HISTORICISING PARTY INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC, 1999-2023

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KEYWORDS
Democracy, democratic consolidation, political parties, internal democracy, leadership recruitment

ABSTRACT
The main thrust of this paper is to historicise party internal democracy and the challenge of democratic consolidation in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2023. It explains that the teething problem of party internal democracy has been described as a major cause of intra-party wrangling, party defection and so on rocking the fabrics of the Nigerian political parties especially since the return to civil rule in 1999. This problem has resulted in making the citizens to become atrophied by cynicism and mistrust of government and people in government. The paper, therefore, argues that party internal democracy has constituted a major problem hindering democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The paper critically examines major defections carried out by some politicians as a result of problem of party internal democracy and its implication on democratic consolidation during the first twenty-four years of the birth of the Fourth Republic. It concludes by suggesting ways of addressing the political menace in order to build up the country's democracy from being nascent. The methodological approach adopted in this paper is historical, thematic and qualitative. Sources of information include primary and secondary materials derived from newspapers and extant literature.

Keywords:

Introduction

Nigerian democracy has faced several political challenges since the return to civil rule in 1999. Notableamong these political challenges are the imposition of candidates, godfatherism, money politics, injustice, lack of party manifestoes and ideology, party indiscipline and lack of internal democracy. The absence of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties constitutes a major threat to democratic consolidation in the country. This problem, which has led to party defection, otherwise known as cross- carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping and party-jumping has remained a permanent feature in the

Nigerian democracy since the birth of the Fourth Republic.

According to Harold Lasswell cited Oyediran (1999) 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. This explains that political competition among aspirants irrespective of their number in a democratic setting is normal. This 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).

A thorough examination of the Nigerian democracy since 1999 in particular reveals that virtually all the 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 process, but also give them unrestricted opportunity to contest in elections under the party's platform. This kind of restriction and constraint has increasingly resulted in party defection, party wrangling, war of attrition, recrimination, acrimony, coordination dilemmas, and cross-carpeting among Nigerian political parties. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the challenge of internal democracy on the democratic consolidation in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. The paper is divided into five sections. The first section is introduction, second section focuses on conceptual clarification, the third section deals with historicising party internal democracy in Nigeria, the fourth discusses party internal democracy and the challenge of democratic consolidation in Nigeria while the last section is the conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

It is important to consider the meanings of some key concepts and issues because they are inherent in the theme of this conference and this topic. They include democratic, consolidation, election and internal democracy.

Democratic Consolidation: According to Senator Bola Tinubu, former governor of Lagos State, consolidation suggests there is a democratic foundation being strengthened and built upon (http://www.burningpot.com). Consolidation requires that habituation to the norms and procedures of democratic conflicts regulation will be developed.Democratic consolidation is the deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is "so broadly and profoundly legitimatised among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" (Ouyang, http://www.oycf.org/perspective/6-063000). It means a democratic stay that cannot come to an end suddenly or abruptly through unconstitutional acts such as military coups or dictatorships. It implies established stability in governance. This consolidation of democracy involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty (Dode, 2010). The term "Democratic Consolidation" was originally meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression. This normalization requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, the functioning of a mature civil society and political institutionalization (Dode, 2010).

Election: Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary 2006 (583-584) defines election as: "the act or process of organizing systematic (s) election (permitting mass participation and method of choosing) a person or persons by vote for a public office position in which state authority is exercised". Also, Roberts and Edwards (1991.41) defined election as: "A method for the selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by an electorate; those (citizens who are qualified to vote under the rules and procedures of the electoral system".

Internal democracy: This simply refers to the internal management and functioning of political parties and party systems based on democratic principles that reflects in terms of candidate selection, leadership selection, policy making, membership relations, gender, minorities, youth and party funding (Ojukwu,et al 2011).The point of emphasis articulated in this conceptual clarification recognizes the fact that selection or election of candidates for any elective office within the party in particular should base on rational choices of democratic values which should also conform to the ideals of democracy. Besides, the election process must be reasonably open to members' adequate participation. This invariably would lead not only to ideal democracy but also result in democratic consolidation.

