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Politics of Defection and its Implications on Nigeria's Democracy

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Abstract- This study examines the politics of defection and its implications on Nigeria's democracy. Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 ushered in a great hope of democratic dividend and heralded a rare opportunity for the country to launch a new democratic strategy, after years of military dictatorship. The emergence of multiparty democracy in Nigeria since 1999 has been seen as a major breakthrough in the democratic process. However, the way and manner politicians in Nigeria defect from one party to the other has not only constituted democratic nuisance, but has continued to raise serious concern among political observers and participants in Nigeria. This have lend credence to lack of clear ideology and manifesto among political parties in Nigeria. The issue of defection has been one of the major bane of democratic process in Nigeria. The rateat which Nigerian politicians' defect from one party to another depicts political immaturity, ideological confusion and total lack of sense of direction within the political class. Therefore, the study investigated the peculiar trend of defection in Nigeria and its implications on Nigeria's democracy. In achieving this objective, the study relied on content analysis. The study however, recommended among others; the strengthening and/or amendment of the constitution and electoral laws to regulate the alarming rate of defection of politicians in Nigeria, social re-orientation and political education directed towards inculcation of new values and norms in the political system.

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I. Introduction

The practice of defection from one party to the other appears to have become a necessary attribute of party politics in Nigeria. Politics of defection in Nigeria can be traced to 1951, when several members of NationalCcouncil of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) defect to the Action Group (AG) just to deny Dr. NnamdiAzikiwe and his party (NCNC) the majority in the Western Regional House of Assembly, which the party required to form the government in the Western Region (Adejuwon, 2013). Within the Action Group (AG), LadokeAkintola, a deputy leader of AG, left the party in a crisis of personality and ideology between him and the party leader, Obafemi Awolowo, to form United Democratic Party (UNDP). UNDP then entered into alliance with Northern People's Congress (NPC) to frustrate AG dominance of the Western Region.

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Lending credence to the above, Mbah (2011) argued that defection has become not only a norm but an increasingly permanent feature in the Nigerians democratic culture. Party defections and political instability are the greatest challenges confronting Nigeria's democracy (Nwanegbo*et al.*, 2014). The usual practice is politicians defecting to other political parties if they fail to secure party nominations during own party's primaries, while some who felt disillusioned, cheated or denied free and fair primaries, defect to other parties so as to participate in the elections, with the intention of returning to their original parties after such elections. This has been the practice during election periods in Nigeria since democratic resurrection in Nigeria in 1999.

One of the issues that has contributed to party defections in Nigeria is lack of internal democracy within political parties. In Nigeria, recognition of candidates for nomination and selection for primary elections depends on the strength of the candidate in area of economic and political power, without any due consideration of the integrity and capability/capacity of the candidate involved (Jinadu, 2014). These acts have led to political crises leading to individuals defecting to other parties and/or forming new parties as a result of dissatisfaction with party operation and general voter's apathy in the democratic process. (Badejo *et al.*, 2015). For instance, the unhealthy power contest and intra-party crises prompted incessant defections of prominent members of People's Democratic Party (PDP) between 2013-2015 to the opposition party-the All Progressive Congress (APC). In Nigeria, no political party has clear ideology and this has accounted for incessant internal party crises which usually leads to defections. But in some cases, politicians still defect to another party even when there is no crisis within their political parties. As a result of the above scenario, it is necessary to note that party defections in Nigeria are not restricted to one party, but has become a political norm in Nigeria's democracy. Therefore, the spate of defections and its implications on Nigeria's democracy has raised a fundamental question on the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

However, the study intends to answer the following questions:

i. What are the factors responsible for party defections in Nigeria?
ii. What are the implications of party defections on Nigeria's democracy?

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II. Conceptual Exploration of Defection and Democracy

Conceptual exploration of defection and democracy is necessary in this study to give clear understanding of the terms and their impact on each other. Defection is an act of swapping political parties. It is an act of changing party allegiance or moving from one party to another. This particular term is known by different nomenclatures-"decamping," "cross-carpeting", "party hopping, "party switching," "party crossover" and canoe-jumping" (Malhotra, 2005). Some scholars has argued party defection is caused by political events involving political institutions while others concluded that it is as a result of ideological pressure (Nokken and Poole, 2002).

