets".

Political nomadism is a single phenomenon with manifold nomenclatures. It has been variously christened "party defection, cross-carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, party-jumping, political port-de-port, party decamping, political party prostitution (Malthora, 2005, p.9; Udeuhele, 2015, p.1); a long list to which we add "political leapfrogging" and "party desultory". Udeuhele (2015, p.1) captures the "vitiating nature" of political nomadism in the political prospect of Nigeria when he

described it as “politics without principle”, adding that “political nomadism is self-serving as it leaves the politician without a bus stop pursuant to self-aggrandizement”. He recalls that political nomadism as a practice is not new to Nigeria though the coinage of the term may seemingly be recent. He was however quick to add that since the commencement of the Fourth Republic, the “Nigerian democracy has been marred by series of political nomadism with politicians decamping from one political party to the other, particularly from opposition parties to the ruling Political Party both at the National and State levels”. According to Hoeane (2008, p.70) political nomadism comes into play when “an elected political party representative within a legislative structure such as a parliament, embraces a different political or policy perspective that is incompatible with that of the party/parties he or she represents”. He situates the prime cause, as well as implication of nomadism in politics to “the problem of the development of dishonest traits in some politicians that have accompanied the introduction of floor-crossing, resulting in the tainting of good and credible democratic practice” (Hoeane, 2008, p.74). Meanwhile, Mbah (2011) was particularly not happy with the phenomenon of political nomadism. Commenting on its negative implications, he opines *inter alia*:

One of the greatest fears of the current defection from other parties to the PDP is that it is leading to a further fragmentation of opposition parties from where politicians have defected to the ruling party. It also creates chances for the emergence of new political parties that lack strength and focus on the political scene. Today, Nigeria has 62 registered political parties from three in 1999 when the Fourth Republic was enthroned. As a result, this situation of defection leads to mushrooming of political parties and reinforces the weakness of opposition parties. This does not augur well for the development of party politics because it promotes money-bag-politics. This does not give room for ideology-based political parties to thrive and develop. Parties are formed and joined for personal interests. The type of allowances they allocate to themselves make the ideology-based political parties impossible (Mbah, 2011, p.18).

Odum (2002) draws a line of comparison between political nomadism and prostitution. He likens the nomadic tendencies of politicians to the constant switching of beds by prostitutes. In his exact words:

Politicians and prostitutes are two seemingly parallel professions. One supposedly displaying constitutional leadership virtue in governance is the latter revealing social vice – the fabric of a decadent society [sic]. Incidentally, one common denominator for both appears to be their loyalty, which stands on quick sand, shifting as mundane attractions glow in their adulterous eyes. The consideration, especially with the modern day politician is where stakes may be lower and gains higher. It does not matter who is the offer. So, while the prostitutes switch beds, the politicians change camp in this game of cross-carpeting. That simply put, is the internal ordering of our nascent democracy. Power is no longer a thing held in

trust. It has become a fraud which every politician is clamouring to hold (Odum, 2002, p.1).

To him, therefore, political nomadism “does not augur well for democratic consolidation”, and this is because “every game has its own rule(s) or it ends up in a storm of confusion... the pattern appeared better defined on ideological ground” (Odum, 2002, p.4). Defectors/nomads that often embark upon such nomadic movements almost always do it on the basis of feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent with the former party, and not necessary due to any ideological claims.

The former Governor of Borno State and National Chairman of Conference of Nigerian Political Parties, Alhaji Balarabe Musa, in an interview with *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) was quoted to have asserted point blank that “defection undermines the quality of politics in Nigeria. He notes that “defection of politicians from one party to another undermined the political development of Nigeria” (NAN, Feb 12, 2014). He could not conceal his dissatisfaction with the trend as he thunders:

The defection by members of political parties is mindless. This is because there is a lot of loose money in the country and anybody with sufficient money can go to any other party to achieve his ambition....The root of defection is money politics..., another reason why politicians decamp is due to lack of internal democracy within political parties. This lack of internal democracy is what results to this threatening level of defection in the country (Musa, in NAN, Feb. 12, 2014).

Democratic consolidation The term “Democratic consolidation” primarily denotes making a democracy stronger. We had earlier seen it as consistent procedural institutionalization and habituation to the ideals of democracy; while according to *Wikipedia* (2009, p.1), it represents “the process by which a new democracy matures in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock”. Corroborating the above, Przeworski (1991, p.26) notes that:

Democracy is consolidated when under given political and economic conditions a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town, when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all the losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost. Democracy is consolidated when it becomes self-enforcing, that is, when all the relevant political forces find it best to continue to submit their interests and values to the uncertain interplay of the institutions.

