

# INTRA-PARTY POLITICS AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The uneasiness between the prediction of a politician and the code of appropriate political conducts lies at the roots of political tensions in Nigeria's nascent democracy. This refers specifically to the dissonance between the ambitions of socially, economically and politically strong men, women and weak institutional basis of political engagement. The autocratic character of intra-party relations has tended over time to underscore the ferocious character of politics, particularly since the onset of Nigeria's post-military democratic experiment in 1999. For instance, about one third of the people elected at different levels in the recently concluded National Elections are politicians who had crossed over to opposition political parties on account of alleged unfair and undemocratic treatments by their original parties. This category of disgruntled party men only enlarged a pre-existing category constituted mainly by five governors of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and their teeming followers, who had defected from their party, formed the New PDP and subsequently merged with the emerging opposition party, All Progressives Congress (APC). Yet even within the latter, there had been wide spread allegations of intra-party autocracy and high handedness on the part of those gladiators who claimed to own the party. Accordingly, this paper sought answers to the following questions: is there apposite relationship between intra-party autocracy and electoral tensions in Nigeria? In what ways does the undemocratic process of choosing party candidates affect the power and choice of the electorate? Are political' rules and regulations deliberately designed to grant undue advantage to their leading elites? Has the resumption of party politics expanded or circumscribed the democratic spaces available to the Nigeria electorate? Both documentary and survey research data were deployed to provide the bulk of the data which supported our analytical conclusions.

**Keywords:** Political Party, Democracy, Politics, Elections, Constitution, Legislature, Judiciary

## Introduction

Man makes and propels the evolution of socio-political institutions so as to forge networks of relationship, exercise a modicum of control in human conduct and regulate the process of human and societal development. This is principally why although institutions are products of man's historic interaction in society, the former also acts as breaks on and regulators of men and ineluctably impacts on man's conduct in ways that ensure societal order and, in most cases,

peace and stability. So, man creates and evolves socio-political and economic institutions and these institutions in turn also nurture man and his society. In the majority of cases, therefore there is a presumption that socio-political institutions are invented and evolved to support man's natural quest for progress. While the pivotal role of political parties is the provision of democratic ethos and practice, it is pertinent to focus on the extent to which institutional ethos are upheld by the dominant gladiators in Nigeria's party system. This is more so, when intra-party rivalry tops the list of cases of political conflicts in Nigeria. This raises another pertinent question regarding the character of party rules, regulations and constitution and the historically prevalent attitude of politicians toward party sanctioned rules. Another issue raised relates to the nature of inter-party relations and the accurate sources of its ferocity is it the zeal to represent the people, the nation or the urge to fulfill personal ambition in terms of political offices, access to public resources, prestige? This, amongst other goals, seeks to interrogate the popularly held belief that intra-party hostilities arise from principled disagreements amongst key party players over key issues of politics and governance. It therefore focuses deeper on the possibility of intra-party warfare, itself embedded in the syndrome of the "strong man overriding the party creed and breaking down the necks of the less powerful party members a situation which produces the paradox of constitution makers being the first culprits of its violation, which raises the question, how and why do politicians display unremitting impunity in intra-party relations? How do they circumvent party rules? And what consequence does this bear for the subsequent inter-party electoral competition. In sum, what is the concrete nexus of intra-party animosity and ferocious inter-party electoral competition and what do all these entail for democracy in Nigeria?

### **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 of democratic systems (Omodia, 2010). In this situation, political parties are structured to perform articulate, aggregative, communicative and educative functions. Such a system is likely to be associated with poor political culture which tends 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).

### **Intra-Party Crises in Nigeria: Chronology**

The evolving character of Nigerian politics from the last quarter of the colonial period to the present is reflected in the changing character of her party politics. Thus, from the enactment of regionalism by Author Richards in 1946 through the short period during the First Republic lasted, two dominant factors shaped the character of intra-party relations/politics: ethno-religious and, to a lesser extent, some feigning of ideological commitment. From the beginning of the 1950s, the two dominant political parties in the Northern and Western regions were unabashedly ethnic in intent and purpose. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG) were formed to primarily to, cater for regional interests and then participate in the national political affairs. One can comfortably posit that the last decade of the colonial era and the first decade of independence reflected a mixed grill of ethnic, client list and civic tendencies on the part of leading gladiators in the party system (Lewis: 2007). The construction of identity and political attitudes accordingly toed these lines. However, it can scarcely be gainsaid that ethno-religious identity enjoyed relative saliency during this period. A historical evidence may support this proposition by Tyoden (2012) who avers that "in the cause of advancing its own goals and interests in Nigeria, the colonial authorities had deliberately encouraged the three dominant ethnic groups at the three regions Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba to develop and assert their separate social, cultural and even political identities and to pursue the issue of political self-determination from their separate, exclusive, regional-sectional perspectives.