However, Malhotra (2005) observed that in some nations, party defection are not taken seriously whereas, in some countries, such actions are seen as threat to democratic stability. This threat prompted the enactment of laws against defection in some countries. For instance, India enacted laws against defection in 1973, 1985 and 2003. The law provides that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for withdrawing membership of his original political party (Janada, 2009). The law reduce cases of party defection in the Indian polity since it was difficult for Indian public office holders to forfeit their position. In Nigeria, there exist also allow aim at checkmating the rate of defection in sections 68 and 109 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution (as amended). However, inherent deficiencies in the law have frustrated the achievements of the purpose of the law.For instance, section 68 (1g) states thus:

> *A member of the senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected. Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored (Constitution of Federal of Nigeria, 1999, p.34)*

However, Winston Churchill remained one of the foremost political defector. He first joined the British parliament as a Conservative in 1901, defected to the Liberal in 1904, and defected back to the Conservative in 1925 (Wikipedia-The Free Encyclopedia, 2014). In Nigeria, the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar seems to be the most defected PDP politician in recent times, he defected to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) from Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), then moved back to PDP and then moved back to APC Progressive Congress (APC). On the other hand, democracy is a system of government that encapsulates three vital components: meaningful competition among individuals for public office using political parties at periodic intervals, inclusive participation of the citizens in the selection of leaders and policies formation/ implementation and considerable level of civil and political liberties (Diamond *et al.*, 1989).

Nnoli (2003) see democracy as a system of government involving freedom of individuals' political life, equality of citizens before the law, social justice in the relations between the people and government as well as free choice of individuals in deciding political leaders. Schumpeter (1990) conceptualize democracy as an institutional arrangement for reaching political decisions through which individuals acquire the power to decide, by means of a free and competitive struggle for the people's votes. Democracy cannot function effectively and efficiently without political parties and individual belonging to political parties can retard democratic process through their actions within the political parties. Democratic success is measured on the extent to which people have unrestrained access to participation in the policy processes (Unah, 1993).

What really gives democracy meaning is the right of citizens to freely participate and choose their leaders. The extent of citizens' involvement in decision-making relates directly to the type of policies government make. The absence of the above elements retards any democratic efforts.

III. Ideological Confusion and the Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria

The alarming rate of defection of politicians and instability within political parties occasioned by lack of internal democracy tends to obstruct democratic sustenance in Nigeria. Political party is one of the major institutions prerequisite for democratization and democratic sustenance. In advance democracies such as U.S.A., Britain, Germany, etc. parties have been known to exist on sustained ideological base, not just platform for ascending to political power.Ideology, according to Christenson (1981) is seen as a belief system that justifies chosen political order for the society. It is a set of shared beliefs regarding the proper order of a society (Omotola, 2009). Omotola (2009) avers that ideology constitute the hallmark of social political identification as well as mobilization and unifying factor.Ideology as a set of beliefs has the potency of unifying people of different cultures, ethnic groups, religion, gender and orientation.

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Galvanizing the concept of political ideology in Nigerian politics will prove clearly that Nigerian political parties lacks clear ideology and in fact, suffering from ideological confusion. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigerian parties have been established on baseless foundations. This has accounted for unnecessary defections of Nigerian politicians because these parties lack clear ideology. While Omotola (2009) argued that this baseless foundation of Nigerian political parties is responsible for party's ideological barrenness, we conclude that complete absence of ideology in Nigerian political parties has accounted for the prevailing party crossover and party switching in Nigeria.

For instance, all political parties in Nigeria have one internal crisis or the other. Often, these crises led to conflict, division, factionalization and killing of party members. Example, the killing of former Justice Minister, Bola Ige after he indicated his interest to resign his position in PDP-led government and return to help his party, Alliance for Democracy (AD) for the 2003 elections, the killing of PDP South-South leader, Harry Marshall after he cross-carpeted to All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP), the killing of former Deputy Speaker, Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly after he defected from PDP to All Progressive Congress (APC) to contest 2015 general elections for the State House of Assembly, etc. are all clear instances that party politics in Nigeria is not rooted on ideological democratic principles.

