Factions, Prevalent Intra-party Conflict, and Democracy: Implication for Peace and Political Stability in Nigeria

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Abstract

Intra-party conflicts because of factions' interest have become an integral part of Nigeria's political and party history. However, in contemporary times, they have become more prevalent and even assumed dangerous dimensions, with destructive consequences for democratic sustenance and consolidation. With Time-Series research Analysis (TSA), and secondary data from the literature, this paper explores the challenges of factions' struggle within political parties, and how they trigger intra-party conflicts in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. With special attention on the two dominant political parties in the country, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC), this study proceeds from the proposition that intra-party conflicts are not given, but have been nurtured by certain structural factors that have defined the narratives, shapes, and contours of politics in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper argues that the struggle for dominance and power to control the party decision-making processes, the imposition of candidates, and the subversion of internal democracy are among the major causes of conflicts in the two major political parties. It concludes that, for political parties to remain relevant as an agent of democratic sustenance, they need to establish internal mechanisms, with conflict-carrying capacity which would enable them to manage intra-party conflicts constructively. Furthermore, a

culture of political tolerance and dialogue should be an integral part of the parties' system on various issues of interest to individuals and factions, both in pre-election and post-election periods, which promises negotiation wherever misconceptions prevail.

Keywords: Factions, conflict, intra-party conflict, democracy, political party

Introduction

Political parties are a kind of organization made up of factions, individuals, and groups of individuals with differing opinions, values, and interests. Their sole purpose of coming together is to form a platform for recruiting personnel for elective positions and controlling the decision-making processes of the state. Political parties play a significant role and serves as the bedrock of politics and governance in every democratic society. In contemporary times, it is difficult to think of democratic sustenance without political parties. There is a growing consensus among scholars about the strong bond which exists among political parties and the practicality of democratic sustenance and consolidation (Maiyo, 2008; Jinadu, 2011; Babatope, 2012). For democracy to survive, political parties need to recruit members and select among them the best candidates for elective positions. In doing this, they engender consensus building within their folds and contribute to the stability of the entire system (Simbine 2015:5).

Conflict often arises from mutually exclusive views, thoughts, and interests as the groups and individuals struggle to have a better chance within the party in the selection of party representatives. Beyond being conveniently tagged, albeit theoretically, as the media for aggregating interests and opinions within a polity (Omotola 2010:125), political parties' personalities in a liberal democracy are constantly shaped and reshaped by ever-recurring conflicts among the different actors within their folds (Adeniyi, 2019).

While intra-party conflicts, across the globe, may emanate in different forms and sizes, the most debilitating conflicts, not only to democracy itself but also to society as a whole, are those arising over the selection of party leaders and candidates. Ideally, political parties are expected to put in place adequate institutional frameworks for mediating conflicts that may occasionally arise among their members (Scarrow 2005, cited in Adeniyi, 2019). This is the case in advanced democracies where rules have been internalized, entrenched, and institutionalized for regulating power contestations within political parties. But in a nascent democracy, like Nigeria, as in most illiberal democracies, the opposite seems to be applicable (Basiru 2015:83). Since the country returned to civil rule in 1999, after many decades of military rule, the records of political parties in the area of internal conflict management have not been disappointing (see Olaniyan 2009; Ojukwu and Olaifa, 2011;

Accord, 2019). Although the problem is not new in Nigeria's political development, its prevalence in recent times is alarming and calls for serious attention. This is evident from the hostilities and outcry that characterized the last conducted party primary elections in the two dominant parties before the 2019 general elections (Daka and Abuh, 2018).

All over the globe, factions exist and many political parties are indeed factionalized. The actions and activities of factions manifest indirectly, because of their impact on party plan of action, and directly, through their influence on the whole party structure whenever they refuse to follow party directives or rebel against the wish of the party. Also, members of the party are not all of the same status. Socially, economically and politically, they have different views and opinions, and preferences on how the party's master plan can be executed. As none of the factions is capable of gaining total dominance over the party, members that share similar views can merge to impose their influence on the party's internal decision-making process.

In each faction inside the party, some members come together to create rival subgroups to boost their stakes. Based on this situation, intra-party politics is characterized by a twofold process. Firstly, these subgroups have faced the incentive to compete against each other against political offices, and implementation of policies, seen as the private good. Secondly, they need to collaborate to preserve party unity, which is the public good that allows them to win election to form the government. Each period the faction's return is unsatisfactory, the subgroup faces the temptation to leave the party, or align with other groups or compete on its own to produce the good. Furthermore, any time a faction seems to be a liability or engages in activities that are detrimental to the party's chances, it will be expelled or suspended. Thus, a political party is a platform where people with related but non-identical inclinations congregate and bargain to reach an internal compromise.

Although political parties are presumed to be an organization of individuals that profess similar political ideology, they are by no means homogenous with a unitary will. Rather, a political party consists of members with non-identical preferences. These political actors have permanent vested interest which each strives to achieve through the party mechanism at the expense of other members with similar ambitions. Stakeholders and political actors adopt strategies to safeguard their interests which ordinarily are a daunting task for each to obtain outside the party.

