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INTRA-PARTY CONFLICTS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: A REVIEW OF ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC)

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Abstract

Political activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic was hitherto dominated by People Democratic Party for sixteen years. The party, for four uninterrupted general elections continually won the presidency and was able to secure comfortable majority in both Houses of the National Assembly. Majority of the states were under the control of the Party while opposition parties scrambled for few seats at the parliament and they managed to win few states. The domineering posture of PDP was however truncated in 2015 by all Progressive Congress (APC); a conglomeration of four leading opposition political parties that merged in 2014 and later a faction of the then ruling party- PDP consisting of five state governors. APC from inception has had a fair share of intra-party conflict that has threatened the survival of the party. It is against this background that this paper, relying on qualitative method, sought to interrogate the causes of intra-party conflict within the fold of the APC and its attendant impacts on Nigeria's young democracy. Going by the unavoidable yet, important functions party performs in a democracy, the paper provided a number of recommendations to forestall a slip into the ugly past of political violence caused by intra-party conflict.

Keywords: Intra-party, conflict, democracy, intra-party, democracy.

Introduction

Intra-party democracy is germane for the guarantee of active participation of the politically involved citizen in the affairs of their parties. This will increase their influence and contribution to the development and survival of such parties (Wilhelm and Karsten, 2011). Political parties as a creation of the constitution provide a simplified means for the operation of modern democracy. The very essence of political parties to the effective practice and survival of representative democracy is emphasised by Rossiter (1960) in his description of parties as the

life-wire of democracy, he opined that "...There cannot be democracy without politics just as there can never be politics without parties". Modern democracy is unthinkable difficult without political parties. Schattschneider, (cited in Norris 2005) in his own view concluded that "modern democracy in mass society is unworkable without parties". This is because political parties serve as intermediary (agent) between the electorate and the state; they offer voters the opportunity of choice in the leadership recruitment process and also provide order, stability and coherence in the formation of government. Parties serve as yardstick for measuring the extent of fragility or otherwise of a democratic system while still offering the opportunity of comparison of good governance among states. (Omodia, 2010 cited in Adebayo, 2016, Ojukwu and Olaifa). Parties serves variety of purposes which include aggregation of various interests, structuring electoral choices, selection of candidates for elections, coordination of formation and activities of government and organization of legislature (Norris, 2005).

Legal framework exists in most countries which requires parties to shape their internal procedures according to democratic procedures and norms that is consistent with the constitution and laws (Wilhelm and Karsten, 2011) The capacity and ability of parties to effectively discharge their responsibilities is dependent on the regulatory environments- which is the external laws that governs the operations of parties in the country (constitution) and also by internal party rules and regulations (bye laws of parties) (Norris, 2005). Parties operations are guided by their rules and regulations which are imbedded in their constitutions. The constitution spells out the *modus operandi*, the selection process(s) for party flag bearers, intra- party regime change as well as the tenure of office of party officials among others.

Party politics in the Nigeria's fourth republic is chaotic, problematic, crises ridden and often bloody. It is politics of war, acrimony, hatred, mudslinging, anarchy, discord, division, disunity, rascality and gangsterism as against that of peace, brotherhood, cooperation, consensus, orderliness and integrity (Oyediran, 1999). The duo of Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) agree that intra- party conflicts are traceable to the failure of parties to adopt openness in their dealings which denies members to participate in the decision making and other processes within the party. The trend is further aggravated by the undue influence of party leaders who would stop at nothing to glorify their wishes above those of others. This they do through the abuse of the laid down procedures and rules of the party as contained in their various constitutions. Political intrigues, manipulation and over bearing influences of money bags in imposing their wishes on the party and lack of internal democracy in conducting party affairs are few cases that provide fertile grounds for growth and nurturing of conflicts within the party. The nature of Nigerian politics which encourages weak

institutions and strong individuals has in no small measures promoted abuse of process, disregard for rules of law in very high scale, giving room for the imposition of the 'the rule of self' as against the 'rule of law'. The Nigerian party system however shares the character traits of the Nigerian states.

Intra-party conflicts have become a component part of Nigerian politics, which has resulted in acrimony, war of attrition, problems in coordinating party affairs and internal wrangling within the party (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). It is a considered view of scholars that the collapse of the second republic is linked to internal strife occasioned by the deadly intra-party conflicts as contained in the coup speech of Major Chukwuma Kaduna Ezeogwu (especially the Action Group crises which later snowballed into a full-blown political violence that engulfed the Western Region between 1964 and 1965).

All Peoples Congress is a true replica of Nigeria's heterogeneous and cantankerous nature. A relatively very new party that emerged as a conjecture of four opposition parties with different political ideologies, programmes and manifestoes. The merger that birthed APC was hurriedly packaged in the year 2013 to provide a formidable challenge to the then ruling PDP. APC has ab initio, exhibited characteristic of a crises-infected party that was only buying time to explode. However, it is expedient to examine what has the situation been like in the internal contest of APC; what are the factors responsible for intra-party conflict in APC?; how do the factors affect democracy in Nigeria?; and what is the possible way forward?