This scholarly view was further corroborated by Schmitter (1992). His position is that “if consolidation sets in, the democratic regime will have institutionalized uncertainty in certain roles and policy areas, but it will also reassure its citizens that the competition to occupy office and/or to exercise influence will be fair and circumscribed to a predictable range of outcomes” (Schmitter, 1992, p.424). Democratic consolidation, therefore, in the

opinion of Babar (2015) has three important ingredients namely: all inclusive public policy, social-political justice and electoral politics (Babar, 2015).

Wasilewsk (1996) identifies two aspects of democratic consolidation viz: Value Orientation/consensus and institution building. While the value-orientation component underscores consensus about rudimentary rules of democratic procedures among all major political players; the institution-building component underscores a demand of translating value consensus into a democratic institutional framework which accommodates competing interests of all leading political actors. He added that these two aspects of consolidation are mutually interdependent, and that both have to occur to make consolidation complete.

In their own contribution, Akubo and Yakubu (2014) recall that scholars have used different definitions of democratic consolidation. These definitions are based on two conceptions of democracy, namely: the minimalist conception," which emphasizes procedural or formal democracy, and the "maximalist conception," which focuses on the outcomes of politics, such as institutionalization of political institutions, social justice, and economic equality (Lee, 2007, p.103 cited in Akubo & Yakubu, 2014). The minimalist conception of a consolidated democratic regime, according to Schmitter (1992, p. 424), is "the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives that participate in democratic governance".

Concerning the maximalist conception, Schmitter puts it as the process of institutionalization of relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted. In other words, for a mature democracy, durable patterns of relations have to be linked to democratic institutions. The mere existence of these institutions is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for consolidated democracy (Wasilewsk, 1996, p.11).

Brief Historical Account of Political Nomadism in Nigeria

The first case of what could be termed political nomadism in Nigeria occurred in 1951. In the said year, the first notorious cross-carpeting episode was dramatized in Nigeria. It was regrettably no less a figure than the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was reputed to have masterminded the inglorious cross-carpeting in the Western Regional House of Assembly, during which the electoral victory of the NCNC led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was short-changed in favour of the Awolowo-led Action Group (AG). The NCNC won 42 seats out of 80, but within 24 hours, 20 of them had cross carpeted to AG. Udeuhele (2015) recollects that this cross-carpeting scenario robbed Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the chance to lead the government business of the Western Nigeria. Nnanna (2010, p.3) cited in Udeuhele (2015, p.77) captures the sordid drama in the following lines:

This was the most celebrated cross-carpet episode in Nigeria. The Yoruba members of the National Council for Nigerian and the Cameroon (NCNC) were lobbied to cross over to the Action Group (AG) to stop Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, from becoming the Premier of Western Region. When the House met,

there was a red carpet, and the speaker's bench was in the centre; the government side was on the right whereas the opposition bench was on the left side. The NCNC, the majority party occupying the government side, had the red carpet separating them from the opposition. The Governor was then the Speaker or the Chairman of the House. He took his seat. Chief Awolowo got up and announced that he had a matter of urgency to raise in order to forestall a situation that could lead to riots and anarchy, and which many members of the House had decided to correct. One of the NCNC members got up and remarked "Your Excellency, I do not want to be part of a situation where Yorubaland would be set on fire". So I am crossing over to the other side. Consequently, the gentleman crossed over to AG on the floor of the Western House of Assembly.

From this moment, the seed of cross-carpeting and party-switching was sown in Nigerian politics. It is not just ironic, but pathetically paradoxical that political nomadism enjoys greater patronage by the political big-wigs and *crème de la crème* of the political society, who, in the words of Hon. Patrick Obaghiagbon, a foremost Nigerian lawmaker, are supposed to be the "suzerains of democratic ethics and ethos"¹⁴.

During Nigeria's First Republic, the major political party defections were witnessed in the Western Region. As a result of personality clash between Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was the leader of the opposition party, the AG, and his deputy, Samuel Akintola who doubled as the Premier of the Western Region. As the conflict of interest and crisis within the party deepened, Akintola felt his interest was no longer protected in the party, thus, he and his supporters defected to the newly-formed United Progressive Party (UPP) where they tarried until the First military coup prematurely terminated Nigeria's first civilian administration.

Like the First Republic, the Second Republic also witnessed a major political party defection in the build up to the 1979 general elections. A disagreement over the presidential flag bearer of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) caused a serious rift amongst the members of the party. When the party eventually nominated Nnamdi Azikiwe as its presidential candidate for the election, his major challenger, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri left the party and formed the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) on which platform he pursued his presidential ambition. Some prominent members of the NPP later decamped to GNPP in solidarity with Waziri.