Based on this individual interest, intra-party politics is characterized by conflict and consensus between interdependent groups within the party. Hence people with the most comparable views often cluster together based on the exchange of political resources to

form factions or caucuses to shape the party tactics in order to maximize their share of benefits. The cluster of factions makes politics, in general, to be seen as a process predicated on the conflictive and consensus-oriented relations among interdependent individuals (Maor,1997:147; Dike 2003; Ishaka, Zainab and Humphrey, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been characterized by incessant intra-party conflicts resulting in factionalisation in the two dominant political parties at the three levels of government. Instead of bequeathing an enduring political culture of tolerance, progress, and development on the nation, political parties are increasingly involved in undemocratic practices and violence. Consequently, politics has become a do-or-die affair, with a zero-sum game of winner takes all. This situation is worsened by the growing philosophy of impunity and brazen contempt for the rule of law displayed by the political class, who acquire power and wealth through elections that are visibly marred by fraudulent acts, ballot snatching, killings, and other forms of electoral irregularities. As a result, there is much scheming for a position even against the wish of the electorate and the party laws, leading to the proliferation of factions and subgroups to capture the state power. With time-series research design and analysis (TSA), and secondary method of data collection, this paper examines the challenges of factions and their effects on intra-party conflict, as it is being experienced in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, with special attention on People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC), and how these developments affect democratic consolidation and sustenance in the country. Although there has been significant literature on internal democracy and intra-party conflict in Nigeria, the aspect of factions and their destabilizing effects has received scant attention. The significance of this paper is in deepening the discourse in this area.

Conceptual Framework

Factions

A faction, according to *COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary*, is an organized group of people within a larger group which opposes some of the ideas of the larger group and fights its ideas. Also, *Webster New World College Dictionary* 4th edition defines a faction as a group of people inside a political party, club, government, and many others working in a common course against the main body. For Zariski (1960), cited in Patrick and Mahias (2005), a faction is tantamount to "any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members have shared sense of distinctiveness and purpose, and are organized to act mutually – as a divergent bloc within the party – to achieve their goals". Zarisk's definition reveals that, though factions exist within a party, what is paramount to the individuals is their interest which they project as a collective interest of members of the party.

Zuckerman (1975), cited in Nicola, José, and Dan (2011), defines a political party faction as a structured cluster inside a political party that seeks, at a minimum, to control authoritative management positions of the party. A party faction is a "structured group", in that there are well-known patterns of behaviour and collaboration for the faction members over time. Thus, it is proper to differentiate party factions from groups that coalesce around a specific or temporarily limited issue and then dissolve (Zuckerman, 1975: 20).

In a broader perspective, Beller and Belloni (1978: 419) define a faction as "any relatively organized subgroup that exists within the context of some other group and which (as a *political* faction) competes with rivals for power advantages within the larger group of which it is a part". Like most concepts in social sciences, there is no precise and widely accepted definition for faction among scholars, but one expression that frequently appears in all the definitions is " group consciousness". Thus, party faction is an intra-party conscious group with the intent to project and maximize their interest above the general objectives of the party. A faction may be a dominant or minority group based on ideology, group identity, policy support, and individual benefits.

The emphasis of this paper is on faction based on individual benefits because political parties in Nigeria, unlike those in advanced democracies, have no clearly defined ideology. Factions in any political party have three main objectives: (1) vote-seeking, (2) office-seeking , and (3) policy-seeking. Regarding vote-seeking, the effort and goal of the faction or subgroup within a political party is to use the party as a means to get legitimate political power and assume office as a duly-elected and constituted government. This enables the office-seeking faction to control government portfolios or ministries, and regulate positions and other office benefits. The more the votes a faction gets within the areas of their stronghold, the higher its bargaining power is when forming government and allocating appointments.

Intra-party conflict involves a condition of divergence among the associates of a political party. This situation often occurs among members of the same party because they engage in the pursuit of divergent incompatible political objectives to the detriment of others with similar goals (Momodu and Matudi, 2013). This implies that intra-party conflict often occurs when members are entwined in the quest of opposing goals most especially in the selection of candidates for both elective and appointive positions. It is, therefore, a situation of "great challenge, shock, difficulty, and distress arising from the inability of the individuals or political parties concerned to negotiate, resolve and reconcile effectively their internal differences or disputes" (Eme and Anyadike, 2011).

As a social phenomenon, intra-party conflict is not an unexpected occurrence, because conflict is unavoidable in every human society. However, intra-party conflict has both functional and dysfunctional consequences, depending on how the management of the party perceives the conflict and how they respond to it. According to Momodu and Mature (2013: 3), "a functional conflict encourages understanding, and inclusive growth, creativity, development, and symbiotic relationship between individuals and groups. It also repairs damaged relationship both at individual and groups level. On the other hand, "dysfunctional or destructive conflicts disrupt growth; hamper development and causes disharmony, mistrust, sentiments, and hatred between individuals, and groups. It also bridges the communication gap and stirs up strife which makes reconciliation difficult.

Thus, intra-party conflict can be constructive and destructive. In the sense of the former, it is healthy for the political system, while, in the sense of the latter, it becomes a worrisome phenomenon.

Democracy and Democratic Consolidation

The concept of "democracy" is fiercely contested among scholars of political science. There is no consensus definition of the nature and contours of the term. However, generally, democracy implies a kind of political system and government in which the people hold the supreme power based on the concept of popular sovereignty (Olowu, 1995; Olaitan, 1992; Oluokun, 2000; Akintilebo, 2011).

According to Oyovbaire (1987), democracy is a system of government that seeks to achieve a generally accepted common good through collective initiation and discussion of policy questions concerning public affairs and which delegates authority to agents to implement the broad decision made by the people through a majority vote. In the opinion of Jakob and Siermann (1996), democracy could be examined from two basic perspectives: firstly from the individual or citizen perspective; and, secondly, from that of the political institutions through which the values of democracy are realized in a specific sociopolitical context, where decisions are collectively arrive at through direct or indirect preferences of all the citizens of the polity.