Literature Review

Political Party

Political parties are essential component of democracy, this is because political parties provides link between the electorate and the government. Parties offer voters the opportunity of choice in the leadership recruitment process of the country; they provide order, stability and coherence in the formation of government; parties serve as yardstick for measuring the extent of fragility or otherwise of a democratic system while still offering the opportunity of comparison of good governance among states. (Omodia, 2010 cited in Adebayo (opcit), 2016, Ojukwu and Olaifa).

Johari(2002) views political party as a well organized active political agents of the society, whose primary concern is the control of government powers; this they do by competing with other groups holding divergent views for popular support. Political party is a group of organized individuals purposely for winning government power, through elections or other possible means (Heywood 2013). Further still, Johari(2002), in re-echoing the view of Curtis, states that parties are a "group of people who hold certain beliefs in common or who are prepared

to support party candidates, work together for political victory, attain and maintain power". In the view of Onobonije (1975), a political party is an organisation of people who have similar opinion, views and beliefs about certain political end for the state or country and the methods through which such end could be accomplished. Political party is a group of politically active individuals, sharing similar political views and having the main aspiration of taking control of government machinery through election.

Parties serve variety of purposes which include aggregation of various interests, structuring electoral choices, selection of candidates for elections, coordination of formation and activities of government and organization of legislature (Norris, 2005). Political parties are essential actors in representative democracies across the globe. Parties assist in articulating groups' aims, nurturing of political leadership, development and promotion of policy alternatives. Parties also present voters with coherent electoral choice and alternatives. The togetherness and cohesiveness of party men in the parliament promotes and contributes to efficient government (Scarrow, 2005). Johari (2002), in conceptualising political party, provided 3 essential ingredients of a political party:

- i. An group of persons with a common view on some important matters of public policy;
- ii. An organization of people whose major aim is to take part in the struggle for power; and
- iii. A body of person whose members struggle to ensure that policies and programmes implemented of their through a legal and democratic means.

Scarrow (2005) provided five typical models of political parties organisation to the understanding of party internal democracy. To her, the nature of the party organisation explains the extent or level of inclusiveness of party members in decision making process (s).

Models of Political Party Organisation

	Party types	Centralization of decision making	Level of inclusiveness of members	Institutionalization
1	Dominant Leader	High	Low	Mostly low
2	Party of Notables individual	Medium(often in strata and hierarchical	Low	Low to medium
3	Individual Representation	Medium to high	Medium to high	Medium to high
4	Corporatist Representation	Medium to high	Medium	Medium to high
5	Mass bases Democracy	Low to high	High	Medium to high

Democracy

Going by Harold Lasswell's definition of politics as who gets what, how and when (Laswell, 1936), the political-economic tendency of man propels him to aspire for ownership, control and retention of political power which (to him) is a harbinger of economic success. Conflicts are borne to erupt in the struggle for political power; such conflicts are best resolved through democratic means. Democracy to Lively (1975) is a mechanism through which the society maintains its equilibrium. Johari's view of democracy is in the form of government; to him a democratic government is one that is constituted based on the constitution of the land, acts according to the will of the people and is accountable to them in everything (Johari 2002). Harvey and Harvey (1974) hold the view that democracy goes beyond periodic election and 'one man one vote', to them democracy encompasses among other things, doing things according to the set rules of government, accommodation of minority views, periodic elections, freedom of speech and largely, observance of the rule of law. According to Ajayi (2003 cited in Adebayo 2016), for any state or regime to lay claim to being democratic, there must be popular participation, competitive choice, the presence and enjoyment of civil and political liberties by citizen in all climes, and accountability of the government. Okolie (2016) quoted by Okonkwo & Unaji (2016) views democracy as a way of life in a society in which individuals is believed to have equal right and liberty as regards the chances of freely participating in the values of that society.

Democracy therefore refers to a system of constitutionally based government that promotes citizens participation in governance through periodic, free and fair elections; with maximum guarantee and regards for citizen rights, liberty and rule of law.

Intra-Party Conflict

The concept of intra-party conflict is a coined phrase to connote all manifestations of tussles and wrangling within a political party. This ugly trend reflects in the form of political opposition within a political party (Okonkwo and Unaji 2016). Okoli (2001) opined that intra-party opposition is a political opposition that takes place within a political party. It is an internally generated opposition where a rebellious group within a party constitutes into a factional movement that stands opposed to the activities of the other group(s) within the party. In the words of Okonkwo & Unaji (2016) Momodu and Matudi (2013), the unpalatable trend is often triggered "when members of the same political party pursue incompatible political goals or try to influence the decision making process of the party to their advantage". This indicates that intra party conflict manifests most often when members are entangled in the pursuit of divergent aspirations and goals, most especially in fielding of members for both elective

and appointive offices (Ibrahim and Abubakar, 2016)

Intra-party conflict refers to series of disagreement, disputes and displeasure that emanate within the party from or about the conduct of party affairs. It is manifested through overt or covert confrontations between factions, which sometimes are violent in nature thereby resulting in bodily harm or injury, and or anti-party activities and subsequently a dwarfed electoral fortune for the party. It is social and political phenomenon that is manifested in "great shock, difficulty and distress created in a political party due to the inability of the party concerned to resolve and reconcile effectively its internal differences or disputes" (Eme and Anyadike, 2011: 43 cited in Ibrahim and Abubakar).