The NPC and AG emerged from pre-existing socio-cultural organizations created to promote ethnic-sectional interests and identities. The AG and NPC particularly sought to ensure that political powers in their regional domains were monopolized by members of their ethnic origins. The first ethnic-oriented political crisis in Western Nigeria became the direct outcome of this identity construction, the landmark party carpet crossing in the Western House of Assembly in 1951 sign-posted this. The leader of the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC),

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was to be the Premier of Western Region following the victory of his party in the Western regional election. On the day of inauguration, the Yoruba members of the NCNC, who had earlier been intensely brain washed, decided to cross-carpet to the side of the Action Group – a purely Yoruba political party. To set off the exodus, one of the NCNC members (who is a Yoruba), got up and remarked, “Your Excellency”, referring to the Governor, who doubled as the House Speaker, “I don’t want to be part of a situation where Yoruba land would be set on fire, so I am crossing over to the other side”. And this heralded their crossover to the Action Group (Mbah, 2011). Consequently, the leader of the NCNC, an Igbo lost to the leader of the Action Group (AG), the Premiership position. The ploy underlying the crossover was just to deny Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, the premiership position of the Western Region. Although being a resident of Lagos territory, he was constitutionally entitled to this. Consequently, Zik as called by his political admirers came under pressure to return to his home, the Eastern Region, to take up the premiership position. Significantly, again Zik could not achieve this without engendering another ethnic disaffection. Chief Eyo Ita, has been the leader of the NCNC in the Eastern region. Because the Ibos formed a very dominant majority in the Eastern Region, Eyo Ita was, as it were, shoved aside in order for Zik, the National leader of the NCNC to become the Premier, thus complicating the intra-party crisis in the NCNC.

In the North, the effects of the radical orientation of Aminu Kano and the perceived and actual marginalization of the Northern minorities lay at the root of intra-party crises during this period. Aminu Kano had opted out of the Arewa Cultural Group, which had metamorphosed into the Northern People’s Congress, to form the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). This was primarily to give expression to his “Talakawa” stance a pseudo socialist ideological identity which targeted repudiation of the feudal identity of mainstream Northern political leadership. The formation of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) by Joseph Tarka, from northern minorities, following incessant cases of marginalization from the dominant Hausa-Fulani political establishment, was another significant factor. Issues of principle and civic orientation also played out later in western Nigeria in the First Republic (1960-1966) when the former premier, Chief Ladoke Akintola, left the Action Group with his teeming followers to form a splinter organization known as the Nigerian National Democratic Party which later aligned with the NPC. Similarly, in the East, a leading Ibo politician and a very close ally of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the national leader of the NCNC, Dr. Kingsley Mbadiwe, broke ranks, and with other

defectors, formed a new political party known as the Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (NDNC) (Mbah 2011). True to the prevalent trend, this party formed an alliance with Awolowo's Action Group during the 1959 General Elections.

A pivotal point to be made about intra-party crisis in the second republic is that although parties of the First Republic were largely relabeled as new political parties, this was significantly ameliorated by both national and global forces, which we shall focus upon in the subsequent sections of this paper. Rebellion against First Republic party Lords became more pronounced in the Second Republic, hence it was possible for the National Party of Nigeria (NPC), a supposed reincarnation of the NPC, to enlist strong membership across the nation, in the West Central, South-South and South Eastern States. During this era more functional, and less parochial factors had begun to gain salience in the construction of political identities.

The Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and Great Nigerian Peoples Party (in the North East) became sign-posts of this type of identity. In the West, due to personality clashes, Chief Awolowo's loyalists, such as Adisa Oladdosu Akinlola, Anthony Enahoro, Richard Akinjide, even Chief Akin Omoboriowo, defected from UPN to NPN; in like manner, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, a sitting governor of Kano State decamped from, the PRP to the Nigerian People Party (NPP) following disagreement with the leaders of PRP, Mallam Aminu Kano and Pa-Michael Imo Udu, the iconic Nigerian labour leader. The 1983 General Elections period in Nigeria marked the beginning of phenomenal and indiscriminate defections of members of the opposition parties such as UPN, NPP, the PRP and GNPP to the ruling NPN. We shall show how institutional factor had made this fashionable among many politicians. Other notable political office holders like Dr. Clement Isong of the old Cross River State, also defected from the NPN to the UPN on account of power play at the national level of his party.

What is meekly accepted as the third republic in Nigeria's political history was the period 1991 – 1993 when the Babangida's regime inaugurated a diarchic governance system, mainly at the state level, supposedly preparatory to completing the civilianization programmes slated for the later part of 1993. Two political parties, created by decree, by the Babangida government, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC) became the organizational harbingers of party politics in that era. Intra-party politics accordingly had circumscribed institutional contexts plus a not so disinterested military regime at the national level that regularly called the shots. One needs to add that the military government of Babangida

also drew up their constitutions and manifestoes, including laying down “the rules and regulations governing membership and the structure and operation of the parties, as well as providing generous grants for their sustenance (Tyoden, 2013). Two major reasons were adduced by the Regime for wholly forming political parties on behalf of politicians: one had to do with the desire to attenuate ethno-regional cleavages; the second was to nip in the bud the menace of money bags; thus, eliminating the control and dominance of party politics by over-bearing personalities (Tyoden, Ibid). General Babangida himself justified his action thus:

The two party systems was recommended by the Political Bureau and accepted by the Armed Forces Ruling Council in the strong conviction that such a system would induce all tendencies in our pluralistic society to seek accommodation under the umbrella of the two parties (Olagunnju et al 1991:40).

