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Party Defection and Sustenance of Nigerian Democracy

By Jaja Nwanegbo, Jude Odigbo & Kingsley Nnorom

Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Abstract- It has always been the practice in Nigeria's unstable party democracy for people to defect to other parties with the intention to secure nominations from the party, and for a good number of them to return after elections to join the winning party to vie for positions in the government. The recent massive party defections by political gladiators in Nigeria were symbolic as it was the members of the ruling party that defected to opposition party and on a non election period. This paper examined the implications of this on democracy in Nigeria. It observed that this particular defection would help build strong opposition that would create a balance in the country's democracy by checking the excesses of the ruling party at any time. It also noted that party defections are integral part of democratic processes. However, it argued that since the present defections are not driven by fundamental ideological consideration, there is still a tendency that the opposition would still crumble in no distant time especially if the motive (which is to stop the incumbent president) is not achieved or even after the struggle as the bond cannot be strong outside ideology. The paper relied on content analysis and adopted abstractions from elite theory. It observed that lack of ideology and internal party democracy appears to have ignited the prevailing squabbles that orchestrated the recent exodus. The paper recommended social re-engineering, reorientation and mobilization that is directed towards inculcation of new values and the essence of entrenching acceptable philosophy in Nigeria's party system.

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Party Defection and Sustenance of Nigerian Democracy

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Abstract- It has always been the practice in Nigeria's unstable party democracy for people to defect to other parties with the intention to secure nominations from the party, and for a good number of them to return after elections to join the winning party to vie for positions in the government. The recent massive party defections by political gladiators in Nigeria were symbolic as it was the members of the ruling party that defected to opposition party and on a non election period. This paper examined the implications of this on democracy in Nigeria. It observed that this particular defection would help build strong opposition that would create a balance in the country's democracy by checking the excesses of the ruling party at any time. It also noted that party defections are integral part of democratic processes. However, it argued that since the present defections are not driven by fundamental ideological consideration, there is still a tendency that the opposition would still crumble in no distant time especially if the motive (which is to stop the incumbent president) is not achieved or even after the struggle as the bond cannot be strong outside ideology. The paper relied on content analysis and adopted abstractions from elite theory. It observed that lack of ideology and internal party democracy appears to have ignited the prevailing squabbles that orchestrated the recent exodus. The paper recommended social re-engineering, re-orientation and mobilization that is directed towards inculcation of new values and the essence of entrenching acceptable philosophy in Nigeria's party system.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The practice of carpet-crossing, defection or party switching appears to have become an undying attribute of party politics in Nigeria. Carpet-crossing by Nigerian politicians is dated back to the First Republic particularly in 1951, a decade to Nigeria's independence in the defunct Western Regional House of Assembly (Adejuwon, 2013). For him, it was an overnight affair when several members of the defunct National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), led by the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe decamped to the Action Group (AG), led by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, purposely to deny Zik and his party, the majority in the Western Region House of Assembly, which he required to form the government in Western Region. With that

decamping, AG was able to form the Government in the region. Also, in that same first Republic, another Premier of the that same Western Region of Nigeria, Ladoke Akintola left the then Action Group in a crisis rooted more in personality clash but explained as personal principles and his conviction to advance the Yoruba race into the Nigeria's mainstream politics to form UNDP and enter into an alliance with Northern People's Congress (NPC). Subsequent republics are not exempted from defections and carpet-crossing. For instance, in the old Ondo State during the Second Republic, Akin Omoboriowo, the then Deputy Governor of United Party of Nigeria (UPN) led government of Michael Ajasin defected and joined the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to become its gubernatorial candidate (Okparaji, 2010).

Explaining this long history and the consolidation of the trend in Nigerian political system, Mbah (2011:3) observed that political party defection has become an increasingly permanent feature in the Nigerian democratic experience. In fact, for over a decade now since the country returned to democratic governance (1999), party defections and political instability are the greatest challenges confronting Nigeria's democracy. The usual practice in the past has been for politicians to defect to other parties with promises of election tickets if they fail to secure party nominations during their own party's primaries. Some who felt disenchanted or denied of a level playing ground, defect to participate in the election, with some still having the intention of returning to their parties. This has been the practice during election periods especially since 1999. The most recent major defection is different from the usual experiences. It appeared to have heralded an irreconcilable stance of major political gladiators in the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Indeed, the formation of splinter unit (New PDP) on August 2013, under Kawu Baraje leadership typified the degree of disillusionment among the party bigwigs in PDP.

