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Challenges of Internal Democracy in Nigeria's Political Parties: The Bane of Intra-Party Conflicts in The Peoples Democratic Party of Nigeria

CHRIS C. OJUKWU ^α, TOPE OLAIFA ^Ω

Abstract: Preparatory to the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, there already exists public (mass) apathy and cynicism in town. The attitude however suggests that, as usual, the elections will not be credible, free and fair. The people have become atrophied by cynicism and mistrust of government and people in government. What may have informed this development is the abysmal collapse of internal democracy in Nigeria's political parties. It is in the light of this, the paper attempts to examine some of the basic challenges of internal democracy as it constitutes the main factor for the intra-party wrangling rocking the fabrics of the Peoples Democratic Party of Nigeria. In conclusion, the paper advances few means of tackling the menace so as to pave way for smooth and free-flow elections in 2011.

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I. INTRODUCTION

We sought to restore the image of our party, because the image of our dear party, the largest political party in Africa, has been grossly eroded due to strife, imposition of candidates, god fatherism, money bag politics, injustice, and lack of understanding of our party manifesto. As the ruling party, if we get it right, Nigeria will get it right. (Nwodo, 2010).

Internal democracy must succeed for PDP to grow. I get scared sometimes when I think of the fact that if we don't manage our party very well, some day we might be in opposition. (Metuh, 2010).

In a few months from now, Nigeria will be going into another general election, making it the fourth general election conducted in the Nation's Fourth Republic. The last three elections were held in 1999, 2003 and 2007. These elections were not without severe criticisms both from local (National) and international communities because of their peculiar nature and character: rigging, destruction or disappearance of ballot boxes, doctoring of results, thuggery and

intimidation of the masses. These kinds of electoral frauds informed the public cynicism and apathy. Many Nigerians are sceptical of the credibility of the 2011 elections not only because their votes may not count at the end of the day but because they have lost interest in voting as those they had voted for before now disappointed them due to lack of performance and their rapid transformation from acute penury to stupendous wealth, all at the expense of the electorate. It is perhaps why the National Chairman of PDP submits that the party has been handed over to godfathers who, with 'reckless abandon', impose candidates with questionable character and no leadership qualities on the citizens. Such people elected under the platform of the party have consistently brought public odium on the party to the chagrin of PDP members and the nation at large (Nwodo, 2010). Their apathetic behaviour also finds expression in the Hobbessien nature of politicking in Nigeria—'War of all against all'. Interestingly, INEC is not oblivious of these concerns expressed by the public. While the excitement generated by the appointment of Professor Attahiru Jega as Chairman of INEC is making waves across the country, the question is, can he organise a truly free and fair polls similar to that of Professor Humphrey Nwosu in 1993 which was believed to be the best election Nigeria had ever had, or will he end up like his immediate predecessor, Professor Maurice Iwu who failed to serve the Nigerian citizens but the ruling political party which appointed him.

Candidly, political gimmicks are not abhorrent in so much as they are in consonance with the provisions of the Electoral Act. Harold Lasswell argues that politics is all about who gets what, when, and how an idea which expresses the need to plan and strategise in order to achieve one's political goals and objectives. Political competition among elites in a democratic setting is normal. Such is what Schumpeter describes as a 'democratic method,' that is, an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's vote (Schumpeter 1942/1976)

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However, it has been observed in recent times that many political parties in Nigeria find it very difficult to adopt an open system that will not only allow members of the party to participate in the decision-making but also give them unrestricted opportunity to contest in elections under the party's platform. This kind of socio-political restriction and constraint has increasingly resulted in party wrangling, war of attrition, recrimination, acrimony, coordination dilemmas, and cross-carpeting in many Nigerian political parties. As Awosika captures it, such restricted politics is poisonous. It is politics of war not of peace, of acrimony and hatred and mudslinging not of love and brotherhood, of anarchy and discord, not of orderliness and concord, of divisions and disunity and not of cooperation, consensus and unity, not of integrity and patriotism; it is the politics of rascality, not maturity, of blackmail and near gangsterism, not of constructive and honest contribution. (Oyediran, 1999).