Following another military coup in the country in 1983, party politics was yet again suspended. However, the return to democratic governance in 1999 gave the country another opportunity to nurture and consolidate democratic virtues. After a somewhat peaceful transition of power from People's Democratic Party (PDP)-led government of Olusegun Obasanjo to Musa Yar'Adua, it was believed that Nigeria's democracy was on the verge of being consolidated. The death of Yar'Adua in 2010, notwithstanding, it was believed that the constitutional transition of power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan and his eventual re-election as the substantive President in 2011 would set the country on

¹⁴ Hon. Patrick Obaghiagbon speaking on *Channels Television* on 27 June, 2013, concerning Rivers State Crises, which according to him "are bringing calamitous end for Nigeria".

the right track towards deepening democracy and the institutions thereof. However, Jonathan’s decision to contest the 2015 presidential election precipitated a conflagration of massive defection from PDP to the newly formed All Progressives Congress (APC). Since the 2015 electioneering period, even into post 2019 elections, the country has continued to witness unprecedented number of defections and “re-defections” to the detriment of democratic consolidation.

Table 1: SOME FOREMOST NOMADIC POLITICAL ELITES IN NIGERIA BEFORE 2015

Name of Defector	Defection		
	From	To	Republic
Chief Samuel Akintola	AG	UPP	First
Dr. Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe	NCNC	DPNC	First
Chief Akin Omoboriowo	UPN	NPN	Second
Alhaji Abubakar Remi	PRP	NPN	Second
Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri	NPP	GNPP	Second
Chief Evan Enwerem	APP	PDP	Fourth
Alhaji Alhassan Shaibu	APP	PDP	Fourth
Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	PDP	AC	Fourth
Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	AC	PDP	Fourth
Isa Yuguda	ANPP	PDP	Fourth
Ikedi Ohakim	PPA	PDP	Fourth
Aliyu Shinkafi	ANPP	PDP	Fourth
Saminu Turaki	ANPP	PDP	Fourth

Source: Compiled by the Authors

The above table is not exhaustive but a depiction of the major actors who abandoned their political parties to pitch their tents somewhere else. Historical accounts show that two major inseparable reasons account for political nomadism in Nigeria. One, a rift in a political party usually polarises members into two parallel factions; and when not properly managed, leads to a breakaway of one faction from the party. From **table 1** above and following from our earlier position, a rift in AG between the Awolowo-led group and Samuel Akintola-led group eventually culminated into breakaway of the latter from the party, hence the movement of Akintola and his supporters from the AG to UPP.

The second but similar reason for political nomadism in Nigeria has been personal interest of the actors. Most Nigerian political actors place personal interest far and above party interest; hence, when party interest is at variance with personal interest or when personal interest cannot gain immediate satisfaction because of party interest, the political nomads do not hesitate to move. During the Second Republic, Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri abandoned the NPP when the party opted for the more popular Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as its presidential candidate for the 1979 presidential election against the personal interest of Alhaji Waziri who had hoped to be the party’s flag bearer. Even as recent as 2007, Nigerians woke up to the news that the then Vice President Atiku Abubakar had left his party – the PDP for the Action Congress (AC). Media reports had it that the major reason for his defection was to pursue his presidential ambition which could not be attained under the platform of the PDP under whose platform he was still serving as the Vice President.

Unsurprisingly, Atiku lost the election and “re-defected” to PDP as shown in table 1. Indeed, political nomadism cuts across different epochs, but reached an unprecedented level in the periods leading to 2015 and 2019 general elections as discussed in the next section.

Select Cases of Political Nomadism in the 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

If the seed of political nomadism was planted in the First and Second Republics; and nurtured in the early part of the Fourth Republic, 2015 and 2019 marked the period of harvest, sale, consumption, digestion and replanting of the seed. Political nomadism, no doubt, is a game of opportunistic political gamblers. The political nomads possess the inherent idiosyncrasy of perpetually gravitating towards the successful party of the time. As is evident in table 1 above, when PDP was at its best bestriding the politics of the nation like a colossus, there were series of nomadic mobility from other parties to the party. In moments of electoral uncertainty, political nomads monitor and study the political ambiance to determine the party upon which the light of electoral victory will shine. Hence, while the 2015 general elections drew closer, and the internal crisis in PDP seemed to be deepening, the nomads within the party embarked upon what they know how best to do—crossing over to where there is no “heat”, as Senator Ekwunife would say. The result was a massive exodus of at least five (5) PDP governors and thirty seven (37) lawmakers to the then newly formed opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Table 2: PDP GOVERNORS WHO DEFECTED TO APC IN NOVEMBER, 2013

S/n	Names	State
1.	Rotimi Amaechi	Rivers
2.	Abdulfatah Ahmed	Kwara
3.	Rabiu Kwankwaso	Kano
4.	Murtala Nyako	Adamawa
5.	Aliyu Wamakko	Sokoto

Source: (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Progressives-Congress>)