Historicising Party Internal Democracy in Nigeria: An Overview

One major consequence of absence of internal democracy among the political parties is party defection or cross-carpeting. Historically, the issue of party defection is not new in Nigerian politics. Its evolution in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period. There were cases of cross-carpeting among some Nigerian politicians in the colonial period. A good example cross carpeting or defection occurred when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the National Council of the Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) after the death of Herbert Macaulay, aspired to become the Premier of Western Region following the regional elections of 1951, which was equally contested by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba man, and the leader of Action Group. The outcome of the 1951 elections revealed that NCNC won 42 seats out of 80, but within 24 hours, 20 of them who were Yoruba and elected on the platform of NCNC cross carpeted to Action Group (AG) in order to deny Dr. Azikiwe the premiership of Western Region in favour of Awolowo (Natufe, 1999:3). This political event led to how the expression, "cross-carpeting" came into the political dictionary of Nigeria, and which has remained till today in Nigerian politics.

Also, the rift between Chief Obafemi Awolowo (the First Premier of Western Region) and his deputy Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola (who later became the Second Premier of Western Region) in the First Republic had a semblance of a political situation where lack of internal democracy led to serious political crisis in the post-colonial Nigeria. While Akintola, disapproved the continuous overbearing influence of Awolowo on him even as Premier of the Western Region, the aftermath was the crisis arising from the disagreements between Awolowo and Akintola who later entered into an alliance with the Northern People's Congress (NPC) which was the political party at the centre. After Akintola had emerged as the Premier of Western Region under the Action Group, he later dumped the party for his party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The outcome of that feud short-lived the tenure of Akintola and his NNDP (Babangida,2011).

In the Second Republic, the gladiators in the then National Party of Nigeria (NPN) reportedly jettisoned what was expected to be a well thought out internalized arrangement to have the late MKO Abiola become the NPN's presidential candidate for the 1983 general election. He was allegedly shortchanged and told that the NPN presidential slot was not for the highest bidder. He was exchanged with the Alhaji Shehu Shagari (Babangida,2011). Since the return to civil rule in 1999, the anomaly has continued to feature in the build up to general elections in the country. In fact, the Fourth Republic has recorded episodes of wrongful exchange of candidates especially within the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Between 1999 and 2023, the menace became rampant and a monstrous continuum that threatened the growing nascent democracy of the country.

Party Internal democracy and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

There is no doubt the fact that the practice of democracy in Nigeria lacks essential internal democratic virtues that conform to international best practices as in the developed countries like the United States of America. It is characterised with kangaroo primaries organised by leaders of political parties in favour of their anointed, preferred or imposed candidates, unlawful substitution and wrongful replacement of candidates who are voted through the people's mandate, the selection of candidates for political offices by the party overlords without recourse to due process and laid down regulations in the parties' constitutions among others. According to Mimpen internal democracy requires two instrumental elements. The first element 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 people can participate in elections equally but may also engage in participation or be represented in other ways. The inability of some cabals or the so-called godfathers among the Nigerian political parties to adhere to the principles of ideal democracy has resulted in the emergence of new parties, and various factions within the party, party defection among others which have constituted a major threat to democratic consolidation. It is therefore pertinent to critically examine some challenges of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties.

One major challenge of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties since 1999 is the issue of party defection. The country had

witnessed series of carpet crossing, with politicians jumping from one party to the other especially to the ruling party since the birth of the Fourth Republic. A number of reasons have been adduced to this ugly political phenomenon. While some argued that over-ambitious and selfish interest of Nigerian politicians were accountable for this problem, others hinged it on the lack of internal democracy among the political parties. The paper argued that both factors contributed largely to this political challenge. Therefore, it is essential to examine a chronicle of party defections that characterised political parties in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