Thus, absence of internal party democracy seems to have contributed to party defections in Nigeria. Indeed, this gives rise to unhealthy power contest and intra-party feuds. Arguably, while it could be stated that the defection by these members of the ruling People's Democratic Party in 2013 to opposition party could be linked to 2015 elections, there is overwhelming evidence that crisis of internal party prompted the exodus. As a

Author α: Department of Political Science Federal University Wukari, Wukari-Nigeria.

Author σ: Department of Political Science University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Author ρ: Department of Sociology Kwararafa University Wukari, Wukari-Nigeria. e-mail: judeodigbo@gmail.com

result, intra-party squabbles, disputations have continued to energies the growth of what could be seen as a sordid act of party defection. As was seen, the recent massive party defections in Nigeria and the muzzy struggle that characterized the act were very fierce and intense, almost cutting the breath of the party politics in Nigeria. Indeed, the situation in the other parties, especially the party they defected to is not in any way better. There seems to be absence of internal party democracy in virtually all political parties in Nigeria which always raise another; the issue of question of ideology.

Following from the above, it is important to note that party defections are not exclusive character of one party in Nigeria. It is a general practice. Thus, the magnitude of the current defections and its impacts on the body polity raises fundamental questions on the manifestation of the trend and sustainability of Nigerian democracy. Evidently, it shows a clear indication that the phenomenon has the capacity of either derailing Nigerian democracy or reinforcing opposition with the capacity to provide a guide for democratic consolidation. In fact, its persistency, ubiquity and growth could provide a bleak future on the sustainability of party politics in Nigerian political system. Considering its implications on quality of governance, peace, stability and the challenge of sustenance of Nigeria's democracy, this paper seeks to establish the critical link between defections arising from internal party crisis and the extent it has impacted on sustainability of Nigeria's democracy.

II. DEMOCRACY AND DEFECTION: CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

The spread and general acceptability of democracy as an appropriate form of governance tend to have increased intellectual effort at achieving universality in the accepted definition of the concept. Scholars (Osaghae, 1992; Schumpeter, 1990; Nnoli, 2003; Appadorai, 2004; Dahl, 2000; Ake 2003; Awa, 1999; Sen, 1999; Ake 2000; L. Diamond, J. Hartlyn, J. Linz & M. Lipset 1989) have continued to dissect the concept of democracy in a manner it would reflect global practices. In spite of their contributions, democracy is still devoid of generally accepted definition. This could be attributed to structural inadequacy, cultural, environmental and societal imperatives inherent in recipient societies which condition the operation and practice of democracy (Nwanegbo & Odigbo 2013b). Hence, Osaghae, (1992) argued that regardless of the discrepancies that could be observed, one fundamental objective of democracy is "how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belongs to all people". More succinctly, Diamond *e tal* (1989) posited that democracy is a system of government that congregates three vital

stipulations of governance: (a) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties for political offices at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; (b) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and (c) a level of civil and political liberties. For them, these are requisite conditions.

Indeed, to Nnoli (2003), it is a system of government usually involving freedom of individuals in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens and justice in the relations between the people and the government and the participation of the people in choosing those in government. Earlier, Schumpeter (1990) defined democracy as an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide, by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. It is a state with unlimited opportunities for adult participation in political life. Democracy does not function in isolation, it is about the people. And its success is measured or dependent on the extent it has empowered people to surmount their basic needs and enjoy unrestrained participation in the policy process (Unah, 1993). In fact, what gives democracy meaning and substance is participation and authority of the people to determine who rules. The extent of involvement encompasses the power to decide who rules, what policy to support and decision which would benefit the greatest number of people. The absence of the above contaminates the functionality and operation of democracy and democratization process. In such condition, democratic values inherently imbedded in its operations tend to be neutralized making democracy to produce contradictory results.

