



## Political parties and the Practice of Internal Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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### Abstract

Nigerian politics and practice have a mixed history, and despite its apparent openness to the general public, it remains a mystery and opaque to the outsider. This paper examined the phenomenon of Political Parties and the Practice of Internal Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with special focus to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC). The paper relied on secondary sources of data as its primary source of information. This strategy is used because of its inherent benefits. To be specific newspapers, periodicals, textbooks, the internet, journals, government publications, official documents, and other secondary sources were used in this study to give insight into party politics and internal democracy. This study used content analysis method of investigation and analysis. This entails deciphering the meaning of materials gathered in order to arrive at a credible and verifiable conclusion. The research found out the political parties in Nigeria lacked much-needed internal democracy, particularly when it comes to candidate selection. Political incumbents and so-called godfathers were also characterized as having an arrogant and demanding attitude. The paper therefore, suggested amongst others that political parties must be revamped to allow voters to freely elect those who represent them and fight for leadership positions. To maintain the democratic ideals of consolidation such as tolerance, accountability, and transparency, effective institutions should be established. In addition, social capital culture must be infused into Nigeria's political system. Without social capital, any institution or organization may struggle to function at its full potential.

**Keywords: Politics, Political parties, Democracy, Internal democracy,**

### Introduction

It is clear that due to the frequent military intervention in Nigerian politics since 1966, the issue of democratic governance has generally been a disaster. Under a military regime, government became a weapon of punishment, harassment, impoverishment, suppression and intimidation. This outward situation generated stiff and consistent opposition from the critical political spectrum led by the pro-democracy activists and groups inclusive of the G-34, which later transformed into the People's Democratic Party (P.D.P) whose election in 1999 put an end to military rule, and ushered in an era of democratic governance in Nigeria.





Democratic governance with its ideal of elective representation, freedom of choice of leaders, rule of law, freedom of expression and accountability has become the acceptable system of government all over the world following the global trend where military and monarchical rules are fading and liberal democracy is taking the lead. The right of the people to exercise their franchise is now the order of the day. People are now conscious about who rules and under which platform. Without the platform of political parties, none of this would be possible today. Candidates seeking electoral office compete on the platform of a political party, and each political party should have its own ideology and manifestoes which should decide what kind of regulations or policies to be expected from such parties' candidates and use the ideology and manifestoes to govern when elected into office. It is expected that with the growing number of political parties in the democratic process, it will go a long way towards promoting political participation, awareness and involvement, even in the most rural parts of the country (Muktar, 2014).

Political parties are formally constituted organizations with the express and proclaimed goal of attaining and/ or maintaining legal control over the personnel and policies of an existent or prospective state's government, either alone or in alliance with other similar organizations. Political parties are one of the most essential and influential entities in modern democratic governance. Because political parties are critical components of the democratic process, it is critical that they operate democratically within their own ranks. As a result, internal party democracy is a critical element that political parties must adopt in order to contribute meaningfully to any democratic arrangement and accelerate democratic processes and consolidation (Muktar, 2014).

Internal democracy is the means of introducing party politics and discipline in political parties, as well as the process of integrating broader democratic ideas. It is a channel through which political parties promote transparency in party nominations or primaries, members' ideological underpinnings, and the upkeep of discipline and order. Within political parties, internal democracy represents the fundamental ideals of democracy (Jude & Ika, 2013). Internal democracy is the belief that all party members should have equal access to openness, accountability, and fair play in terms of equal opportunity (Okhaide, 2012; Ojukwu & Olaifa 2011; Liebowitz & Ibrahim 2013 and Hallberg 2008).

Intra-party conflicts are a major problem that tramples on the fundamentals of democracy and democratic values in the absence of internal democracy. Since the First Republic, intra-party conflict has been known to occur in Nigerian democracy and political parties (1960-1966). However, during the Fourth Republic (1999-present), their manifestations has become more obvious, possibly as a result of the country's longest period of democratization. Cross-carpeting, violence, anti-party actions, instability, bad governance, and other stumbling blocks to Nigerian political parties and democratization are all consequences of intra-party feuds (Jude & Ika 2013; Toyin 2014; and Awofesu & Irabor, 2016).

Many political parties have been grounded due to intra-party disagreements and a lack of internal democracy, most recently is the erstwhile People's Democratic Party (PDP), which dominated Nigeria's political space for sixteen years (1999-2015). Many experts (Paden 2015, Adibe 2015, and The Centre for Public Policy Alternative 2015) agree that this is what gave the opposition All Progressive Congress (APC) an advantage in winning the 2015 General Elections and deposing the PDP. However, the APC also found itself in the midst of intra-party crises of varying magnitudes less





than two years after taking office, ranging from state internal division to executive-legislative feuds in an all-party show and internal schism among party executives. This intra-party feuds led to the inability of the ruling APC to present candidates in Zamfara and Rivers States in 2019 general elections due to protracted litigation which led to the expiration of the period of fielding candidates for the various positions.

