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## **From the Ruling Party to the Opposition Political Party: Crisis of Internal Party Democracy and 2015 Elections in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Generally, Nigerian political parties in the present republic have been hampered by crisis of internal democracy thus, undermining their political leadership recruitment function. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is a good example of one of these Nigerian political parties that lacks internal democracy. In fact, PDP was a leviathan. The 2015 Election symbolised a contest between David and Goliath. The electoral outcome is that PDP has transformed from a ruling party to an opposition party. The study, by relying on the theory of relative autonomy of the state and secondary sources, concluded that lack of internal democracy was a necessary condition for PDP's poor performance in the 2015 General Elections, and thus, there is a relationship between the crisis of internal democracy and 2015 electoral outcomes. Also, the paper noted that PDP authoritarianism deepened the crisis of internal democracy in Nigeria and that this authoritarian character of the former ruling PDP was a reflection of the authoritarian character of the Nigerian state which is currently shaping the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). The study is essentially qualitative, historical, and inductive.

### **Keywords:**

Election, Political Parties, PDP, APC, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The credibility of the electoral process in Nigeria has generally been undermined because the political parties and the politicians alike refuse to play the game of politics by the rule. Thus, the credibility of general elections is always in doubt due to high level of electoral malpractices and violence as well as numerous election petitions. The 2015 General Elections is not an exception. At a point, PDP was a leviathan (Aniche, 2015). For example, prior to 2015 General Elections, the opposition politicians were perceived to have suffered more political intimidation and suppression from the ruling oligarchy, and in some cases victims of political killings and selective fight against corruption in Nigeria under People's Democratic Party (PDP) (Odibachi, 2010).

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PDP was not able to perform the role of broadening the radius of political leadership recruitment within the party leading to defection in pre-election period. Little wonder that the much expected 'dividend of democracy' has continued to elude the generality of the people of Nigeria. Interestingly, the outcomes of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria transformed PDP to opposition political party and All Progressives Congress (APC) into ruling party. The 2015 General Elections, therefore, symbolised a contest between the Biblical David and Goliath (Aniche, 2015).

### **The Problem**

Nigerian political parties in the present republic have been hampered by crisis of internal democracy thus, undermining their political leadership recruitment function. The PDP is a good example of one of these Nigerian political parties that lacks internal democracy. In fact, POP was a leviathan. The zoning of elective political offices among political parties in Nigeria by including and excluding aspirants undermines internal party democracy (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2015). As a result, the crisis of internal party democracy among Nigeria's political parties in the Fourth Republic has attracted enormous scholarly attention. Among these scholars attracted by this lack of internal democracy are Akubo and Yakubu (2014) who point out that absence of internal party democracy is one of the challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) try to identify some of the challenges or hindrances of internal democracy in PDP such as poverty of party ideology, primaries, candidate selection, party funding, zoning formula, party unity, and party executive arrogance. They further note that lack of internal party democracy has ensured lack of transparency and fairness in choosing candidates in primary elections and party leadership executive positions which ultimately weakens political parties in Nigeria. While Okhaide (2012) asserts that internal party democracy is one of the indispensable ingredients of credible election but the amendment of the 2010 Electoral Act failed to check the crisis of internal democracy among Nigeria's political parties.

Momodu and Matudi (2013) conclude that intra-party conflicts arising from crisis of internal democracy is a threat to democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In the same vein, Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) posits that lack of internal democracy within political parties is a limiting factor in Nigeria's attempt to deepen, sustain or consolidate democracy. Also, Ikeanyibe (2014) establishes that lack of internal democracy in nomination of party candidates for general elections weakens party unity and institutionalisation of Nigerian political parties, and as well, negatively affects democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Similarly, Ikechukwu (2015) notes that absence of internal democracy is one of the major factors leading to party defections with ominous consequence for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

But scholars have not given adequate attention to the nexus between lack of internal party democracy and electoral outcomes in Nigeria. This study consequently seeks to interrogate the interface between crisis of internal democracy and 2015 electoral outcomes in Nigeria. The question or poser, therefore, is: did lack of internal party democracy responsible for voting PDP out of power in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Explaining the Fallouts of 2015 Elections in Nigeria**