The problem as a matter of fact, hinges on lack of internal (intra-party) democracy in political parties. One of the parties in Nigeria where lack of internal democracy is highly visible, is the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the ruling and most dominant party in Nigeria. Thus, the paper sets out to achieve the following objectives: to trace the origin and evolution of PDP; to define internal democracy, its advantages and risks; and to show how lack of internal democracy is the problem of PDP.

II. POLITICAL PARTIES: PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Political parties are fundamental to modern political processes. To this end their significance cannot be overemphasised. In other words, the political party is the major organising principle of modern politics (Heywood, 1997). It is a group of persons bound in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its officials (Agbaje, 1999). To have a government in place in any society there is bound to be political parties that are to contest vigorously to form such a government. The understanding is that complex modern societies would be ungovernable in the absence of political parties. Parties help with the formation of governments to the extent that it is possible to talk of party government; it also gives governments a degree of stability and coherence especially if most of members of the government are drawn from a single party and therefore, united by common sympathies and attachment.

Omoruyi opines that a political party is 'a social group' characterised by a high degree of rational direction of behaviour towards ends that are objects of common acknowledgment and expectation. It is quite

different from other social groups such as Labour Unions and other associations because of the unique functions it performs for the system such as: organising for public opinion, communicating demands to the centre of governmental decision-making and political recruitment. In essence, political parties are institutional representations of the struggle for power between aggregations of the prevalent political interests in society. They provide a forum for active involvement in a country's political process as well as the articulation of demands by various interest groups in the society. Perhaps, it is the reason one should be able to know what happens between political parties and within members of a party, and how party functionaries and activists relate among themselves within their respective political party (Tyoden, 1994).

From the inception of Nigeria as a sovereign and independent nation, several manners of political parties have emerged. National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Northern Peoples congress (NPC) and Action Group (AG) in the First Republic. The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), United People of Nigeria (UPN), Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in the Second Republic. National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the Third Republic; and a lot more in the present Fourth Republic. Out of this lot in the present dispensation, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) stands out in the sense that for over one decade now, it has dominated the political landscape of the nation, Nigeria.

Peoples Democratic Party came into being on the 19th August, 1998. It was formed by a group called G.34 Committee headed by Dr. Alex Ekwueme, the Vice-President of Nigeria in the Second Republic. Drawing on Omo Omoruyi's study, PDP arose from three main sources. First were the politicians, who were denied registration by General Sanni Abacha during his self-succession project. They later metamorphosed to G.34 men, a Committee that petitioned against the self-succession project of Sanni Abacha. Second, were those politicians who were former followers of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), and were not opposed to the self-succession of the Abacha and also not part of his machine. This group called itself the All Nigeria Congress (ANC) and was led by Chief Sunday Awoniyi. Third, were those who were the followers of the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua under Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM). Chief Tony Anenih and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar belonged to this group.

From the beginning of the Fourth Republic in May 1999, PDP has been the ruling political party. The party controls the National Assembly that is made up of the Senate and House of Representatives. Out of the 36 States in Nigeria, the party is in control of about 26 States. The political objective of the party include, to

seek political power for the purpose of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria and promoting the security, safety, welfare of all Nigerians; to promote and establish political stability in Nigeria and foster national unity and integration; to provide good governance that ensures probity and participatory democracy; to offer equal opportunities to hold the highest political, military, bureaucratic and judicial offices in the country to all citizens; and to provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise (<http://pdpimostate.org/manifest.aspx>).

In terms of organisational structure, the party is divided into three major levels—National, State and Geo-political Zones. The National level is headed by the National Chairman of the Party. The office rotates, among the six geo-political zones of the country. The southeast is presently occupying the position, in the person of Chief Okwesilieze Nwodo. The State level is headed by any elected party member of the State and such an individual is addressed to as the Chairman of the State Party. The leader of the party in a geo-political zone of the party is addressed as Vice-Chairman. Other important organs of the Party are the 'Board of Trustee' (BOT), and the National Working Committee (NWC) and National Executive Committee (NEC). These organs oversee the smooth running of the Party, its policies, programmes and operations.