This study will use a qualitative approach that is solely dependent on secondary data alongside descriptive, comparative, and historical approaches, using the content method of analysis. It analyzes the foundations for internal democracy and the necessity to promote internal party democratic ideals, as well as the origin, causes, and manifestations of intra-party conflicts in the fourth Republic, with a particular focus on the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) as well as the implications that these crises or conflicts have for the future of democracy and democratization in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual clarifications**

Before we get into the kernel of the matter, it's vital to understand the fundamental ideas in this study: politics, political parties, democracy, internal party democracy,

### **Concept of Politics**

Politics like other social science concept has different meanings, definitions and views as they are different scholars. Politics consist of ceaseless interaction of individuals and groups with each other in a flow of activities in and around public governance. This persistent and ordered pattern of human interactions is distinguished from other types on the grounds that it involves the use of power and authority (Chaturvedi, 2006) cited in (Jev, and Dzoho, 2014)

The concept politics, is derived from the Greek word '*Polis*', which means the city state. According to famous Greek philosophers and political scientists, Politics was a subject which dealt with all the activities and affairs of the city state. Their City States were known as '*Polis*'. City state was an all-inclusive term, as the ancient Greeks made no distinction between the State and the Government on one hand, and State and Society on the other. They never differentiated between personal life and social life. Hence according to them politics was a total study of man, society, state, morality and so on. (Johari, 2011).

Politics has been in currency ever since Aristotle, the universally acknowledge father of *politics*. Aristotle, began his famous work titled *Politics* with the observation that "man is by nature a political animal". By this, he mean that the essence of social existence is politics and that two or more men interacting with one another are invariably involved in a political relationship. Aristotle also mean that very few people prefer an isolated life to one that includes social companionship. Men are engaged in politics as they try to define their positions in society, as they struggle for scarce resources and as they try to convince others to accept their points of view. Aristotle then concluded that the only way to maximize one's individual capabilities and to attain the highest form of social life was through political interaction with others in an institutionalized setting, a setting designed to resolve social conflicts and to set collective goals for the state, (Anifowose and Enemuo, 2009). Some modern political thinkers have frequently used the term '*politics*' in this sense. For instance, Laski (2008) Lipset (1969) Catlin (1965) Dahl (1991). Thinkers like Lasswell, Dahl have defined politics in terms of power, influence, and authority. In this study, politics means an interplay of power-seeking relationship among political actors





which is undertaken within certain parameters defined by the political parties and the institutionalized processes that governs its operations and interplay.

### **Concept of Political Parties**

The word "party" can be traced back to the Latin word "partire," which means "to split." This term, on the other hand, did not enter the political lexicon until the 17th century. Prior to that, the word "part" had already made its way into the French language as "partager," which means "to partake." By the time the term "party" was coined, it had supplanted the term "sect" (Ogunnoiki, 2018). What is a political party given that we know where the word "party" comes from? No definition of party, according to Lawson (1976), is ever completely satisfactory. Scholars, particularly those in the field of political science, continue to work on a description that best represents the characteristics and functions of a political party. According to the Irish statesman and political philosopher, Burke (1770) cited in (Ogunnoiki, 2018), is "a body of persons united for the purpose of furthering the national interest by their collective endeavors, on some particular principles in which they are all agreed" (Langford, 1981; Ogunnoiki, 2018, p. 116).

According to Coleman and Rosberg (1964), political parties are "associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and/or maintaining legal control over the personnel and policy of the government of an actual or prospective sovereign state, either singly or in coalition or in electoral competition with other similar associations" (Coleman and Rosberg, 1964; Ogunnoiki, 2018 p.116).

A political party therefore is any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office (Sartori, 1976). It can also be seen as "any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect government office holders under a given label" (Epstein, 1967; 1980; Ogunnoiki, 2018). Succinctly, a political party is "an organized attempt to get control of government" (Ogunnoiki, 2018, p.116).

The term Political Parties therefore has no universally acceptable definition. However, in its simplest form, political parties are organized groups, whose major intention is to contest, win elections and take control of government. The primary purpose of any political party is to take control of state power. Political parties are one of the necessary ingredients and requirements for a healthy democracy world over.

Indeed, they are the machinery in which democracy and democratization thrives successfully. Burke clarifies political parties as an assembly of men of common interest for the purpose of promoting their values across the society through power contest (Babayo and Mohammad, 2019). Political parties are seen by classical scholars in the field (Lowell 1913, Schumpeter 1942, Michel 1965, Duverger 1966 and Sartori 1976) as a fraction of a whole society; a section of the state comprising of individuals sharing similar ideology and principles who seek for political power and control to advance their interest and ideology at national and international levels. The views of the above scholars summarised it all because political parties cannot be far from the composition and purpose mentioned above in any type of democracy. Idowu (2019) is of the view that political parties are a group of people organized for the purpose of winning government power by elections or other means. Idowu provided four characteristics which usually distinguish political parties from other groups to include:

- i. Aim to exercise government power by winning political offices;
- ii. Are organized bodies with a formal card carrying membership;







- iii. Typically adopt a broad issue of focus, addressing each of the major area of government policy; and
- iv. To varying degrees, are united by shared political preferences and a general ideological identity. Modern scholars (Appadorai 2004, Kapur 2009 and Johari 2011) perceived political parties in a similar view in which they see parties as a group of ideologically oriented men who pursue power through a legitimate means of democratic principles of election in order to pursue their ideology legitimately and authoritatively in the society. The views of the liberals differ from that of the Marxist on the nature of parties in the sense that liberalist see parties as organised bodies of public opinion aggregation and democratic pursuance of power while the Marxist views parties as instruments for securing power and domination of the ruling class by the bourgeoisie which should be replaced with proletarian parties (Johari, 2011). Parties played vital roles in democracy including representation, opposition, recruitment and training of leaders, harmonizing different interests, providing alternative choice framework and social services to the society (Norris 2005 and Speijcken 2011). As a departure, political parties is applied to mean a platform on which power-seeking actors within a democratic setting organizes themselves in a manner as to recruit and mobilize the electorates using whatever possible means to win elections and to pilot statecraft.