In Nigeria, issues such as ethnicity, religion, language, culture, money, etc. have considerable role in the formation and management of political parties and thus, it is pertinent to note that democratic sustenance in Nigeria has remained a "tall dream" that may not be achieved. Nigerian political parties are riddled with ideological confusion, internal crisis and lack of capacity to sustain itself. This has accounted for parties charging names, merging with other parties and sometimes form alliance but still face peculiar problems. Ideological principles is necessary in party formation, structure and management. This is why Seliger (1976) averred that politics interconnect with ideology. Fundamental in party ideology is the entrenchment of internal party democracy to guarantee equal opportunity for participation and protest.

Table 1: Major Catalogues of Political Cross-carpeting in Nigeria

Names	Old Party	New Party	Names	Old Party	New Party
Alhaji Kwatalo (Dep. Gov.)	ANPP	PDP	ChubaOkadigbo (Senator)	PDP	ANPP
AdamuArgungu (Dep. Gov.)	ANPP	PDP	Ike Nwachukwu (Senator)	PDP	NDP
EnyinayaAbaribe (Dep. Gov.)	PDP	ANPP	Jim Nwobodo (Senator)	PDP	UNDP
John Okpa (Dep. Gov.)	PDP	ANPP	Chukwemeka Ezeife	AD	UNPP
BuckmorAkerele (Dep. Gov.)	AD	NDP	Mohammed Goni	PDP	UNPP
GbengaAluko (Senator)	PDP	ANPP	Chris Okotie	NDP	JP
Khadirat A. Gwadabe	PDP	ANPP	ObinnaUzor (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	NDP
Daniel Saro (Senator)	PDP	UNPP	HarunaAbubakar (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	NDP
Peter Ajuwa	ANPP	LDP	Nuhu Audu (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	UNPP
Mala Kachala (Gov. Asp.)	ANPP	AD	NnannaOnyenekon	ANPP	PDP
Mike Mku	PDP	UNPP	Catherine Acholonu	PDP	UNPP
GbengaOlawepo (Gov. Asp.)	PDP	NDP	Emma Bassey (HOR)	PDP	ANPP
Matthew T. Mbu Jnr. (Senator)	PDP	ANPP	Graham Ipingasi (HOR)	PDP	ANPP
OmololuMeroyi (Senator)	AD	PDP	GbengaOgunniyi	AD	PDP
AlliBalogun (HOR)	AD	UNPP	Kingsley Ogunlewe (HOR)	AD	PDP
AppolosAmodi (HOR)	PDP	NDP	Dorcas Odunjiri (HOR)	AD	PDP
Alh. M. Koirana-jana	UNPP	PDP	Roland Owie	PDP	ANPP
UcheOgbonnaya	PDP	ANPP	Marshall Harry	PDP	ANPP
Ukeje O.J. Nwokeforo	UNPP	AD	SergentAwuse	PDP	ANPP
Emmanuel Okocha	APGA	PAC	WahabDounmu (Senator)	AD	PDP
Adamu Bulkachuwa	PDP	ANPP	Emmanuel Iwanyanwu	ANPP	PDP
Kura Mohammed	PDP	ANPP	IyolaOmisore (Dep. Gov.)	AD	PDP
Chief IdowuOdeyemi	PDP	AD	Jonan Jang	PDP	ANPP
Chief Ade Akilaya	PDP	AD	YemiBrinmo-Yusuf	AD	PDP
Olufemi Ojo	PDP	AD	FedelisOkoro	AD	PDP
KayodeOguntoye	PDP	AD	GbolahanOkuneye (HOR)	AD	PDP
James Mako	AD	PDP	AuthurNzeribe	ANPP	PDP
FedelisOgodo	AD	PDP	LakenBalogun (Senator)	AD	PDP
Arinze Egwu	ANPP	PDP	Alex Kadiri (Senator)	ANPP	PDP
Patrick Edediugwu	ANPP	PDP	Funso Williams	AD	PDP
Ray Akanwa	PDP	ANPP	RochasOkorocha	PDP	ANPP