According to Huntington (1996), democratic consolidation depends on how strong, stable, and viable the democratic institutions in a political system perform their functions in terms of effective and responsive government, transparency, and accountability to the citizens. In other words, democratic consolidation is considered advancement over the very basics of democracy (Huntington, 1991). To attain such a significant form of consolidation, a proper democratization process that aggregates interests in the political terrain and seeks

to mobilize and rally support in the public space must be entrenched in the political system. A maximalist conception of democratic consolidation is provided by Linz and Stepan (1996). According to them, "consolidation occurs in a democracy when a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan, 1996:15). They then identify state, completion of democratic transition, and the ability of political leaders to govern democratically as three very significant factors necessary for any meaningful discussion on democratic consolidation in any political system. These three vital aspects are well-defined when foundational goals of democracy are realized behaviourally, attitudinally, and constitutionally for the sustainability of its five arenas, namely political society, economic society, civil society, state apparatus, and the rule of law. On the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions, the factions must learn how to bargain, negotiate, and resolve their differences in a win-win outcome without violence.

Factions and Intra-party Conflict: A Study of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), 1999-2015

What is known as People's Democratic Party (PDP) today is a conglomeration of groups of individuals and organizations that came together to float a political party. The party was established in August 1998 by the adherents of several groups and organizations, such as G-18, which was dominated by the members of the defunct National Party of Nigeria (NPN), led by the former Second Republic Vice President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme; G-34, comprising some bureaucrats and politicians, some retired generals,; and Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM), a political platform of late retired Gen. Shehu Yar'Adua. The party, which has a wide political base, was made up of factions whose common goal was to end military rule and restore democracy to Nigeria. However, there was struggle among the factions within the party on which faction will produce the candidate to represent the party in the presidential election.

The faction of the retired generals who were also the major financiers of the party in its formative years succeeded in imposing General Obasanjo, who had just been released from detention for a phantom coup plot, as the presidential flagbearer through their party primary election held in Jos. Gen. Obasanjo contested the general election against Olu Falae, the presidential candidate of All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), and eventually won the presidential election and was sworn into office on 29th May 1999. In sharing the public good to the members of the factions that made up the party, Alhaji Atiku, who represented the PDM faction, was selected as the vice president. Alex Ekwueme, who contested at the presidential primaries but lost to Obasanjo, became the board chairman of the party, while Chief Solomon Lar became the founding national chairman of the party. Jerry Gana, who was from the G-34 faction, was made the national secretary. Late Chuba

Okadigbo, from the old NPN block and a staunch member of PDM, was meant to be the Senate President; however, he was schemed out, while Evans Enwerem emerged from the Obasanjo's faction, which worked assiduously to be in control of the legislature.

Although the party had wide-range membership from all areas of life, such as traditional chiefs, academics, and businessmen, two factions dominated the affairs of the party: the ex-military factions and PDM. This was possible because Obasanjo had no political platform before he became the President. Despite the sharing formula, it was not long after the assumption of office that the internal disorder as a result of struggle among the factions for domination and how to share position began to manifest and its effect was felt in the unity of the party.

As a result of the internal struggle among factions within the party, Olusegun Obasanjo referred to PDP as "a dynamic amalgam of interest groups held together by, if anything at all, the fact that the party is in power and therefore the strong expectation of patronage" (Cited in Anifowoshe 2004: 65). Similarly, Bamanga Tukur, a former National Chairman of PDP described his party as an amalgam of diverse groups united only by one purpose – to grab power, but not yet fused into a functional political party for development (Anifowoshe 2013). These declarations by Obasanjo and Bamanga Tukur, who had occupied various political positions through the party platform, capture the level of national disorder in Nigeria and partly explain why political parties in recent times have experienced intense conflict among their followers and have completely failed to fulfil their obligation as institutions for democratic sustenance.

The fact that PDP is an amalgamation of subgroups corroborates the assertion of Aleyomi (2014), that Nigeria's modern political parties exhibit three fundamental characters. First, they are centralized and depend more on personalities rather than on institutional structures. Second, many of the party leaders work for self-aggrandizement as well as ethnic and regional interest, rather than national interest. Third, parties are usually form only for election purposes to capture state power to form a government for personal gains.

A critical look at the events that characterized PDP in the first four years of its rulership in Nigeria as a party suggests that, most often, it is the quest for personal gain that manifests in intra-party conflict between members as an individual and among factions as a subgroup in the party. This results in the break-up of political parties and defections across parties. The PDP has experienced an untold high turnover of its executive leaders since its formation. During the first reign of the party at the federal level, it had more than three National Chairmen, namely: Chief Solomon Lar, the pioneer chairman, Chief Barnabas

Gemade, and Chief Audu Ogbe. The same was the case with key officers, like the national secretary. The states and local governments had their due share of unusually high turnover. This trend was reproduced in the other two major parties – Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All Peoples Party (APP). In the second tenure (2003-2007), there was a higher rate of turnover, as the souls of all the parties were virtually in the pockets of the political chief executives, depending on the level of government in the federal structure at which a party holds political sway – for the PDP it was at the federal, state, and local levels.

Right from the inception of the present republic, political leaders in the country have not hesitated about defection from one political party to the other, depending on their perceptions of what they may gain in terms of allocation of political appointments. For instance, the First Senate President in the Fourth Republic, Senator Evans Enwerem, contested for the governorship position under the platform of APP in Imo State (Mbah, 2011:6). He lost in the party's primary election; he defected with his faction to the PDP before the general election, upon offer of a senatorial ticket by the party leadership. He won the senatorial election to the Senate and was also assisted by Chief Obasanjo's faction to become the Senate President. There were series of defection. For instance, in Plateau State, Alhaji Alhassan Shaibu, for a relatively flimsy excuse, defected to PDP from the All Peoples' Party (APP) in 1999. As compensation, the President appointed him a member, Northern Nigeria Development Company (NNDC).