On the other hand, defection could be seen as an act of swapping. Thus, party defection is the act of switching from one party to another. According to Malhotra (2005) party defection is known by different nomenclatures—such as "floor-crossing," "carpet-crossing," "party hopping," "dispute" and "waka [canoe]-jumping" (cited in Janada 2009; Mbah 2011). Indeed, party defection occurs in every political system. It is a global reality and an integral part of political process. King and Benjamin (1986) investigated the rationale behind party defections especially in America, and came to conclusion that party defection is most likely to coincide with important political events such as changes in partisan control of political institutions, with changes in key economic indicators, and in times of military conflict. For Castle and Fett, (1996) it is the ideologically cross-pressured members who are most likely to change parties (cited in Nokken and Poole 2002).

However, Malhotra, in his analysis observed that in some countries party defections "are a non-issue

and not perceived as a problem,” whereas in others the practice threatens government stability and is taken as very serious (cited in Janada 2009). Understandably, this threat and instability arising from defections especially in emerging democracies prompted enactment of anti-defection laws in some societies. Most of the anti-defection laws emphasize parliamentary defection. For instance, India enacted various anti-defection laws in 1973, 1985 and presently the 2003 anti-defection law. According to Malhotra, the 2003 law provides that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for “voluntarily giving up the membership of his original party (cited in Janada 2009).

The above legal provision appears to have reduced drastically cases of defection in the polity since one finds it difficult to forfeit one's position or faces parliamentary expulsion. Interestingly, a similar law (anti-defection law) exists in Nigeria. However, major deficiencies and incongruence that fraught the 1999 constitution, its operation and function have stalled the achievement of gains derivable from the law. For instance, the conflicting positions of section 68 (1g) and 109(1) tends to weaken the enforcement. For instance, section 68 (1a) states that:

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 expiration of the period for which that House was elected. Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:34).

The fluidity in formations, mergers and demergers including the orchestrations of internal party crisis has made that section difficult in application as the boundaries between mergers and demergers in Nigeria party politics appear too thin, thereby creating justification for parliamentary defections. In the other vein, it is imperative to note that in most developing political system especially in Latin America and Africa, party defections seem not to be motivated by ideological consideration but several other mundane factors not unconnected with the foundations of party politics in the regions. For instance, in most post-colonial states, parties emerged within the context of religious, ethnic consideration and the financial capacity of few elites. In fact, many of them are driven by such considerations and are ultimately seen as devoid of ideological coherence, heavily personality-driven and relying on an ethnic support base (Carothers 2006). Ideology plays a pivotal role in prolonging the life span of a political party. It neutralizes or reduces internal conflict thereby serving as a binding force. Nnoli (2003)

explaining that ideology is a very crucial aspect of politics, not only by serving as a cognitive structure for looking at society generally and providing a prescriptive formula, that is, a guide to individual action and judgment, but also as a powerful instrument of conflict management, self identification, popular mobilization and legitimization.

In fact, intra party crisis in Nigeria underlies the burgeoning state of party defections in Nigeria. For instance, major parties in Nigeria, like the ruling Peoples Democratic Party, All Progressive Grand Alliance among others are in severe internal crisis. These crises have corresponding impact on the political system, and sometimes ensue in members defecting to other parties. Essentially, internal party democracy is a sine qua non for redressing deep rooted animosity among members and reactivating the fortunes of these parties, since they have lost ideological content. It is through this that parties would be able to select candidates that are capable and alluring for elections. Scarrow (2004) In fact, internal party democracy would serve as a veritable platform for mediation and conflict resolution among party faithful. Following from the above, it could be hypothesized that there are serious ideological poverty in virtually all Nigerian political parties which appeared to have generated intra party conflicts and in turn increased the rate of party defections.

III. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

The study adopted the elite theory in explaining the interplay in the political horse trading and its impact in evolving credible and open market democracy in Nigeria. The elite theory as developed by Vilfredo, Pareto, Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Jose Ortega Gassat among others, hinges on the fact that every society is composed of two classes of people (Varma 1975). The two classes are made of minority group who rule and the majority being ruled. More specifically, Roberto Michel's “iron law of oligarchy” dwells on element of organization, which exists in every kind of human society that strives for the attainment of a definite end (Varma 1975). In fact, Michels concluded that as a movement or party grows in size, more and more functions are to be delegated to an inner circle of leaders (elites), and, in course of time, the members of the organization are rendered less competent to direct and control them (see Varma 1975).