Inter-party relations within the SDP and NRC were largely influenced by the mode of their creation and the statutory context within which they operated: there were no privileges relating to having founding fathers and or financial sponsors – almost all members became co-founders and co-joiners. But these were more in appearance than in reality as rich and influential politicians still enjoyed preponderance of privileges when it came to choosing candidates for elections. In addition, the constitutions of the parties made party chairmen the leaders of the parties. In fact, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) had reason to comment on the fact that party chairmen were so powerful that they sometimes operated against the collective will of the entire Executive Committees at a given level or even against the collective will of the generality of party members (Daily Times; 1993). However, in comparison to the first and second Republics, the theme afforded more internal democratic opportunities; yet there was the appearance of solidarity tendencies: the People’s Solidarity party, the People’s Front and the Consultative Forum which tended to create significant cleavages within the two parties. This portrays the enduring nature of the internecine struggle for political power amongst the country’s politicians. This tendency however stopped short of inducing defections.

### **Intra-party Crisis in the Current Dispensation from 1999**

After sixteen (16) solid years of military rule, interspaced with a three year diarchy mostly at the state level, the Nigeria military regime under General Abdulsalami Abubakar, affected haphazard hand-over to a civilian regime led by a former military head of state, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. Thus was born the current Fourth Republic. A towering feature of

incipient politics throughout the federation became the pervasive crises rocking all political parties that participated in the re-civilization electoral activities of 1998-1999. In this, the ruling PDP generated the negative demonstration effects on other smaller parties like the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All People's Party (APP). In portraying the crises inside Nigeria political parties, a useful methodological course will be to provide indicators of crisis situations. One is the visible alteration within the ranks of party membership at all levels of the federal structure. The second is high turnover in the election and/or appointment of members of the executive committees of political parties. A third indicator is the breakup of parties and subsequent formation of factions. The fourth manifestation of party crisis is rampant defections across parties. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) had held sway at the National center with an overwhelming number of states – in fact at times as many as 23 states out of 36 states more reference will be made to it. We shall however focus on party crises at the state and federal levels in view of the large number of local and ward chapters of all the parties. The PDP has since 1999, had more than its due share of crises, having had a spectacular rate of turn-over in its National Executive Committees. For instance, during the first term in the presidency of the PDP which lasted only 4 years, the Party had more than 3 National Chairmen: Chief Solomon Lar, the pioneer chairman, Chief Barnabas Gemade Chief Audu Ogbe. It was the same for other key officers like the national secretary. The states and local governments had their own due share of unusually high turnover. This trend was reproduced in other two major parties, the AD and APP. Through the second tenure 2003-2007, there was even higher rate of turnover, as the souls of all the parties were virtually seated in the pockets of the political chief executives depending on the level of government in the Federal structure at which a party holds political sway; for the PDP it was at the Federal, State and local levels. For the AD it was the six states of the South West – Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti and this only for one term of office 1999-2003; because from May 2003, the President who is also of South West extraction, had tricked all the Governors of the AD into a deceptive pact that turned out to be monumental political suicide. And so the AD almost fizzled out of the country's political, landscape as the PDP swept five states leaving only Lagos, where the Gov. Bola Tinubu had displayed delectable smartness and never yielded his political constituency to President Obasanjo's political trap.

The crises in the leadership of so many chapters of almost all the parties had provided ready-made excuse for party members who are enamored of party flirtation in search of greener

political pasture. Hence, the political lexicon of Nigeria soon became saturated with defection, decamping, cross-carpeting. Such cases have become legion and they apply to all the political parties. What is more, between 2007 and 2011 general elections not less 60 political parties mushroomed and about 25 appeared in the ballot papers of the 2001 general elections.

Right from the inception of the present Republic, Politicians have shown no qualms about moving in and out of political parties, depending on their perceptions of political advantage; the First Senate President in this dispensation, Senator Evans Enwerem, was originally the governorship candidate of the All People's Party (APP) in Imo State (Mbah 2011). But he lost his bid to bear the flag of his party for the subsequent general election. He decamped to PDP before the general election; upon offer of senatorial ticket by the Party leadership. He did not only win election to the senate but was also railroaded by Chief Obasanjo's Presidency and the national leadership of PDP to the Senate Presidency. In Plateau State, Alhaji Alhassan Shaibu, for a relatively frivolous reason, decamped from the All Peoples' Party (APP) and joined the PDP in 1999. As compensation, the President appointed him member, Northern Nigeria Development Company (NNDC). Another striking decamping during the Obasanjo regime was that of his Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. He was a foundation member of the party, having played active role in late Musa Yar'adua's PDM. He defected to the Action Congress which became the new name of Alliance for Democracy (AD) after an open pitched battle with his boss, the President: contested as the presidential candidate of the Action Congress in 2007 general elections, returned to the PDP in 2011 (Mbah 2011) and ludicrously decamped again from the PDP; became a leading force in the formation of the New PDP and subsequently joined the emergent organizational colossus now known as the All Progressives Congress (APC).intra-party crises, real and contrived, resulted in a spate of defections involving governors of different party affiliations: the Governor of Bauchi state up till 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015, Alhaji Isa Yuguda was a PDP member, failed to pick the party gubernatorial ticket in 2007, decamped to now All Nigerian People Party (ANPP), won the election under the latter's platform and subsequently decamped back to his original party, the PDP. The former Governor of Imo state as originally a member of PDP, decamped to Progressive People's Alliance (PPA), won election under its platform and almost immediately reverted to PDP; Governor Theodore Orji of Abia State followed the same pattern by changing party identity from PPA to PDP. The Governor of Ondo State, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko won his governorship election on the platform of the Labour Party

(LP) but later decamped to the PDP. In the North, Aliyu Shinkafi of Zamfara State (ANPP) and Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State (ANPP) defected to the PDP (Mbah, 2011).