In Cross River State many eminent APP and AD members defected to the PDP with their followers as a result of the struggle to handle the party machinery. Also Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the vice president under the Obasanjo administration, was among the eminent members of PDP that defected to other parties. He was among the founding members of the party and played an active role in late Musa Yar'Adua's PDM. He defected to the Action Congress, which became the new name of Alliance for Democracy (AD), after a serious disagreement with his boss. He contested as the presidential candidate of the Action Congress in the 2007 general elections, returned to the PDP in 2011 (Mbah 2011), and again moved to the PDP; he later joined forces with some aggrieved members of PDP in the formation of the New PDP and subsequently joined the emergent organizational colossus now known as the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Intra-party crisis, real and imagined, leads to series of defections involving governors of diverse party affiliations. For instance, the Governor of Bauchi State, Alhaji Isa Yuguda, was a PDP member until 29th May 2015. In 2007, as soon as he failed to win the party gubernatorial ticket, he defected to the then All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP). After the election, which he won under the ticket of ANPP, he moved back to PDP. Also, the former

Governor of Imo State, Mr. Ikedi Ohakim, was formerly a staunch member of PDP. He defected to Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA), and won the election under its platform, later he reverted to PDP. The same was the case with Governor Theodore Orji of Abia State. He moved from PDP to PPA. The Governor of Ondo State, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko won his governorship election on the platform of the Labour Party (LP), but later moved to the PDP. In the North, Aliyu Shinkafi of Zamfara State (ANPP) and Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State (ANPP) defected to PDP (Mbah, 2011:7).

The Nigeria National Assembly was not exempted from the defection saga, as more than 14 senators and 35 members of the House of Representatives defected from one party to the other between 1999 and 2013. At the mini-convention held at Eagle Square in Abuja by PDP in 2013, a faction of the party led by seven state governors: namely Kano, Kwara, Rivers, Sokoto, Adamawa, Niger, and Jigawa, protested and walked out of the venue. They moved to the Yar'Adua Centre, where they held a media conference and declared their intention to organize a new political party referred to as the New PDP (n-PDP). The splinter group from PDP later, after many months of initial struggle, and court order between it and the parent body, on the one hand, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), on the other hand, formalized a merger with the now ruling party – All Progressives Congress (APC). The party eventually won the presidential election in March 2015 and a reasonable majority of governorship seats. Since the inauguration of APC at the centre as the ruling party, the pattern of defection has reversed in its favour. So the activities of factions and subgroups within a political in Nigeria contribute a lot to instability.

All Progressive Congress (APC), 2015-2019

The APC, since its emergence as the ruling party, has been faced many intra-party conflicts. Most of the conflicts have assumed a crisis because of poor management. The party was formed in 2013 by the conglomerate of splinter groups, such as the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressives Change (CPC), and a faction of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) (Mazen 2013:1). Shortly after its formal registration by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and its convention, about three of its founding leaders, namely Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, Chief Tom Ikimi, and Chief Annie Okonkwo, left the party, based on the allegation of being marginalized (*Daily Post, Thursday*, August 4 2014:1; *Premium Times*, Friday, August 5, 2014:22).

Chief Tomi Ikimi, who participated actively in the merger talks and signing of a pact between competing factions, resigned his membership of the party on 26 August 2014,

after he had alleged that the National Leader of the party, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, and his faction imposed what he termed as "strange leadership" on the party (Owete 2014:1). It was alleged that Ikimi's resignation was not unconnected to the outcome of the leadership crisis that characterized the national convention of the party held in Abuja on 13 June 2014, in which he was schemed out of the chairmanship of the party, which Tinubu's faction won. This shows how desperate Nigerian politicians and their faction are when they lose out in power game.

The APC has its fair share of faction-induced internal conflict. In the build-up to the 2019 general elections, 15 senators, 37 representatives, and three state governors left the APC and joined other political parties. However, the majority of those that left APC joined PDP. Factions within political parties as the election comes closer try to have an edge over one another. For instance, in one of Ikimi's letters to Chief John Oyegun, the then chairman of the party, dated 27 August 2014, he openly accused Tinubu of hijacking the party for self-aggrandizement. An excerpt from the letter reads:

> This reckless and arrogant self-aggrandizement paved the way for the imposition of a strange leadership on the APC in July 2013 when the party obtained registration from INEC [Independent National Electoral Commission]. Those of us who had worked so hard towards the successful merger and creation of the APC were manipulated out of the scheme of things. In the bizarre struggle to seize control of the party, we were even openly accused by the self-proclaimed owners of the party, of wanting to steal 'their' party (quoted in Owete 2014:6).

As always the case, Ikimi defected to another party with his teeming population of followers, which nearly weakened APC. Also, other founding members of APC, such as Modu Sherrif, defected to PDP for the same claim of marginalization. Castigating the APC, after defecting to the PDP, Alhaji Modu Sherrif, another founding leader who played a major role during the merger exercise, asserted thus:

> I have taken time to study the package called APC and come to realize that it won't work. And any serious politician who knows his onions would not want to be in a ship that is bound to crash' (cited in Adebajo, 2018:4).

Immediately after taking over of government from PDP, there was an internal crisis in APC as a result of infighting among factions to dominate the affairs of the party, mostly in terms of appointment into sensitive offices both in the party and within the government.

