



Effects of Decamping by Politicians on Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria since 1999

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of decamping by politicians on democratic consolidation in Nigeria since 1999. Most political and electoral crises witnessed in Nigeria are by-products of the inability of political parties to midwife a viable and workable internal democracy with recourse to candidate selection for various political offices. This paper argues that the political history of Nigeria is replete with cases of parallel party leadership structures, factions, monopolistic and over bearing attitude of political incumbents, party leaders and self-serving godfathers. This intra-party power-play had pushed aggrieved politicians to make U-turn directly or indirectly from one party to another. Using qualitative descriptive method and zero-sum game as its theoretical underpinning, this paper posits that acts of decamping tend to circumvent the credibility of the Nigeria political process, thereby inhibiting democratic consolidation. This paper further argues that political decamping in Nigeria which is almost becoming a culture is a product of collapsed political values and norms, lack of principles based on shared beliefs and the selfish interest of Nigerian politicians. The paper concludes that, the party system in Nigeria is weak and vulnerable; its future remains precarious and endangered by politicians who through their whims and caprices have become greedy, selfish, dubious, thoughtless and irrational. It recommends among others, that political parties need to be re-engineered from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of structuring, mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts.

Keywords: Decamping, Democratic consolidation, Zero-sum game, Party politics, Politicians

Introduction

It is a truism that most political and electoral crises witnessed in Nigeria are by-products of the inability of the political parties to midwife a viable and workable internal democracy especially with recourse to candidate selection for various political offices. This trend albeit in most cases no doubt spells doom for the consolidation of democracy in the country as political parties have not found reasons to be thorough in their dealings. The political history of Nigeria is replete with cases of parallel party leadership structures, factions, monopolistic and over bearing attitude of political incumbents, party leaders and self-serving godfathers, etc., which are capable of affecting, endangering and circumventing the credibility of the Nigeria political process. Today, political alignments and realignments are becoming too high and politicians from





across the divide are beginning to weigh their options and pitch their tents where they feel that their bread is buttered. All these cases constitute major, howbeit, worrisome events that have made headlines that tend to expose the crude display of greed and opportunism of the political class, whether in the ruling party or in the opposition political party. It equally demonstrates to Nigerian electorate that there are really no principled and ideologically sound alternatives for them to pick from in the ruling political elite.

Given the general perception of Nigeria's brand of politics as stomach-based, it is not surprising that the party in power, the All Progressives Congress (APC), is so far the highest in the gale of party crisis across the country. This intra-party conflict has largely been a two-way traffic between the ruling APC and the major opposition, People's Democratic Party (PDP), with the former receiving a lion's share of the defectors. Prior to the 2019 general elections, a new wave of politicking was widely witnessed, which analysts say may be the long-awaited game-changer in Nigeria's political equation. Personalities like Olusegun Obasanjo, Atiku Abubakar, Bukola Saraki, Dino Melaye, Aminu Tambuwal, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, Godswill Akpabio, Aisha Jummai Alhasan, Banabas Gemade, Osi Edozu, Timi Alaibe, Osita, Izunaso, Hope Uzodinma, Mallam Nuru Ribadu, Sam Ortom, Jerry Gana, Tunde Adeniran, Godspeed Orubebe, among others, made U-turn directly or indirectly from one party to another to form a formidable party prior to 2019 general elections.

The move, reminiscent of the massive exodus of the pre-2015 New-PDP movement by aggrieved members of PDP which later merged to form the APC, came on the back of failed efforts by the PDP to placate party members who felt short-changed during the party's national convention in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and the APC state congresses that had reduced the ruling party to a conflict ground. This created confusion and debate among intellectuals and voters in general to what different analysts have described as decamping, canoe jumping, floor-crossing, party-hopping, high jumping, frog jumping, party switching, cross-carpeting, crossover, prostitution, etc.

In Nigerian polity, most candidates seem to decamp based on primordial interest and egoistic hedonism. This form of political oscillation calls for a lot of explanations and raises a lot of political questions. Decampment can only be healthy to the political system and democracy when it is built on the choice of ideology and it will be inimical to democratic process if it is the function of primordial and egoistic interest (Badejo & Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2015). Right from inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the political system has witnessed a great surge of proliferation of mushroom political parties and decampment saga, and all these displays seem to be associated with the dissatisfaction of some candidates with respect to administration and decision of the party's executives in area of choosing candidate to represent the party. This dispensation has celebrated over one hundred decampments of members arising from parties' lack of internal democracy, and selfish desires of members. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the effect of decamping by politicians on democratic consolidation in Nigeria since 1999.



Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Decamping

Decamping is an act of swapping political parties. It is an act of changing party allegiance or moving from one party to another. This particular term is known by different nomenclatures, “defection,” “cross-carpeting,” “party hopping,” “party switching,” “party crossover” and “canoe-jumping” (Malhotra, 2005). Some scholars have argued that party decamping is caused by political events involving political institutions while others concluded that it is as a result of ideological pressure (Nokken & Poole, 2002).

Moreover, it should be noted that the phenomenon of decamping is no respecter of the age of a democracy. It occurs both in the established and in new democracies (Chang, 2009). However, the frequency of its occurrence varies from one country to another. For instance, Evans and Hadley (2010) argued that only 20 switches took place in the American Congress from the 1940s to the 1990s. By contrast, defection is reported very frequently in most African new democracies. The term ‘cross-carpeting’ has been used interchangeably with concepts like party defection, party switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party-jumping (Malthora, 2005; Mbah, 2011). In his work, Chang (2009) used the term ‘political defection’ in place of cross-carpeting. He defines political defection as a situation in which a legislator switched from his original party to run either under another party or as an independent candidate.

In the same vein, Blunt (1964) defines party switching in place of decamping as any situation in which a member of a legislature who had been elected on a certain party platform changed his political allegiance before a next general election. In this regard, political party defectors are usually regarded as political prostitutes without political principle, morality, conscience and lacking in political ideology to champion the cause of leadership for the wellbeing of the society and political development of the country. Different reasons have been advanced for the occurrence and prevalence of decamping in Africa. One reason is the nature of party formation. Party formation is often driven by political careerism rather than ideology. According to Omotola (2009), ‘the role of ideology in party formation and competition tend to be weak in African third-wave democracies’. Personal ambition and ethnic loyalty, as opposed to social and economic issues, tend to drive Africa's political parties (Rakner & Walle, 2009). The deprivation that opposition politics might engender often made it unwise for politicians to remain in opposition parties. This is perhaps so because the party in power often discriminated against the opposition.

Thus, owing to the winner-takes-all nature of African politics, political opponents usually had to choose between crossing the carpet to join the ruling party or suffer exclusion, repression and lack of access to resources. Also, decamping from opposition parties to the ruling party explains the emphasis on the primacy of political power. This is because the possession of state power leads directly to economic power, and who hold positions in the power structure determine the location and distribution of economic resources and political rewards. Similarly, patronage politics is also a motivation for cross-carpeting. In a political system where importance





is attached to patronage or perks, politicians will most probably switch parties in the direction of the dispenser of the patronage. In such political systems, power relations among groups and between government and the governed is anchored on and shaped by access to state resources, facilitated by those who control the sharing (Desposato & Scheiner, 2008).

For the purpose of this paper, decamping could be seen as an act of changing from onepolitical party to another. Thus, it is the act of defecting from one political party to another. Decamping describes the circumstance whereby members (politicians) of a political party willingly leave their party for another whether for just or unjust reasons. It involves the process of swapping or changing political party by politicians.

Democratic Consolidation

There exists plethora of extant literature on democratic consolidation (Diamond, Fukuyama Horowitz and Plattner, 2014; Suttner, 2004; Carother, 2002). The concepts of democratic consolidation have come to be nuanced around the democratization debate as it relates to studies on democratic rule (Suttner, 2004). However, many of these studies clearly define the third wave of democratization, which started from Europe and thereafter move through Latin America in the 1970s and 80s. While the third wave of democratization was certainly significant to the spread of democracy, its occurrence in Africa in the 1990s through several transition program gave momentum to these debates on democratization. According to De-Melo (2014, p.25), 'democratization is the process of building democracy through transition from authoritarian or semi-democracy to a fully democratic political regime'.