The above table should not be mistaken to mean that political nomadism in Nigeria is only a business for state governors or the members of executive arm to the total exclusion of members of the legislative organ—the Senate and House of Representatives put together. Indeed, as it is in the tent of rat, so also it is in the burrow of rabbit. Mbah (2011, p.7) has not forgotten the:

...six senators who were elected on the platform of the ANPP, the Accord Party (AP) and the Action Congress (AC) who cross-carpeted to PDP. These include Senators Sali Gogwin (AC, Plateau State), Patrick Osakwe (AP, Delta State), Patricia Akawasike, (ANPP, Nassarawa State) and Sa’di Yauo (ANPP, Zamfara State). Since 2007 when the present National Assembly was inaugurated, no fewer than 13 Senators and 15 members of the House of Representatives have defected to the PDP.

Just as the PDP were the major beneficiaries of unwholesome defections from other political parties before the 2015 general elections as argued by Mbah (2011), the party became a major victim of its own “brainchild” during the 2015 electioneering period as lawmakers serving on the platform of the party decided to jump over to the APC – where pastures appeared greener.

Table 3: 37 PDP LAW-MAKERS WHO DEFECTED TO APC BEFORE 2015 ELECTIONS

Source: Edeh and Udeogu (2015). *The role and performance of electoral stakeholders in the 2015 general*

S/n	Name	State
1.	Nasiru Sule	Kano
2.	Ahmed Zarewa	Kano
3.	Aliyu Sani Madaki	Kano
4.	Basher Babale	Kano
5.	Alhassan Ado Dogon	Kano
6.	Munir Dangyadi	Kano
7.	Aminu Suleiman	Kano
8.	Abdulmumin Jibril	Kano
9.	Musa Ado	Kano
10.	Mustapha Bala	Kano
11.	Muhtari M.C	Kano
12.	Jagaba A. Jagaba	Kano
13.	Kabiru Marafa Achida	Sokoto
14.	Aminu Shehu Shagari	Sokoto
15.	Isa Salihu Basher	Sokoto
16.	Abdulahi Mohammed Wamakko	Sokoto
17.	Saalu Mohammed Nabunkari	Sokoto
18.	Aliyu Shehu	Sokoto
19.	Shaibu Gwandu Gobir	Sokoto
20.	Musa Sarkin Adar	Sokoto
21.	Abdullahi Balarabe Salame	Sokoto
22.	Umar Bature	Sokoto
23.	Andrew Uchendu	Rivers
24.	Asita Hounorabl	Rivers
25.	Maurice Pronen	Rivers
26.	Sokonte Davies	Rivers
27.	Mpigi Barinda	Rivers
28.	Dakuku Peterside	Rivers
29.	Dawari George	Rivers
30.	Ogbonna Nwuke	Rivers
31.	Ali Ahmad	Kwara
32.	Zakari Mohammed	Kwara
33.	Ahman Patigi	Kwara
34.	Rafiu Ibrahim	Kwara
35.	Mustapha Mashood	Kwara
36.	Aiyedokun Akeem	Kwara
37.	Nasiru Sani Zagon Daura	Katsina

elections, pp.13-14.

If **Table 3** clearly depicts lack of political ideology among Nigerian political parties in the build up to the 2015 general elections, it fundamentally reveals the monumental but regrettable absence of philosophy among the politicians themselves. In the build up to the election, more political heavyweights continued to switch parties at will. As a clear demonstration of lack of or disregard to party ideology and enthronelement of personal interest above party and public interest, the then President of the Nigerian Senate, Mr Bukola Saraki who was considered as the third citizen of Nigeria and leading the then PDP-dominated Senate, abandoned the sinking ship of the PDP he was co-piloting and jumped into the burgeoning ship of the APC when it was becoming clearer to him that he might not be re-elected if he contested the 2015 election on the platform of the PDP. His defection culminated into the defection of more Senators (including the eloquent Senator Dino Melaye) and other politicians who saw him as their role model. Suffice it to say that Saraki was not the only high-profile leader of the Nigerian parliament who defected from the PDP. Indeed, his counterpart at the lower chamber of the legislature – the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwa—equally cross-carpeted from the PDP to the APC to further his political interest of becoming the Governor of Sokoto State. Also, among the major opportunists and defectors was former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar who once again left PDP to seek political fortunes with the APC. As highlighted earlier, Atiku had served as Vice President under the platform of the PDP between 1999 and 2007. During the 2007 general elections, he defected to the Action Congress (AC) to contest the presidential election. Having lost the election, he migrated back to the PDP where he tarried until 2015 electioneering period when he yet again abandoned PDP for the newly formed APC led by his former political foes – General Muhammadu Buhari and Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Saraki did not stop there as he leapfrogged again back to PDP in the events leading to the 2019 general elections. Indeed, no political era in Nigeria witnessed more ridiculous abuse of party principles and democratic ethics and ethos vis-a-vis political nomadism than the 2015 and 2019 general election periods. In the fascinating words of Udeuhele (2015, p.85-86), “this trend shows that Nigerian politicians have no democratic values and our political system is awash with professional politicians who are devoid of modern political ideology and therefore are suitable as political prostitutes, ever disposed for political harlotry and ready to romance and bedmate any party that holds the ace to guarantee their mindless self-interest”. No truth could be truer than this!