The above postulations mirror vividly the state of Nigerian political society. Arguably, the Nigerian elites appeared to have succeeded in rendering the majority incapable of controlling them through the perfected process of managing electoral frauds and heinous manipulation of state institutions. This is manifest in the total delusion of the basic electoral principles symptomatic of the market democracy. Instead of opening up the democratic space genuinely for people's participation,

they created the kind of politics which places in the hands of the very few elite the ultimate control of the political system, including the institutions; the political parties, electoral institutions and agencies, security agencies, judicial organs, etc. That is 'machine politics' (see Ibeanu, 2007). Control of these institutions by the members of the ruling class creates a lot of fierce contests, bad bloods and crisis in the political system.

Attached to this contest is the bad governance principles associated therewith in such societies. Ultimately, associated with machine politics is the control of the state economy by such group of persons (the elites) and the indulgence in the act of buying people's support and conscience and in forcing such support when corrupt mobilization becomes difficult. Further to this is sharing the state resources among the members of the ruling class. Considering that the society including the members of the class is not a monolithic existence, there is a sustained contest among members of that class for the control of the machine as that also means control of the distributive power. The winner usually takes all and the loser loses everything. Hence, the contest is usually very fierce and petty. In the face of this contest, several activities take place, all surrounding the struggles for the acquisition and utilization of the state power. They become victorious or to avert losing out, they play dirty and sometimes, depending on their place in every power equation, engage in act of destabilization and in some occasions, persistent defections. This is in their desperate move to align with other parties or groups where they feel that their individual interest would be secured and by this heating up the polity. People tend to be deluded into accepting flimsy reasons such as crisis, as what propels such defections without emphasizing their (defectors) role in those crises. In many cases political elites tend to manipulate ethno-religious sentiments as tools for gathering political support after

defection (see the instance of the Western Regional House of Assembly). Interestingly, the recipient parties in their desperation to get more members and strength accept the defectors and present them in a manner they could be seen as political "saints" regardless of their previous misdemeanor.

IV. NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY SINCE 1999: CATALOGUES OF POLITICAL DEFECTION

Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 raised optimism that democratic practices and inherent qualities embedded in it would help to fast-track Nigeria's development trajectory. This hope tends to be becoming a mirage. Nigeria since 1999 appears to have been engulfed with series of confrontations, ethno-religious conflict, economic instability, militancy, terrorism and political squabbles. These crisis that rocked major political parties from 1999 till date instigated multiple political party defections in this fourth republic. These defections as noted earlier were mainly to secure party platform or nomination to contest elections. The fact that most of the defectors especially from the ruling parties at the national and state levels later returned to their various parties lend credence to the above assertion. However, there is no indication that the recent exodus in the ruling party would align with what seems to be a noticeable awful character of Nigerian politicians or that there is any "chance of return" at least for now. This is because both defectors and highly placed individuals in the ruling party stand at different extremity with none of them ready to compromise. With this move, number of defection cases has continued to occur and appeared to have overwhelmed the numbers prior to the present republic. Records of the major defections in the Nigeria's political landscape since the commencement of the fourth republic were stated below:

Figure 1 : Major Political Defection since 2003 General Elections

Name	Initial Party	Party Defected to
Ikedi Ohakim (former governor, Imo State)	Progressive People's Alliance (PPA)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Theodore Orji (Abia State governor)	Progressive People's Alliance (PPA)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Rochas Okorochoa (Imo State governor)	All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	All Progressive Congress (APC), prior to this, he has defected to many parties (initially he started as PDP member)
Chris Ngige (former governor Anambra State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Achike Udenwa (former governor Imo State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (but has returned to People's Democratic Party (PDP)
Chibuike Amaechi (River State governor)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Chinwoke Mbadinuju (former governor Anambra State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Alliance for Democracy (AD) (but has returned to People's Democratic Party (PDP)
Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa (former governor Sokoto State)	All Progressive Congress (APC)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)