In 1999, Chief Evan Enwerem, having lost the gubernatorial primaries in the All Peoples Party (APP) in Imo State, decamped and joined the People's Democratic Party (PDP) on whose ticket he won a sensational seat (Odum, 2002). In Plateau State, Alhaji Alhassan Shaibu decamped from the APP and joined the PDP in 1999. Former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, a founding member of the PDP, defected to the Action Congress (AC) after a running battle with the former President Olusegun Obasanjo. In 2007 he contested the presidential elections on the platform of AC but lost to the late President Umaru Yar'Adua. A few months later, Atiku went back to the PDP where he contested the presidential primaries in 2010. In Ondo State, there was a mass cross-carpeting of PDP members to the Labour Party (LP) after Dr. OlusegunMimiko had been declared the winner of 2007 gubernatorial election by the Court of Appeal sitting in Benin. In fact, nearly all the members of Ondo State House of Assembly like Hon OyeboAladetan, Hon. Henry Akinsuroju and the incumbent Speaker (Rt.Hon Samuel Adesina) who were all elected under the platform of PDP decamped to LP between 2009 and 2010.

Defection was not only limited to party members alone. There were examples of state governors defecting from opposition party to the ruling party during this period of study. The first was that of the then incumbent governor of Bauchi State, Isa Yaguda who had initially won the governorship election on the platform of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) but later defected to the PDP with a large number of his supporters. Others include the then incumbent governor of Imo state, Ikedi Ohakim, who won the governorship election on the platform of the Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA) but defected to the PDP; Aliyu Shinkafi of Zamfara State (ANPP) and Saminu Turaki of Jigawa state (ANPP) all defected to PDP. Also, defections were not only peculiar to state governors, but also involved senators and members of House of Representative. For example six senators who were elected under the platform of the ANPP, the Accord Party (AP) and the Action Congress (ACN) cross-carpeted to PDP at the floor of the National Assembly. They were Senators Sali Gogwin (ACN, Plateau state), Patrick Osakwe (AP, Delta state), Patricia Akawasike, (ANPP, Nasarawa state) and Sa'di Yauo (ANPP, Zamfara state). Since 2007 when the present National Assembly was inaugurated, no fewer than 13 Senators and 15 members of the House of Representatives have defected to the PDP. Also, in 2011, Senator Ajayi Boroface who was elected on the platform of the LP to represent Ondo North Senatorial District defected to ACN. Another candidate who was also elected on the platform of LP, a member of House of Representative, representing Akure North Federal Constituency in person of Hon. Sunday Abegunde (aka Abena) equally decamped to the ACN.

A critical analysis of party defection discussed shows that it is in two ways. First, there is great movement of politicians from different political parties into the ruling party with little to other parties in the build up to the general elections. The idea is to participate in parties' primaries. The second movement starts after the party primaries. At this stage those who lost in the party primaries move to their former parties or to new ones or even to form a new party under which they intend to contest the next elections. However, there is nothing wrong in people cross-carpeting if they do not find the programmes of their party in consonance with their ideals. However, it becomes dubious when politicians begin to mortgage their consciences as well as seek to pursue their private and selfish interest in the name of cross carpeting at the expense of strict adherence to party discipline and ideology. This may have stemmed from the mere fact that politicians are too desperate to hold public office as a means of accumulating wealth. In advanced democracies, cross carpeting is done on principle, rather than on selfish and personal interest. The scenario of party defection in Nigeria today is political prostitution which lacks political morality and discipline.

Another critical challenge of internal democracy in Nigeria is how party primaries are being conducted within the Nigerian political parties. The conduct of party primaries within the Nigerian political parties does not conform to

norms of democratic principles. Virtually all the political parties have failed to apply the provisions of the party's constitutions to all party members who are eligible and want to run for office in the conduct of their party primaries. Rather than conducting appropriate primaries, what we usually witness is either kangaroo primaries or the imposition of anointed candidates on the party without election and due process. This problem has often times led to the loss of contest to opposition party especially in the stronghold of the incumbent party. Examples of such are the governorship elections in Anambra State in 2009; Ogun State in 2011; and Edo State in 2020. For instance, in Anambra State, Professor Chukwuma Soludo, the former Governor of the CBN was imposed on the State as the PDP governorship candidate by the National Executive of the party without any primary. This act 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. This was why the then Vice-Chairman of the southeast zone of the PDP said that "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). Also, as a result of the rift between the then National Chairman of APC, Senator Adams Oshiomhole and the Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, Governor Obaseki was disqualified by the Screening Committee of the APC from participating in the party's primary. This forced Mr. Obaseki and his deputy, Mr Philip Shuaibu to cross carpet to PDP, where they were given the party ticket to contest governorship in Edo State in September 2020, which they eventually won. This led to the loss of Edo State (which formerly ruled by APC) to PDP in 2020.