### **Nigerian Political Parties**

From the First Republic (1960-1966) to the present Fourth Republic (1999-present), Nigerian political parties have shared a similar quality that has made them regional in vision, ethnic in orientation, and religious in nature (Agbaje, 2008). Nigerian political parties began as a regional movement in the 1920s, then evolved into nationalist activities, giving them a colonial heritage, similar to that of most African parties in the post-colonial era. The parties lack philosophy and democratic governance ideals, as has been the case with Nigerian parties since independence in 1960. (Salih, 2003).

The first parties to emerge in the First Republic were the Action Group (AG) for Yoruba West, the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), which was dominated by Igbo East, and the Northern People Congress (NPC), which represented ethnic and religious groups rather than party ideology, and this outlook laid the foundation for continued ethnoreligious and regional parties in Nigeria Second Republic (1979-), and the third and fourth republic (Akinboyega&Anifowose, 2008; Idowu, 2019)..

It can be argued that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) looked more national in orientation from 1999 to 2015 dominating five out of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria in the Northeast, Northcentral, Southeast, South south but the Southwest still maintain a regional and ethnic party of Alliance for Democracy (AD) which later transformed into Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) that joined the coalition which established APC in 2013. The All Nigerian People Party (ANPP) established it dominant presence in Northern Nigeria and despite the overwhelming domination of PDP it later turned out to be an opposition with strong presence only in the Southeast and South-South after its defeat in the 2015 General Elections by the opposition All Progressive Congress (APC). In this context, the study is restricted to the PDP and APC in which their structure, organization and recruitment are more national in terms of outlooks.





## Concept of Democracy

Democracy is the most familiar concept in many political discourses. democracy is quite old. It entails a system of government that allows the citizens freedom to decide their desires. Ancient Greece (Athens in particular) is widely regarded as the birthplace of western democracy (Jev, and Dzoho, 2014). It is common knowledge that the word democracy is derived from Greek words *demos* which means “the people”, and *kratia* which means “to rule”. This in theory means a governance system by the people and, for the people, as opposed to rule by one despot (autocracy), or a few (oligarchy). Thus, literally, democracy signifies ‘the rule of the people. Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy is very close to its literal meaning. It reads: 'Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people'. In short, democracy as a form of government implies that the ultimate authority of government is vested in the common people so that public policy is made to conform to the will of the people and to serve the interest of the people.

Popper (1963) on his part, asserts that democracies are a system wherein one administration can be replaced by another without bloodshed, which to him indicates elections. He rejects the concept of sovereignty in favour of elections, stating that the imperfections and uncertainties of elections are preferable to the prospect of tyranny found within sovereignty (Jev, &Dzoho, 2014) The minimalist conception of democracy has been challenged by maximalists. In criticizing the minimalist conception, the Maximalists argued that without effective guarantees of civil liberties, elections do not constitute democracy, and that a “procedural minimum” for defining democracy must include not only elections, but reasonably broad guarantees of basic civil rights -such as freedom of speech, association and assembly (Jev, &Dzoho, 2014).

Thus beyond the procedural electoral minimum, maximalist scholars of democracy have identified further characteristics that must be present for these basic procedures to meaningfully constitute a democracy. Robert Dahl, for instance, advances three essential conditions for the well-functioning multiparty democracy. These are: (a) Extensive competition by political candidates and their groups or parties; (b) Political participation that provides the choice for the electorate to select candidates in free and fair elections; and(c)Civil and political liberties that enable citizens to express themselves without fear of punishment (Dahl, 1982).Larry Diamond, another maximalist, sees the definition of democracy as encompassing “not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organizational liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations); effective power for elected officials; and functional autonomy for legislative, executive and judicial organs of government (Diamond, 1988 cited in Jev, &Dzoho, 2014).

Nwankwo (2000), sees democracy as “a system which gives periodic opportunities for the masses to choose their leaders; a system of government in which the will of the people prevails. It is a majority government; a government elected by the majority of the electorate who are qualified adult citizens.” It therefore means that in a democracy, political sovereignty is vested in the people or the electorate (Jev, &Dzoho, 2014). Arising from the forging, the definition of democracy in the context of this study follows Nwankwo’s definition but also integrates Dahl’s perspectives. Therefore, democracy implies a political arrangement that offers the opportunity to electorates to determine their representatives who act directly on their behalf within both formal and informal organizational settings. The formal setting being the state structures such as the legislature, executives and judiciary and other





related agencies. The informal settings on the other hand consists of political parties, pressure groups and other non-formal agencies making demands on the government.

### **Concept of Internal Democracy**

Internal democracy refers to a variety of methods for involving all members of a party in internal party decision-making and other considerations (Scarrows, 2004). Internal democracy, according to Duverger (1963) cited in Idowu (2019) is the pillar that allows a democratic society to work properly. In a different perspective, Sartori (1977) cited in Okhaide(2016), argued noticed that it was the logic of party competition, not internal democracy, that created a lively, functioning democracy. Internal democracy is a top-down approach to party decision-making that includes party primaries, representation, accountability, and a level playing field for all members to be taken on board by the party (Okhaide, 2016).