Ibrahim and Abubakar, 2016 hold the view that intra-party conflict could either be constructive or destructive in nature. It is in their view that the former is beneficial for the polity as it serves the purpose of internal checks. The nature of the Nigerian intra-party conflicts is in the manner of the former where "the dimension, multitude and impact of intra party conflict continue to be a worrisome phenomenon to the development of democracy" (Ibrahim and Abubakar, 2016). Olaniyan (2009) observed in a view similar to the above that "party politics has adorned the toga of notoriety in Nigeria to the extent that its defining characteristics have been intrigues, bickering, backbiting, schisms and violence".

On tracing further the propelling force(s) for incessant intra-party conflicts in Nigeria, Mbah provides a view as follows:

The Petit-bourgeois found out that although they have acquired political power, they were not truly in control of the economy. However, they understood that political power offered opportunities for economic power and therefore the opportunities inherent in their political power where best and perhaps the only way they had to create economic base for themselves (Mbah, 2011:9).

Okoli (2001) submitted that intra-party wrangling is caused principally by difference in personality of political actors in the party, clashed socio-economic interests, incompatibility of ideological among members of the party.

Rubin et'al. (1994) and Shale & Matlosa (2008) advanced some factors responsible for conflict within political parties to include: 1) favouritism in the form of promoting the interests of kith and kin; 2) unequal sharing of resources-conferring huge resources on the leader(s); 3) centralised authority-concentrating power at the top. Shale & Matlosa (2008) however added lack of regular meeting as part of the triggering factors for intra-party conflict in Nigeria.

Intra-party squabble is traceable to the rent- seeking nature of Nigerian politicians where politics is seen as the fastest route to economic success, rather than seeing politics as an avenue to offer selfless service to the society, it is seen as an end in itself. Self preservation being the ultimate law of nature naturally presumes that man will strife to ensure that his interest is secured

against endangerment. In view of this, personal ambition of party men is a critical factor for intra-party strife. They scheme to ensure the realization of their goals. The weakness of political structures and institutions which promotes lawlessness in high places encourages in no small measure, disregard for party's rules and regulations which in turn leads to wrangling, disputes and crises in the party. The heterogeneous nature of Nigerian society also plays a vital role in promoting intra-party opposition. Every section of the country tends to struggle vigorously for the control of state's resources through political offices. Political party which is the cradle for nurturing such ambition receives lots of pull-and-push from the various segments. Political clientelism and godfatherism make political parties oligarchical in nature and operation-this is to enable the party leaders (who most of the time provide funding for the party) have undefeatable control over the party. Those party men who are not favoured by the party oligarchs promote crises in the form of factions to challenge the structure. Lack of internal democracy in practices and operation of political parties provides a breeding ground for intra-party opposition and squabbles. The process and outcome of selection of candidates that parties present to the electorate must be reflective of democratic norms and practices (Scarrow, 2005). Norris (2004) cited in ACE (2008) has pointed out that one of the main issues in party internal democracy is the process of nominating candidates for elections, which according to him depends on 1) centralization of power (whether the state chapters are empowered to make selection), 2) the scale of participation by members is a considered factor and 3) the scope of decision making-talking about the number of candidate vying. Most legal framework recognizes party liberty to decide the most appropriate process and internal regulations. This last statement perhaps explains why parties fail to practice what they preach by thrashing internal democratic practices in carrying out their affairs in the dustbin of selfishness. This breeds a lot of conflicts within the party.

Ibrahim and Abubakar (2016) added a new dimension to the triggers of intra-party crisis. To them, another party could sponsor crises in the camp of its rival so as to brighten its chances for winning election. The Action Group conflict of 1965 was worsened by the covert involvement of NPC, by offering its support for the Akintola faction that later moved out of the party to form NNPP. So was the case of APC when Alh Buba Galadima declared himself factional chairman of APC. It was believed that Buba Galadima was sponsored by Atiku and PDP to destabilize APC during the run-up to the 2019 elections. Event later confirmed the link between PDP and Galadima as the former continued to ceaselessly tongue lash APC and Buhari.

Nigeria's Intra-Party Conflicts in Retrospect

Brute force, violence, subjugation of political subjects as well as trick, threat and tension are part of the colonial legacies bequeathed on Nigeria. Hence,

party politics is fashioned after the nature and character of Nigerian state. Intra-party conflict in Nigeria dated back to pre-colonial era. Early parties had a fair share of intra-party wrangling. As typified above, political parties in Nigeria first republic were modeled after the *dominant leader* model while the fourth republic are largely reflective of the *party of notables model* (which Robert Michels 1911 dubbed the iron law of oligarchy) of political parties organisation (Scarrow, 2005) this explains the level of participation of members in decision making process. This trend no doubt brews intra-party displeasure and conflict in no small measure as larger percentage of members are left out in the decision making processes.