Democratization is broken down into three major processes, which include the phases of liberalization, transition and consolidation. Accordingly, the liberalization phase is when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles. The transition phase, which is the term used to denote 'political change or regime', occurs when 'the first competitive elections are held (Diamond, Hartlyn, Linz, & Lipset, 1998). The consolidation phase is entrenched when democratic practices, rules and institutions have been established and entrenched in a way that the most relevant political actors accept their outcome (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Scholars see this as the final phase of establishing durable political regimes and stabilizing democracy from reversal.

Generally, the concept of democratic consolidation was 'meant to describe the challenge of making new democracy secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual reversal waves' (Schedler, 1998, p.1). This definition underscores the protection of democracy against authoritarian setbacks that have been the challenge of many democratizing states. By safeguarding democracy from collapse and constructing a barrier against authoritarian tendencies, democratic stability and consolidation is ensured (Schedler, 1998). However, the problem with this definition is that it does not state clearly the processes or conditions that would prevent democracy from reversal in the face of authoritarian regression.

Following this inadequacy, Schedler (1998) presented five modes of democratic consolidation to include preventing democratic breakdown, preventing democratic erosion,



completing democracy, deepening democracy and organizing democracy. The first two of these signify negative traits that should be prevented while the third and fourth denote positive traits that need to be strengthened to ensure democratic consolidation. The fifth symbolizes a neutral trait. For him, therefore, the best option for avoiding democratic breakdown is to ‘eliminate, neutralize or convert disloyal players’ (Schedler 1998, p.96). The prevention of democratic erosion is to restrain the likelihood of ‘silent regression from democracy to semi-democratic rule’, which could engender the demise of democracy. In other words, democratic safeguards must be instituted to restrain political elites from weakening democratic institutions and structures. Where political elites are in the habit of undermining democratic institutions the consequence is the manifestation of ‘veneer democracy’. However, this paper adopts in totality the above exposition by Schedler which claims that democratic consolidation is but an, ‘expectation of regime continuity and nothing else’ (Schedler 1998, p.103).

Theoretical Underpinning

Theoretically, the study adopts the game theory’s zero-sum game as its theoretical framework. This is to engender a proper understanding of the strong wind of defections by Nigerian politicians. A game in this context is seen as a gamble or chancy affair. It denotes a decision problem involving at least two actors or players whose decisions are guided by rules, with available options, pay-offs or gains resulting from the interconnected decisions of the players. The features of this theory according to Leeds (1981) include “flexibility, survival, conditions of uncertainty and conditions of pay-offs, in which players are rewarded or penalized in terms of what they see as their interest”. The players or actors as described by the game theory above could be likened to defected governors, federal lawmakers, ministers, among others, who consider elections as game that must be played to win power relevance in absolute terms. The pay-offs is fixed, player A gains what B loses that is, if PDP wins the presidential election, the APC loses and vice-versa. Each player therefore in line with the principle of optimal maximization, seeks to employ the best rational strategy to win.

From a cursory look at the wave of decamping in Nigeria, it can be deduced that decamping is the character of politicians who are in contention for pay-offs in the general elections. Pay-offs means different thing to different politicians, to some, it is joining the party that seem likely to win the presidential election, while to some others, pay-offs is to join the party where their political/economic gains can be guaranteed. The need for political survival drives Nigeria’s politicians to battle for political relevance and opportunities both in their states and at the federal level, irrespective of the means and cost. Alan Cowell (cited in Joseph, 1991) aptly captures the situation of party politics in Nigeria. According to him, a man who supports the party in office will be rewarded with contracts for official projects, enabling him to pass on a large size to those further down the line that looks to him for generosity. The system helps those in power to perpetuate their rule because they are at the fountainhead of wealth. In Nigeria, the zero-sum nature of politics leaves members of the opposition at the receiving end of a lot of injustices. Visibly, ‘the-winner-takes-all’ approach to politics implies that the loss of an election is synonymous with the loss of patronage and access to socio-economic benefits.



History, Rationale and Politics of Decamping in Nigeria

Historically, decamping by politicians in Nigeria began before independence. In other words, the events of decamping in the polity are as old as Nigerian politics itself. For instance, Mbah, (2011) describes the events in 1951 as the first celebrated decamping incident that occurred in Nigeria, as the scenario that deprived Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the chance to lead the government business of the Western Region. In that event, the Yoruba members of the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) were lobbied to cross over to the Action Group (AG) to stop Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, from becoming the premier of Western Region. That heralded the first act of cross carpeting or decamping in Nigeria's political history.