The predominant view in the Political Science literature among African scholars is that most post-colonial states in Africa including Nigeria are characterised by low relative autonomy (Alavi, 1972; Ake, 2001). Connected with the dwindling private capital penetration in the economy is intense political competition to control the bureaucratic/administrative apparatus of the state. This intensifying political competition

for state power coincides with the socio-economic competition. Thus, Ifesinachi (2000) contends that the relative autonomy of the state also depends on the management of government institutions of the state by political leadership. A state characterized by low autonomy does not limit itself to supervisory or regulatory role, and is hence compromised such that instead of rising above class struggle, is deeply immersed in it (Ake, 1973).

For Ake (1981), by involving the state so intimately in the class struggle, and by increasing the state power, the blurring of the distinction between the ruling class and the state is reinforced. The government, thus, collapses into the ruling class reinforcing the authoritarianism of the hegemonic faction of the bourgeoisie. Thus, elections, for Adejumbi (2000), are merely a system for political and ideological reification of the hegemony and power of the dominant class or a system of social acculturation through which dominant ideologies, political practices, and beliefs are reproduced. Therefore, within the context of class differentiations and inequalities, political rights as enshrined in elections present little or no choice to the dominated class as the choice of candidates and agenda oscillates among members of the dominant class.

Consequently, Ake (1995) points out that the result or implication of this is a dissociation of voting from choice and rights from the exercise of political power. In essence, elections cannot facilitate or foster political accountability, responsiveness, and democracy, which is why Ogban-Iyam (2005) argues that this form of democracy, that is, electoral democracy does not approximate popular democracy, and thus, could only be termed "electocracy." Similarly, political parties are merely platforms for political and ideological reification of the hegemony and power of the dominant class or a system of social acculturation through which dominant ideologies; political practices, and beliefs are reproduced. This state of affairs does not permit political democracy or even liberalism, rather it makes political authoritarianism mandatory. Under the pressure of siege mentality, this hegemonic faction is unwilling to accept liberal restraints on power which might give any other group leverage. The implication of the above is that the Nigerian politics suffers from lack of internal democracy in the political parties and the absence of credible polls. The fact that a civilian as opposed to a soldier is superintending over the affairs of Nigeria does not in itself make it democratic rule where the will of the people is sovereign (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

The point being made is that authoritarianism of the Nigerian state elevated the cult of personality of the president as state power was privatised and personalised. For example, Odibachi (2010) observes that the former ruling party, PDP encountered the muscling powers of the presidency. The tenure of the national leadership was often short-lived the moment the chord holding them and Obasanjo together was broken. The PDP within the eight years of the two tenures of Obasanjo's Administration had about four national chairmen and other accompanying officers. Not surprisingly, the Nigerian politics between 1999 and 2015 was still characterised by lack of internal democracy, party fictionalisation, incumbency factor, lack of ideological clarity and cult of personality (Omodia, 2010). This has ultimately cost PDP the political leadership of the Nigerian state. There is strong tendency that the ruling APC may acquire the authoritarian character of PDP. This propensity arises as a result of the low relative autonomy and authoritarian character of the Nigerian state and the ruling class irrespective of the political party in power. This may make or mar APC in the future elections, particularly 2019 General Elections.

### **Historical Evolution of Political Parties and Elections in Nigeria**

Although, elections and formation of political parties in Nigeria dated back to 1923 (that is, a year after elective principle was introduced by Clifford Constitution of 1922); the post-independence elections results in Nigeria had generally been disputed by political parties usually leading to post-elections crises (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963; Aniche, 2009). The implication being that the post-independence elections in Nigeria had been generally characterized by electoral malpractices, violence, emasculation and intimidation of opposition parties, post-elections carpet-crossing and incumbency factor.