The Nigeria National Assembly is by no means spared of this gale of defections and cross carpeting, as no fewer than 13 Senators and 35 members of the House of Representatives had switched party between 1999 and 2013, when 'tsunami' rupture balkanized the so called Africa's largest party, the PDP. At the Mini-Convention that the PDP conducted in 2013, seven state governors – Kano, Kwara, Rivers, Sokoto, Adamawa, Niger and Jigawa with their teaming supporters walked out of the venue, the Eagle Square in Abuja, moved to the Yar'Adua Centre where they addressed a press conference and announced their intention to form a new party to be called the new PDP. After an initial running battle with the parent body, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the new-PDP decided to strike a deal for a merger with the now mega party the All Progressives Congress (APC). The party eventually won the presidential election in March 2015 and a reasonable majority of state governorship seats. Ever since its inauguration at the centre the pattern of defection has reversed in its favour. Early August, 2015 a former state chairman of the PDP and leading members of the party in Bayelsa state decamped to the APC at the state party rally that was massively attended by both national regional and state officials of APC plus their teaming supporters/ followers. The decamped members reeled out a plethora of reasons for their action. However, we shall take up analysis of reasons for decamping in the sequent section of the paper.

### **Explaining Intra-Party Crises**

It is pertinent in this regard to note ethno-regional model, the class model, and the neo Marxian characterization of post-colonial state as obstructive phenomena in the march to democracy. While each of these variables play several and collective roles in molding the character of politics in Nigeria, it is more fruitful to focus on the inclusive variable namely, the institutional form and patterns through which they exfoliate. For instance, one of the exponents of the 'post-colonial state' as an efficacious explanatory tool for analysis of party crises in Nigeria posits:

The Petit-bourgeois found out that although they have acquired political power, they were not truly in control of the economy. However, they understood that political power offered opportunities for economic power and therefore the opportunities inherent in their political power where best and perhaps the only way they had to create economic base for themselves (Mbah 2011:9)

This is typical of the analysis that flows from dominant perspectives on Nigeria politics, particularly by neo Marxian scholars. A prominent strand of it is to blend with class analysis whereby a pseudo economic motif is imputed to the ruling elite. Unfortunately, these frameworks scarcely proceed further than this. Why is it possible for the so called officials of the post-colonial state to succeed in using state power to enrich themselves? To answer this, one will eventually turn to the process of institution building and how the rulers and the ruled think about same. If for instance, all the institutional guards of democracy: the police, the judiciary, the constitution, the legislature, the election management body, the civil society and so forth display a good measure of integrity and patriotism would the political elites be able to manipulate political decisions and programmes to suit their self-interests? The post-colonial state simply bears a character which the sum total of institutional effects constructs. It is the same for the ethno-regional variant of this explanatory scheme. So, to explain intra-party politics in Nigeria, it may be more beneficial to focus on attitude to institutions and why the integrity of vital institutions, or even a morass of them in some cases, predispose leading actors to personalization of collective goods, autocracy, impunity, and lack of internal democracy in the leading political parties. When disgruntled party members complain bitterly about lack of internal democracy, do they accuse their parties of lacking sufficient statutory instruments for regulating the actions of leaders when it comes to intra-party elections and in appointments? In Nigeria, to be sure, there has hardly been a political dispensation without an avalanche of rules and regulations. Some illustrative cases need to be cited at this point. The PDP ruled Nigeria for sixteen years: 1999-2015. Its operators are by the same token, representative of the character of party politics in Nigeria. It has had almost three constitutions since inceptions. As regards state congress and national conventions for electing the members of its executive committees at the state and national levels; these constitutions have been very elaborate and lucid. For instance: the PDP Constitution 2006 as amended in 2012 pledges in chapter 8 under “Nomination of Candidates for Election into Politic Offices” that its provisions would be consistent with the (1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) in 2010 and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), in matters relating to internal electoral processes. Accordingly, the party set its internal electoral guidelines and regulations in consonance with the national constitutional provisions and electoral laws. If these statutory instruments: the party constitution, the electoral laws and the National Constitution of 1999 were compiled within the party’s internal electoral

processes, it would have minimized the rate of squabbles within its ranks in regard to the highhandedness if not outright directorship in the nomination of candidates for public offices. Former President Obasanjo's outright rejection of his Vice-President Alhaji Abubakar's presidential candidacy in 2007 pushed the latter into Action Congress of Nigeria and as a result he had to run for the presidential election against PDP's candidate, late Umaru Shehu Yar'Adua. That competition was very ferocious, because Atiku's decampment from PDP was a major year turning point in the general elections of that year. Atiku could not participate in the PDP presidential primary elections because the outgoing President simply did not want him to run on the platform of their party, with little or no regard to the degree of Atiku's followership in PDP. In ex-President Jonathan's bid for a second term he was believed to have deployed, albeit illegitimately all manners of executive power, influence and privilege in frustrating the ambition of potential candidates for the presidential ticket. It is indeed a common place knowledge that the "historic" walk out of state governors and their teaming supporters in 2013 PDP's Special Convention was a culminating point of the political skirmishes within the party which had brewed covertly and, at times, overtly during the preceding two or three years.