The defection of these political gladiators from the PDP ensured that the party, for the first time since 1999 lost the presidential election in 2015 and also became the opposition party in the country’s parliament known as the National Assembly. Indeed, Goodluck Jonathan lost the presidential election to Muhammadu Buhari who had contested the election in four times under different political parties – ANPP in 2003 and 2007, the CPC in 2011 and the APC in 2015.

While the victory of the APC in the 2015, and to a lesser degree, the 2019 general elections marked what many analysts perceived as a good step in the direction of Nigeria’s democratic consolidation, the nature of the victory, the political alignments and re-alignments and the unsavoury manner with which political gladiators perverted party principles and jumped unrestrictedly from one political party to another before and after the 2015 and 2019 elections undermined real movement towards democratic consolidation.

To put this in a more proper perspective, the euphoria that greeted the victory of the APC was yet to settle when a crack in the party led to another round of migration of the party members. One of the first household names to decamp from the ruling party was the former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar who had only joined the party just before the 2015 general elections. Expectedly, the former Vice President once again in 2017 unashamedly returned to his estranged “wife”, the PDP, having realized that his political ambition of becoming the president of Nigeria would be made unattainable in APC with President Buhari set to stand for re-election in 2019. Thus, the 2019 general election began to take shape as early as 2017.

As the 2019 election drew closer, the political landscape of Nigeria once again became a beehive of political prostituting as notable politicians began to dump their political parties to flirt with other parties. Key political actors who left their parties include the Senate President, Bukola Saraki who dumped the APC and returned to romance with his erstwhile hubby, the PDP. Yakubu Dogara, the Speaker of the House of Representatives also dumped the APC he had joined during the 2015 general elections for the PDP. Suffice it to say that the movement was not asymmetrically designed to be from the APC to the PDP as Senator Godswill Akpabio who had been a two-time governor of the oil-rich Akwa Ibom state dumped his long-time party – the PDP for the APC in August 2018. There are varied opinions for his surprise decision, but many analysts believe he joined the APC (the ruling party) to stop his prosecution from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) against financial misconduct during his time as governor of the state. Another prominent politician who jumped from the PDP to APC for the 2019 election was Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu, a former governor of Abia State in the Eastern region of Nigeria. See **Appendix 1** for information on notable politicians who switched political parties before the 2019 general elections.

The Appendix is a reflection of pure political nomadism when juxtaposed with tables 3 and 2. A look at these tables and the appendix reveals that many of these household names in Nigerian politics switch parties whenever elections draw closer just so they could achieve their personal interest. Apart from the names documented in the appendix, there were other **thirty-eight (38)** members of the country’s House of Representatives led by the then Speaker, Yakubu Dogara who also swapped APC for PDP during the 2019 electioneering period. Incidentally, majority of them were also part of the group who jumped from PDP to APC during the 2015 general elections. Also revealed in the appendix is that Nigerian politicians mostly cross-carpet during electioneering periods just to ensure that they get elected under any political party with higher prospects of victory.

Political Nomadism and Democratic Consolidation: The Unsavoury Nexus

Political nomadism is an opportunistic shuttling of party members or political candidates from one political party to another. What this suggests is that the practice is inconceivable outside party system, and a political party is primarily a body of organized individuals whose ultimate aim and goal is to win election and thus be in power either in the executive or legislative arm of the state or both. It is a group of people who share a common conception of how and why state power should be organized and used (Nnoli, 2003). In every human society where democracy is fashionable, and of course in Africa where

political parties had sprouted before the development of a political society, political parties and their periodic elections contestation have generally come to at least define not just the character of liberal democracy (Momoh, 2013) but to also constitute the vehicle of democracy. It has been observed that in advanced democracies, institutionalization of political parties almost always tend to cohere with the institutionalization of democracy. What this means is that there is a significant relationship and wholesome correlation between parties institutionalization and democratic consolidation, since institutionalization is a maximalist prototype of democratic consolidation (Schmitter, 1992; Wasilewsk, 1996).