As Suberu (2004) notes, under a power sharing arrangement adopted since 1999 by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the six most important political positions in the federation have been shared among six geo-political zones (three each in the north and south) as follows: President of the Federal Republic (Southwest or Yoruba zone), Vice President (Hausa-Fulani/minority or northeast zone), Speaker of the House of Representatives (Northwest or Hausa-Fulani zone) and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives (South-South, Niger Delta, or Southern minority zone). The expectation was that at the end of the maximum two terms of the incumbent Yoruba President in 2007, the presidential slot would shift to another geo-political zone of the country, with consequential adjustments in the zonal allocation of the other key political positions. He argues that a major attraction of this kind of power sharing arrangement is its flexibility and informality which helps to prevent the kind of ethno-sectarian polarization and gridlock that tarnished more rigid or constitutionally entrenched power sharing arrangements in countries like Lebanon and the former Yugoslavia.

Since the party took over government in 1999, it has evolved so many policies that are yet to be implemented. Between 2000 and 2002, the Olusegun Obasanjo government came up with the reform and privatization policies. Though noble, because they were not properly implemented, the policies rather than

alleviating or ameliorating people's deplorable condition, aggravated the situation and deepened the rate of corruption in the system. As Ihonvbere (2004) points out, *'We are all agreed that things have not gone too well in the direction that we all would wish or want. In fact, this leadership has failed us very badly and followership has become trivialized, commoditized, contaminated and corrupted'*.

It was the same trend when Umaru Musa Yar'Adua took over in 2007. He came up with what he termed, the 7 point Agenda. Interestingly, not even one agenda was carried out prior to his death in May 2010. The point is that since the commencement of the PDP government in 1999, there has not been any comprehensive, coherent, systematic and sustained programme for reforming or transforming the country. The abysmal collapse of the agricultural, industrial, financial and commercial sectors of the economy, principally private sector driven, the nation's epileptic supply of electricity and terrible and death trap roads across the country lay credence to this. Some of the consequences of the neglect include: the high rate of kidnapping and abduction, intra-ethnic conflicts, political corruption and culture of primitive accumulation.

Essentially, the functioning and organisation of political parties occupy a very important place in the understanding of political process in any democracy. Their internal dynamics are often faced with one basic problem, the intractable nature of internal operations, that is, poverty of internal democracy.

III. INTERNAL (INTRA-PARTY) DEMOCRACY

Political parties are one of the institutions that are carriers of democratic principles in any organised society. Thus, there are a number of 'institutional guarantees' that parties have to fulfil if they were to effectively meet what is expected of them in a democracy. One of such institutional requirements is internal (intra-party) democracy. As Magolowondo (n.d) points out, this very important institutional dimension is lacking in many political parties, particularly in emerging democracies. But the question is, *what is Internal Democracy?* Drawing on Susan Scarrow (2004) study on *'Political Parties and Democracy in theoretical and practical perspectives; Implementing intra-party democracy'*, internal democracy is a very broad term describing a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision-making. It is democracy within the party and the extent to which a party subscribes to and abides by the basic and universal democratic tenets.

As Tyoden (1994) argues, hardly is a political system adjudged democratic without the central placement of political parties in its political process. This

is because political parties are the major vehicles for the expression of an essential feature of the democratic process. In this case, however, inter and intra party relationships are vital because they determine the health and resilience of the party system and by extension the fate of democracy and the nature of the political system itself. In similar vein, Mersel (2006) asserts that various democracies in recent times have faced the problem of nondemocratic political parties, a situation where most parties only focus on external activities, neglecting internal planning and organisation. He argues that in determining whether a political party is nondemocratic, attention should be given to party's goals and practices. This is so because some parties often ignore essential elements such as their internal structures.

The idea is that parties must be democratic not only externally in their operations, but also internally in the organisational functions. The interplay between parties and democracies should reflect the parties' adherence not only to democratic goals and actions but also to internal democratic structures (Mersel, 2006). Internal democracy aims at developing more democratic, transparent and effective political parties. It identifies specific challenges in the internal management and functioning of parties and party systems. These include: candidate selection, leadership selection, policy making, membership relations, gender, minorities, youth and party funding. All these pose some critical questions. For instance, is internal democracy a selling point for parties or does it pose important dangers for parties with regard to internal cohesion? What are the effects of (more) internal democracy for the external position of the party towards voters, that is, does it make party membership more attractive?