However, the nature or character of post-independence elections in Nigeria can be classified into two which are: one, elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule, and two, elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule. The elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule in 1964/1965, 1983, 2003 and 2007 were generally characterized by electoral malpractices, violence, inter-party conflicts, electoral petitions, emasculation of opposition parties, post-elections carpet-crossing/defections and incumbency factor sometimes leading to intervention of the military into Nigerian politics (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

For example, Ikejiani-Clark (2004) notes that the 1964 federal elections and 1965 elections in Western Nigeria were marked by major crisis leading to demise of first republic and emergence of military government in Nigeria. The 1964 federal elections, particularly, were boycotted by the opposition parties. Similarly, Ofoeze (2001) insists that the 1993 general elections like 1964 federal elections and 1965 Western region elections were characterised by high level of electoral malpractices, violence, post-elections petitions, inter-party conflicts and electoral crises which ultimately terminated the second republic.

Elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule in 1979, 1993 and 1999 according to Ofoeze (2001), were keenly disputed and contested in courts even when there was no significant electoral violence probably owing to the fact that these elections were conducted under the military regime. But it is more or less elections stage-managed by the military to hand power over to their preferred candidate(s). Thus, Adejumobi (2000) points out that the military often unduly interfere with the electoral process to determine electoral outcomes during the transition programme. For example, the emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian president in 1999 was widely believed to have been masterminded by the military that manipulated the election to his favour. For example, Nigeria successfully completed transition from military rule to civilian rule for the second time when the military head of state General Abdulsalami Abubakar handed over power to the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo of People's Democratic Party (PDP) on May 29, 1999 (that is, after more than fifteen years of military misrule from 1983 to 1999) without much electoral violence but seriously disputed and contested in courts by opposition parties (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

Odibachi (2010) writes that subsequently in between 1999 and 2010, two elections of transition from military rule to civilian rule were successfully conducted in 2003 and 2007. In 2003, erstwhile president, Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded himself in a second tenure, and in 2007, he transferred the mantle of leadership to the late president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. But the monumental protests, condemnation and legal suits that trailed the elections at all levels overheated the polity. Consequently, in all the elections conducted in 1999, 2003 and 2007, the then ruling PDP dominated the political landscape of Nigeria at all levels of governance even at the discontent of many Nigerians, and amid widespread allegations of electoral fraud. As such, the nascent democracy so-called remains fragile.

Thus, even in spite of the fact that various provisions of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria make political parties the only legitimate organ of leadership choice in Nigeria, the principal actors in the formation of political parties and maintenance of government are not active in performing the functions of educating and mobilizing the voters. It seems apparent, however, that some of the political parties exist only on paper and for the purposes of collecting subventions from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (Egboh and Aniche, 2012). Thus, Nwankwo (2005) observes that the political parties in Nigeria are highly centralised, little institutionalised, very unstable and ridden with internal crisis. These characteristics are as a result of the fact that political parties in Nigeria did not originate from socio-political changes in society, but through institutional manipulation of electoral laws.

In the same vein, Ofoeze (2001) rightly states that the political parties in Nigeria, especially the PDP have all failed to fulfil those generally recognised roles and functions which their counterparts in the Western societies perform; and which guarantee the sustenance of democracy and democratic principles. Similarly, Adeyemo (2009) submits that Nigeria's nascent democracy cannot engender a greater popular participation in politics necessary for institutionalisation of democratic culture if the political parties, particularly, the PDP continue to subscribe to the current undemocratic culture of imposing candidates rather than allowing them to emerge through appropriate party leadership recruitment process.

### **The Emergence of PDP from the Ruling to the Opposition Political Party in Nigeria's 'Fourth Republic'**

Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, provides that "No association, other than political party shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at an election." While section 222 of the same constitution provides the condition under which an association can be registered or function as a political party. Also, sections 225 and 226 require Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to regulate the political parties while Part I under the Third Schedule, Paragraph F, section 15, subsection B empowers the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to register political parties. It states that the Commission shall have power to - (b) register political parties in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and an Act of the National Assembly.

However, section 229 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, defines political party in following words: "Political party includes any association whose activities include canvassing for votes in support of a candidate for election to the office of President, Vice President, Governor, Deputy Governor or member of a legislative house or of a local government council."