But then, it is interesting, albeit in the negative sense, to remark that political nomadism repudiates the principles of political party institutionalization. An institutionalized political party is one that bristles with such sublime qualities and regularized idiosyncrasies like non-personalization by a cult of personalities, internal party democracy, national presence, definite ideology from which it derives its manifestoes and membership, responsible and responsive national and regional leadership who see themselves anywhere they go as proud ambassadors and custodians of the value and overriding interest of the party, among others. That virtually all these indicators/indices of party institutionalization are lacking in Nigeria's political parties is almost becoming visible to the blind. This, being the true reflection of Nigeria's democracy, leaves one with the stark reality that Nigeria's democracy is still far from being consolidated.

The sad truth is that political nomadism has no *lebensraum* for that lengthy time needed for nurturing a party ideology, nor has a political nomad that patience to imbibe requisite training that instils in one the gumption to become a proud ambassador and custodian of the value and overriding interest of the party, due mainly to the fact that a nomad is always on the move. The case of Uche Ekwunife, Senator representing Anambra Central Senatorial District, is a shining example of decadal relevance. Having begun her political career under the auspices of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), where she rose as a member of the Federal House of Representatives, one would have expected she tarries there. However, being unable to get the party's ticket to contest the 2010 gubernatorial election in Anambra State, she quickly jumped into the boat of the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) to contest the election. Having lost the election, and having seen the fortunes of her new political party dwindling, if not hovering around the political Bermuda Triangle, one would have expected to see her abide in the party since the party itself was relatively young and needed to be nurtured to maturity. But No! She quickly abandoned the sinking ship of the PPA and jumped into the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), a party many believed was indigenous to *ndi Anambra*, where she was re-elected to represent her people at the Federal House of Representatives in 2011. Her political nomadism and harlotry did not end at APGA, as she once again discovered greener pasture on the political farmland of her erstwhile "husband" – the PDP – under whose umbrella she was "elected" as a senator representing Anambra Central Senatorial District during the 2015 general elections.

Not yet satisfied, on January 8, 2016, she announced that she had defected to the now ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) consequent upon her knowledge that her election

had been nullified by the Appeal Court in Enugu on Dec. 6, 2015, on grounds of irregularities. As an obdurate political nomad, she unashamedly declared: "It's better now for me to join the APC. Let the heat be there (in PDP)..." (<http://thenationonline.ng.net/ekwunife-defects-to-apc/>). Those are the words of one who has not come to stay; indeed, the words of a nomad. They are never prepared to face "the heat" of political party institutionalization; they always believe "it is better" every "now" and again to "join" the ruling party or any party with the highest prospect of coming into power. Indeed, no sooner than she joined the APC did she realize that her political fortunes and popularity were dwindling, thus, she once again exhibited her penchant for party desultory by returning to the PDP to seek the party's ticket for the 2019 Senatorial election. This attitude, needless to say, undermines party institutionalization and party politics. Suffice it, therefore, to say that to undermine political party institutionalization is to foreclose the possibilities of democratic consolidation, if not to abort it. And that is the supreme charge which this paper holds against political nomadism in the conscientious and moral court of political deontology.

We have not forgotten in a hurry, the national uproar, ululation and political debates that accompanied the defection of Aminu Waziri Tambuwa, the former Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives from PDP to APC. While serving as a Speaker under the auspices of the PDP, Tambuwa was several times accused of secretly and openly romancing and bed-mating with the opposition, the APC. Eventually, as party primary elections drew closer, and with PDP about to implode in the 2015 general elections, the Speaker hurriedly joined the moving train of the APC, where the pastures appeared greener. As self-seeking politician, Tambuwa abandoned the APC and returned back to the PDP during the 2019 general elections having realized that his prospects of being elected the Governor of Sokoto State would be greater under the platform of the PDP. Without fear of contradiction, therefore, this paper agrees with Udeuhele (2015, p.78) that:

...there is nothing wrong in people cross-carpeting if they do not find the programme of their party in consonance with their ideals. It is rather dubious when politicians begin to mortgage their consciences as well as seek to pursue their private and selfish interest in the name of cross carpeting. This may have stemmed from the mere fact that politicians are poor and desperate to hold public office as a means of accumulating wealth. In advanced democracies, political nomadism is done on principle, rather than on selfish and personal interest. What we are witnessing today is political prostitution which lacks political morality....

We are not withdrawing either our sympathies with Musa (in NAN, 12 Feb., 2014) that defection: "...is the utilization of the constitutional provision for freedom of association and choice. The phenomenon happens in all countries of the world...in advanced countries defection happened rarely and if it happened, there must be honourable reasons for it". The true position, however, is that *nemo dat quod non habet*—'no man can give what he has not'. Political parties in Nigeria are literally the same. They have so far remained adamantly un-institutionalized, gravitating as it were, around some prominent and influential individuals instead of establishing themselves as strong institutions propelled

by values, principles and ideologies. None has a well-defined ideology diametrically distinct from the other. What one sees in party “A” is what one will invariably see in party “B” in terms of organization, leadership, manifestoes, policies and philosophies (if any). So, why the harlotry, if not for what it should not—desperate rapacity for political green pastures, instant selfish-aggrandizement and immediate material gratification cum wealth accumulation, all of which are expressed in ridiculous and over-bloated sense of megalomania that end up in travesty of social justice, one of the bedrocks of democracy? Most admittedly, political nomadism “has negative impact in the process of consolidating democracy under unwarranted situations of myriad defections among legislators, governors, deputy governors, and other party members to the ruling party. This trend tends to make caricature of our politics and particularly nascent democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria” (Udeuhele, 2015, p.83).