Internal democracy, also known as intra-party democracy, refers to parties having an agreed-upon method and rules for making mutual decisions and avoiding or managing disagreement in order to avoid arbitrary decisions or imposition of candidates against the wishes of the majority of members. For democratic consolidation and representation, internal democracy is essential. It provides a space for members to be properly recruited, socialized, trained, disciplined, accountable, and transparent. Any political party that lacks internal democracy is deemed undemocratic, despite the fact that no political organization may declare itself undemocratic. Internal democracy can be harmed by arbitrary party leadership and the marginalization of some party members. Anti-party actions, disagreements, election failure, and divergence from democratic norms are all consequences of a lack of internal democracy (Omilusi, 2016).

Internal democracy entails party candidate selection, consultation, internal party discipline and sanction, promotion of party philosophy, and accountability (Awofeso, Obah-Akpowaghaga & Ogunmilade, 2017). Internal democracy can be promoted in two ways, (Hallberg, 2008): advocacy and legal/regulatory measures. Selection of party leaders, election of party representatives, collective decision-making, and peaceful discussion are all aspects of advocacy. The second issue is legal/regulatory measures, which should include a party constitution, gentleman agreement on representation principles and regulations, minority consideration, negotiation, and penalty for members. In this context, internal democracy is the whole gamut that involves the setting of party rules and procedures to which all party members submit themselves and are penalized when rules and regulations governing the party are disregarded. Therefore, the place of internal democracy is to check the conduct of party members in relations to the established rules and regulations of the party.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Group Theory**

Whenever a discourse about political party and democracy is launched, theories, models and conjectures are design to provide a sense of direction for the discourse. The group theory is the fundamental underpinning of this study. According to the group theory, there are several factions in any society that are constantly fighting for power and dominance over one another. Groups are able to balance their competing interests through group consensus by balancing and restricting each other's powers.





The intellectual root of the group theory lies in the doctrine of pluralism which was developed in the early twentieth century by a number of scholars such as Arthur Bentley, David Truman and Earl Latham. Bentley, to whom the origin of the group theory in its present form can be traced, conceives groups as the basic unit of political activity in the society. In his words, “when the groups are adequately stated, everything is stated. When I say everything, I mean everything” (Bentley 2017). Bentley conceives the importance of groups in terms of their processes or activities rather than as formal structures since the society itself comprises of dynamic processes and not static institutions. The theorist also introduced the concept of “interest” in trying to answer the question as to what gives direction to group activity. According to him, it is this interest that differentiates a genuine group from a coincidental collection of people (Bentley, 2017). However, group interests expressed as demands on the political system occasionally conflict and the capability of the state to manage the various conflicting interests goes a long way in stabilizing the entire system (Varma, 2006).

Another group theorist, David Truman, holds that for a group to achieve its interest in relations to others which are engaged in competition with it depends on whether it possesses certain acumen such as access to those in authority, resources, organization and leadership (Truman, 1971). On the other hand, a group’s inability to influence government decision could be adduced to lack of resources, ineffective leadership and poor organization. But the question is what happens when group interests conflict? The group theorists argue that through an unconscious balancing process, the role of government as adjuster of group conflict, the phenomenon of overlapping and cross cutting membership and the rules of the game (however unorganized they are) groups are able to achieve equilibrium in their interactions. (Varma, 2006).

The adoption of this theory as a foundation for studying political parties and the practice of internal democracy in Nigerian’s fourth republic is predicated on the interplay of forces and power struggles among various groups in Nigerian society, which resulted in the circumvention of rules to satisfy sectional interests. As a result, adopting the group theory allows us to investigate how intrigues among diverse groups and the resultant consequences affect the outcomes of political activities, particularly in Nigeria’s process of development.

### **Political Parties and Internal Democracy: The Nexus**

Two major schools of thought emanate from the desirability of intra-party democracy. One calls for oligarchic system, as maintained by Duverger (1954) where a few should have effective control of political party to ensure cohesion and avoid cumbersomeness that leads to inefficient decision making process which are at variance with the ultimate desire for well organized, structured, and institutionalized party systems. This position further argues that internal party democracy “weakens political parties and compromises their ability to compete against their opponents and is therefore undesirable.” The argument goes further to say that democratic consolidation needs participation of a few party members, preferably by the party leaders in decision making processes (Teorell, 1999; Bashir, 2016) so as to ensure presentation of acceptable candidate before the electorates. This position further asserts that accommodation of internal party democracy tends to divert more attention towards conflict management and internal competition which would eventually bring about weak and uncoordinated institutions.







Contrary to the pro-Duvergerian position is the pro-competitive school that calls for internal party democracy for ensuring effective interest aggregation, safeguarding and strengthening participatory democracy in the wider society (Maiyo, 2017). This argument further receives some boost from Richard (1997) who views it as systems “which facilitates citizen-self-rule, permits the broadcast deliberation in determining public policy and constitutionally guarantees all the freedom necessary for open political competition”. Direct participatory democracy is said to be a thing of the past because, the complexity of the state system is brought about as a result of increase in the level of technology, population explosion and plato’s division of responsibilities.