By 1998, nine political associations had already fulfilled the above laid down conditions for registration of political parties by the constitution. But the Guidelines for the Formation and Registration of Political Parties (GFRPP) were issued by INEC to prune down the number of political parties (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009; Yagboaju, 2011). Thus, according to Nwankwo (2005:208), "Although, the constitution allows the free formation of political parties, it gives the INEC an enormous power to receive and process applications of intending parties and register those that fulfil laid down conditions." Consequently, of the 26 political associations that picked up application form and applied to INEC, only 9 political associations scaled thorough verification exercise (Stage II), and, therefore, qualified for the local government election held on the December 5, 1998 which include Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP), Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), National

Solidarity Movement (NSM), People's Democratic Party (PDP), People's Redemption Party (PRP), United Democratic Party (UDP) and United People's Party (UPP).

In order to prune down the number of political parties out of these nine, mentioned above, INEC issued Guidelines for the Formation and Registration of Political Parties (GFRPP) composed of three stages. For example, paragraph 10 (3) of the Guideline (GFRPP 10(3)) provides that for a party with provisional registration to become a full-fledged political party in Nigeria, it must win at least five per cent of the total number of votes cast in each of at least twenty-four states of the Federation including Federal Capital Territory Abuja, at the local government council election (Nwankwo, 2005).

However, only two political parties, namely, People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All People's Party (APP) were able to meet the criteria for full registration. By invoking paragraph 12 (2) of the Guidelines for Formation and Registration of Political Parties (GFRPP Par. 12(2)) the Alliance for Democracy, which came a distant third was equally granted final registration as political party. The paragraph empowers the INEC in the event of only one political association satisfying the requirements under paragraph 10 (3) to register one other political association that scored the five per cent of the total votes in the highest number of states of the Federation including FCT. For details of the distribution of votes of December 5, 1998 local government chairmen/councillors election see Table 1 below.

**Table 1: December 5, 1998 Local Government Chairmen/Councillors Election**

Political Parties	No. of Chairmen	No. of Councillors	No. of States + FCT with 5% Votes
AD	103	1,071	14
APP	192	2,589	36
DAM	-	4	-
MDJ	3	61	3
NSM	2	8	1
PDP	470	4,650	37
PRP	2	21	-
UDP	-	12	-
UPP	1	26	1

Following from the Table 1, only three political parties, namely, PDP, APP and AD were fully registered by INEC to contest 1999 presidential, gubernatorial, National Assembly and states assembly elections in Nigeria. Thus, according to Nwankwo (2005), other political parties that failed to meet the criteria were advised to fuse into any of these three political parties that were fully registered.

As a result, these three political parties are more or less conglomerates of units that do not share a common view, but come together for opportunistic reasons. For example, Nwankwo (2005) notes that the PDP is a conglomerate in which two different groups are dominant, namely, the All Nigeria Congress (ANC) and the People's Democratic Movement (PDM). Even as Ofoeze (2001) observes that Group of 34 (G. 34) comprising persons which not only refused to serve under Abacha's regime, but opposed the self-succession bid formed the nucleus of what later became PDP.

Nwankwo (2005) posits that the ANC was dominated by persons who belong to the conservative elements that have been active in the civilian and military governments of Nigeria since independence. But the PDM grew out of the political disagreements of the Second Republic, and was dominated by

economic and administrative elites from all parts of Nigeria oriented towards modernisation. The nationwide representation of the PDM accounted for the emergence of the PDP as a quasi-national party.