Muritala Nyako (Governor Adamawa Staate)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Rabiu Kwakwanso (Governor of Kano State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Abdufatah Ahmed (Governor of Kwara State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Aliyu Wamakko (Governor of Sokoto State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Ifeanyi Ararume (Former Gubernatorial Candidate in Imo State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (but has returned to People's Democratic Party, PDP)
Isa Yaguda (Former Governor, Bauchi State)	All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Alhaji Mahmud Shinkafi (Governor of Zamfara State)	All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Ibikunle Amosun (Governor Ogun State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP) to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and presently All Progressive Congress (APC)
Segun Oni (Former Governor of Ekiti State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
George Akume (Former Governor Benue State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) presently known as All Progressive Congress (APC)
Femi Pedro (Former Deputy Governor of Lagos State)	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Labour Party (LP)
Segun Mimiko (Governor Ondo State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Labour Party (LP) but has recently returned to Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Late Funsho Williams (Former Gubernatorial Candidate Lagos State)	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Iyiola Omisore (Former Deputy Governor of Osun State)	Alliance for Democracy (AD)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Orji Uzo Kalu (Former Governor of Abia State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Formed, the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) but has since returned to (PDP)
Saminu Turaki (Governor of Jigawa state)	All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Atiku Abubakar (Former Vice President)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) but returned to PDP and now in APC
Late Chuba Okadigbo (Former Senate President)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP)
Late Harry Marshal (Former PDP Zonal Leader)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP)
Timipre Silva (Former Governor of Bayelsa State)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)
Tom Ikimi (PDP Chieftain)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC) But has returned to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Aminu Waziri Tambuwal (Speaker House of Representatives)	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	All Progressive Congress (APC)

Source: Compiled by the author from Newswatch, December, 23rd 2013; Vanguard December, 22, 2013; Punch, January 3rd 2014; Sun Newspaper, December 23rd 2013, Vanguard, September, 27th 2014, Sun Newspaper, 9th November, 2014.

Understandably, it could be stated that the above zigzag political roaming tends to be permissible specifically for the executive arm of government under the 1999 constitution. However, such leverages are not extended to the parliament. It is outlawed by virtue of the provision of section 68 sub-section. According to section 68 (1) of the 1999 constitution, a member of the

Senate or of the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if:

(g) 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 the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:68).

Thus, the constitution seems to be explicit on the conditions that could warrant or would demand forfeiture of one's seat in the Nigerian parliament. However, the constitution like in many other sections created gap in the second part which states that such forfeiture is legitimately mandatory "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" (section 68 (1) of 1999 Nigerian constitution). Considering the nature of Nigerian political parties and perhaps more importantly the character of Nigerian politicians and the fact that no individual or agency is saddled with the responsibility of determining when a party is divided or not, makes this section more complex and ambiguous.

Beyond constitutional complexities, experiences have shown that the general impact on the stability of the system is terribly monumental especially when it disadvantaged the ruling party. For, instance, over 15 members of the ANPP in the National Assembly have defected to the PDP since 2007 (Mbah, 2011). As a result, the ANPP appeared to have been overwhelmed by the probable loss of its members to the PDP. On its part, the ruling party tends to explain this as heroic, milestone and landmark decision motivated by the successes of the party over a decade of providing leadership. In the senate, Dr Wahab Dosunmu, Senator Adeseye Ogunlere and Senator Musulius Obanikoro all elected on the platform of Alliance of Democracy (AD) Lagos State defected to join the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Senator Arthur Nzeribe (Imo), Senator John Nwanunu (Abia) Dr Usman Kadir (Kogi) the trio defected from the All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) to join the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). While Senator Satti Gogwin, Action Congress (Plateau) defected to join the ruling party (PDP) (see Okparaji, 2010). Also, Patrick Osakwe (LP, Delta State); Patricia Akwasike, (ANPP, Nasarawa State); and Sa'di Yauo (ANPP, Zamfara State) in 2010 defected to Peoples' Democratic Party (also see Baiyewu, 2012).