The internal crises within the PDP became the party's Special National Convention convened to supposedly formalize the process of electing some members of the National working committee that had been severed for more than one year. Rather than allow this simple, straight forward constitutional formality to take place, the President's political hatchet men prevailed on him to use this opportunity to get rid of some party executive members, like the Deputy National Chairman, the National Secretary and others, who in their calculus might not be deadly supportive of the President's Second term ambition. The party hawks on a hatchet man's brief from the Presidency decided to with impunity; exclude the names of some serving National walking committee members from this validation voting.

Other smaller political parties bear the same character and outlook: candidates were handpicked by leading gladiators and party executive positions dispensed like prebends. The emergent political amalgam, the APC, in its for tuitions wisdom refrained, at the national level, from handpicking candidates, and tried to present some semblance of internal democratic process at its presidential, primary election in Lagos. At the state level, the abuse of the principles of internal party democracy became even more horrendous. Here both the President (in the case of PDP), the national chairman, members of the national working committees working in

collaboration with the state governor have consistently hi-jacked the nomination of the party's gubernatorial and national assembly candidates. Where it involved a party not holding power at the centre, the NWC and the governor but particularly the latter, almost single handedly selected party flag bearers for general elections. This is like a time honoured practice of the Nigerian party system. But it is number one culprit of intra-party crises. A few illustrations will bear this proposition out: the former governor of Rivers state, Hon Chibuike Amaechi clearly and loudly, won the PDP's gubernatorial primaries held early 2007, and subsequently received his certificate of return from the NWC of his party. In addition, the nation's election umpire, the INEC witnessed the process and endorsed the outcome which had Amaechi as the winner of the PDP gubernatorial primary. Curiously, the President who is also the leader of the party, directed the outgoing Governor, Dr. Peter Odili to replace Amaechi on account of unsubstantiated allegation of financial malfeasance when he was Speaker of Rivers State House of Assembly. He regained his candidature from the Supreme Court, simply because the case was too crystal to be a victim of judicial manipulation that had become a major feature of Obasanjo's administration. It has become a norm in Nigerian politics of the Obasanjo-Jonathan eras, for outgoing governors to select their political favorites to be succeeding them in utter disregard to the parties' constitutional provisions governing intra-party elections. In Bauchi State, this autocratic action forced Alhaji Isa Yuguda to dump the PDP and ran to the ANPP, on the platform of which he won the subsequent gubernatorial election. And to demonstrate the fact that his political umbilical cords were tied to the PDP, he ran back to the party (PDP) after winning election on the platform of the ANPP.

In Benue State, the two leading contestants for the gubernatorial seat were once PDP members; a minister and a speaker of the House of Assembly. The former had to decamp to the All Progressives Congress (APC) when the outgoing Governor, Barrister Gabriel Suswan, schemed him out of the PDP's nomination game. And Ortom, who got elected under APC, was indeed a leading member of the PDP a few months to the gubernatorial election. Curiously, the same Governor today is haunted by the bleak future of losing his seat because he did not subject himself to the primary election of the APC. As the legal outcome is almost a foregone conclusion; yet President Buhari of APC Ortom's party, is believed to be making frantic efforts to save his seat; a possibility that can only be contemplated in a clime in which the personality of the politician weighs so perniciously against constitutional imperatives.

Ambivalence and contradictions define the constitutional orientation of Nigeria political culture. Looming political figures manage to get away with covert and overt breaches of party and democratic processes simply because the constitutional configuration of the politics is vulnerable to wanton breaches. Nigerian parties are organized along caucus lines, most of them grant undue privileges, to some influential politicians. Once a person wins election at any level—local, state or federal—as the political chief executive he/she automatically becomes the leader of the party, even if hitherto he/she was not the most popular leader. As the leader of the party, he exercises enormous discretions: including initiating moves to amend the party’s constitution to suit his political preferences. As the political chief executive, he also wields the power of patronage, in a content where the impunity of political leaders is of leaving in various realms. The extant constitution of Nigeria has an “immunity” clause that protects the Governors and Deputies the president and his “Vice” against legal prosecution on criminal charges while in office. In his situation, autocratic predilections become highly appealing. Potential party competitors are scared by the awesome privileges of the chief executive, in most cases they chicken out and find solace in opposition. The seven governors who defected from PDP with over 40 national assembly members, so to speak, left the PDP for President Jonathan, a pattern which was replicated at the state level. The 1999 constitution conferred some indefensible privileges to the state Governors and not few of them have readily deployed these illegitimate privileges in privatizing otherwise democratic proceedings in their states. In the South East for instance, there exists a plethora of atavistic engagements between State governors and leading politicians in their parties, in Abia, between Gov. Orji and his political benefactor, ex-Gov. Uzo Kalu; in Imo state between Okoroocha of APC and his Deputy whom he eventually removed from office in Enugu, between Governor Sullivan Chime and his deputy the same in Ebonyi State. Most of these battles come to a head in the build up to elections, when the question of who picks the party’s ticket is in the front banner. Bearing the procedure and due process amuse persuade in Nigeria party system in newspaper column notes that the reasons are greed, ego, power and above all, lack of internal democracy. All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) just patched up their differences because of the upcoming gubernatorial election in Anambra State (Eghosiube, 2013). It notes that Imo state Gov. Rochas Okoroacha engaged in a pitted battle of supremacy with erstwhile Governor Achike Udenwa for the soul of the then newly registered All Progressives Congress (APC). Again in Anambra State, a former governor under the platform of