As the leader of the NCNC, Azikiwe was to be the Premier of Western Nigeria following the elections of 1951 with Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba man, and the leader of Action Group, the leader of the opposition in the Regional House of Assembly. The NCNC won 42 seats out of 80, but within 24 hours, 20 of them had defected to AG. It was Chief Awolowo that exerted pressure on a number of Yoruba elected members on the NCNC platform to 'decamp' in the House and join the AG, in order to deny Dr. Azikiwe the premiership in favor of Awolowo. Azikiwe had assumed the leadership of the NCNC following the death of Herbert Macaulay. There would have been no basis for defection if Macaulay a Yoruba man, and not Azikiwe, was elected Premier of Western Region on the NCNC platform in 1951. This marked the introduction of ethnic rivalry into Nigerian politics and compelled Azikiwe to 'return home' to the East where he became the Premier (Natufe, 1999). It was the above that set the pace for the development of Nigerian politics around ethnic and regional rivalry as well as crisis and instability that followed later. This scenario essentially set the foundation for the politics of decamping in the political dictionary of Nigeria and has remained till today.

It could be argued that the bitter fight that took place between the two statesmen and their respective supporters throughout the early '60's led to division within the Action Group and its eventual splitting into separate and distinct parties and the unrestrained brutal violence that was unleashed by both sides against one another led directly to the first coup d'état of January 15th 1966 (Kayode, 2013). In the same way as it happened between Akintola and Awolowo, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC and Dr Kingsley Mbadiwe had an occasion to fall apart in their political relationship which led to Mbadiwe's formation of the Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (DPNC), which sought a working relationship with the Action Group at the Federal Elections in 1959 (Mbah, 2011).

By the Third Republics, money politics and political patronage had been introduced into Nigeria's body politics. Since every public office-holder uses the state power for that purpose, decamping becomes inevitable from this process, since the state has become a "means of production" and a "means of primitive accumulation" (Ekekwe, 1986; Iyayi, 1986). Consequently, party membership was either retained or changed according to how easy the members perceived their elections to be in the parties. Decamping of this scenario was that of Chief Akin Omoboriowo who was elected as the Deputy Governor of Ondo State under the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria but left the party to the National Party of Nigeria to contest as its gubernatorial candidate (Sodeine, 2009).



These anti-democratic activities, coupled with the exigencies in the formation of parties in the return to democratic rule in 1999, a product of military fiat, gave birth to indiscipline and gangsterism in politics. Thus, with the problems that accompanied the earlier periods, Fourth Republic political parties seem to be bereft of party discipline and ideology. Party indiscipline refers to the violation of the entrenched fundamental principles, rules and regulations guiding the conduct or behavior of every member of a political party at all times and any deviation from these principles, rules and regulations ought to be punished accordingly, irrespective of whoever is involved (Oviasuyi 2006). Studies have provided examples of actions of indiscipline in political parties in Nigeria to include: repeated breach of the party constitution, unilateral funding of parties, the superiority influence of the individual over the party, godfatherism, etc., (Thovoethin, 2004; Oviasuyi 2006; Omilus, 2013).

Despite different conceptions and meanings ascribed to decamping the meaning of defection can no longer be regarded as vague. Decamping by politicians essentially refers to the joining or moving from one political party to the other having calculated the pay-offs and the consequences (Okparaji, 2010). One of the rationales for decamping by politicians in Nigeria has been to advance their personal interests, especially where their interests are not achieved. In other hand, they are forced to move from one party to another looking for a party where their interests can be met. Adeyemi (2014) argues that politicians defect from one political party to another as a result of declining fortunes of a certain political party caused by the party leadership crisis or intra-party crises and sometimes lack of internal democracy and political 'favoritism'.

Decamping is considered as that strategy necessary to provide better chances of either picking election tickets or returning as political officers in on-coming general elections. Udo (2014) argues that Nigerian lawmakers' leave one party to the other in order to satisfy their selfish interest. He went further to ask: how do we explain a situation where lawmakers defect from one party to another and then defect back to their original party in the space of only one month and under circumstances that celebrate disregard for principles? Party leaders in Party A suddenly move to Party B and begin to condemn everything they had done in Party A. How do we explain the claim that political office holders are paid to remain in their party? How do we explain that negotiations for party allegiance are premised on automatic ticket and predetermined political posts? In all these types of horse-trading and deal-making, nobody is talking about the people or securing obligations or commitments on infrastructural development. Nobody is raising the issue of free education or healthcare, let alone anything remotely representative of the needs of the people.