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Bode Olajumoke	ANPP	PDP	Danishi Sango	PDP	AD
Hassan Y. Bagudu	PDP	ANPP	OlusolaSaraki	ANPP	PDP
AmbaliAmuda	ANPP	PDP	Alh. AbdulazizTonku (HOR)	ANPP	UNPP
KhindeAyoola	AD	PDP	Muhammed Khalie	PDP	ANPP
AlliBalogun	AD	PDP	Mrs. O. AdiukwuBakare	PDP	AD
Peter Oyetunji	AD	PDP	AuduDamsa	PDP	ANPP
RamotaOkemakinde	AD	PDP	DapoSarumi	PDP	PAC
SalisuMatori	PDP	ANPP	ToyinAnifowoshe	JP	NDP
Ibrahim Lame	PDP	ANPP	Bukar Mai Lafiya	ANPP	PDP
Annie Okonkwo	PDP	ANPP	Col. Magji Deb (rtd)	ANPP	PDP
Chief Akin Akomolefe	PDP	AD	Alh. SaiduShehuAwak	ANPP	PDP
Chief (Mrs) A. Olaye	PDP	AD	Muhammad Dukku (HOR)	ANPP	PDP
TundeOwolabi	PDP	AD	LekeKehinde (HOR)	AD	PDP
EmekaNwajiuba	ANPP	NDP	AdemolaAdegoroye	AD	NDP
Magnus Ngie-Abe	ANPP	PDP	Ichie Mike Ejezie	UNPP	ANPP
Price Ugorji A. Oti	ANPP	PDP	E. Aguariavwodo (HOR)	ANPP	PDP
Ben OkeObasi	ANPP	PDP	ToyinAnifowoshe	NDP	JP
Joseph Egwuta	ANPP	PDP	Alhaji Ibrahim Apata	ANPP	PDP
Linus Okorie	PDP	ANPP	IkediOhakim (Gov.)	PPA	PDP
Jafar Bio Ibrahim	ANPP	PDP	Theodore Orji (Gov.)	PPA	PDP
Raheem Agboola	AD	ANPP	Orji UzorKalu (Gov.)	PDP	PPA
UcheNwole	PDP	ANPP	RochasOkorocha (Gov.)	APGA	APC
Peter Adeyemo	AD	ANPP	Chris Ngige	PDP	APC
AyokaLawani	AD	ANPP	AchikeUdenwa	PDP	ACN
O. Odumbaku	AD	ANPP	Chibuike Amaechi (Gov.)	PDP	APC
Prince Elvis Jude Agukwe	PDP	AD	AttahiruBafarawa	APC	PDP
EffiongEdunam	NDP	PDP	MuritalaNyako (Gov.)	PDP	APC
Catherine Acholonu	UNPP	NDP	RabiuKwankwaso (Gov.)	PDP	APC
ChinwokeMbadinuju (Gov.)	PDP	AD	Abdulfatah Ahmed (Gov.)	PDP	APC
Alhaji BaffaGarkuwa	ANPP	PDP	AliyuWamakko (Gov.)	PDP	ACN
Abdulmuminu Abubakar	ANPP	PDP	IfeanyiArareume	PDP	ACN
Sa'adu Muhammad	ANPP	PDP	Isa Yuguda	ANPP	PDP
Alhaji Sada Yakubu	ANPP	NDP	Mahmud Shinkafi (Gov.)	ANPP	PDP
Muhammad A. Umar	ANPP	PDP	IbikunleAmosun	PDP	APC
George Okpagu	UNPP	ANPP	Segun Oni	PDP	APC
Alhaji Ibrahim Ali Amin	ANPP	PDP	George Akume	PDP	APC
Isa Kachoko	ANPP	PDP	Femi Pedro	ACN	LP
Segun Mimiko (Gov.)	LP	PDP	Emmanuel Ukoette	PDP	APC
SaminuTuraki (Gov.)	ANPP	PDP	ChubaOkadigbo (Senator)	PDP	ANPP
Atiku Abubakar (VP)	PDP	ACN	Andy Uba (Senator)	PDP	APC
Timipre Sylva	PDP	APC	Nelson Effiong (Senator)	PDP	APC
Tom Ikimi	PDP	APC	Aminu Tambuwal (Speaker HOR)	PDP	APC