Penning and Hazan (2001) contend that open candidate selection methods may in some instances actually increase the power of small elite, the political up-starts. It enhances a necessary viable democratic culture within the party as well as society at large. Again, internal democratic procedures may have positive effects on the representation of ideas of the electorate and may strengthen the organisation by attracting new members and creating space for fresh ideas. It can as well provide necessary vertical linkages between different deliberating spheres, and also a horizontal linkage between competing issues (Teorell, 1999).

Mimpen (n.d) examines two essential instrumental elements of internal democracy. The first involves organising free, fair and regular elections of internal positions, as well as candidates for representative bodies. The second entails equal and open participation of all members and member groups in such a way that interests are more or less equally represented. These two instruments are essential for creating an open and deliberative political party in which

creating an open and deliberative political party in which people can participate in elections equally but may also engage in participation or be represented in other ways.

IV. ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

Indeed, some variables are central to internal democracy. The first and major variable is equal participation of all members and groups in the democratic processes of the party. This emphasises the involvement of the rank-and-file in the party's policies, as well as representation at party activities and in party bodies. Democratic policy-making involves a participative process of policy development in debates, consultation meetings and other platforms, and it decentralizes the mandate of decision-making to the rank and file of political parties (Salih, 2006).

The second variable is inclusiveness. Democracy is all about inclusiveness. If there is no provision for people's inclusion in the party, there may be little participation since one begets the other. Inclusiveness stresses how wide the circle of party decision-makers is. Scarrow (2005) opines that in the most inclusive parties, all party members, or even all party supporters, are given the opportunity to decide on important issues, such as the choice of party leader or the selection of party candidates. Due to the fact that inclusiveness is a matter of process and formal rule, more inclusive parties will offer more opportunities for open deliberation prior to the decision stage. As it were, this particular variable (inclusiveness) is seriously and visibly lacking in the Peoples Democratic Party. For instance, it is the major challenge the Lagos PDP chapter is currently facing. It has not only led to the formation of so many competing groups and caucuses, but also escalated the rate of muscle-flexing among party chieftains. The concomitant effect is the inability of the party to win the governorship elections in Lagos since 1999. It is in view of this, Ogundimu (2010) argued that, for any party to brace up for governorship election, it must not go into the election as a divided house. Lagos PDP is still disunited and the first step to 2011 election is to foster unity, harmony and understanding in the fold. He further held that if PDP wants to make any impression during the election, the branch should field a consensus candidate, and not an aspirant leaning on any group locked in politics of bitterness with other competing groups.

The third variable is party institutionalisation. Institutionalisation demonstrates the degree to which internal decisions and procedures are formalized, and the extent to which the party has coordinated structures throughout its target constituency. It is believed that parties with high degree of intra party democracy are

generally highly institutionalized because they need rules that define who is eligible to participate and what constitutes victory in internal contests. Beyond all this, the assumption is that internal democracy in political parties thrives more in societies that strongly uphold democratic principles and ethos. The most widely accepted criteria for identifying a country as democratic have been put forward by Robert Dahl—civil and political rights, fair, competitive, and inclusive elections. Dahl calls countries that meet these criteria 'polyarchies', but they are more commonly referred to as 'liberal democracies' (Dahl, 1971; Schedler 1998). Nwankwo (1992) argues that democratization is a process of political renewal and the affirmative acceptance of the supremacy of popular will and consensual obligation over the logic of elitism and parochialism. It embraces both the shift in the disposition of individuals and classes towards the polity and the institutionalization of genuine representative political structures and organs of mass mobilization and conscientization.