Intra-party crisis is also one reason that makes politicians to decamp to other party. It is a conflict by party men and women to outwit one another in the control of party machinery ahead of future elections (Orji, 2013). It is important to note that decamping of some members of the APC to the PDP was borne out of numerous crises ravaging the party. In the All Progressive Congress for example, it is believed that Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a national leader of the party dictates and directs the party affairs (Oketola & Falodi, 2015). This is evident as candidates who emerged as the party flag-bearers in election and party executives always seek his consent and support for such position. A chronicle of decamping of this scenario is that of former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar who after a running battle with the former president Olusegun





Obasanjo, defected to the then Action Congress where he contested the presidential elections (Mbah, 2011). The political calculation in the country took a dramatic turn by 2013 with the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC) through the merger of four political parties. The merger was by Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). This was to garner more supporters over the Peoples Democratic Party in the build up to the 2015 general elections (Joseph, 2014), which also coincided with the formation of New PDP (led by a former leader of the party, KawuBaraje). This development led to the defection of five former PDP governors, MurtalaNyako (Adamawa); Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara), Rabiukwankwaso (Kano), Aliyu Wammako, (Sokoto) and ChibuikeAmaechi (Rivers), to the APC ahead of the 2015 general elections. Also was the governor of Imo State, RochasOkorochoa, from the All Progressive Grand Alliance and the eleven PDP senators; Senator Bukola Saraki (Kwara Central), Umaru Dahiru (Sokoto South), Magnus Ngei Abe (Rivers South), Wilson Asinobi (Rivers West), Bindawa Muhammed (Gombe Central), Aisha Jummai (Taraba North), Chief Olusola Oke (Ondo) Mohammed Ali (Borno South), Mohammed Shaba (Kwara North), AbdulahiAdamu (Nasarawa West) and Ibrahim Abdullahi (Sokoto East), as well as thirty-seven members of the House of Representatives who decamped from the PDP to APC (Ebere, 2014).

Essentially, parties are formed by individuals that share the same political ideology, that hold a common vision and mission statement (Ojukwu&Olaifa, 2011). Empirical studies have revealed that Fourth Republic political parties in Nigeria are composed of persons with different ideologies who do not only misunderstand themselves but are regularly feuding (Omotola, 2009; Mbah, 2011). Thus, while Omotola (2009) is of the opinion that this faulty origin of political parties in Nigeria is responsible for the party's ideological barrenness, it is emphasized further that poverty of ideology is significantly accountable for the prevailing cross-carpeting of the Fourth Republic. For instance, virtually all political parties in Nigeria seem to have one internal crisis or the other. Sometimes these crises snowball into full scale conflict, leading to divisions and factionalization within the party.

The All Progressives Congress (APC) toed the line of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) with the outcome of the party convention that saw the election of national leaders of the party. The fact that one of the contestants for the position of party chairman who was formerly of the PDP, Tom Ikimi returned to PDP lends credence to this (Nwanegbo, Odigbo, &Nnorom, 2014). More so, hardly had the APC won the 2015 presidential election when; its members in the National Assembly were involved in leadership crisis. Most fascinating is the fact that most of the actors that led the political Tsunami that swept the PDP off with the instrumentality of the APC are turning against the foundation they laid. Prior to 2019 general election, Nigeria's democracy had continued to witness long queues of party decamping.

Decamping and Democratic Consolidation: The Nexus

Malhotra (2005) observed that in some nations, party decamping is not taken seriously whereas, in some countries, such actions are seen as threat to democratic stability. This threat prompted the enactment of laws against defection in some countries. For instance, India enacted laws against decamping in 1973, 1985 and 2003. The law provides that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for withdrawing membership of his original political





party. The law reduced cases of party defection in the Indian polity since it was difficult for Indian public office holders to forfeit their position. In Nigeria, there exists also laws aim at checkmating the rate of defection. This can be found in section 68 and 109 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). However, inherent deficiencies in the law have frustrated the achievements of the purpose of the law. For instance, section 68 (1g) states thus:

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 (Constitution of Federal of Nigeria, 1999, p.34)

In Nigeria, the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar seems to be the most defected PDP politician in recent times. For instance, he defected to ACN from PDP, then moved back to PDP and then moved to APC and has also defected to PDP. The major linkage between decamping and democratic consolidation unfolds in the negative. Democracy cannot be consolidated where politicians lack ideological focus and are only interested in their personal gains, a development which gives impetus to the spate of decamping and carpet crossing witnessed in Nigeria.