First, the issue of which faction produces the Senate President came to the fore. The faction of the n-PDP that joined APC towards the 2015 elections connived with the PDP members in the parliament to elect Dr. Saraki as the Senate President against the wish of the party that has allocated the position to Tinubu's faction. This action put the party in the crisis that characterized its first four years of leadership at the federal level. This manifested in the conduct of some of the acrimonious party primaries and congresses held across many states, such as Kogi, Bayelsa, Anambra, Edo, and Ondo States. Except in Anambra and Bayelsa States, in which the exercises, to a reasonable extent, were well managed by the national and state leaderships of the party, others were so serious that they created schisms at the national level. Even though the party seems to have succeeded in managing the threat to its existence, and won the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections, and assumed the position of the dominant party in Nigeria's political terrain, intra-party crises have remained pervasive. The 2016 and 2020 gubernatorial primaries in Ondo and Edo States, respectively offer an illustration here.

Besides generating a 'war-like' atmosphere among the contestants, the situation made leadership of the party to be at each other's throats. There was an allegation against the then party's chairman, Chief Odigie Oyegun, by the National Leader of the party, Bola Tinubu. The latter accused the former of manipulating the party's guidelines to favour Akeredolu, one of the candidates, to emerge as the party's flagbearer in the November 2016 poll (Azikem 2016:1). In a release through his media office, Tinubu accused Chief Oyegun of sabotaging the will of democracy in Ondo State. In his words:

> [A]s a party chairman, Oyegun was supposed to protect our internal processes and be an impartial arbiter, a person in whom all had confidence. Instead, he donned the garment of a confident man, duping the NWC (National Working Committee), the party, and INEC in one fell blow. He has robbed APC members in Ondo State of the chance to pick in a fair manner who they believe is the best candidate (quoted in Azikem 2016:6).

The interest of Bola Tinubu and that of Buhari factions clashed on the choice of the gubernatorial candidate of the Ondo State. While Rotimi Akeredolu was the preferred candidate of the Abuja bloc, Olusegun Abraham was backed by the Bola Tinubu faction. The National Chairman refused to do the bidding of Tinubu's faction. Essentially, what always plays out in all these conflicts is the interest and payoff that each faction tends to maximize to consolidate its position and increase its negotiation power within the party.

The struggle among the factions within the party resulted in rancorous congresses across the country, as predicted by political analysts. Although the incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari, emerged as the candidate of his party at the National Convention of the party in a free and fair atmosphere, the same remark might not be made about other primaries to elect other representatives of the party at other levels, such as governors, National Assembly and Houses of Assembly, were crisis-ridden (Neme 2018:3; Ebiri 2018:8; Akeregha 2018:3). The situation further factionalized the party. In almost all the states of the federation, the APC primary elections and congresses experienced one form of crisis or another, which mostly occurred between the governors and other members with vested political interest. Also, the newly elected chairman of the party and former Edo State Governor, Comrade Adams Oshiomole, got entangled in the web of crisis that afflicted the APC (Abuh 2018:12).

The latent intra-party conflict between the new chairman and some governors came to the limelight when three governors, Abdel Aziz Yari, Rochas Okorocha, and Ibikunle Amosun of Zamfara, Imo, and the Ogun States, respectively, alleged that the National Chairman was behind the crises in their states. The Governors of Imo and Ogun States were clinically contemptuous in their attacks on the party chairman. The Governor of Imo State claimed that the fortunes of the party, not only in Imo State but also in the South-east, had suffered a setback under the Oshiomole leadership. The Governor of Ogun State specifically accused the chairman for visiting injustice on Ogun State by not allowing the wishes of the people to stand (Fabiyi et al., 2018:8).

In response to these criticisms, the chairman informed the public "that the reasons for the series of attacks on him were because of the failure of the governors concerned to impose an undemocratic process on the party" (Ebegbulam 2018:1). Oshiomole, as regards Governor Okorocha, stated thus: "…what I am not able to do for Governor Okorocha is to assist him with the instrument of APC to help him to build a political dynasty" (Alechenu and Akinkuotu, 2018:8). What could be gleaned from the foregoing narratives is that the ruling APC, like the PDP, was also in the web of pervasive factionalisation and intra-party conflicts.

The undemocratic tendencies manifesting in Nigeria's political system are partly because of the undeveloped and factionalized party system (Omotola, 2009). Thus, among the threats to the democratic consolidation process in Nigeria today is lack of appropriate management, and resolution of intra-party conflicts which result in a regular outburst of violence with direct consequences on national cohesion and political stability in the country (Babatope, 2012; Tyoden, 2013; Abbas, 2013).

Implications of the Recurrent Factions and Intra-party Conflict

Recurrent intra-party conflicts, as shown in the previous sections, could have wide-ranging implications for the peace and political stability of a society, especially a fledgling democracy in a fragile state such as Nigeria that is still trying to consolidate democratic governance. Intra-party conflicts are not only a threat to the party concerned but also to the entire political system because they can instigate instability. Functionally, political parties act as a stabilizing factor in a political system. In performing their traditional responsibilities of internal conflict management, they could serve as a source of political stability in society. However, political parties that are unable to manage disagreements within the frameworks of extant rules are not likely to be able to perform functions that could enhance the stability of the polity (Omotola 2010:130). Seen this way, therefore, intra-party squabbles and "wars", as are characteristic of the post-1999 Nigerian politics (Omoruyi 2002:8), have not only institutionalized indiscipline and political vagrancy (Basiru 2015: 92) but have, as the narrative of the APC's crisis has shown, created an environment for political instability both within and outside parties (Adeyemi, 2019). In their insightful study on the internal working of the PDP before the 2003 general elections, Amadasu and Amadasu (2003:120) implicate the party as an organization riddled with internal schisms, brigandage, and subterfuge. These pathologies, according to them, do not only weaken the party but also do not allow for cooperative effort or support needed by the party to develop the economy. This has become a common scenario even in the present ruling party APC since 2015. Even the minor political parties are not insulated from intra-party conflict (Ugbede 2019a; 2019b).