The need to have some degree of direct participation in decision making is only through democratic internal party politics where every member should have inputs to the outputs of the political party’s activities. In line with Scarrow’s (2005) argument, which is also maintained by Maiyo (2017), political parties that practice intra-party democracy are likely to select more capable and appealing leaders, to have more responsive policies, and, as a result, to enjoy greater electoral success (and) strengthen democratic culture generally. It equally “encourages political equality by creating level playing field in candidate’s selection and policy development within the party; ensures popular control of government by extending democratic norms to party organizations such as transparency and accountability; it improves the quality of public debate by fostering inclusive and deliberative practices within parties (Gauja, 2006; Muktar, 2014)

This paper therefore maintains that internal democracy is a vital aspect of ensuring coherence, stability and constitutionalism within political parties. This is because internal democracy does not only serve as a compass which gives parties a direction, but also a mediating element which political parties can fall back to avoid or alleviate crisis. However, lack of internal democracy, particularly in the process of candidate selection and party primaries in the People’s Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress thus calls for critical attention and analysis, and is perceived to be responsible for the outbreak of crisis within the political parties.

### **Challenges of Internal Democracy in Nigerian Political Parties**

#### **Paucity of Ideology**

For political parties, ideologies are important. "Ideologies are complete perspectives of societies and social changes that include explanations, values, and aspirations for past, present, and future developments," (Hofmeister&Grabow, 2011). Political and social activity are inspired and justified by ideologies. They are an important tool for political orientation. Political parties are critical to the establishment of democracy (Lamidi& Bello, 2012). As a result, political parties nominate candidates and define the issues that will be debated during periodic elections. Political parties have a variety of roles, including encouraging citizens to become more involved in elections and government operations, defining current political issues and determining the most sensible options, and offering candidates with the ability to make issue-based judgments (Janda, 2006, Otaida et al, 2020).

Parties must be motivated by different ideas that sell them to voters and distinguish them from one another in order to be positioned to carry out the aforementioned obligations (Lamidi& Bello, 2012). As a result, political parties continue to be defined by their ideologies. A party ideology is a moral framework that upholds the sanctity of political parties and the promises they make to voters. It is an





encapsulation of political ideologies that give rise to political acts that allow citizens to select how they want to be governed (Simbine, 2004, Otaida et al, 2020).

It was clear from the start of the Fourth Republic's original three political parties (PDP, AD& APP, and later ANPP) that the parties lacked ideology (Omotola, 2009). The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was viewed as a jumble of politicians with various ideological bents, such as conservatives, radicals, progressives, and retired generals who were frequently embroiled in intraparty strife. The Alliance for Democracy (AD) was a pro-Yoruba party created with the explicit objective of returning power to the South West, whereas the All Peoples Party (APP) which later became the All Nigeria Peoples Party, (ANPP) was a collection of politicians, the majority of whom served under General Sani Abacha's government (Adebayo, 2008). This explains why there was more internal party opposition than in previous political epochs (Olaniyan, 2009). It is clear that the parties' conflict resolution strategy is not proactive because the parties are not form based on ideology and so not pursued aggressively.

The Nigerian state is viewed by the parties in power as a conduit for primitive capital accumulation, while it stifles competition for leadership posts among all members (Tenuche, 2011, Lamidi& Bello, 2012). According to Domingo and Nwankwo (2010), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), for instance, did not appear to be a party with a clear ideological identity, but rather a "centrist" party that "operates more as a catch-all organization that houses a spectrum of political perspectives." The party's power grew throughout time as a result of its incumbency and consequent access to state resources and power (Alfa et al, 2017).

The politicians became enmeshed in a never-ending battle for control of the party apparatus, with the founding fathers demonstrating massive totalitarian inclinations (Simbine, 2004). Some members of the party viewed the gatherings as their personal property, and they controlled the flow of activities. The PDP's intraparty quagmire, (Simbine, 2004), resulted in the creation of unstable groups and caucuses, with many party loyalists posing as Board of Trustees (BOT), elders, or party leaders. The conflicting interests of different factions led to repeated leadership changes, with at least six national chairmen of PDP in the last 16 years of its rule, and none of them has completed their term before being summarily ousted (Lamidi& Bello, 2002 cited in Otaida et al, 2020)

Because the parties lack ideological foundations, they rely on cheap public relations, and party leaders have exhibited an abject desire to pursue their own self-interest (Simbine, 2005). Politicians operated like political bats in their quest to alter their party loyalties due to the lack of ideologies (Aina, 2002). Despite the fact that the ruling parties (the PDP and APC) have always enjoyed an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly (Lamidi& Bello, 2008), the lack of ideologies has led to legislative executive/schisms and political malfeasance.

The activities of the Fourth Republic political parties, particularly the PDP and the APC, have shown that they lacked ideological disposition to contribute profoundly to internal party democracy, party institutionalization, and democratic consolidation. As a result, their manifestos are ideologically neutral (Adejumobi & Kehinde, 2007). This deprives them of the essential ideals that could provide voters with a political foundation on which to lend their support and vote. The party's presidential candidates rarely base their campaigns on national development. Rather, these campaigns are based on



the candidates' personalities. As a result, the registered political parties could be described as "catch-all" parties because there is no clear ideological divide between them (Omilusi, 2015; Alfa et al, 2017).

Political parties take an anti-democratic stance and neglect to conduct voter education and membership drives. The parties are merely "opportunistic contraptions" that engage in "gutter politics" rather than "ideological politics." Instead of democratic dividends, these parties create democratic deficits. Without true, committed democrats and an electorate free of material necessities for survival, democracy is almost impossible (Lamidi & Bello, 2012; Otaida et al, 2020).