PDP Dr. Chris Ngige, was about to be railroaded to party gubernatorial ticket “Consensus” candidate when widespread protests from other party big wigs forced a primary election which all the same was highly flawed (Egbojiube Ibid). The crises in Nigeria political parties are basically institutional and this affected the foundation of other variables/factors adduced by authors who have attempted explanation of this endemic malaise. For instance, let us more critically examine Tyden (2013) explanatory variables: social heterogeneity, origin of the parties, level of socio economic advancement, the primacy and supremacy of political power.

Regarding the first factor, Tyden (2013) posits: in societies that are highly plural or fragmented, political parties will tend to reflect, the cleavages in society, in both number and nature of relationship! This thesis can scarcely be validated in the light of extant practice and experience in party system in Nigeria because of two major factors, one historic and the other institutional. The experience of Nigeria’s First Republic party system, had showed that sectional parties hardly win national elections, hence the NPC needed to radically transform for the major progenitors of its original greed to create it in the new form it got reborn in 1979 as National party of Nigeria (NPN); the Action Group which retained its ethno-regional character got re-baptized as UPN and accordingly failed to make appeal beyond the South West. A second factor was the Constitution of 1979 which required, as a criterion for registration, the national spread of political organizations seeking to be registered as a political party with effect from the second Republic (Gberevbie 2014, Ogbeide 2012). The character of intra-party crisis since 1999 does not bear out this thesis: ethnic/communal platforms have been used by disaffected party men to fight their causes. The only exception was the 2013 national crisis of PDP which on the core north cited President Jonathan’s pledge in 2011 not to contest for the presidency in 2015 so power could move back to the North. The second factor is origin of political parties. Here the author argues that how political parties reflect the interest groups and their dominant ideological orientations are vital to the character of inter and intra-party relations. It tries to draw a distinction between the first, second and third Republic parties with the SDP and NRC which were formed, according him, by an over-arching Leviathan, the military regime of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida. For sure, institutional discipline tended to be more in evidence during the diarchic party system of Babangida (1989-1993) but it can hardly be historically validated that first and second Republic party systems, although reflecting the social character of their leading authors, were in any way ideological. Indeed, their ideological blankness represents their major setback.

The fluid factor, the level of socio economic development is a function of the strength of institutional foundation, considering the potential affluence granted to the country by abundant solid and liquid mineral arable lands.

### **Implication for Intra-Party Elections**

The ferocity of unresolved intra-party crises in Nigeria inexorably produce “push impact” on most disaffected members. The most immediate illustration lies in the immediate past and current altercation raging between the PDP and the APC; the latter had admitted seven serving governors of the former with their massive followers. The former Governor of Rivers State, Rt Hon. Chibuike Amaechi was a staunch caucus member of the PDP, he served as the chairman of the Nigerian Governors’ Forum for more than 7 years. Upon decamping from the PDP; he became one of the most awesome political nemeses of the PDP and in particular the incumbent President Jonathan, who incidentally is his “brother” from the Niger Delta geo-political zone. The same was the case with the erstwhile PDP Governor, Rabiu Kwakwanso who remained on the war path with the PDP until the latter’s defeat at the national level. The 2013, 2007 general elections were marred by violence principally because the PDP, not enamored of internal democracy handpicked objectionable candidates; and fearing that they might lose in the general elections rigged the elections massively. Such was the horrendous level of the irregularities that attended the 2007 general election that its number one beneficiary, late President Yar’adua openly acknowledged it and pledged to initiate without delay, the process of reforming the electoral system of the country.

Live coverage of the elections of 2015 showed that in Rivers State, the PDP Embarked upon near military operation with the police, army and the navy accompanying its agents as they perpetrated one of the most horrible travesties of electoral process in the nation’s history, forcing voters to either vote for the party or leave the polling station. Gov. Amaechi and his party members in the APC were relatively helpless principally because they had no control over these security agents. Worse still, in the build-up to the general elections, violence of historic proportion had engulfed Rivers State, occasioning sponsored cult wars in which prominent politicians were killed. In most parts of the North West and North East, like Kano, Sokoto, Bauchi, Borno, the orgy of malpractices perpetrated by erstwhile PDP Governors, now in APC

was widely reported. In Gombe State, AIT and Channels Televisions showed the military blockade in the residence of Sen. Danjuma Goje, immediate past Governor of the State who defected from PDP to APC along with 10 other PDP Senators. While the election lasted, he was virtually held in a house arrest.