Beyond impeding societal peace and democratic stability, intractable intra-party conflicts, if not nipped in the bud, could also play out at the horizontal level of intra-governmental relations. Specifically, such conflicts could create unhealthy executive-legislative relations, especially in the spheres of public budgets and appointment ratifications (Aiyede and Isumonah 2002; Aiyede 2005), as was the case in the 8th national Assembly from 2015-2019, with Senator Saraki and Dogara as Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively. Theoretically, the executive and the legislative arms of government are meant to be autonomous, but the realities and complexities of modern societies have made their co-operation imperative (Basiru, 2014:80). Although conflicts between the two arms are sometimes inevitable, this could be better managed where there is a culture of party discipline and cohesion. Where such is lacking and intra-party conflicts have become so pervasive, executive-legislative gridlocks, when they do occur, are often akin to brinkmanship, if not warfare. As a matter of fact, since the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999, there have been many documented instances in which legislators and governors in the same parties, did not only frustrate governance but also attempted to

destabilize the social system. The 2020 intra-party crisis in Edo State's APC offers an illustration here. While it lasted, it did not only polarise the party into Adams Oshomole and Obaseki camps, but it also polarised the state's legislature. The zenith of the crisis was when the Governor was denied the first choice of refusal in party ticket.

At another level, intra-party conflicts have, in many instances, led to the criminalization of political struggles in which politicians engaged in an assassination spree (Basiru, 2015:92). As reported, between 2001 and 2006, many political heavyweights, from all sides of the political spectrum, were felled down by assassins (Adeniyi, 2019). These included Chief Bola Ige, Chief Harry Marshall, Ahmed Pategi, Funso Williams (Olorungbemi, 2014:263). Finally, in the course of contestation for power within a party, players may embark on primordial mobilization that could create further divisions in society, which, in the long run, will threaten national stability. Also, political louts and thugs are trained and armed by most politicians.

The Triggers of Intra-party Conflict and Threats to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

The proper functioning of a democratic society is to some extent determined by the conduct, nature, composition, and character of political parties and other political institutions within the system, which consequently begets democratic consolidation (Maiyo, 2008; Ogundiya, 2011). In most developing nations, such as Nigeria, political parties face numerous challenges in trying to realize their fundamental objectives and functions. Some of these basic challenges to democratic sustenance are examined below.

Lack of Clear Ideology

The amalgamation of diverse factions with differing and incompatible interests to form a political party without a clearly defined ideology and party principle, other than just to win political power and control government resources over time, is a sign of danger to party stability and political order in society (Aristotle, 2012; Babatope, 2012; Tyoden, 2013; Aleyomi, 2014). This has been the case in Nigeria, unlike in developed democracies, where political parties play both functional and structural roles, with emphasis on issues of national interest, such as clear ideology and principles. In Nigeria, the issue of ideology counted for little in any party formation, composition, function or relations (Tyoden, 2013). For instance, with the return to democratic rule in 1999, only three political parties contested the election; AD, APP, and PDP. But as a result of factions and breakaways within the early parties, more parties were later registered to contest for the 2003 elections, bringing the total to 29.

As of January 2011, there were 64 political parties in Nigeria, but some of the parties were later deregistered or merged in 2013, making the total 27 (Simbine, 2013). The AD was particularly a party that represents ethnic and regional agenda without a clear ideology other than to return power to the southwest region (Lamidi & Bello, 2012). It dominated only six Yoruba-speaking states of Lagos, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Oyo (Abbas et al., 2015). It is the same fate with ANPP, as the party could only win elections in 9 northern states in 1999 and seven in 2003 (Abbas et al., 2015). In the case of the ruling party, PDP (1999-2015), Lamidi and Bello (2012) also argue that it could not be clearly understood whether PDP is indeed a conservative, progressive or radical party.

In Nigerian politics, ideology is articulated based on religious and ethnic bias. This situation corroborates Tyoden's (2013) assertion, that ideology does not go beyond what is articulated by the promoters of "the ethnic group first before the nation". In such a situation, the nature of party interactions and relations, as observed by Oyadiran and Toyin (2016), leads to ethnicisation of party politics, which encourages North versus South tickets and the like, as witnessed in the Fourth Republic, which is bereft of any fundamental ideological differences. Aristotle (2012), Babatope (2012), and Tyoden (2013) opine that it is mostly the anarchy of selfish ambitions and sectional cleavages of the political leadership that reflects the core of party relations, formations, and their operations in the political system.

In the same vein, the level of the unpopularity of PDP's government before the 2015 general election because of their inability to fulfil most of their campaign promises saw the merger of major opposition parties – ACN, ANPP, and CPC – and factions of some opposition parties to come up with APC. Considering the timing of the formation of the "progressive" alliances just before the 2015 elections, it was not out of place to argue that the whole political process was only an attempt of winning political power, rather than any ideological compatibility per se (Abbas et al., 2015). This fact, according to Aduku and Umoru (2014:94), is evident as the two most dominant figures in the APC alliance are Buhari and Tinubu, whose ideologies are two poles apart. However, despite the challenges, the APC was the first opposition party in the political history of Nigeria to take over power from a sitting government in 2015 national election, and still retained it in the 2019 general elections.

Personalization and Lack of Institutionalization of Political Parties

Political parties in Nigeria have not been able to attain the expected level of institutionalization, especially in the areas of internal cohesion and discipline. This deficiency often contributes to the decline of their conflict management capacities at intra-

party and inter-party levels. The crisis at both levels of party relations is worrisome. It is such that none of the parties has been able to hold together without severe conflicts that threaten its very existence (Simbine, 2013:18). Institutionalization of party and party system is measured by the internal and external activities of parties. Internal factors refer to those that are only internal to party organization, such as internal democracy, complexities, finance, and adaptability. External factors refer to the relationship of parties with their external environment (Kura, 2011:270).