The nature, dimension and frequency of decamping in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999 supports some of the scholarly analysis that democracy in Nigeria is still a mirage. In the view of Kura (2011), political parties are the necessary channels in establishing the necessary link(s) between the state, civil society and democratic consolidation. For him, political parties are barometer used for measuring the degree and effectiveness of the practice of democracy. Being the mirror to which democratic principles reflects, their actions and in actions could make or mar a political system. Political parties aggregate so many functions but not limited to governance, representation, policy making and execution, interest aggregation and articulation, peaceful change of government, making government effective and responsive (opposition parties function also as pressure group), accountability, social and integration functions. What is more, wherever a political party exists, it tends to perform common functions at different stages of economic, social, political and judicial development.

Effects of Decamping on democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Decamping in Nigeria is traceable to the emphasis on the primacy of political power. Easton sees politics as an avenue for authoritative allocation of values. People struggle for political power so as to be able to preside over the allocation of resources. This is because the possession of state power directly gives access to economic power. By implication, those who hold political positions determine the allocation and distribution of economic resources and political rewards. The alarming rate of political decamping in Nigeria and the increasing number of party defectors remains a serious source of concern. This concern, according to Ogundiya



(2011) revolve around the role of political parties in the collapse of first, second and third republics.

Mbah (2011) averred that desperation to hold public office as means of accumulating wealth make Nigerian politicians to cross-carpet without justifications. In advance democracies such as U.S.A. Britain, Germany, Australia, etc. decamping is done on ideological principles, rather than selfish and personal interest. For instance, a member of Republican Party in the USA can express support for Democratic Party member or aspirant without necessarily decamping to Democratic Party. In 2008, Collin Powell, a former US secretary of Defense publicly supported Democratic Party candidate, Barrack Obama for the US presidential elections without defecting to Democratic Party. Why political defection in Nigeria is almost becoming a culture is that there is paucity of ideas, collapse of political values and norm, lack of principles based on shared beliefs and the selfish interest of Nigerian politicians. Under this circumstance, democracy is built on faulty and false foundation. Issues such as ethnicity, religion, individual/personality and language influence the formation of political parties and movement of politicians to a particular parity.

Momoh (2010) noted that political parties in Nigeria have manifestoes that are all virtually the same. These manifestoes are formulated by consultants, not party members or activists. This may have been the reason why Nigerian political parties always look up to electoral commissions to help in educating the voters. Oyebode (2012) submits that it is difficult to have democracy without genuine and committed political parties. Political parties operating in Nigeria are nothing but an organization managed by opportunists. In Nigerian democracy, there is lack of internal democracy within political parties as a result of frequent conflicts, crises and imposition of candidates for elections. While Aina (2002) doubt the integrity of political participation and competitions in Nigeria of which parties are the basis, Mbah (2011) portend Nigerian political party as strip of ideological foundation, deficit in ideas and principles. This ideological bankruptcy has reduced Nigerian political parties to a mere organization that survive on monetization as the basis for loyalty and support. This act erodes the efficacy of democratic consolidation through party processes. In Nigeria, politicians only decamp from one party to another to contest elections or get favour not on the basis of party ideological differences.