The case of Ogun State in the 2011 gubernatorial election was a little bit different. Two different primaries were conducted by the party (PDP) in the state to choose the gubernatorial candidate for the election. The crisis between the party leaders resulted in the emergence of two factions which held two different primaries that invariably led to the emergence of two different candidates. The candidate of one faction led by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, in person of Brigadier Adejunji Olurin (Rtd) was accepted by INEC as the candidate of the party. This development made the second faction led by the former governor of Ogun State, Otunba Gbenga Daniel to defect to PPA with Chief GboyegaIsiaka as the standard bearer of the party. The outcome of this crisis led to the loss of the state which was initially controlled by the PDP to the ACN. Also, in the build up to the 2016 governorship election in Ondo State, there was the emergence of two factions within the PDP leading to the conduct of two different primaries. While the first faction led by Senator Ahmed Markafi-led National Caretaker Committee of the PDP with the support of the then incumbent governor, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko produced EyitayoJegede as the standard bearer of the party, the second faction led by Ali Modu-Sheriff faction produced Mr. Jimoh Ibrahim as the candidate. Both factions eventually approached the courts in order to certain the true standard bearer of the party. The crisis lingered on until three days to the election, when the Supreme Court led by Walter Onnoghen (Chief Justice of Nigeria) in conjunction with other four justices affirmed the ruling of the Appeal Court, which declared EyitayoJegede as the governorship candidate of the party (Dyepkazah 2016). The political crisis eventually led to the loss of the state (which was formerly ruled by PDP) to the APC (which was then an opposition party in the state).

The high incidence of aggrieved members seeking redress in the court of law over injustices meted on them as a result of the outcome of party primaries in the recent times is another challenge. This has to do with issuance of court injunctions and counter orders in attempts to stop one candidate or the other from contesting. The amendment of the Electoral Act of 2006 section 87 (9) by National Assembly which states that: "where a political party fails to comply with the provision of this Act in the conduct of its primaries, its candidates for elections shall not be included in the election for the particular position in issue" later gave birth to Electoral Act of 2010 which states that: "Every political party shall not later than 60 days before the date appointed for a general election under the provisions of this Bill, submitted to the commission in the prescribed forms, the list of candidates the party proposes to sponsor at the elections, provided that the commission shall not reject or disqualify candidates for any reason whatsoever". The use of the phrase "any reason whatsoever", make INEC to be stripped of its ability to determine the qualification or status of

any candidate submitted by a party, irrespective of any circumstances surrounding a candidate's status. With this provision, the cabals or godfathers within the party now has the power to dictate, impose, and determine how, who and why a candidate can contest in an election in which they are participating, even if INEC has doubts over the candidate's credibility (Mbah,2011)

Lack of internal democracy which causes party defection has resulted in the development of divided house within the ruling and opposition political parties. There is a general saying that a house that divided against itself cannot stand. A good example of this was the case of the then governor of Bauchi State, Isa Yuguda who defected to PDP from ANPP but his deputy refused to follow him. Initially the legislators in the House impeached the deputy governor, but the court reinstated him due to the unlawful impeachment. While the governor was a PDP member, his deputy an ANPP member. What a divided House? It will be very difficult for both of them to work in harmony and make a sensible progress politically. The deputy governor is likely to face all sorts of intimidation and be sidelined in all areas of public service. Indeed, it is morally wrong for an aspirant to use one political party as a platform to ascend power only to dump that party at the least opportunity for another party. This is what is often referred to as lack of discipline among the Nigerian politicians with the growing cases of defections to the PDP in particular and the depleting member of the opposition, there is a mounting fear that Nigeria may gradually be moving toward a one –party state which may be inimical to the nation's nascent democracy and its consolidation. Another example of divided house took place within APC in Ondo State as a result of political rift between the then Governor, Mr. Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (SAN) and his Deputy, Mr Agboola Ajayi, over the ambition of the former in the build up to the 2021 governorship election in the state. The development forced Mr. Ajayito initially defect to PDP to contest party primary. Having lost the governorship primary election to Mr EyitayoJegede, he joined Zenith Labour Party and was adopted as the candidate of the party in the gubernatorial election in the state.