### **Defection Syndrome Among Political Parties**

Lack of internal democracy, ethnic, and religious affinities are important reasons for defections before Nigeria's early years of independence politics and nowadays. In 1951, when the first cross-carpeting episode occurred in Nigeria, Yoruba members of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) were lobbied to cross over to the Action Group (AG) to prevent Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, from becoming the Premier of the Western Region, (Awofeso and Irabor (2016). Another element that contributed to defection during the First Republic was a personality clash between political party leaders and distinct factions. During the failed Third Republic, it was clear that the state had become increasingly well-known as a tool for primitive capital accumulation. As a result, people join political parties in order to have access to public wealth and milk it dry (Ekekwe, 1986; Sodeine, 2009). As a result, party regulations are being openly disobeyed (Oviasuyi, 2006; Otaida et al, 2020).

Due to intraparty dissension among members, the creation of the APC in 2013 resulted in a large number of defections from the then-ruling PDP. As a result, a PDP faction known as the new PDP (nPDP) was formed, led by Abubakar Baraje, the party's former leader. Since the APC government took office in 2015, the rate of defection into its side has grown (Awofeso&Irabor, 2016). Nigeria has seen a variety of cross-carpeting by politicians since the return to democracy in 1999, which far exceeds the amount seen in earlier dispensations (Baiyeju, 2012). Across the political spectrum, the tendency has become a regular feature at party gatherings and rallies, encompassing both the executive and legislative branches (Omilusi, 2015). The recent wave of defections has major consequences for democratic politics. It aptly depicts that politicians regard political parties as vehicles for accumulating riches (Mbah, 2011; Otaida et al, 2020).

As a result of lack of internal democracy, defections has become the bane of party institutionalization and democratic process in Nigeria. This practice of political prostitution is associated with absence of political ideologies (Elomba, 2010). Mbah (2011) asserts that, "It gets problematic when politicians mortgage their consciences and strive to achieve their own and selfish interests in the name of cross-carpeting." The frequency and type of defections in sophisticated democracies, is different from that of PDP and APC which are based on self-interest, rather than principles is worrisome. As a result, voters are forced to select between parties based on personality, ethnic affinity, religious inclination, and other primordial emotions (Omotola, 2010; Otaida et al, 2020) Nigerian political parties are made up of people with diametrically opposed viewpoints, which explains the lack of party discipline. As a result, the parties are prone to fractures and excessive defection, putting the democratic process in jeopardy (Otaida et al, 2020). Defections are sometimes motivated by



the desire to run for office while some are as a result of lack of internal democracy. The resent problem of internal party wrangling due to lack of internal party democracy in Edo state is the one of Osagie Ize-Iyamu of PDP in 2016 that became OsagieIze-Iyamu of APC in 2020 and Godwin Obaseki of APC in 2016 now Godwin Obaseki of PDP in 2020 and many more cases.

### **The Factor of Godfatherism**

The activities of godfathers can be said to jeopardize the parties' ability to carry out their tasks effectively. Their overbearing powers and influence lowers political engagement and, in some cases, leads to political apathy or alienation (Lamidi & Bello, 2002). The godfathers push their favorite candidates on the party in order to use them as agents in siphoning the state's resources at all levels of government (Omotola, 2007).

Political godfathers,(IDEA, 2007), have a crucial influence in internal party politics. Parties have official procedures for electing their leaders, but these protocols are frequently ignored; due to the fact that, godfathers have a way of selecting who will lead the party. The role of money politics and vote buying in Nigeria's party politics has left the country vulnerable to the whims of the political elites, who buy political positions for themselves and their allies (Adamu, Ocheni & Ibrahim, 2016).

In such a scenario, the realization of democratic dividends becomes a distant prospect, and democratic governance's prospects are limited. This calls into doubt the legitimacy of leaders who emerge from such a skewed process. Several studies have revealed flagrant violations of political party constitutions, unilateral political party funding, and godfatherism (Omilusi, 2015).Only candidates with the blessing of the party's leaders and godfathers were able to realize their dreams (Alfa, et al, 2017).

### **Consensus Candidacy and Incumbency Factor**

Consensus candidacy is one of the processes used by political parties in the Fourth Republic to select their candidates, even though it has been in practice for some time, it has the potential to undermine internal party democracy and, by extension, democratic consolidation. In this regard, the party leader employs a variety of strategies to prevent the development of alternative candidates other than the favored candidate(s), who are almost always incumbents (Alfa et al, 2017). The party's apparatus is thrown behind such a candidate before to the party conventions, and the conventions or congresses become essentially ratification ceremonies for such candidacy. President Goodluck Jonathan's election as the PDP's lone candidate in the 2015 elections is a good example. This circumstance shattered the party and alienated certain members, particularly those in the North such as late Adamu Ciroma and former President Ibrahim Babangida, among others (Adeniyi, 2017).

The use of the incumbency factor by government chief executives at various levels is closely related to the foregoing. The incumbents control the political process and influence the election process to themselves or their preferred candidates using the state machinery. With the resulting intraparty crises, this has been a bane of party unity and cohesion in the Fourth Republic. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo's participation in the emergence of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as presidential candidate and subsequent election as president in 2007 and former Governor Ibrahim Idris of Kogi State's role in the emergence of Governor Idris Wada in Kogi State in 2011 are two classic examples (Aleyomi, 2013, Adeniyi, 2017; Alfa et al, 2017).