In the South West, intra-party crisis reverberated negatively on the general elections of September 1983. A near replay of the uprising of 1964-65, in the old Western Region took place particularly in Ondo State, where Akin Omoboriowo a former Chieftain of the UPN, having defected to the NPN, deployed the “federal might” to try to capture the state, so to speak, for his new party. Similar, scenario also played out in the old Anambra State where Chief C.C. Onoh with a horde of NPP defecators used the federal might to secure a landslide victory against sitting Gov. Jim Nwobodo of the NPP. The Anambra State case involved a long-drawn and celebrated judicial trial that reached the Supreme Court which eventually decided in favour of C.C. Onoh, of the NPN who in reality never pulled up to 30 percent of the total vote cast. The crises generated by the 1983 elections in which the ruling party at the centre, the NPN showed unremitting resolve to achieve landslide victory, were principally responsible for the Military Coup of December 1983 led by General Muhammadu Buhari. There is a direct relationship between intra-party altercations, disaffection and downright warfare and ferocious electioneering in Nigeria.

### **The Future of Democracy**

Democracy is a concept that needs to be clearly comprehended by both the key political players and other citizens. Dahl in Gberevbie (2014) identifies the existence of civil liberties, political pluralism, political participation that provides the choice for the electorate to select candidates in a free and fair election, as a condition for society to be regarded as democratic. Similarly, Badru (2005), states at length that democracy represents, first and foremost, an increase in citizen political equality in terms of their popular participation in society. He argues that democracy is a system of government that enables both leaders and the citizens to be conscious of what is required and accomplish it for the betterment of that society in terms of political, social and economic development (Gberevbie 2014). These definitions imply that authoritarian method of running democratic institutions, such as political parties would impede the cause of democracy which subsequently ensues intra-party crisis. At the centre of it all is how to choose the executive members who will run them and candidates who will bear their

flags in inter party elections. This is still a very rudimentary level of democratic evolution, yet it is fraught with seemingly intractable crises. If wrong and objectionable candidates are selected by parties, in flagrant disregard of democratic procedure and rules, it would not only generate crisis within the party but also rub off negatively on the quality of alternatives that the electorate is presented with. Since independent candidacy is constitutionally prohibited, electorate apathy might result. Experiences of 2003 and 2007 general elections showed large scale apathy by Nigerian voters: imposition of party candidates and large scale rigging of the voting process, like outright writing of results by agents of political parties, were widely reported (see Ggberevbie, 2014, Ojiefor 2007, Usman 2007, Oluwaseun 2012). These anti-system conducts were outgrowth of crises that brewed from within the political parties. This situation is sustained by the glaring weakness of key institutional guards of democracy: the police, the judiciary, the legislature, the election management body, the constitution and the civil society.

### **Constitution**

With specific reference to party politics and elections, the Constitution has failed to provide adequately for safeguards against the anarchical tendency of desperate politicians. For instance, sections 68, 1 (g) and 109 1 (a) on party defection: although section 68 1 (a) states, “A member of the senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected; provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), Experience has shown that relying on the last part of this provision, politicians have always found excuses to defect indiscriminately in their never ending quest for political power. The first four years from 1999 saw a number of notable national legislators decamp to the ruling PDP: three Alliance for Democracy Senators; Wahab Dosunmn, Yemi Brimoh and Fidelis Okoro represented the first example. The more anomalous of the 1999 constitutional provision in this regard relates to its position on members of the executive branch of government who change party membership in the course of an existing tenure in office. It was possible for the erstwhile Vice-President, Abubakar and many governors to decamp from their parties without losing seats. Apart from containing contradictory and ambiguous provisions on the operations of political

parties, the 1999 constitution is looked on as a “democratic albatross” because it is believed to have legalized impunity through a host of provisions which support “executive” high-handedness, executive control of the police and other critical democratic institutions, especially at the state level, coupled with the immunity clause in section 308 are cited as a veritable fillip to autocratic behaviour by chief executives at different levels of governance in Nigeria.

### **Legislature**

It is instructive to know the curious twist of process in this amendment. According to section 9 of the 1999 Constitution it takes two third majority of the members of two Houses of the National Assembly to approve an amendment of any section of the Constitution and simple majority each of two thirds of the State Houses of Assembly. This Day Newspaper reported in one of its daily editions of July 2010 that “Sixteen Imperial Governors” arm-twisted members of their Houses of Assembly into voting against the “financial autonomy of the states houses of assembly, the states judiciary and the local governments”. Paradoxically, the newspaper reports, “the same Houses of Assembly easily voted in favour of the financial autonomy of the National Assembly, the Federal Judiciary and the INEC”. This report summarizes the vulnerable state of the legislature in Nigeria. One can behold robust legislating only relatively at the National level.

### **Election Management Bodies (INEC)**

In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has the sole power to conduct all elections, except local government elections which are reserved by section for a body to be set up by the State Houses of Assembly. The latter have long since been established in all the states of the federation as States Independent Electoral Commissions. The structure of INEC is made up of the chairman, 12 Federal Commissioners and 36 Resident Electoral Commissioners in the 36 states of the Federation. All these Commissions, that is, 48 plus the National Chairman are appointed by the President on the strength of the powers conferred by the same constitution. However they are subject to National Assembly’s ratification. Analysts point at this as a loophole which makes the body pliable to the presidency. Their fears were vindicated during the Obasanjo regime, when he appointed Professor Maurice Iwu as the INEC Commissioner in 2005. All the national and state elections conducted by INEC under him remained the most compromised in terms of efficiency and integrity (Adegbamigbe 2007, Aiyetan 2007, Ploch, 2008, Gberevbie, 2014).