There were several cases of divided house especially within the PDP in the build up to the 2015 and 2023 general elections. In fact, the challenge made the PDP (who was then a ruling party) to lose of power to APC (which was then an opposition party) in 2015 at the national level. PDP, a ruling party, which had been in power at the national level for sixteen years (1999-2015) lost power to APC (a newly and opposition political party) in 2015, thus making APC today a ruling party at the national level. First, in the build up to the 2015general elections, there were several cases of defection from PDP to APC, a party that was newly set up in 2014 by three major political parties (namely AC, ANPP and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and some prominent members of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). The defection occurred as a result of grievance against the emergence of the former President, Goodluck Jonathan as the Presidential candidate of PDP. In the build up to the general election, five PDP Governors known as G-5, namely Chibuike Amaechi (Rivers State), Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto State), Rabiu Kwankwaso (Kano State), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa State) and Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara State) (Premuim Times, March 19:2014: Nigeria 2015: Jonathan dares Saraki, Governor Ahmed, other PDP defectors). Aside the G-5, more than eleven Senators who were elected on the platform of PDP defected to APC in January 2014. They were Senator Bukola Saraki (Kwara State and former Senate President), Danjuma Goje (Gombe State), Abdullahi Adamu (Nasarawa State and later National Chairman of APC), Magnus Abe (Rivers State), Alhassan Aisha (Taraba State), BindoJubrilla (Adamawa State) and so on (Premium Times, 2014). The G5 and other PDP defectors, who decamped to APC was later known as new PDP faction (nPDP) The same scenario occurred in the build up to the 2023 general elections. First, the failure of the National Working Committee of the PDP to zone the party Presidential ticket to the South was the first major factor that led to a divided house among the prominent members of the party. Prior to the conduct of the primary, prominent members of the party from the Southern region had insisted that the presidential ticket be zoned to the South. Rather than heading to this call, the National Working Committee decided to throne the contest open, which made it possible for both Northern and Southern candidates to vie for the ticket. The development led the then Governor of Anambra State and former Vice-Presidential candidate of the party, Mr. Peter Obi to cross carpet to Labour Party in order to contest the 2023 Presidential election. Secondly, the loss of presidential ticket by the Southern candidate in person of Nyesom Wike to the Northern candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar during the primary election led to the emergence of G5, namely Seyi Makinde (Oyo

State), Nyesom Wike (Rivers State), Samuel Ortom (Benue State), OkezieIkpeazu (Abia State) and Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi (Enugu State). The G5 governors of the opposition PDP though did not formally defect to another political parties, worked against the PDP during the 2023 presidential election, and supported Presidential candidates of APC and LP. For instance, while Seyi Makinde and Nyesom Wike supported APC candidate, Samuel Ortom, Okezie Ikpeazu and Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi supported LP candidate. Crisis within the APC in Kano State equally forced Rabiu Kwankwaso of the APC to form a new political party known as New Nigeria Political Party (NNPP) in a bid to contest the 2023 Presidential election.