In the pre-colonial era, the New Nigeria Democratic Party was torn apart by what Ibrahim and Abubakar (2016) called petty jealousy and inability to manage spoil of office. Lack of openness, and autocratic posture of the party leaders coupled with inability to resolve issues led to the formation of Lagos Youth Movement in 1933 (later Nigeria Youth Movement 1936) by displeased members of NNDP. It is to be noted that, the NYM was short-lived principally because of incessant intra party feud in the fold of the party. The ethnic colouration of the party which was promoted to the highest level greatly undermined internal democratic value of the party as it was disintegrated in 1941 by the *Ikoli-Akinsanya* crisis (Ibrahim and Abubakar (2016).

Innocent recounted (2012: 2-3) quoted in Ibrahim and Abubakar (2016) succinctly captured:

In 1941, the NYM, to its intents and purposes, shed its national character. Nnamdi Azikwe and the Ibo members of the movement together with Samuel Akinsanya and the Ijebu Yoruba left the movement. The reason being that the non-Ijebu Yoruba had supported the victorious candidacy of the Ijaw, Ernest Ikoli, to the legislative council over that of Samuel Akinsanya.

Intra-party conflict in Nigeria is as old as the Nigerian party politics itself, as it has being traced to NNDP and NYM; the trend continued to thrive in subsequent regional parties. National Council of Nigerian and Cameroun (NCNC) which later metamorphosed into National Council of Nigerian Citizen a predominantly Ibo party, Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) a party that was northern in its formation, ideology and operations. Action Group was a party that grew from Egbe Omo Odua a pan Yoruba cultural group (Olaniyan 2009). In NPC, there were continuous irreconcilable differences between its leader Sir Ahmadu Bello and Mallam Aminu Kano. The latter later moved out of the party to form the Northern Peoples Element (NEPU) (Onyishi, Abubakar and Ibrahim 2016) Action Group was engulfed by bloody and destructive intra-party conflict that later lead to a full blown violence that resulted into declaration of state of emergency in the region (Dedley 1973 cited in Abubakar and Ibrahim 2016, Puke 2010). The crisis was a case of lack of trust and confidence between the leader of the party Chief

Obafemi Awolowo and his deputy Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola. The later was expelled from the party on the 20th of May, 1962 for anti-party activities and insubordination after he and five regional ministers walked out of the party conference in Jos. He was removed as the Premier of Western Region through a vote of no confidence. Akintola went ahead to form another party, the New Nigeria Democratic Party (NNDP) which was backed by NPC. The new party won almost all elections in the region (Onyinshi, Nwosu et'al, 1998 and Puke 2010). The NCNC crises was kick started on the floor of the Western Region parliament in 1951 when some of its Yoruba members cross- carpeted to AG. They have being brain washed to dump their party to foreclose the chances of a non Yoruba man (Nnamdi Azikwe whose party had won majority seat in the parliament) from becoming the Premier of the region. Azikwe was by this incidence forced to relocate to his home (Eastern) region. His home coming created further crises in the Eastern Region's wing of the party (and later nationally) as he forcefully high-jacked the party from Chief Eyo Ita who was the leader of party in the region. He was aided by other party stalwarts of Igbo extraction as Chief Ita was a non Igbo of Efik origin (Onyishi). Apart from this incidence there were other cases of crises that rocked the NCNC. The failure of the party leaders and NCNC parliamentarians to hold a common view on whether or not the party should continue to support Macpherson constitution further tore the party apart. The crises led to the expulsion of three federal ministers from the party in 1952 while some regional ministers were also expelled from the party in 1953. The crises led to the dissolution of the Eastern House of Assembly on the 6th of 1953. The expelled ministers floated another party called National Independent Party (NIP) with Eyo Ita as the chairman. (Nwosu et'al 1998). Dr. Kingsley Mbadiwe, one of the national figures of the party broke ranks with Chief Nnamdi Azikwe. He and other disgruntled elements defected from the party and formed a new political party known as the Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (NDNC) which went into alliance with the AG for the 1959 elections (Mbah 2011).

The second republic experience is not any different from the previous situation. The reincarnated UPN in the West was plagued with personality clashes that led to the defection of some of Chief Awolowo's loyalists, such as Adisa Oladosu Akinlola, Anthony Enahoro, Richard Akinjide, and Chief Akin Omoboriowo, all defected from UPN to NPN; in the same vein, due to irreconcilable differences between the then governor of Kano State, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi and the leaders of his party whichs facitionalised the party into Mallam Aminu Kano and Pa-Michael Imoudu groups, the governor dumped his party (PRP) to join the Nigerian People Party (NPP)(Tyoden 2002 cited in Olaniyan 2016, Onyishi 2016)

Innocent (2012: 6) summarises the second republic experience as follows:

The paradox of party politics in the Second Republic is that intuitional attempt to evolve a party system which would promote stable contest between parties presumably characterized by different programmes manifested in issue oriented ideologies, which would work towards the integration of the people with the governing of the society, what emerged in practice was transactional politics based on opportunistic and informal networks of politicking replete with intra party factionalism that constantly led to shifting of alliances, a situation which unavoidably supplanted the formal structures of party organization.