The internal characteristics and power configurations of the political parties have manifested in huge organizational weaknesses and internal conflicts. The parties have particularly been plagued by suspensions and expulsions of party members, defection, particularly before elections, and deep divisions and factions that have manifested sometimes in violent clashes (Ikelegbe, 2013: 18). Intra-party violent conflicts have been particularly heightened during election because of the imposition of favoured and dubious consensus candidates, and the swapping of nominated candidates by party chieftains. The absence of fair platforms and the subversion of the will of ordinary party members and delegates in party primaries have grieved several party leaders and members and precipitated numerous defections (Ikelegbe, 2013: 18-19). More empirically, whether parties in a particular polity can effectively perform the required functions is a matter of the degree of institutionalization of party and party system (Kura, 2008).

Another problem associated with lack of institutionalization is the fact that a few prominent, powerful and influential individuals have completely hijacked the party machinery. While Obasanjo had total control of the PDP during his days in active party politics, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu determined what happened in the ACN, and now in APC. Similarly, all the affairs of the Congress for Positive Change (CPC) resolved around Rtd General Buhari before the emergence of APC, while the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) was controlled by the Kano State Governor, Shekarau, and Ali Modu Sherrif (Simbine, 2013). In the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), the only authority that mattered was Oloye Olusola Saraki (now late), while Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu (also now late) and Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State control the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) (Simbine, 2013). In recent times, the dominant figures in APC are Buhari and Tinubu.

Un-institutionalized parties will always find it difficult to develop deep roots in the society in which they exist and operate. "This factor has led to a low rate of party identification among voters, which also leads to high electoral volatility" (Simbine, 2013:18). When parties generally lack strong institutionalization, they exhibit a low level of organization

and become even more available to be hijacked by a few party leaders who dictate to the majority.

God-father's and Imposition of Candidates

Among the basic features of politics and party activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is the issue of godfatherism. According to Ayoade (2008), godfather is "… a benign political accretion of the position of either political notables or dreaded political rascals who are recalcitrant to the deterrence of the legal regime". Godfatherism is "an ideology constructed on the belief that certain powerful individuals possess enormous power and considerable means, and connections to single-handedly determine who gets party ticket to contest for (sic) an elective position and who wins in an electoral contest" (Ogundiya, 2009: 286).

To Ayoade (2006), godfatherism is not philanthropy; it is often marked by devious and undemocratic acts, such as violence, bribery, and corruption, all for the sake of perpetuating the wishes of the godfather. In other words, godfatherism is neither a missionary work nor a philanthropic gesture; rather, it is an investment in a political system (rogue) where returns, as the profit, are expected. It is usually characterized by undemocratic acts, violence, and corruption to realize the desire of the godfather. There is a mutual relationship between the godfather and the godson: the godfather is a political entrepreneur who "invests" his resources in the godson and the godson is obliged, or at least should, on assumption of political office to reciprocate by reimbursing his godfather in kind and maintain absolute loyalty to him in all areas, including decision-making whilst in public office. The sole objective of all godfathers is to rule by proxy or rule through protégés (Ojo and Lawal, 2013)

Political godfathers ensure that election results are declared in favour of their chosen candidates, irrespective of the evidence that their godsons may be the unpopular candidates. Godfathers in Nigerian politics rarely adhere to democratic rules according to internationally accepted standards. They play electoral politics without regard to the rules of engagement, have little or no respect for the established rules of conduct governing the process, and do not display any sense of moral restraint in their appreciation of what constitutes appropriate behaviour in a democratic political order. It is not surprising, therefore, that election results, whether at the party level or the level of general elections, are always disputed by those who are declared losers. All the three presidential elections since 1999 were subject of judicial intervention (Abutudu, 2013:10-11).

The takeover of the political party's machinery by godfathers has virtually choked off the party system as a channel for the aggregation of citizens' interests. The preferences articulated by the party usually turn out to be the personal interests of the godfather. The sustainability of the control of the political niche by the godfather cannot be left to the uncertainty of the preferences of the voters in a free and fair election. This desperate attitude of the godfather has naturally resulted in the criminalization of the electoral process (Abutudu, 2013:12). Therefore, because godfathers have a significant influence on the internal workings of political parties in Nigeria, they are inadvertently or deliberately involved in the stability or otherwise of these parties. In other words, because they are the epicentres of political infighting and struggle for power and office, they are one causative factor of members' defection (Momoh, 2013).

Absence of Internal Democracy within the Political Parties

In Nigeria, political parties do not adhere to the basic principles of democracy, which include internal democracy. This could be because their leaders hardly emerge through democratic and popular means, hence the continuous rise of the culture of political violence and assassination, especially in some sections of the country. Internal (party) democracy is referred to as a democratic process which is characterized by transparency, accountability, and openness in all the affairs of the party, particularly in selecting party executive and candidates in a general election (Ukeje,2011). Internal democracy thus implies an equal opportunity to all party members based on the general rules, laws, and regulations of the party to express their opinion and participate in the decision-making process of the party in all areas (Kari and Uchenna, 2011).