One of the greatest challenges of lack of internal democracy among political parties is the further fragmentation of opposition parties from where politicians have defected. It has created chances for the emergence of new political parties that lack strength; focus on the political scene and without manifestoes or ideology. Today, there are about nineteen registered political parties by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from three in 1999 when the Fourth Republic began. Lack of internal democracy with the major political parties had led to the creation of mushroom political parties which results in the weakness of opposition parties. In fact, before 2022, the number of political parties in Nigeria rose to between 32 and 62 until they were deregistered by INEC. This development does not augur well for the development of party politics in Nigeria. In fact, it promotes money politics. This does not give room for ideology-based political parties to thrive and develop. Parties are formed and joined for personal interests (Abimbola and Adesote, 2012:248).

Another underlying challenge which political party defection created as a result lack of internal democracy is the development of dishonest traits in some politicians. Odum (2002:1) captures this scenario when he argues that: Politicians and prostitutes are two seemingly parallel professions. While the former supposedly displaying constitutional leadership virtue in governance, the latter is revealing social vice – the fabric of a decadent society. Incidentally, one common denominator for both appears to be their loyalty, which stands on quick sand, shifting as mundane attractions glow in their adulterous eyes. The consideration, especially with the modern day politician is where stakes may be lower and gains higher. It does not matter who is the offer. So, while the prostitutes switch beds, the politicians change camp in this game of cross-carpeting. This is the internal ordering of our nascent democracy. Power is no longer a thing held in trust today. It has become a fraud which every politician is clamouring to hold (Mbah, 2011:17-18).

On a final note, the increasing cases of undemocratic practices in our polity as a result of lack of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties, shows the problem of poor leadership among political parties. If this ugly situation is not adequately checked, it can lead to outright political instability. For examples, countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have experienced a number of cases of party defection which had threatened the stability of the political systems (Mbah, 2011: 19). Hoeane, (2008:71) argues that in extreme cases of floor crossing, where the number of public representatives who have defected has been significantly high, such shifts of allegiance have led to the collapse of democratically elected governments, such as in Lesotho in 1997. Defections of political office holders to other political party without the need to resign the first platform for coming to political position do not add value to the process of democratic consolidation in the country.

Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discourse has clearly revealed the challenges of internal democracy on the democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It argued that lack of internal democracy within Nigerian political parties is inhibitive to democratic consolidation. The essential elements of internal democracy which include equal participation among party members especially the involvement of all ranks-and-file in the party's policies, as well as representation at party activities; inclusiveness and institutionalization that demonstrates the degree to which internal decisions and procedures are formalized are lacking within the Nigerian political parties. Besides, 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 are: 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). 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. According to Toyo (1994), the fundamental basis of democracy is the ideological thesis that human beings are equal. This 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. Thus, the equal rights of all social individuals to participate in taking significant social decisions and in running those affairs of society that sharpen the fortunes of its members is crucial in a democratic setting.

Having examined some of the challenges of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties since 1999, the paper is of the view that if the anomalies of lack of internal democracy such as, 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 parities apart but also occasioned the decampment of many party stalwarts can be addressed.

First, the adoption of some of 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. Some of these recommendations are, 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.

Second, there is need to infuse the social capital culture into Nigeria's political system. Any institution or organization 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. The 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 (Putram 1993, 1995; Fukuyama, 1995). Social capital describes the relations that knit together communities, parties through a sharing of trust. It also emphasizes that for an institution such as political party to be orderly and prosperous; these basic norms must be embedded in the system (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). Francis 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 of emphasis here is that if our political parties are really groups of people bounded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, that is, if it is true that the parties represent and reflect people sharing the same political interest, value and ideological orientation, then, social capital should be able to address the problem of internal democracy among the Nigerian political

parties. With the infusion of social capital in our parties, the rate of distrust and cut-throat competition may reduce among party members.

More importantly, 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 the nearest future will remain mere rhetoric (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011).

Adherence to the fundamental principle of democracy among the Nigerian political parties that upholds the equality of man is hereby advocated for. The right of every member must be respected and preserved. Consensus candidature and candidate selection must be played down in any election and at all levels. Therefore, whosoever emerges as the elected candidate must be given institutional backing rather than substituting him for a candidate of selective approval. In other words, definitive respect for the will of the majority within the party helps to reduce intra-party conflicts which usually lead to party defection and formation of new political parties.

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