Nwankwo (2005) further states that the only shared interest that brought ANC and PDM together was the removal of military, and as soon as this was achieved, the tension between the two groups became apparent, a tension that has continued to engulf not only the party organization, but also the legislative and the executive arms of the government, which they control. In the words of Nwankwo (2005:216):

*Another important group in the PDP is the National Solidarity Association (NSA) encapsulating economic barons and former military officers of the Babangida and Abacha regimes. Due to the overriding loyalty to the subgroup, the core group, political preferences are not defined along party times, but depend on different perceptions with own rule systems and sets of strategies in the subgroups.*

Similarly, Ofoeze (2001) observes that the PDP as it is today, is simply an amalgam of motley of strange bedfellows, individuals and factions who do not only lack consensus on fundamental issues of socio-economic and political life, but also have nothing in common with one another except in terms of their commitment to capture and retain state power, possibly ad infinitum. The party not only lacks internal cohesion, but also does not really possess any concrete systematic programme of action. As Ofoeze (2001:88) puts it:

*... in the course of transforming itself into a political party, the group simply threw its door open and allowed itself to be invaded by large number of people and group most of whom were/are neither committed to the original ideals of the group nor the country's overall socio-political and economic wellbeing. Indeed, some of these invaders were/are those persons/groups who either assiduously worked for the Abacha's self-succession bid and/or those who had, in the past, created or immensely contributed to the country's socio-political and economic miasma. Given the huge financial and numerical strength of these invaders, the original patriots and founders of the group easily got overwhelmed and side-lined in the affairs of the party...*

Little wonder that despite the provision of section 223 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended in 2011 and provisions of Articles 16 and 17 of the Constitution of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as amended in 2009 as well as the provisions of relevant sections of Electoral Act 2002 as amended in 2003 and 2006, PDP lacks internal democracy in election of party executive committees and nomination of candidates. POP primaries have always been characterised by brigandage and shenanigans, which include substitution of candidates even few days before election (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

Consequently, PDP was fractured in August, 2013, when seven state governors, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and some other senior members formed a parallel national executive committee. The seven governors were Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto), Babangida Aliyu (Niger), Rabiuk wankwanso (Kano), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa), Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara), Sule Lamido (Jigawa) and Rotimi Amaechi

(Rivers). The breakaway faction, which named itself the new PDP (nPDP), alleged increasing repression, restrictions of freedom of association, arbitrary suspension of members and serial violation of the party's constitution by the chairman, Bamanga Tukur. The faction also claimed that the party chairman was backed by President Goodluck Jonathan whose only calculations are geared towards side-lining or shutting out any real or imagined opposition ahead of the party's presidential primaries for the 2015 elections. According to International Crisis Group (2014:8-9):

*Following an 18th October, 2013 court order, which stopped the nPDP from establishing offices and barred the INEC from recognizing It as a political party, five of the seven dissident governors joined the APC. Those defections boosted the number of states controlled by the opposition to sixteen, leaving the PDF with eighteen. Furthermore, 49 House of Representatives members and eleven senators (alt elected on the PDP platform) also defected, meaning, for the first time ever, that the opposition had assumed parity in the National Assembly.*

### **The David and Goliath: The Aftermaths of 2015 Elections and the Emergence of APC as the Dominant Political Party in Nigeria**

The Biblical David and Goliath played out in the just concluded 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, in which All Progressives Congress (APC) was the David while PDP was the Goliath. PDP, the self-acclaimed largest political party in Africa, boasted that it will dominate Nigerian political landscape for 60 years. But its aspiration of ruling Nigeria for 60 years ended in 16 years with the outcomes of 2015 General Elections. Just like the Biblical David, APC emerged the ruling and dominant party in spite of the usual abuse of incumbency in Nigerian political and electoral processes. The APC presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, won the PDP presidential candidate, the former President of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, in the 2015 Presidential Election (Aniche, 2015). For detailed information on the results of the 2015 Presidential Election, see Table 2 below.