The aborted third republic had a two party system under the supervision of General Ibrahim Babangida (rtd). The two parties; Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) had the same structure and objectives. There were pockets of internal crises during their primary elections at various levels across the federation. In spite of the fact that these parties were imposed and supervised by military, they were not without internal crises (Abubakar and Ibrahim, 2016). The SDP was split between late Musa Ya'radua and Babangana Kingibe who strived ceaselessly for the control of the soul of the party. The NRC was equally divided into the Tom Ikimi led Republican Action Committee and NRC Consultative Forum led by Adam Ciroma and Bamanga Tukur (Mohammed 2008 cited in Olaniyan 2016).

The Fourth Republic came with lots of expectations and high hopes due to long years of military presence in the political arena of the country. The transition was horridly packed and three regionally based parties were bequeathed to the country by General Absalam Abubakar lead junta. The transition programme which is the shortest in the history of the country was climaxed with the inauguration of a democratically elected regime of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on the 29th of May, 1999. Political gladiators seem to have learned nothing or perhaps very little from the previous precarious intra-party conflicts in the previous republics. The republic was started with three parties viz: People Democratic Party (PDP, All peoples Party (APP) and Later All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). The number of the parties grew to 16 in 2003, 25 in 2007, 61, 68 and 91 in 2011, 2015 and 2019 respectively. It is safe to say that intra-party conflict continue to increase as the number of parties increase in the fourth republic just as Muhammad (2008) captures it that the intra party conflict continue to remain a recurrent and a predominant feature of partisan politics in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. All the major political parties continued to get imbued by series of crises. The PDP for instance during the first term of Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999-2003 had three party chairmen (Solomon Lar, Barnabas Gemade and Audu Ogbe) none of them completed their tenure in office due to crises within the party.(Onyishi,2016). Almost immediately after 2003 general

election, PDP had been sharply divided into pro Atiku and Obasanjo groups. About the same time, the Anambra State chapter of the party was engulfed in a protracted crisis between the governor Dr Chris Ngige and his godfather Chris Uba who was reported to be Obasanjo's close ally. The crises resulted to the kidnapping and orchestration of forceful resignation of the governor. The party national chairman Audu Ogbe had on December 4, 2004 dispatched a letter to the president on the need for him to intervene in the crises. As fallout from the crises, the party chairman who was said to be loyal to the vice president Alh Atiku Abubakar was forced to resign in 2004. Atiku's presidential ambition under the platform of the party was consumed by the crises as he was forced to quit the party to join Action Congress to pursue his presidential ambition in 2007. Atiku later returned to the party in 2011 and played a leading role in the formation of New PDP. A splinter group of seven disaffected PDP governors (who with their loyalist) staged a walk-out of the party convention on 31st of August 2013 in Abuja. A parallel part secretariat was set with Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje as the chairman of the faction call New PDP(nPDP). Five of the PDP governors that formed the new PDP (Mr. Chibuike Amaechi (Rivers), Alhaji Ahmed Abdulfatah (Kwara), Dr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso (Kano), Alhaji Murtala Nyako (Adamawa), and Alhaji Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto)) later defected to the APC while the duo of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (Niger) and Alhaji Sule Lamido (Jigawa) declined to move along with their colleagues to the opposition party (Innocent (2012: 6) Muhammad (2008) Thisday, 27 Nov 2013).

The May 16th, 2016 convention of the party in Portharcourt brewed yet another round of protracted conflict that rocked the party for over a year. The outcome of the convention was the factionalisation of the party as the former chairman Sen. Ali Modu Sheriff was removed by a group of stalwart and Alh Ahmed Maikarfi was installed as the chairtaker chairman of the party. Ali Modu Sheriff insisted that the convention was not properly constituted. The crisis kick-started a year long fought legal battle that was settled on July 11th 2017 by the Supreme Court in favour of the Makarfi caretaker committee. (Guardian, July 12, 2017).

Hyenas and Jackals in a Cake: The Case of APC

Since the inception of the fourth republic in 1999 till 2015, the PDP which prides itself as the biggest party in Africa has consistently dominated electoral fortune in Nigeria political space. The party besides winning the presidency, has consistently maintained comfortable majority in the National Assembly while having majority of the state governors in its fold. The electoral fortune of other opposition continued to dwindle while PDP was waxing stronger, surmounting all known challenges and winning elections at all levels with much ease compared with the fragmented opposition parties (Saka & Amusan, 2018). A former PDP

chairman Prince Vincent Ogbulafor had boasted that PDP would rule the country for an interrupted 50 years.