Justice Uwais Report on Electoral Reforms (2008) points out that the classification of INEC as a federal executive body in section 153 of the 1999 Constitution brings it under the oversight of the executive arm of government, which makes it ill-placed to conduct free, fair and credible elections (Uwais Report 2008, Gberevbie 2014). Although the amendment of the Constitution in 2010 has since strengthened the independence of INEC, one cannot rule out the influence of the President when it comes to pushing through the National Assembly for ratification of any prospective INEC Chairman he appoints. At present, there is a raging political warfare between the APC which produced the current President and the PDP, which is now the main opposition party, over the current Acting Chairman of INEC who President Buhari appointed upon the expiration of the tenure of Professor Atahiru Jega, the immediate past INEC boss.

At the state level, the election management bodies are nothing but governmental bodies for legitimating the undemocratically selected political functionaries. The party that controls a state almost always sweeps local government polls, which makes the local government elections throughout the federation shambolic. All cases of electoral malpractice since the inception of the Fourth Republic have always implicated members of INEC and/or its agents, which shows that this body as it currently operates is a central problem of democracy. But to be fair to this body, politicians and some unscrupulous Nigerians exacerbate INEC's integrity crisis the majority of INEC operatives during elections are ad hoc staff recruited for the purpose of each election. They are often vulnerable to the manipulative antics of politicians. In ambiguous institutional context, most polls are compromised, and the electorate short changed ultimately. The 2007 General Elections witnessed the removal from office of four governorship candidates already declared winners by INEC and in fact sworn into office as democratically elected executive governors of their states. They had spent between 18 and 30 months in office before being removed through court judgment and their opponents sworn in their stead (Gberevbie 2014). States involved are, Ondo, Ekiti, Edo and Osun. The next pertinent question is: What happens to the salaries and fat allowances which the wrong incumbents had collected? This points out another institutional lacuna because the judicial determination of a election cases ought to have been completed before swearing in the candidate whose victory is under judicial scrutiny. The amended electoral law of 2010 failed to do this.

## **Police**

The Nigerian Police has proved to be a very loyal tool of the executive arm of government. When the new PDP was formed by a formidable faction of the old PDP, the police were used to seal its office and bar its members from operating in them; when the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, defected from the PDP to the opposition APC in the build up to the 2015 General Election, it was the police that did the unconstitutional, dirty job of attempting to prevent him from going into his office. At the state level, depending on the state governor's political relationship with the Federal Government, it is the police that were used to harass, hound and suppress political opponents. In 2003 and 2007 "charades" called elections, in the 1983 "landslide victory" mayhem of the NPN which then wielded the federal might, the police led other security agents in harassing political opponents and the electorate to submit to monumental manipulations of the general elections. The justice Uwais' Report on Electoral Reform (2008) had noted that "the leadership of the Nigerian Police often issue instructions against opposition political groups by not granting them permits to hold political rallies (even though this is a constitutional right), encouraged policemen on electoral duty to intimidate and harass people on the day of polling. (Gberevbie 2014). Most citizens and scholars believe that the Nigeria Police do not belong to the nation state but to government chief executives, at various levels of governance and in some cases, a few non-governmental "strong men" in the country.

### **Judiciary**

The litigation of judicial pronouncements and court injunctions has complicated the crisis within and among Nigerian political parties. In 2011, the PDP's national convention for internal election of its presidential candidate was nearly marred by a flurry of court injunctions relating to the removal and counter-removal of its Chairman Dr. Okwy Nwodo. It is a classical illustration of what has become the norm among the courts to issue injunctions as vendors parcel out news tabloids to enthusiastic readers for a price. In Nigeria, the courts seem to have joined the political fray with their power of judicial injunctions. At the state level where the judiciary does not enjoy sufficient financial autonomy, the democratic process has been manipulated by the political "strong men" who in most cases use the police to beat opponents to submission or defection to another party.

### **Conclusion**

Political party is just an organizational instrument for conducting the art of politics; there may be other platforms for political participation such as the civil society and sundry media of civil engagement, such as the print and electronic media (including the internet). However, in the current constitutional configuration of the country, political party is the only platform for seeking elective political power. Its politics is therefore pivotal in the game of power. But the rules of party politics both formal and informal are contradictory and ambivalent thus defying prediction at times. We have examined the institutional trajectory of party politics and noted that it reflects the institutional dilemma of national politics, but its manifestation in party politics has been all the more pernicious to the integrity of politics in the country.

The scenario yielded by a critical analysis of party politics casts doubt on democratic enactment, to say far less about democratic consolidation (DC). It does not make any sense to speak of “democratic consolidation” when democratic transition has not been completed. This is because “consolidation” is a verbal derivative of “solidity” which in a word is “firmness”. As a key driver of politics, the political party can only be firm if it institutionalizes internal “democratic practice” and abrogates the “strongman” and “Godfather” syndrome; if laws, rules, regulations and constitutional bases of engagement are not contradictory, ambivalent and protective of special interests. We hope to have general elections with less ferocity and tension, and the electorate on its part would be presented with lists of credible candidates, while those who get elected would be more likely to abide by the rules of politics that are system-supporting. This is the condition that will not only ensue conducive transition but also engenders a qualitative leap in our rather sluggish approach to genuine democracy.

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