Conclusion and Recommendations

While democratization, as we observed earlier, is a process of adopting, imbibing and secularising the fundamental values and principles of democracy, democratic consolidation entails a consistent procedural institutionalisation and habituation to the ideals of democracy. For democracy and its consolidation to take place, the institutionalization and ideologization of political parties should not be taken for granted. However, since the First Republic, all efforts to consolidate the nation’s democracy have always been dashed by the nomadic and rent seeking character of the ruling class who at every point in time switched political parties in an embarrassing and abashed manner. This phenomenon reached a new climax during the 2015 and 2019 general elections when politicians freely traded their political parties for others. An average Nigerian politician is more concerned with what he/she will gain from the political party rather than what he should contribute to the party; and this accounts for the incessant cross-carpeting among the political class. While the constitution and electoral laws of the country do not prohibit political nomadism, this ugly trend has left every ruling party in the country underdeveloped and the oppositions fragmented. This undue quest to acquire state power, by engaging in Fulani-like nomadism has retarded the consolidation of Nigeria’s democracy, especially since 1999.

To reverse this mirthless trend, therefore, it is the recommendation of this paper that: (a) the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) mandates the existing political parties to make public their ideologies and philosophical undertones, distinct from those of other parties. Until Nigerian political parties are ideology based, politicians would continue to swim in the ocean of political nomadism. (b) There be an enactment of electoral law prohibiting elected political office holders from defecting to any other political party while still serving in office. Those who wish to switch political parties for any reason should first and foremost resign from the public office they currently hold. (c) Political parties be made to imbibe the principle of internal party democracy and provide an equitable playing ground for all members. The only way to consolidate the nation’s democracy is for the political parties to encourage internal party democracy, which would ultimately have spillover effect at the national level. There is no doubting the fact that lack

of internal democracy has also fuelled some of the nomadic junketing to and fro political parties among top politicians in Nigeria.

Appendix 1: NOTABLE POLITICIANS WHO SWITCHED POLITICAL PARTIES BEFORE THE 2019 ELECTIONS

S/n	Defector	State	From	To	Remarks
1	Bukola Saraki	Kwara	APC	PDP	Governor of Kwara State from 2003 to 2011; elected Senator in 2011 under the PDP; cross-carpeted to the APC in 2014 where he was re-elected as Senator in 2015; returned to PDP in 2018
2	Yakubu Dogara	Bauchi	APC	PDP	Elected into the HoR in 2017 and 2011 under the PDP; defected to the APC in 2014 and got re-elected in 2015; became Speaker of the HoR in 2015; defected back to PDP in 2018; got re-elected in 2019; decamped yet again back to APC in July 2020.
3	Samuel Ortom	Benue	APC	PDP	Current Governor of Benue State; From APP, he moved to PDP and was appointed Minister in 2011; decamped to APC in 2014 and was elected Governor in 2015; decamped back to PDP in 2018 and was re-elected
4	Aminu Tambuwa	Sokoto	APC	PDP	Current Governor of Sokoto State; elected into the HoR in 2003 under the ANPP; defected to the Democratic People's Party (DPP) in 2007 but when he could not get the return ticket, he defected back to the ANPP; defected to the PDP before the 2011 election and was elected the Speaker of the HoR in 2011. Decamped from PDP to APC in 2014; was elected Governor of Sokoto State in 2015 on the platform of APC. Defected back to PDP in 2018
5	Rabiu Kwankwaso	Kano	APC	PDP	Elected Governor of Kano in 1999 under the platform of the PDP, lost his re-election in 2003. In 2011, he was re-elected for a second term as Governor under PDP, but cross-carpeted to APC in 2014 and was elected into the Nigerian Senate in 2015. In 2018, he defected back to the PDP to contest the presidential election
6	Orji Uzor Kalu	Abia	PDP	APC	Served as Governor of Abia State between 1999 and 2007 under the PDP; decamped to PPA in 2007 to contest the presidential election; returned to PDP in 2012; jumped back to PPA in 2015. Once again, he jumped from PPA to APC in 2016 and was elected into the Senate in 2019 before his eventual conviction for corruption charges
7	Dino Melaya	Kogi	APC	PDP	Elected into the HoR in 2011 under the PDP; decamped to APC in 2014 and was elected as a Senator in 2015. In 2018, he "re-decamped" to the PDP