However, the recent defections from the ruling party to the opposition party have generated enormous tensions. The exodus of thirty seven (37) members of House of Representatives and eleven (11) senators from the ruling party (PDP) was matched with rancor and litigations. This is not unexpected given that party politics in Nigeria are personalized and the seemingly non-institutionalization of political parties in Nigeria tends to increase the magnitude of confrontations. Since parties are the creation of the most influential individuals in collaboration with allies, the processes of conducting

party affairs and regulating the behavior of members have remained hugely conflictual. Arguably, it could be stated that the present trend may prosperously augment the size and growth of opposition party, but it is still vague whether this growth could be translated into good leadership or to be sufficient enough to check and condition the action of the ruling party. What is incontrovertible is that both the opposition and government parties are bereft of ideology and are therefore not rooted on any major foundational belief. The fact that both the abandoned and recipient parties are identical in virtually every attributes indicates that the movement may persist yet the leadership gap may correspondingly broaden. In fact, such exodus has remained ubiquitous over the time. The experiences in the first republic and subsequent republics where internal party conflicts resulted to defections lend credence to the above assertion. Essentially, defections in Nigeria have been more conflictual and indeed, seem unable to promote democracy and good governance. This is really one of the predicaments of democracy in Nigeria over a decade. The reason for that is not unconnected with the absence of major factors on party politics, ideology, etc.

V. IDEOLOGY AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRATIC SUSTENANCE IN NIGERIA

The scale of party defections and acrimonies, instability accompanying the act tends to suggest that defection has become one of major threats and destabilizing factor to party politics and sustainable democratic practice in Nigeria. Indeed, political party is essentially a requisite institution in the process of democratization and democratic sustenance. Conventionally, political parties have been understood to rest their existence on sustained ideological foundation. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, is to determine whether ideological status of Nigerian parties is inextricably linked to perennial internal wrangling and to determine its implication on democratic sustenance.

Ideology generally could be seen as a set of shared beliefs regarding the proper order of a society and the means this could be achieved (Seliger, 1976; Gerring, 1997; Iyare, 2004; Omotola, 2009; Jost, Federico & Napier, 2009). According to Van Dijk (2006) an ideology is the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group. As Omotola (2009) rightly noted, ideology functions as a means of self-identification, as an instrument of conflict management, as a prescriptive formula and as a mobilizational and unifying force. Indeed, several other scholars have seen ideology beyond the confines or views of specified party politics (Heberle, 1951; Banshurst, 2005; Fischman & Law, 2005). For Heberle (1951) ideology of a movement in "a broad, non-

technical sense" could be seen as "the entire complex of ideas, theories, doctrines, values and strategic and tactical principles that is characteristic of the movement.

The import of the above definitions is that since ideology is a shared belief, it has the potency of binding people together regardless of their background, sex, religion, culture, status and orientation. It engenders peace and reduces internal bickering thereby promoting decorum, growth and development which extend to the larger polity. This does not mean also absence of conflict of interest, but a party that is fundamentally built on ideology possesses the capacity to democratically managed conflicts of interest. Of course, the tendency that party faithful may resort to compromises to accommodate other competing interest is certain. Buttressing this further, Jost (2006) asserted that different ideologies represent socially shared but competing philosophies of life and how it should be lived (and how society should be governed), it stands to reason that different ideologies should both elicit and express at least somewhat different social, cognitive, and motivational styles or tendencies on the part of their adherents (cited in Omotola, 2009). Yet, it is endowed with internal value mechanisms for addressing basic issues emanating from within.