## The Zoning Factor

Political parties established the zoning formula to allow for the alternation of power among the constituent parts in their goal to offer every geographical area at the national, state, and municipal levels the opportunity to govern. While this does not allow all interested parties to strive as they like due to the motivation for its creation, incumbents and some party leaders reject the formula in order to achieve their own goals. For example, after President Yar'Adua's death in 2010, the PDP's stakeholders agreed that Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, who succeeded him, should be allowed to run for president in the 2011 elections but not in 2015, in order to allow power to return to the North. However, in 2015, Goodluck Jonathan reneged on the promise and ran for re-election, a circumstance that, as previously stated, resulted in widespread desertion and anti-party sentiment, ultimately leading to the PDP's defeat by the APC in the 2015 elections. ( Adeniyi, 2017).

From the foregoing, it is germane to say that established democratic rules have been circumvented in today's political parties, PDP and APC inclusive. It is the few who have grabbed the means of power that impose their will on the people in the parties, and not the people themselves. If democracy is to be thrown open as the polity for mass participation in political affairs, the PDP and APC has shrunked the political space, thus making democracy look like a closed shop (Agbaje&Adejumobi, 2006; Otaida et al, 2020).

## Party Executive Arrogance

There is no gain saying the fact that the problems of internal democracy in PDP took roots in party executives high-handedness since 1999 and that of APC less than two years into the leadership of the party, which has also found itself in the middle of intra-party crises of variant magnitude ranging from states internal division, executive-legislative feud in an all intra-party show and the internal schism among the party executives. This affirms the common saying that when the head of the fish is bad, the entire body becomes bad as well. The assumption is that some People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) executives, especially at the National level, feel that they have the latitude to turn things around as they wish in the party. That was why between 1999 and 2007 in the then ruling PDP, the then President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, took total control of the running of the affairs of the National Assembly. Within that dispensation there emerged five presidents of the Senate: Evans Enwerem, Chuba Okadigbo, Pius Anyim Pius, Adolphus Wabara and Ken Nnamani. He also fell out with some key actors and players of the party who were not ready to compromise and tolerate his dominance of the party. Some of these personalities were, Chief Audu Ogbah, Atiku Abubakar, Orji Uzor Kalu, Ghali Naaba, Ibikunle Amosun, Chief Tony Anineh, Aruthur Nzeribe and Uche Chukwumereije. The inability of the party to manage the crisis and conflicts (which was a result of party executive arrogance) led to decamping of many of the founding fathers and respected chieftains of the party to other political parties. The same problem of executive arrogance prevails in the States occupied by the PDP and APC; a situation where the State Governors solely dictates what goes on at the State level has become blatant and unacceptable. As Metuh (2010, p13) points out that:

One thing I have noticed in States where there is crisis, is that the governors don't want to let go their grips on the party structures and other stalwarts insist that there must be separation of party from government. The governors fund the party but I don't subscribe to it that the





governors should run the party. The party should be the conscience of the people, the party should be able to control the governor and say, you haven't done enough roads, you haven't done this and that. But it isn't happening especially where the legislature isn't acting as checks and balances on the Executive abuse of power. It is only the party that can do that, but the party isn't doing that.

Just as in the case of the above incidences, there were internal conflicts between the executive and the legislature in APC after the defeat of PDP in 2015. The first incidence was the brazen disobedience of the APC party members in the National Assembly by electing the leadership of the two chambers as against the desire of the executive and the party. While it is good for the lawmakers to be independent in terms of their affairs, it is also good for the party to institute discipline and for the executive to lobby for position in the two chambers of the National Assembly. Thus, immediately after the leadership tussle in the National Assembly, the Saraki-led Senate and its loyalist perceived a threat and witch-hunting allegedly believed to have emanated from the executive which started with CCT Tribunal of the Senate President. Thus, the Senators that were loyal to Saraki leadership vowed to deal with the executive in their own ways (Nwajiuba 2015; Babayo & Mohammad, 2019). Perhaps, that explains why many State Houses of Assembly are presently in comatose if not at the level of abysmal collapse. In an attempt by the Governor to have an upper hand in the State Assembly affairs, the Assembly members are usually factionalized into two or made to sing same song in support of the governor. Suffice it to say that the firm grip of governors on party structures occasioned the move by the National Assembly to amend the Electoral Act 2010. The amendment is to pave the way for legislators to become automatic members of the National Executive Committees (NECs) of their parties (Ojukwu, & Olaiifa 2011; Babayo & Mohammad, 2019).

### **The Crises of Internal Democracy in the PDP and APC: A Discourse.**

Twenty-two years after the re-establishment of democratic rule in Nigeria, it is clear that the country's political parties are just democratic in name. Throughout this years of uninterrupted democratic rule, political parties have failed to internalize democratic values in their selection of candidates for public elective offices (presidents, governors, and so on), as well as those for their party apparatus. It started out as a matter of godfathers imposing candidates on the party they claimed to own and finance. Then the tune was dictated by the one who was playing the piper. Consensus candidacy, on the other hand, is a process in which a cabal inside the party, usually led by the existing political executive, meets and imposes candidates on the rest of the party members, thereby circumventing the democratic process of politicking, horse trading, and give-and-take. They restrict political space by claiming that a specific political position is not vacant.