Towards the end of 2012, an attempt was made to rally all major opposition party under a single platform to provide a formidable challenge to the PDP political dominance. Several talks were held and an agreement was reached for four main opposition parties of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and a faction of All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA) lead by Owelle Rochas Okorocha. The merger arrangements were concluded on the 6th of February, 2013, hence the merging opposition parties dissolved their structures into the new party- All Progressive Congress (APC) and the mega party was formerly registered by Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) on the 31st of July, 2013. (Saka and Amusan 2018). The rank of the new mega party received a boost when it admitted 5 governors, 49 members of the House of Representatives, and 11 senators from the ruling PDP (Guardian, July 12, 2017). The event of party switching reached a climax with the then Speaker of House of Representatives, Honourable Aminu Tambuwal and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar announcing their decamping to the mega party APC (Hassan and Lamidi 2017 cited in Saka and Amusan 2018).

The merger though a huge success, and with the admittance of the 5 aggrieved PDP governors, speaker of the House of Representatives and former vice president of the federal Republic of Nigeria and many members of National Assembly as well as other members of Houses of Assembly across the country, the stage seemed set for electoral onslaught against PDP. The mega party was housing politicians with varying backgrounds, orientations and political ideologies; but were only united with a common goal of dislodging PDP mainly at the centre.

Elizabeth Donnelly, the Deputy Head of the Africa Program at Chatham House, in her view agrees that the foundations of the All Progressive Congress (APC) did not provide it with a stable beginning.

"It does seem that this fragile, somewhat uneasy alliance is really starting to show significant stress. At the time, [the formation of the APC] was [an example of] quite astute political thinking in seeing what could be done by forming an alliance across regions and with real political heavyweights in Nigeria. However, with the different regions and different political heavyweights also come complications. So we can now see how the work of being a ruling party has taken its toll." (www.dw.com, 6th June, 2018).

Olisa Metuh former PDP Publicity Secretary described APC in the following words:

"..... The APC has shown itself to be "nothing but a party of ill-bred frustrated and intolerant politicians; bad losers for whom resorting to personal attacks,

blackmail and mudslinging, in addition to promoting violence, has become an ideology." (Premium Times, September 26th, 2014)

Almost immediately after the take-off of the fledging party, it was rocked with series of internal tussle. There were crises in almost all the state chapters of the party across the nation, especially in the states where there were no sitting governors. Political gladiators tried hard to emerge as leaders of the party in their respective states. Alh Ibrahim Shekarau former Kano State Governor announced his resignation from the party in January 2014 for reasons he cited included lack of commitment by the party hierarchy and disregard to him for handling the party structure in Kano to the state governor that decamped to the party the previous year. In his words

"We intended with the merger to form a solid foundation for entrenchment of democracy, the Legacy Group sacrificed all interests for the merger, but for the past six months all agreements reached by the merged parties had not being met No clear leaders, no registration of APC members at any levels. This shows a clear lack of commitment, transparency and accountability to all concerned," (Premium Times January 29, 2014)

Tom Ikimi who had played a very prominent role in the merger, felt he should be rewarded with the chairmanship position of the party, but political gimmicks later played him out of favour of the political gladiators. Ikimi lost to John Oyegun-Adigie; Ikimi feeling very frustrated and disappointed, angrily resigned his membership of the APC (Premium Times, August 27th, 2014). Senator Annie Okonkwo former National Vice Chairman (South) also abandoned the party on the account of lack of internal democracy (Daily Post, 25 October, 2014).

The party went into the 2015 elections and came out with very brilliant performance defeating the incumbent president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. The party also secured comfortable majority in both Houses of the National Assembly. The electoral fortune of the party ushered in a new set of intra-party conflict that plagued the party for the entire dispensation. Bukola Saraki and Yakubu Dogara had emerged as Senate President and Speaker of House of Representatives respectively against the wish of the party hierarchy. The incidence later turned to be a nightmare that haunted both the duo of Saraki and Dogara on one side and the party and the presidency on the other side. The crises culminated in the quitting of the party by both Saraki and Dokara along with their supporters in both Houses.

The most destructive and injurious intra-party conflicts in APC was that of the leadership tussle that rocked its Rivers State chapter and the primary election crises that destroy the soul of the party in Zamfara, Ogun and Imo States. The party state congress had produced factional executives in virtually all the states. While some states were able to manage their crises, Zamfara, Imo and Rivers States wrecked irredeemable damages on the party's electoral fortune in 2019.