Contrary to the above, several studies on political parties in Nigeria point to the fact that political parties in Nigeria seem to be confronted with and indeed suffering from ideological deficiency (Omotola, 2009; Iyare, 2004). This could be attributed to flawed foundation and wobbly foundations of these parties since 1960 which according to Omotola (2009) have been largely responsible for their seeming ideological barrenness. He further argued that despite all pretences to the contrary through their manifestoes, as much as the superficial classifications as the "left" and "right", "progressive" and "conservative", Nigerian parties are bereft of clear ideological commitments. Thus, while Omotola (2009) is of the opinion that this faulty origin of political parties in Nigeria is responsible for the party's ideological barrenness, we emphasize further that the poverty of ideology is significantly accountable for the prevailing political harlotry and party defections in the fourth republic. For instance, virtually all political parties in Nigeria seem to have one internal crisis or the other. Sometimes these crises snowballed into full scale conflict, leading to division, factionalization and sometimes even gruesome murder of members. For example, the gruesome murder of former justice minister Bola Ige after indicating his willingness to resign his position and return to help his party for the 2003 election and the murder of former PDP zonal leader Harry Marchall after he defected to ANPP are instances that party politics in Nigeria is not guided by clear commitments and principles.

Thus, while we do not intend to engage on characterization or evaluating major components that

drive party formation and management in Nigeria such as ethnicity, religion, the role of money and influence of powerful individuals, it is thus, important to note that sustaining Nigerian democracy has remained a herculean task that may not be achieved with the present flawed machinery. Political party is an indispensable apparatus of state. Party system that is not institutionalized and lacked the spicy, needed basic ingredients for regulating conduct, aggregate opinion may definitely lack the capacity to sustain itself and the entire political system. In this condition defections occur and may persist. However, it is important to note that defections are not the solution. It can only offer the defectors short period of peace (if at all). For sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, there is need to critically address basic problems that bordered on party formation, structure and management that would be erected based on certain ideological principles. This is essential because just as Seliger (1976) rightly observed "politics is inseparable from ideology". Fundamental among them is the establishment of internal party democracy to give people opportunity to participate and protest on issues they feel strongly about and to get redress within. Absence of that and death of ideology would obviously continue to drive defections in Nigeria party politics.

VI. DEFECTION AND SUSTENANCE OF NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY

It is commonly held that beyond government, the existence of credible, strong and challenging opposition is important for the sustenance of democracy. The recent defection by a section of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressive Congress (APC) ordinarily ought to drive Nigerian democracy to such situation of balance needed in any normal and established democracy for the practice in the country to consolidate. Looking at the equation of the elected officers in the country before and after that defection, one would understand that it really was a very significant development in the position of Nigeria party politics. It was a defection that saw five (5) state governors, Eleven (11) Senators and Thirty-Seven (37) members of the House of Representatives joining the APC to create a rather balanced power equation among the government party and opposition, giving the posture of an increased possibility for a change in the next general election.

Thus, Nigeria might be presenting a democracy with two consolidated or strong parties that would ordinarily place democracy on a competitive ground. That as stated at the early part of this paper is not only good but required. Incidentally, quite some thick clouds cover both the PDP and APC, making the picture unclear. This calls for deeper inquiry in the nature of these parties to aid our arrival to an acceptable

conclusion. One basic consideration is to determine if the parties, PDP that has being in government at the centre for over thirteen (13) years now and APC have major differences. Has PDP's long stay in power and the ability to maintain high population of 'members' made it sustainable? Has the APC, just by its ability to merge with others and assuming the "physical" status of a big opposition (or even ruling) party made its position as party sustainable enough to make a change in the system. What appears common in Nigeria is that virtually all the political parties have very fluid nature. Beyond not being established on any principle, they are easily formed, reformed, changed, merged, demerged and disintegrated. To help our analysis, there is need therefore to establish the measure of sustainability of political parties and infer from that if the parties in Nigeria, especially the party that emerged from the merger and defection (APC) acquired the strength to create the needed balance that would make Nigerian democracy strong.

Generally, a party's sustainability can be measured by its level of adaptability, its resource adequacy, the presence of mechanisms of internal conflict resolution, and the extent to which the party evolves a continuous process of self reincarnation through the positive leadership recruitment and injection of new ideas (wanjohi, 2003: 239). It can be measured in terms of the size of its core membership as well as the character and organizational capabilities of its core leadership. The more homogenous the core membership and the more focused the leadership, the more sustainable a party will be (Wanjohi, 2003). He further explains that political parties may be viewed like other important organizations whose institutions sustainability is a function of a clear mission based on the leaders' vision. He further called this entrepreneurial viewpoint.