Buttressing Nwankwo's view, Toyo (1994) points out that, the fundamental basis of democracy is the ideological thesis that human beings are equal. It implies acceptance of the basic equality of men as humans and the basic responsibility of all adult for their own destiny. Leadership and representation can be, but not a replacement or elimination of each person's responsibility to determine his own destiny. Hence, the equal rights of all social individuals to participate in taking socially significant decisions and in running those affairs of society that shapen the fortunes of its members. Nevertheless, both the internal democracy and democratization have their own challenges.

V. CHALLENGES OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY

There is no doubt that internal democracy has some challenges. These include

- a) Poverty of Party Ideology
- b) Candidate selection
- c) Party funding
- d) Zoning formula
- e) Primaries and party unity
- f) Party executive arrogance

a) *Poverty of Party Ideology*

Ideology is one ingredient that consolidates and stultifies any political party. It is like a superstructure upon which every other thing is built on. Party ideology precedes party structure, manifesto, organisation. By party ideology, it is meant a set or body of ideas, representations and beliefs common to a specific social

group. It consists of ethical interpretations and principles that set forth the purposes, organisations and boundaries of political life. Nnoli argues that ideology is a very crucial aspect of politics because it arises from the people's understanding, emotional identification with, and evaluation of reality. In other words, it guides, supports, retrains and rationalises political actions (Mbah, 2006). Political parties are formed by individuals that share the same political ideology, that hold a common vision and mission statement. Unfortunately, Nigeria, from inception as a sovereign state, has not been lucky to evolve political parties that have strong ideological foundation and this lapse has consistently constituted lack of internal democracy in parties.

The earliest political parties in Nigeria—the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG) were rather ethnic driven or characterised by the inter-play of primordial political loyalties and forces, hence bereft of viable political ideology on which the nation's political future could be anchored. As Nwankwo points out, this bankruptcy in ideology and vision has made party politics in Nigeria to be a bread and butter game where monetisation of the political process is the bedrock of loyalty and support. The NPC was a party with the philosophy of 'One North, One Destiny and One God' while the NCNC hung on to its universalistic pan-Nigeria vision and dreams until the carpet-crossing episode practically reduced it to a regional party. Today, almost the fifty three registered political parties are functioning without any 'identified' ideology. The question is, what is the ideology of the Peoples Democratic Party? Is the party progressive, conservative, leftist, rightist, reactionary, revolutionary? Until this is addressed, problem of internal democracy will persist in PDP and other political parties in Nigeria.

b) *Candidate Selection*

The question is who selects the party members that desire to contest in an election? What are the laid down processes for selecting a candidate in a party? Is the selection based on their credentials and loyalties to the party or based on their deep pockets (power of the wallet) or popularity of their godfathers? As Scarrow (2005) notes, recruiting and selecting candidates is a crucial task for parties, because parties' profiles during elections and while in office, are largely determined by which candidates are chosen and where their loyalties lie. Whichever procedure is adopted, it is the responsibility of the party to decide who is eligible to contest or participate in the election. The assumption is that selection should be based on good standing of members. In other words, selection of candidates should be devoid of prejudice, class and ethnic chauvinism. This is a serious problem in PDP. Anyaoku (2010) argues that *"to ascribe undue influence,*



especially self-serving influence to the parliamentary group of the party in the selection of candidates would seriously undermine the democratic process.

A striking example was what happened in Anambra State chapter of the PDP where Professor Chukwuma Soludo was imposed on the chapter as the selected governorship candidate for the Anambra State by the National executive of the party. This was not only rejected by the State chapter, but it also triggered a spate of petition writing and prosecution which in effect brought about factions in the party and last minute cross-carpeting of some members to other parties. According to the Vice-Chairman of the southeast zone of the PDP, *"Internal party wrangling denied our great party the governorship seat in the February 6 governorship election in Anambra State. The Anambra election is a litmus test to the party and we will not tolerate such development in any of the remaining States in the southeast zone. We are going to put all the machinery in place to ensure that PDP wins the remaining States in the zone come 2011"* (Metuh, 2010).