**Table 2: 2015 Presidential General Election Result in Nigeria**

<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Muhammadu Buhari	All Progressives Congress	15,424,921	53.96
Goodluck Jonathan	People's Democratic Party	12,853,162	44.96
Adebayo Aveni	African People's Alliance	53,537	0.19
Ganiyu Galadima	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria	40,311	0.14
Sam Eke	Citizens Popular Party	36,300	0.13
Rufus Salau	Alliance for Democracy	30,673	0.11
Mani Ahmad	African Democratic Congress	29,665	0.10
Allagoa Chinedu	People's Party of Nigeria	24,475	0.09
Martin Onovo	National Conscience Party	24,455	0.09
Tunde Anifowose-	Accord Alliance	22,125	0.08
ChekwasOkorie	United Progressive Party	18,220	0.06
Comfort Sonaiya	KOWA Party	13,076	0.05
Godson Okove	United Democratic Party	9,208	0.03
Ambrose Albert Owuru	Hope Party	7,435	0.03
Invalid/blank votes		844,519	-
Total		29,432,083	100
Registered		67,422,005	43.65

**Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 2015.**



Also, APC secured the majority legislative seats in the 2015 National Assembly Elections in Nigeria. Thus, APC secured 60 seats in the Senate out of the total of 109 senatorial seats and 225 seats out of the total of 360 seats in the House of Representatives to become the majority party turning PDP which won 49 seats in the Senate out of the total of 109 senatorial seats and 125 seats out of the total of 360 seats in the House of Representatives into minority party. Presently, the actual number of seats won by the two major parties in each House of the National Assembly is uncertain because nullification of some elections by Election Tribunals or courts and outstanding inclusive elections to fill such vacant seats. For example, Rivers State has no Senator representing any of the three senatorial districts in the State due to inclusive re-run elections. Moreover, out of 29 states where gubernatorial elections were conducted in 2015, APC won 20 states while PDP won 9 states. In the remaining seven states where gubernatorial elections were not conducted in 2015 (due to staggered gubernatorial elections), APC controls 2 states; PDP controls 4 states; and APGA has one state. In summary, APC has a total of 22 states out of the 36 states while PDP has a total of 13 states out of the 36 states of the Federation (Aniche, 2015; Olowojolu and Ake, 2015). For detailed information on the results of the 2015 National Assembly Elections, see Tables 3 & 4 below.

**Table 3: Senatorial Seats Won by Nigerian Political Parties in 2015 Elections**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Number of Seats</b>
All Progressives Congress (APC)	60
Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>

**Source:** Naijaonpoint, 2015.

**Table 4: House of Representatives Seats Secured by Nigerian Political Parties in 2015 Elections**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Number of Seat</b>
All Progressives Congress (APC)	225
Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	125
Other Political Parties	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>

**Source:** Reuters Nigeria Tribune, 2015

The information on Tables 2, 3 and 4 above show how from being ruling party, PDP became an opposition political party while conversely from opposition party, APC became the ruling political party in Nigeria. But prior to the 2015 General Elections, APC, though short-lived, secured majority seats in the National Assembly (NASS) through the mass carpet-crossing of PDP legislators to APC. At a point, the then Speaker of the House of Representatives carpet-crossed from PDP to APC and remained the Speaker. All these were attributable to authoritarianism, lack of internal democracy, and party discipline in the PDP (Aniche, 2015).

However, APC's journey or quest to become the dominant political party in Nigeria was not an easy one. APC emerged in February 2013, as a product of the merger by Nigeria's three biggest opposition parties comprising the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and a faction or a splinter group of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) of Gov. Rochas Okorocha and Senator Annie Okonkwo. The resolution was signed by Tom Ikimi, the then spokesman for the party, who represented the ACN; Senator Annie Okonkwo on behalf

of the APGA; former Governor of Kano State, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, the Chairman of ANPP's Merger Committee; and Garba Sadi, the Chairman of CPC's Merger Committee (Aniche, 2015).

In March, 2013, it was reported that two other political associations - African People's Congress and All Patriotic Citizens - also applied for INEC registration, adopting APC as an acronym as well, reportedly 'a development interpreted to be a move to thwart the successful coalition of the opposition parties, ahead of the 2015 general elections'. It was reported in April, 2013 that the party was considering changing their name to the All Progressive Congress of Nigeria (APCN) to avoid further complications. The party eventually received approval from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 31st July, 2013, to become a political party and subsequently withdrew the operating licenses of the three previous and merging parties (the ACN, CPC and ANPP). Later, the five governors out of the seven governors who formed the new PDP (nPDP) joined APC together with a large number of senators, members of Federal House of Representatives and state houses of assembly loyal to the five defected PDP governors rendering PDP a minority party in the National Assembly (Thurson, 2015).