Beyond every other consideration Wanjohi (2003) explained that political party's sustainability is dependent on its ability to stay focused on its mission and to be able to transform itself into many forms as may be inspired either by the vision of its leaders or by the prevailing political conditions. Such include mutating into a different type or evolving a new mode of operation. ANC in South Africa under the apartheid regime was able to evolve this adaptable character to survive and achieve its goals. Such too could be seen in the manifestation, through the youth's wing and Zikist movement that came with the NCNC in the Nigerian first Republic to survive certain colonial policies and achieve its objectives of wresting sovereignty out of the hands of the colonialists.

We may need to take the other factors one after the other to arrive at a good assessment of the new merged party. First, the capacity of the new political party to be adaptable to changing circumstances in the political system determines to a large extent how the

political party is. It can be explained as how the political party is able to exist and sustain itself within the various changes and circumstances it meets and be able to survive it. Looking at the most celebrate merger that was built through the defections of some PDP chieftains and their followers, it has actually shown the dynamic characters of the leaders of that party to prepare itself for sustenance in the face of the challenge facing them in elections against a dominant PDP country. However, it has to be explained that this is not the first time such mass organization was built as a political party in Nigeria. Usually, preparatory to elections, political parties have usually sought alliance which many of the time led to defections, mergers and birth of a new bigger party.

Incidentally, the same core organization in this new experiment has always found themselves in these arrangements. Thus, they have usually not been able to adapt to the turmoil that go with primaries and elections in Nigeria. Of course, the principles of democracy have in-built mechanisms to control internal insurrections. However, the undemocratic character of these parties has consistently created problems for them. In fact, the undemocratic nature of these organizations usually makes it very difficult for them to survive and to be sustainable. Already, APC is beginning to manifest such traits with the outcome of the recently concluded party convention that saw their election of national leaders of the party. The fact that one of the contestants for the position of party chairman who was formerly of PDP, Tom Ikimi has returned to PDP lend credence to this assertion.

The above situation indicates absence of genuine internal party democracy. Close to it also, is the absence of good mechanism of intra-party conflict resolution. Indeed, with obvious injustice in the system, any mechanism puts in place will rest on nothing strong to solve problems. It will equally not allow leadership recruitment to be open and would surely stifle new ideas. Looking at APC, it still retains those crops of leaders that were at the centre stage in the second republic (especially UPN) and since 1999 under AD, through ACN to the present new merger. Yet, with good percentage of former PDP members who had defected to the APC. What may look appealing is the new crowd thrown into the party (its new members). Incidentally, describing these people as core members of a political party requires establishing the level of commitment that these (especially new) members have for the party.

The next problem is the challenge of resources. Conventionally, one of the most reliable sources of funding political parties is party membership dues. In Nigeria, the culture of having "party financiers" as few members of the party who by that status almost take over the party structure makes it difficult for one to safely argue that any political party in Nigeria has a sustainable base. If those financiers decide to withhold their

supports and finances, just like some PDP Governors did at the height of their intra-party difficulties in 2013, the finance of the party crumbles. Some of the credible resource basis for political parties is returns from investments. Obviously, no political party in Nigeria has such resources not to think of sustaining it. For the government and opposition party, contributions from members in political positions form the strongest source of funding, complementing and sometimes constituting part of the major financiers.

VII. CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it could be stated that one of the major challenges for sustaining Nigerian democracy in the fourth republic is the perennial defections arising from internal party crisis. With huge number of defections, the present republic is facing the problem of stability. This is mainly because of ideological deficiencies among parties and the drive by influential individuals to privatize a political party. Based on the above, this paper concluded that resolving the recurrent defection among party members or ending the persistent defection would demand rethinking and a paradigm change from the hitherto amalgam of political profit making allies representing political parties to erecting party systems that are ideological rooted. More importantly, is the critical role of the civil society groups and state agencies in reversing the present abnormality. Arguably, the beneficiaries of the present rot may pose serious obstacle in this direction. However, sustaining Nigerian democracy demands a sustained radical, social re-engineering, re-orientation and mobilization that would be directed towards inculcation of new values and essence of entrenching acceptable philosophy in the Nigeria's party system.

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