8	Abdulfatah Ahmed	Kwara	APC	PDP	Elected Governor of Kwara State in 2011 under the PDP, decamped to APC in 2014. Migrated back to PDP in 2018
9	Bolaji Abdullahi	Kwara	APC	PDP	Appointed as a Minister under the PDP in 2011; decamped to APC in 2015 and became the Publicity Secretary of the party until 2019 when he jumped back to the PDP
11	Godswill Akpabio	Akwa Ibom	PDP	APC	One of the founding members of the PDP who served as a commissioner in his state between 2002 and 2006. He was elected Governor of the state in 2007 under the PDP. He was elected into the Senate in 2015 still under the PDP. In 2018, he defected to the APC
12	Shehu Sani	Kaduna	APC	PRP	In 2003, he contested for the Senate under the Alliance for Democracy (AD). In 2011, he contested for the same position under the CPC. In 2015, he contested and won the seat under the APC. In 2018, he decamped to PRP under which he contested again.
13	Smart Adeyemi	Kogi	PDP	APC	Was elected a Senator in 2007 and 2011 under the PDP. In 2015, he lost to Dino Melaye of APC. In 2018, he decamped to the APC and contested the 2019 election against his old foe, Dino Melaye who had by then swapped his own APC for PDP
14	Adesoji Akanbi	Oyo	APC	PDP	Was elected a Senator representing Oyo South in 2015 under the APC but prior to the 2019 general elections, he defected to the PDP
15	Monsurat Sunmonu	Oyo	APC	PDP	In 2011, she was elected as the Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly under the defunct ACN. In 2015, she was elected into the Senate under the platform of the APC. She decamped from the APC to the African Democratic Congress (ADC).
16	Rafiu Ibrahim	Kwara	APC	PDP	Elected as Member of Kwara State House of Assembly under the PDP in 2009; also elected as member of Federal HoR under the PDP in 2011; decamped to APC in 2014 and was elected as a senator in 2015. Decamped back to PDP in 2018.
17	Suleiman Hunkuyi	Kaduna	APC	PDP	He was elected as senator in 2015 under the platform of the APC but decamped to the PDP before the 2019 elections
18	Lanre Tejuoso	Ogun	APC	PDP	Contested the 2007 senatorial election under the platform of the ANPP. In 2010, he joined the CPC which later metamorphosed into the APC and was elected as a senator in 2015. Before the 2019 election, he decamped to the PDP when he could not clinch the APC ticket for re-election.
19	Usman Nafada	Gombe	APC	PDP	Became a parliamentarian in 1999 under the ANPP. He defected to the PDP before the 2007 general election. By 2014, he yet again decamped to the APC

					and was elected as a senator. In 2018, he once again decamped to the PDP
20	Ibrahim Dambaba	Sokoto	APC	PDP	He was elected the Deputy Governor of Sokoto State in 1999 under the APP. He contested and won election as Senator for Sokoto South in 2015 under the APC. In June 2018, he defected to the PDP. In 2019, he contested to retain his senatorial seat but lost to the APC candidate, Tambuwa. He later challenged the result at the court and eventually won the case and was sworn in as Senator representing Sokoto South District on November 19, 2019
21	Mohammed Shittu	Jigawa	APC	PDP	Was elected Senator in 2015 under the APC but defected to the PDP before the 2019 election
22	Isa Misau	Bauchi	APC	PDP	Contested and won the 2015 senatorial election under the APC; decamped to the PDP in 2018 and was re-elected in 2019 under the platform of the PDP
23	Suleiman Nazif	Bauchi	APC	PDP	Elected senator in 2007 under the ACN platform, decamped to the ANPP to contest the 2011 gubernatorial election. He decamped to APC in 2014 and was re-elected as a senator. In 2018, he decamped to the PDP
24	Shaaba Lafiagi	Kwara	APC	PDP	Elected a senator in 2011 under the PDP but decamped to APC during the 2015 election where he was re-elected. During the 2019 election, he decamped back to PDP
25	Barnabas Gemade	Benue	APC	SDP	One of the founding members and one-time leader of the PDP; he was elected a senator in 2011 under the PDP. In 2015, he switched to the APC. By 2019 election, he decamped again to the SDP when he could not get the APC senatorial ticket. Suffice to say that since after the election, he has crossed over again to the APC
26	Uche Nwosu	Imo	APC	AA	He aspired to succeed his father-in-law, Rochas Okorocha as the governor of Imo State but was unable to win the APC primary election. He immediately jumped to Action Alliance (AA) and became the party's flag bearer. After the election, he jumped back to APC

Source: Compiled by the authors

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