c) Party Funding

What makes any political party solid is funding, that is, the amount of financial backing it enjoys from members. That is why most times founders of political parties are more interested in attracting members who have economic power than those who have the intellectual capital. This buttresses Marx's argument on the 'materialist conception of history', that it is the economy (economic power) that serves as the foundation upon which is erected the superstructure of culture, law and government. Similarly, C. Wright Mills, in his famous work, *'The Power Elite'* (1956), argues that political power resides in the controlling positions of powerful institutions. The means of exercising power in any institution or social groups are narrowly concentrated in a few hands. He puts it thus:

They rule the big corporations, they run the machinery of the State, Political Parties and claim its prerogatives. They direct the military establishment and occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure in which are now centred the effective means of the power and the wealth and celebrity which they enjoy... To be celebrated, to be wealthy, to be in power requires access to major institutions, for the institutional positions men occupy determines in large part their chances to have and to hold valued experience. (Mills 1956). As Griner and Zovatto (2005) advance, money and democracy have a complex relationship, especially since the affluent role of private money in politics can have many distorting effects such as, corruption, buying of votes and clientelism. When a party is well funded, it may be able to achieve a lot of things. But the financiers usually have some strings attached to it. International

IDEA (2006) expatiates this when it argued that the 'illiberal' nature of the legal framework that governs party activities in Nigeria is empowering those individuals within a party who, through political (including violent means or thuggery) or financial control, wield enormous power in how parties function. They ultimately determine who is nominated or elected within the party or to public office. In 2002, preparatory to the 2003 general elections, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) campaign team organised a launching to boost the campaign. This attracted a wide range of technocrats, captains of industries, political elites and bureaucrats. In that event, over six billion naira was realised. While some of the donors are key political actors and members of the PDP, others are not, but well connected to the presidency and the party. The party at the end of the day usually compensate or reward such donors with contracts and political appointments. Drawing on Anambra State chapter of PDP, Chief Emeka Offor and Chris Uba, between 1999 and 2006 made the State ungovernable simply because they were one of the outstanding financiers of PDP. To be specific, between 1999 and 2003, Chief Emeka Offor not only tormented Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju, then governor of Anambra State but also dominated the running of the affairs of the State because he was his godfather and need to be rewarded. It was a similar case between 2003 and 2005 when Dr. Chris Ngige was the Governor of Anambra State. Chris Uba attempted to colonize the State on the ground that he single-handedly sponsored Ngige's candidacy. The climax of the ugly scenario was the abduction of the governor in July 2003 by a group of hired police team. Interestingly, the ruling party—PDP did not bother either to carry out any investigation or any disciplinary actions, instead, the Governor was abashed, taunted and made to leave the party with ignominy. This, it may not be out of place to infer that Peoples Democratic Party has been perhaps, inadvertently hijacked by political machines, kleptocrats and plutocrats. A political machine is a 'disciplined' small political group endowed with affluence and financial power to carry out some political wheeling and dealing like sponsoring political party campaigns but with the hope of receiving rewards at the end of the day. This group of people relies on hierarchy, patronage, the spoils system and 'behind the scenes' control of the party. The group is corrupt and undemocratic though somehow organised and responsive. Political machine dates back to late 19th Century and early 20th Century in the United States where it existed in some municipalities and States such as, Boston, Chicago and New York City (Gosnell 1933; 1968; Clifford, 1975).

Kleptocrats and plutocrats on the other hand, are those individuals (scattered all over political parties) that steal from the State coffers and practice extortion as

their *modus operandi*. They do not only appropriate State wealth and the benefits that accrue but also use their elected and appointed offices in the government to enrich themselves and their cronies. These are the likes of James Ibori of Delta State, Joshua Dariye of Plateau State, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State, Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State, Lucky Igbinedion of Edo State and Alamesighe of Bayelsa State. These former Governors of PDP milked their States to the level of impoverishment. Most of them are still walking along the streets of their States with air of impunity.

d) *Zoning Formula*

The issue of zoning the office of the presidency in PDP has increasingly bifurcated members of the party particularly between the North and South. While some members of the party from the North argue that it is still the turn of the region or geo-political zone to produce the president of the country under the PDP platform, other members from the same North and virtually all members from the South hold that the demise of the former President—Umaru Musa Yar'Adua marked the end of the zoning formula. Some also claim that the issue of zoning was never discussed in any PDP fora, hence the party should support any PDP credible candidate from any part of the geopolitical zones.