The defections increased the number of states controlled by the opposition to sixteen, leaving the PDP with eighteen. This has serious consequence for the entire party structures in each of these states at local government level because as the governors defected so also the local government chairmen and councillors, and even members of the states' house of assembly. Subsequently and predictably, 49 members of the PDP in the House of Representatives and 11 PDP senators defected to APC. The implication being that for the first time since the inception of the Fourth Republic the opposition had assumed parity in the National Assembly. In order to stop the defections and pacify aggrieved members, the PDP belatedly replaced Tukur with Adamu Muazu. But this move could not check the acrimony within the party as Aminu Tambuwal, the PDP-elected speaker of the House of Representatives and fourth highest ranking official in the government defected to APC. It was not as if APC was unaffected by intra-party conflict but PDP suffered more (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The five governors who defected were Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto), Rabiun Kwankwanso (Kano), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa), Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara), and Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers) while the two who did not defect were Babangida Aliyu (Niger) and Sule Lamido (Jigawa). In December, 2013, 37 members of House of Representatives left the PDP for the APC which gave the APC a numerical majority of 174 members; PDP a slight minority of 171 members; and 15 other party members. This was reversed in February, 2014, when five APC members of House of Representatives defected to the PDP. On 28th October, 2014, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, joined the APC. Some PDP senators also joined the APC, including 11 who defected in January, 2014 (Thurson, 2015).

The APC also faces serious internal challenges, problems and factionalisation. By drawing its membership from four political parties now known as the 'legacy parties', it was, from the onset, a marriage of strange bedfellows and bound to be a difficult union. For instance, the provision in the APC's constitution that governors would be the party's leaders in their respective states deepened its internal problems. It gave pre-eminence to those governors who came from the PDP at the expense of other politicians who had laboured and sacrificed to build the party from scratch. Some of the aggrieved members like former Kano State Governor, Ibrahim Shekarau, and former Sokoto State Governor, Attahiru Bafarawa, left in anger, taking their supporters with them to PDP (International Crisis Group, 2014).

Other aggrieved members complained of dictatorial tendencies by party leaders accusing them of plotting to handpick candidates for the elections in the name of 'consensus candidates' rather than allowing candidates to emerge democratically in the party primaries. In many states, politicians from the smaller parties in the merger complained of marginalisation and demanded that their members be nominated as the APC's candidates for some of the elective offices regardless of their political weight. According to International Crisis Group (2014:11-12):

*In both PDP and APC states, tensions have been aggravated by the dearth of internal democracy. This is particularly a problem in the nineteen states where governors are completing their second, and final, four-year terms. Attempts by them to handpick their successors, instead of allowing state party members to nominate the candidate, and differences between the governors and national party leaders over the choice of the successors, have created multiple sources of friction. As most of these departing governors are also seeking election to the Senate, a 'retirement home' for former governors, their schemes to shut out all other senatorial aspirants from their constituencies are adding to local tensions. In most states, the situation is further complicated by sectional agitation that the gubernatorial ticket must be rotated between all major zones of the state, with various constituencies simultaneously claiming they had been 'marginalised over the years and insisting on their 'right to produce 'the next governor.*

However, from what transpired so far, it seems as if APC is heading the direction of PDP in the name of party supremacy. For example, few days to the inauguration of the Eighth National Assembly, APC organised a sham mock internal party election electing Ahmed Lawan and Femi Gbajabamila as their preferred candidates for the Senate President and House of Representatives Speaker, respectively. But against all odds, and defying party arrangements, Abubakar Bukola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara emerged the Senate President and House of Representatives Speaker, respectively. Worst still, in a melodramatic fashion, a minority PDP senator, Ike Ekweremadu, emerged the Deputy Senate President in a legislative leadership election in which majority of the APC senators were absent. The attempt by APC leadership and vested interest to impose leadership on the National Assembly was in contravention of Section 50(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, which provides that "there shall be (a) a President and a Deputy President of the Senate who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves, and (b) a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker of the House Representatives, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves." The crisis occasioned by this willful attempt made party supremacy to be above the Constitution of Nigeria reverberated in the selection of other legislative leadership positions in the both chambers of the National Assembly. There is strong tendency that the ruling APC may acquire the authoritarian character of PDP. This propensity arises as a result of the low relative autonomy and authoritarian character of the Nigerian state and the ruling class no matter the political party in power. This may make or mar APC in the future elections, particularly 2019 General Elections.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