Source: Thisday, May 26, 2002; The Guardian, July 5, 2002; Thisday, November 30, 2002; Daily Independent, February 5, 2003; The Guardian, January 11, 2003;New Nigeria, May 17, 2002;Weekly Trust, November 15, 2002; Daily Trust, February 18, 2003; The Guardian, February 21, 2003; Thisday, February 27, 2003;Newswatch, December 23, 2013; Vanguard, December 22, 2013; Sun, December 22, 2013;Punch, January 3, 2014; Vanguard, September 27, 2014; Sun, November 9, 2014; Sun, February 8, 2017.

The above is just an abridged version of catalogues of political cross-carpeting in Nigeria. However, it could be noted that the "political prostitution" in Nigeria is permitted in the executive the arm of government under the 1999 constitution. The provisions of section 68 (1g) only affects the legislature and to some extent, ambiguous. This is so because the issue of division in political party or factions within a political party is a relative term that can be interpreted different. Someone might defects from his original party to another as a result of minor disagreement and claim the party was factionalized or divided. Section 68 and 109 of the 199 constitution (as amended) have not empower any agency to determine when a political party is factionalized or divided and this has reduce these constitutional provisions to a fallacy and ambiguity. This has further created unnecessary confrontation in the political system. This is so, because the processes of conducting party affairs and regulating the behaviour of party members have remained largely irreconcilable.

Therefore, the major source of confusion, conflict and lack of focus in both ruling and opposition

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parties in Nigeria is that they lack ideological foundation. The truth is that both the old and new parties in Nigeria are virtually the same in terms of attributes and characteristics. Defection in Nigeria have been more confusing, conflicting and cannot promote democratic stability. This scenario has been obstructing democratic consolidation and growth in Nigeria. For political party to promote democratic sustainability, it must be rooted in clear ideology. Political party is the fruit of ideology and ideology is the root of political party. Political party is vulgar when not liberalized by ideology and ideology fades into a mere literal concept when it loses sight of its relations with political party.

IV. Defection and its Implication on Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

The act of defection in Nigeria is traceable to the emphasis on the primacy of political power. Easton (1965) see politics as an avenue for authoritative allocation of values for the society. People struggle for political power so as to be able to preside over the allocation of resources for the society. This is because the possession of state power directly give access to economic power. By implication, those who hold political positions determine the allocation and distribution of economic resources and political rewards. The alarming rate of political defection in Nigeria and the increasing number of party defectors remains a serious source of concern. This concern, according to Ogundiya (2011) revolve around the role of political parties in the collapse of first, second and third republics.

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

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

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examines the politics of defection and its implications on Nigeria's democracy. From the analysis, it could be stated party defection arising from internal party conflict remained a serious challenge to Nigeria's democracy. Party defection and ideological confusion in the present republic constitute a major problem to democratic stability. Politicians defect from one party to another not on the basis of ideological disagreement, but on selfish interest. Mbah (2011) submitted that party defection has serious negative impact on democratic stability and consolidation. The trend of baseless defections among Nigerian politicians makes mockery of Nigerian democracy, negates the values of opposition parties in democratic system, invalidate opposing views and reduce the efficacy of alterative democratic choices.

Party defection if not checked, could move Nigeria into a system without viable opposition to serve as watchdog to the ruling party. Momoh (2010) linked party defection to political culture and suggest the emergence of new political culture to build on new values and virtues, to reinforce the democratic practice in Nigeria. It is also worthy to note that the nature and character of political parties can frustrate members seeking to defect. Democracy is built on ideologically sustained political parties and the extent to which this is derailed can exert negative influence on democratic stability and consolidation.

However, this paper acknowledge the critical role of civil society groups, non-governmental organizations and pro-democracy groups in reversing

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this "democratic confusion". The study recommended the strengthening and amendment of the constitution and electoral laws to regulate the alarming rate of defection of politicians in Nigeria. Strengthening and sustaining Nigeria's democracy requires a social re-orientation, consistent political education and mobilization based on democratic culture directed towards inculcation of new values in the political system.

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