In Zamfara State, the crises on the choice of the governorship candidate of the party tore the party into shreds that they failed to select candidates for all elective offices before the expiration of October 7th INEC deadline (Punch, January 18, 2018). The Party lost all the elective offices through the law court. Eight aspirants had indicated interest in the governorship seat; the aspirants are serving Senator Kabiru Marafa; Alhaji Abubakar Magaji; serving Deputy Governor, Ibrahim Wakkala; former governor, Alhaji Mahmud Shinkafi; Minister of Defense, Mansur Dan Ali; ^yDr. Dauda Lawal; Alhaji Sagir Haladu; Alhaji Aminu Sani Jaji and Mukhtar Shehu Idris, who is alleged to be Yari's favoured candidate (Newsdiaryonline, November 26th, 2018). A new twist in the crises was a legal party instituted by Senator Kabiru Marafa and 141 others against the party insisting that the party never conducted primary election as the state governor Alh Yari was trying to make the INEC believe (the Guardian April 15th, 2019). The Supreme however voided the acclaimed primary election in Zamfara State ordering INEC to withdraw the certificates of return from the winners of the election all of which are members of APC. Senantor Kabiru Marafa, the immediate past deputy governor of the state, Ibrahim Wakkala; and the member representing Kauran Namoda/Birnin Magaji Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Aminu Jaji were expelled from the party for playing the role of a spoiler (Punch June 3, 2019). With this damaging outcome, the soul of the party in the state seems to have being severed from its body; its survival is only what may be a herculean task.

In Imo State, the party executive was sharply divided between the state governor Owelle Rochas Okorocha who was bent on having his son-in-law, Uche Nwosu succeed him and Senator Hope Uzodima who had the backing of the Nation Executive Committee of the party to contest as governor of the state. The party governorship ticket was handed to Uzodima after a lot hourse trading; the governor was embittered and his own faction entered into an accord with another political party (Action Alliance) under whose platform the governor's godson latter ran for governorship. The party lost the governorship seat to PDP. After series of verbal attack between the party's national chairman Comrade Adams Oshiomole and the governor Rochas Okorocha, the latter was suspend for anti-party activities that resulted in party losing the governorship election (Daily Post, March 4, 2019).

The experience in River State was a replica of the Zamfara incidence. The party in River State was factionalised along Rotimi Amaechi and Magnus Abe camps. The latter was interested in the governorship ticket but the former (a former governor of the state and minister) who is the leader of the party in the state preferred Tonye Cole. Stemming from the state congress of the party, the Magnus Abe led faction had instituted a legal proceeding against the state APC (faction loyal to Amaechi and the recognized state executive). Magnus Abe

obtained a court order barring the state party executive from conducting primary elections pending the determination of the suit. The party (being aware of the INEC deadline for conduct of primary), in violation of the court order went ahead to conduct primary election that produced Tonye Cole as governorship candidate. Magus Abe's faction approached the court to challenge the legality of the election that produced Mr. Cole. The primary elections of all party candidate were declared null and void having being conducted in breach of a subsisting court order(BBC News, February 8, 2019). The party was denied the opportunity to present candidates for all elective offices in the 2019 gubernatorial election.

In all of these, the party was its own enemy and has demonstrated the most destructive and devastating intra-party clashes in the fourth republic. It is destructive that the party lost elections in its own strongholds due to unending opposition within the party. The crises were principally caused by inordinate ambition of the party leaders in hose state to institute their wishes on the party, their by sacrificing internal democracy and later plunging the party into irresolvable crises that caused it huge electoral fortune.

Impacts of APC Intra-Party Conflict on Nigeria Democracy

Intra-party clashes portend great danger for sustainability of Nigeria's nascent democracy in the fourth republic. It has grave implication of truncating the development of political parties and democratization process in the country. Qualified and politically active citizens are discouraged from participating in political processes within the parties as well as larger political processes that could enhance the sustenance of democracy. Intra-party political violence has become a recurring decimal in Nigeria; the Fourth Republic is not any better compared to the previous experiences. This trend portends huge danger for our fledgling democracy as it has the capacity of undermining the democratization process (Saka and Abubakar 2013 cited in Ibrahim and Abubakar , 2016).

Going by the inputs of Scarrow (2005) on the essentials of parties in democracy; according to her, parties present voters with coherent electoral choice and alternatives. The togetherness and cohesiveness of party men in the parliament promotes and contribute to efficient government (Scarrow, 2005), the crises ridden ruling party the APC, is far from fulfilling the above functions.

The grave effect of the party crises in Zamfara State has a damaging impact of the constitutional right of the people to universal suffrage as contained in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The people's right to making their electoral choice was sacrificed on the altar of personal ego of the people that are supposed to protect the very right. Zamfara people are currently being governed by PDP, a party they never voted in the elections; they are being represented by people they never gave their mandate. The implication of this that Zamafra people now suffering under the yoke of judicial democracy that

was facilitated by internal strife in APC may not have any hope for good governance and accountability from the present political leadership as they were voted out in the poll because they never had faith in their ability to lead well. Similar to the above is the issue of River APC that was forbidden by the court from presenting candidates for all the elections in the state. The competitiveness aspect of democracy was by the court ruling removed in the River elections. Election is supposed to be an opportunity for electorate to either reaffirm their support for a regime or fire such regime if not satisfied with its performance (Ibrahim and Abubakar , 2016). The River State election was an undeserved reward that PDP got from the court through the ego of the unyielding gladiators in the party.

The Zamfara and Rivers States APC debacle has introduced a new but dangerous political phenomenon in our democratic experience. It means a weak candidate who could be rejected by the electorate at the polls can have himself imposed on the people by a judicial process. All he needs to do is to sponsor agents to promote crises in the camp of the strongest opponent (party) during primary election; then approach the court to be rewarded with a mandate he already lost at the poll. Such trend portends great danger to the due consolidation of our fledgling democracy.