PDP was not able to perform the role of widening the radius of political leadership recruitment within the party leading to defection in pre-election period. This is because political parties in Nigeria are merely platforms for political and ideological reification of the hegemony and power of the dominant class or a

system of social acculturation through which dominant ideologies; political practices and beliefs are reproduced. This state of affairs does not permit political democracy or even liberalism, rather it makes political authoritarianism mandatory. Under pressure of siege mentality, this hegemonic faction is unwilling to accept liberal restraints on power which might give any other group leverage. The implication of the above is that the Nigerian politics suffers from lack of internal democracy in the political parties and the absence of credible polls. The fact that a civilian as opposed to a soldier is superintending the affairs of Nigeria does not in itself make it democratic rule where the will of the people is sovereign (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

The spate of carpet crossing that has been witnessed in the country in the past few years has become a source of concern to political observers. Therefore, Nigerian politicians merely see political parties as platforms for contesting and winning elections and not ideological platforms where they can constitute responsible opposition. Most Nigerian politicians want to join the bandwagon or more specifically the ruling party, rather than to wait patiently to topple the ruling party through years of responsible and consistent opposition. Perhaps, the attraction of joining in the primitive accumulation of capital is too tempting for them to resist (Mbah, 2011).

This is the reason why most of the politicians defect to other political parties once they are not given the opportunity to contest under the platform of the ruling party, only to come back to the ruling party in the post-election period, win or lose. In the event of winning, in order to consolidate in power or seek re-election, while in the case of losing in order to partake in the primitive accumulation of capital. Thus, most members of other political parties are at one time members of PDP, and at other times, members of another political party, and vice versa. No wonder, the 'dividend of democracy' is yet to trickle down to the generality of people of Nigeria. Nigerians have not seen or enjoyed the 'dividends of democracy' but only suffers from its hypocrisy (Paul, Alih and Eri, 2014; Aniche, 2015). However, the grand merger that resulted in the formation of APC prior to 2015 General Elections represented the first viable opposition to PDP since inception of democracy in the Nigerian 'Fourth Republic' in 1999. The outcome of this viable opposition was the transformation of PDP to opposition political party and APC into ruling party in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria.

But PDP sowed seed of its own destruction. Many of its sins to Nigerian people include poor governance, poverty, economic hardship, insecurity, corruption, infrastructural deficit, mass unemployment, unfulfilled campaign promises, high-handedness, and lack of internal democracy, among others. There could be many other factors responsible for PDP poor performance in the 2015 polls such as the ethno-religious divide of the country that shaped the electoral behaviour and voting pattern. But by failing to ensure internal party democracy, it lost many of its high-ranking members to the opposition thereby strengthening the opposition. Thus, the crisis of internal democracy might not be a sufficient condition but it was a necessary condition for voting PDP out in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a link or connection between the absence of internal party democracy and 2015 electoral outcomes in Nigeria.

It has been demonstrated that there is every tendency that the ruling APC may acquire the authoritarian character of PDP. This propensity arises as a result of the low relative autonomy and authoritarian character of the Nigerian state and the ruling class irrespective of the political party in power. This may make or mar APC in future elections, particularly 2019 General Elections. What is to be done? The fundamental thing to do is to create a political environment necessary for evolving a political leadership

that can manage the Nigerian state in such a way that it can rise or float above inter-class and intra-class struggles for socio-economic and political competitions. By so doing, this can limit the involvement of the state in economy necessary for ensuring internal democracy in all political parties (Aniche, 2015)

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