The worry is not only that the issue has succeeded in heating up the polity and fanned embers of ethnicity but also portrayed some lacunas in the party's internal democracy, which has generated a lot of internal wrangling, acrimony, bickering, recrimination, schism, cut-throat competition between the supporters of zoning formula and those of 'open candidacy'. The likely negative effect of this development may be the inability to produce a consensus candidate for the presidency by the party. If this becomes the case, then, the party at the end of the day may not produce the next Nigerian president since many other political parties, particularly the opposition parties may likely have credible personalities to sponsor.

e) *Conducting Primaries*

Conducting primary elections, no doubt is one of the means of testing the tenacity and authenticity of any party's internal democracy. It is the first litmus test for political parties. Mimper opines that primaries are only effective in contributing to internal party democracy and maintaining party's stability if some conditions are upheld. Some of these conditions include, having a basic party structure, some cohesiveness within the party, and the ability of rank and file members to participate in elections. It has been proven from many studies that some primaries conducted in some political parties are sheer promotional agenda as they do not contribute positively to empowerment of the rank and

file in those parties. The point is, if primaries are reduced to mere 'de-jure' or 'de-facto' process open only to the same old rich and powerful elite that mainly take care of their own or if members are not well informed about the choices they face, then, such intra-party democracy can be questioned.

Perhaps, the drama that was displayed by PDP in December 16, 2006 at the Eagle's Square, Abuja during the presidential primaries is still fresh in memories. Studies reveal that days prior to the primaries, it was obvious to many perceptive minds that Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, the then Governor of Katsina State and late entrant for the presidential race for the party would emerge winner. This was not unconnected with the alleged 'behind-the-scene' deals that played out before the primaries. The development perhaps, made aspirants like Peter Odili, Donald Duke, Sam Egwu to suddenly withdraw from the race and perhaps forced to support Yar'Adua's candidacy. Anyhow, the party submitted that it only adopted 'consensus' approach at the eleventh hour. But consensus exists only when people agree on something and they are more likely to agree when they share the same facts, assumptions, raw materials, methods, conclusions and rules for arriving at those conclusions or inferences (Adeyemo, 2006).

Be that as it may, recently, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, sent a bill to the National Assembly for the amendment of the 2010 Electoral Act. He was demanding for an amendment of Section 87(8) of the Electoral Act to allow political parties to have a freehand to include political appointees of the President and the Governors as delegates at party conventions or primaries. Studies reveal that there were fears that the section in question may deny the President and the Governors a significant number of cheap votes from their political appointees. This suggests that some politicians are using their advantaged positions in government to pervert democratic practice, particularly the autonomy of political parties to determine their own political framework. Interestingly, the upper chamber, at the end of the day, rejected the bill on the ground that it was laden with 'toxic provisions' (The Punch Editorial, 2010).

f) *Party Executive Arrogance*

There is no gain saying that the fact the problems of internal democracy in PDP took roots in party executives since 1999. 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 PDP 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, 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 whims and caprices. 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; a setting where the State Governors solely dictates what goes on at the State level. As Metuh (2010) points out,

"One thing I have noticed in States where there are 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."

Perhaps, that is why Ogun State House of Assembly is presently 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 was factionalised into two groups—G.9 and G.15, while G.9 is in support of the governor, G.15 is against his method of administration. 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. One of the legislators puts it thus:

"We are aware of fears being raised by some Nigerians and the opposition but the truth is that our democracy will be endangered if we do not expand the NEC of parties. We are actually on a mission to save Nigeria's democracy. Most governors have hijacked the party structures at the ward, local government, state and zonal levels. They also call the shots at NEC meetings, especially in the Peoples Democratic Party, where the bidding prevails. We want NEC of our parties to become a robust platform (not mere rubberstamping) with

alternative views. That is why we are bringing more members on board. A clique cannot be taking decisions on behalf of the majority" (Alli, 2010).