Alternatively, if certain offices are vacant, anyone interested in them must be anointed by the powers that be and their wives. In some ludicrous circumstances, interested candidates are denied access to nomination forms, as the party purposefully prints just one form for the favored candidate, or fixes the cost of the form so expensive, that only those who have the financial capability can contemplate expressing their intention. In the end, the nation is denied the services of its greatest, merely because they cannot play the game the dirty way by ingratiating certain expired politicians who feel that the nation exists to serve their insatiable acquisitive proclivity (Godwin, 2017).





Despite the fact that some decampers are nothing more than political flirts, it should be noted that the vast majority of every act of decamping is rooted in an attempt to shortchange, manipulate, and circumvent the rules, as well as other acts prejudicial which has reduced the political process to a disgraceful caricature of what elsewhere should be a representation of what is noble. The political process ab initio, turn out to be smokescreens, designed from the start to legitimize judgments made by a group of political grandmasters. This is a clear break from democratic best practices around the world. The electorate is denied the ability to make informed choices due to a lack of respect for internal democracy among political parties. As a result, the much-desired consolidation of democracy become mere rhetoric (Godwin, 2017).

This scenario contrasts with what occurs elsewhere, where political parties establish standards for the emergence of candidates for electoral seats and give them the freedom to play the game as best they can within well-defined parameters. Nigerians have continued to reject political parties' proclivity for disregarding established rules and insisting on imposing candidates not just on the party, but also on the electorate. It's also unethical to deprive those who have worked hard for the party the opportunity to express their political aspirations just because they don't have the kind of money or contacts that the godfathers require. If this tendency continues, it is believed that the interests of democracy would undoubtedly be jeopardized. The application of the concept of internal democracy in the conduct of political party business, particularly with regard to candidate selection and primary elections, is inviolable and thus sacrosanct in modern societies. Internal democracy is based on the principles of due process, fairness, equity, and good conscience in the performance of duties and obligations to organizations, groups, or society as a whole (Godwin, 2017).

Internal democracy as a seemingly fundamental political concept, however, is only honored more in the breach among Nigerian political parties, as primordial considerations such as avarice, greed, nepotism, and outright inordinate ambition have continued to be elevated above and beyond the wishes of the people (Mbah, 2011). This, no doubt, explains the seemingly endless examples of defection by party members who, having been treated unfairly by so-called party godfathers and stalwarts, have no choice but to pursue their political fortunes elsewhere. Even if one is not involved in the political socialization of electorates, one can contribute to the destabilization and maintenance of internal democracy (Godwin, 2017).

Because the products of unjust and undemocratic leaders can only provide what they have, the absence of internal democracy in the operations of political parties deprives society of competent, conscientious, and transparent leadership. The world is fast changing, and Nigeria, as a member of the international community, cannot afford to fall behind. It is self-evident that Nigeria, like many other African countries, has its fair share of democratic crisis, but it has also made significant progress over time. In recent times, there has been requests across the country for some changes and improvements in the way political parties are organized and managed. Many people have claimed that Nigeria must adopt procedures that protect citizens' rights to elect leaders of their choice, as stipulated in the country's constitution (Dike, 2012).

In the meantime, despite the benefits of democracy and the establishment of democratic norms, the persistence of ethnic and religious sentiments in Nigeria has made election campaigns intensely contested and, at times, violent. Divergences in language, religion, and economic attainment frequently complicate the competition. All of this has combined to exacerbate intra-party feuds and slowed the



process of democratic consolidation. As a result, the dominating pattern of political behavior in Nigeria might be described as a never-ending exertion of state power (Madumere, 2011; Godwin, 2017).

## Conclusion

The study focuses on some of Nigeria's political parties' internal democratic challenges, particularly in the People's Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress. These include non-compliance with the code of conduct of the party politics agreed to and endorsed to guide their conduct and performance, particularly during elections, the non-transparent system of selecting candidates in primary elections as well as in party leadership executive positions, and executive arrogance within the parties, which has not only torn many parties apart but has also resulted in the decampment of many party stalwarts.

## Recommendation

The paper adopts some recommendations made by the International Organization for Sustainable Development (OSD), which are contained in a communiqué issued at the end of a national workshop on Enhancing Internal Democracy of Political Parties; and that of National dialogues focused on political parties in Nigeria, to check some of these undemocratic attitudes and behavior in Nigeria's political parties. The paper therefore recommends among other things:

1. That political parties must be revamped to allow voters to freely elect those who represent them and fight for leadership positions. To maintain the democratic ideals of consolidation, such as tolerance, accountability, and transparency, effective institutions should be established (or existing ones should be strengthened).
2. In addition to this, social capital culture must be infused into Nigeria's political system. Without social capital, any institution or organization may struggle to function at its full potential. Social capital is a system that promotes social harmony and peace. The phenomena refer to people's stockpiles of social trust, norms, and networks, which they might use to tackle common problems. It also denotes the level of social cohesion in communities and associations. Social capital includes social trust, mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, reciprocity, and other civic engagement networks that permit coordination and communication and allow information about other people's and groups' trustworthiness to flow and be tested and confirmed (Putnam 1993, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995).
3. Finally, Nigerian political parties should also guarantee that internal democracy is practiced, since this will reverberate through intra and inter-party competition and will portray opposition party members as partners in progress where superiority of ideology becomes the object of analysis that will make the difference.







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