The second argument of Scarrow (2005) about the essence of party is that party brings about efficiency in government and promotes parliamentary cohesion and inter-government harmony. The Nigeria's experience under the APC led federal government between 2015 and 2019 is a betrayal of that notion as the the country witnessed the highest level of legislative – executive disharmony in the history of the Fourth republic. The mutual suspicion between the leadership of National Assembly under the watch of Saraki and Dogora (who both emerged against the wish of the party) on one hand and the presidency on the other hand was so destructive to effective running of government to the extent that President Buhari had to label the duo as unpatriotic Nigerians for causing unnecessary delay for the passage of budgets (Pmnews online(May 28, 2019).The crisis polarized the National Assembly circus into two sharp factions. The unending battle between Saraki and APC was further aggravated by the alliance he had with PDP moment before he emerged Senate President; the alliance saw a PDP member, emerging as the deputy senate president in an APC dominated senate. The refusal of Saraki to accept the choice of the party for the position of Senate Leader. The party had forwarded the name of Senator Ahmed Lawan (who was the party's choice for the position of senate President) as Senate Leader, but Saraki declined and appointed Senator Alli Ndume.

Protracted intra-party crises in APC has resulted in mass exodus of the dissatisfied members party of the party. Just as it is the norm in the country for disgruntled politician to change party at wish especially if their political aspiration

cannot be sustained in the party. The APC experience that saw the leadership of the National Assembly defecting to PDP, the main opposition party put the fore the disharmony that existed within the party and the two arms of government. The trend advertised the very bad political culture of lack of political ideology of Nigerian politicians. The trend has a dangerous implication on consolidating Nigeria's democracy.

Apart from the above inherent implications intra APC conflict has on Nigeria democracy, conflict within the party (being a ruling party at the national level) has the tendencies of destabilizing governance process thereby halting growth and development; as well as promoting violence and chaos. The combination of these has a negative effect on parties' growth and democratic consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The intra party conflict in Edo State that has resulted into the inability of the House of Assembly to be duly inaugurated has slowed down the process of governance and promoted chaos and violence in the state. The crisis was precipitated by the selective invitation of members- elect for inauguration on 17th of June, 2019 on the order of the state governor Mr. Gaius Obaseki. Twelve members- elect (loyal to the former governor of the state and now the APC national chairman, Mr. Adams Oshiomole) were excluded from the inauguration (Vanguard July 19, 2019).

Protracted conflicts within a party weakens the party's ability for mass mobilization, coherent aggregation of opinions and performing the needed role as an opposition; as well as offering itself as a credible alternative to the government in power thereby offering the electorate the privilege of choice during elections. Above roles of political party as well as credible indicators of representative democracy are elusive in a crises ridden party and democracy. APC's loss of Imo and Oyo States governorship elections to PDP is traceable to unresolved crises in the party. While regime change is a permissible index in democracy, the trend sometimes may slow down consolidation of democratic gains. It is a culture in Nigeria that regimes don't continue with programmes and policies of their predecessor more so if they belong to different parties. Hence, the need for continuity and consolidation of party programmes. Lagos state provides us a model of single party being in charge for a relatively long period of time.

Conclusion: Way Forward

The study examined the nature of intra-party conflict in Nigeria's Fourth republic with a focus on APC. The phenomenon reflects the nature of Nigerian politics as it manifested in the parties of the colonial era and those in subsequent republics. It has been observed that several factors promote conflict within the fold of political parties; they include the nature of Nigeria political culture of rent-

seeking, weak political and institutional structures, political clientelism and godfatherism, heterogeneity of Nigeria and lack of intra-party democracy. It has also been established that crises can be triggered through the sponsored machination of opponents within political parties.

Taking a clue from previous experiences from First and Second Republics, the danger of unmitigated intra-party strife to the survival of Nigerian democracy has been established. None the less parties are essential condiments of representative democracy, as such; it must be insulated from deadly plagues that could limit its optimum performance. In light of the above, it is recommended that the following measure should be taken:

1. The APC must embrace the principle of intra-party democracy in the conduct of its party affairs. Processes and outcome of selection of candidate for elective as well as appointive offices must reflect democratic norms. Every member of the party must be accorded the right to participate in the affairs of the party.
2. The party leaders must be subjected to the constitution of the party and all the activities of the party must fall within the prism of the rules and regulation of the party. While the political and institutional structure should be strengthened such that no individual will be powerful enough to undermine the rule of law both within and outside the party.
3. Decision making process should be decentralized. Concentration of power in the National Executive Committee of the party no doubt will breed further autocracy which resultant effect will be crises that if unresolved could pose great danger to Nigeria's democratic consolidation process.
4. Party men and women should embrace patriotism rather than holding onto ethnic or religious cleavages in approaching party issues.
5. Party leaders should eschew the habit of imposing their wishes in terms of candidates selection on the rest of the party members.

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