VI. CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

The paper essentially examines some of the hindrances of internal democracy in Nigeria's political parties especially in the Peoples Democratic Party. These include, non-observance of the code of conduct document which all the political parties assented to and endorsed to guide their conduit and performance particularly during elections, the non-transparent system of choosing candidates in primary elections as well as in party leadership executive positions, and the executive arrogance within the parties which have not only torn many parties apart but also occasioned the decampment of many party stalwarts. To check some of these undemocratic attitudes and behaviour in Nigeria's political parties, the paper adopts some recommendations made by International Organisation 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 focus on political parties in Nigeria, Mali and India organised by International IDEA in January and February 2006 in Nigeria and India. They include, regular convening of their national executive meetings, elective and non-elective conventions as stipulated in their constitutions, observance of party financial guidelines, internal dispute resolution mechanisms, transparency in party financial administration, and conclusive party primaries; reforming of the legislative framework governing party registration and functioning; measures to limit the role of 'godfathers' and barons in party politics; reform of political financing, that is, the introduction of measures to strengthen parties to raise their own funds, and also enhance their capacity to be more accountable and transparent in matters of party and campaign financing. In addition to these, there is need to infuse the social capital culture into Nigeria's political system. Any institution or organisation that lacks social capital may find it difficult to function maximally. Social capital is a mechanism for social harmony and peace building. The phenomenon refers to those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. It also represents the degree of social cohesion in communities and associational life. Key elements of social capital include, social trust, mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, reciprocity and other networks of civic engagement that facilitate coordination and communication through which information about trustworthiness of other individuals and groups can flow, and be tested and verified (Putnam 1993, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995). Social

capital describes the relations that knit together communities, parties through a sharing of trust. It emphasises that for an institution such as political party to be orderly and prosperous, these basic norms must be embedded in the system. Fukuyama describes such norms as an 'instantiated informal' norms that promote cooperation between two or more individuals, that is, the connections that people develop with relatives, friends, co-workers which can produce private and public goods. The political function of social capital in a modern democracy was explicated by Alexis de Tocqueville in *'Democracy in America'*, who used the phrase the *'art of association'* to describe American's propensity for civic association. The concept is applied to wipe away most forms of social class or inherited status that bind people together in aristocratic societies. Robert Putnam used social capital to unite the Southern Italy in the 1970s and today, it is being adopted in American system to help in lowering the rate of individualism in that society. The point is that if PDP is really a group of people bounded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, that is, if it is true that the party represents and reflects people sharing the same political interest, value and ideological orientation, then, social capital should be able to address the problem of internal democracy in the party. With the infusion of social capital in the party, the rate of distrust and cut-throat competition may reduce among party members. The potency of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms should be widely explored and exploited by these political parties. They should embrace the third-party professional intervention which would provide them with credible, win/win outcomes and ensure that conflict is properly resolved.

Another means of tackling the problem is for the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, to have the 'political will' to operate constitutionally. Political will in this context, refers to the demonstrated credible intent of political actors (elected or appointed leaders, administrators, stakeholders groups) to address or check perceived causes or effects of any abnormality at a systemic level. The term expresses the desire, commitment and dogged determination of political actors and institutional leaders to introduce as well as embark on reforms that will bring about significant and persistent changes in the society. That is, it is a pure expression of moral principles motivated by a genuine concern for the well being of all citizens. What this however, requires of the Chairman of the Electoral body is simply: honesty, integrity, discipline and high level of impartiality and neutrality.

The Chairman of INEC must stick to the legal framework of election in Nigeria, that is, attaching much importance to the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Electoral Act of 2010 since it is critical

starting point for conducting credible, sustainable and effective elections in Nigeria. Without it, government pronouncements to conduct credible, free and fair election in 2011 will remain mere rhetoric. The party needs to revert to the fundamental principle of democracy that upholds the equality of man. The right of every member must be respected and preserved. Consensus candidature and candidate selection must be played down in their elections at all levels. Whosoever emerges as the elected candidate must be given institutional backing rather than substituting him for a candidate of selective approval. There must be a definitive respect for the will of the majority for intra-party conflicts to reduce and free and fair 2011 elections to be guaranteed.

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