Decamping no doubt has telling effects on the process of consolidating democracy, especially when it affects state and federal elected political office holders. This trend is fast making caricature of democracy in the Fourth Republic and seriously belittles the spirit of opposition parties. Until the formation of the APC in 2013 strengthened by the decampment of five aggrieved governors and other parliamentarians from the then ruling PDP, decamping right from the inception of the Fourth Republic had always been in the direction of the ruling party. A development that had led to the further fragmentation of opposition parties where defectors emanated from. This often breeds the emergence of new political parties that lack strength and focus to compete reasonably in the polity. In other words, incessant decamping weakens opposition parties which have a telling effect on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Indiscriminate and unguarded decamping in Nigeria has produced some anti-democratic tenets, such as the speedy whittling down of the legitimacy of political leaders at every level; the gradual mutilation of legitimacy of democratic governance as the most preferred system of



government; rubbished the underlying philosophy and principle of representation by reallocating voters' choice without consultation. Frequent decamping among the political actors leaves the electorate with no alternatives to choose from when it comes to ideological bloc. As such, the character composition of parties is no more different, the only difference is of nomenclatural relevance (Ilo, 2015). Consequently, parties developed ideologies only to win election and form new government. This gives the ruling party opportunities to operate without constructive criticism. Moreover, Hoeane (2008) argues that in extreme cases of decamping where number of public representatives who defected is significantly high, such shifts of allegiance have led to the collapse of democratically elected governments, such as in Lesotho in 1997. The general orientations of the electorates in Nigeria have assumed negative and downward trends as a result of defection and party harlotry by politicians. Decamping has also resulted to political party factionalization and disintegration as its essence has suffered a serious oxidization. Decamping has also directly or indirectly incapacitated the emergence of a formidable political opposition, the hallmark of representative democracy.

Another twist that further weakens the consolidation of democracy is the motivation for decamping among elected political actors that lack philosophical backup. This tends to promote money-bag politics rather than ideological oriented political parties. According to the News Magazine of February 2014, a "mouth-watering" offers of money were outlined for the legislators that cross-carpeted to the APC in the build up to 2015 general elections. According to the report, the then ruling PDP was said to have promised US\$ 2 million to each senator who returns to the PDP, US\$ 1 million to each member of the House of Representatives and US\$ 10 million to each 'leader' who abandoned the APC for the PDP. Although, this is considered a rumor in some quarters, one cannot completely dispel issues like this in any polity that is not ideologically driven, where possession of political power is viewed directly as economic empowerment. Arising from the above, building strong opposition parties under such circumstances becomes very difficult; hence consolidating democracy in such polity becomes a mere wishful thinking.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Following from the above, it can be deduced that decamping largely has been responsible for the speedy democratic recession in Nigeria. The general elections in Nigeria have been characterized by flagrant violation of the rules of the game. As can be noted, democratic consolidation requires widespread agreement on the rules of the game among those competing for power. Such agreement must be built on a broad and deep belief among both elites and the mass public that, a democratic regime is the most appropriate for society. Undoubtedly, the spate of decamping by politicians in Nigeria has grossly eroded such belief among the mass public in Nigeria. This has called for serious attention to the practice of democracy and its consolidation in Nigeria. It is observed in this paper that Nigeria's democracy is shallow and has failed to take deep roots because political parties are deficient and have been unable to play their expected role in strengthening the foundation of democracy. Political parties since 1999 are functionally weak and institutionally frail owing to incessant party violence, lack of clearly articulated manifestoes, coherent and consistent programs that reflect the overall expectations, desires, preferences and aspirations of the masses, which in turn have become listless, lethargic and apathetic. The party





system in Nigeria is weak and vulnerable; its future remains precarious and endangered by politicians who through their whims and caprices have become greedy, selfish, dubious, thoughtless and irrational.

Nigerian political parties have proven themselves to be undemocratic and anti-democratic institutions. The political parties in Nigeria's fourth republic are un-institutionalized as they revolve around some prominent and influential individuals instead of establishing themselves as strong institutions driven by values and ideologies. They are known for exclusion and non-inclusion; the political parties do not observe internal democracy as required. Decision making in almost all the political parties is bereft of transparency, accountability, consensus and consultation. All the political parties need to be re-organized on the principle of all-inclusiveness rather than exclusion, Party officials' needs to be trained to carry out their functions.

Critical attention needs to be paid to the political parties as institutions that play diverse but central roles in democratic consolidation. The parties need to be re-engineered from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of structuring, mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts. This means that issues of organizational capacity, effective leadership, internal democracy, discipline, institutionalization and personalization, ideological platforms of mobilization and linkage to civil society and the masses have to be tackled. All political parties should practice internal democracy to make them strong, effective and efficient through consistent observance of principles of transparency, accountability, consultation and consensus building in policies and decision making. Laws prohibiting political office holders from decamping from the political party on whose mandate he/she came to the office should be enacted.

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