Internal democracy also connotes applying the agreed rules across the board irrespective of personal interest in such a way that it will be adjudged free and fair by at least the majority of the members, if not all. Lack of internal democracy is a bane of democratic sustenance, consolidation, and development in Nigerian politics, because those rules are neglected based on the individuals involved. A typical example is the denial of Governor Obaseki of Edo State the opportunity to seek re-election on the platform of APC because of the disagreement he had with the National Chairman of APC, Mr. Adams Oshoimole. Most of the internal party conflicts witnessed among political parties in Nigeria are either directly or indirectly linked to the problem of intra-party democracy, which has hindered the development of political parties and, by extension, the development of sustainable democratic governance (and consolidation) in Nigeria (Ukaeje, 2011).

Incessant Party/Political Violence

Politically-motivated violence has become a bane of Nigeria's democracy, resulting in frequent assassination and destruction of property in the country. In the build-up to the 2003 general election, many politicians were assassinated across all the states of the federation. Notable among them were Chief Bola Ige, Marshal Harry, Ogbonnaya Uche, Ayo Daramola, and Jesse Aruku (Durotoye, 2014). Ibeanu (2013) avers that perhaps among the most critical challenges of political parties and politics in Nigeria is the persistence of violence in the system. Elections in the country have been characterized by violence, except the elections conducted by the colonial and the military administrations. Specifically, the 1964 general election and spost-2011 elections were plagued by violence and crises. Other elections in Nigeria were plagued by irregularities and violence in a higher dimension (Nweke 2005).

The 2007 elections were particularly plagued by incidents of violence that included theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of property and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem, and chaos. More specifically, incidents of electoral violence have included assault on electoral officials and voters, hijack and seizure of election materials, attacks on security officials, and violent clashes between rival thugs and sympathizers of political parties (Nweke 2005).

Party politics is always being characterized by assassination, arson, intra- and inter-party clashes, and monumental political violence (Babatope, 2012). Rather than being a stage for reconciling and mediating conflicts and preventing violent eruptions through democratic procedures, the political parties in Nigeria have become a major institutional formation for the brewing and accentuation of conflicts. Party involvements in violence and violent conflicts have inflamed prevailing identity and communal conflicts over land, chieftaincy, and community leadership.

The persistence of political party violence has created a system of public distrust, disgust, apathy, and antipathy concerning the political process and the political elite. Nigerians have become disenchanted and alienated from the political process. A culture of political violence has been constructed. This has meant that confidence is being lost in the electoral process, and political cynicism may be emerging. There has been de-legitimation of governments that acquired power through dubious elections (Ikelegbe, 2013). Party politics is characterized by intimidation, victimization, violence, acid attacks, and political assassination, forcing many Nigerians to withdraw from party politics (Babatope, 2012). Party-linked violence has constituted a major threat to democratic consolidation and

survival, as insecurity and fear dominate the system. There have been assaults on civil rights, democratic values and procedures, and the collective psyche and sensibilities of the masses (Ikelegbe, 2013).

Winner-takes-all Syndrome

The Nigerian politics is characterized by the winner-takes-all syndrome. The do-or-die approach (Tyoden, 2013) and the by hook-or-crook (Jega, 2007) method to political competition among political stakeholders in the country has aided the occurrence of a political culture that emphasizes what Aristotle (2012) termed a winner-takes-all concept. In view of the Machiavellian tactics, it is natural that politicians adopt extreme measures and strategies in the pursuit of political power between or among the main political parties in the country (Babatope, 2012). According to this school of thought, all means are fair as, to most of the parties, the end justifies the means to acquire power (Abbas et al., 2015). This activates hostility and suspicion among parties. Given the over-reliance on the state and its institution for capital accumulation, it is not surprising that the struggle for the control of the state's institution and its resources assumes a violent dimension (Tyoden, 2013).

Abbas (2013) states that, once an individual or party wins an election, such uses state powers and institutions, treasury, mass media, and security forces to serve the interest of the dominant party (government in power) to guarantee its dominance. The culture of "winner takes all", which mainly stems from irresponsible spending, severe rule, exclusion of the minority from governance, deprivations, inequity, and injustice, continues to kindle inter-party conflict and violence. The conflict, most times, heightens to a violent dimension, as the state is usually unable to effectively manage social and political conflicts (Shale and Maltosa, 2008). According to Babatope (2012), the failure to manage such conflicts has continued to be a serious limitation to the development of democracy and its subsequent consolidation.

Conclusion

Party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2015 was bedevilled by widespread conflicts because factions struggled to control the activities of their parties. This has debilitating effects on the quest for democratic consolidation. Inter-party relations have also degenerated to do-or-die politics partly because of the apparent elimination of opponents through state-sponsored terrorism, which has turned election contests to a matter of life and death. The consequences have produced fierce political struggle and violence which have continued to pose serious challenges to Nigeria's democratic survival. Party politics and inter-party conflicts encourage regional political leadership, religious divides, lack of clear-cut party ideologies, party indiscipline, and intolerance, among

others. Also, the lack of mutual inter-party democracy encourages the politics of irrationality and intolerance, which abhors debate, negotiation, dialogue, and mutual compromise based on a win-win scenario. These factors, no doubt, have persistently threatened the survival of Nigeria's democracy.

Recommendations

While faction is a vital aspect of intra-party activities, there is a need for proper coordination of diverse interests of members to ensure political stability, peace, development, and democratic consolidation. In addressing to the lingering party politics and inter-party conflicts in Nigeria, the following are hereby recommended:

i. There is an urgent need for re-organization of political parties in Nigeria on the principle of inclusiveness, rather than exclusion. Party factions and officials need to be re-orientated and educated on negotiation and conflict management skills.

ii. There is also a need to re-engineer political parties in Nigeria from the ordinary institution for acquiring political power. This means that issues of organizational capacity, effective leadership and internal democracy must be a top priority.

iii. Godfatherism should be detested, and meritocracy and internal democracy made the benchmark of all party activities.

iv. Transparency, accountability, consensus, and consultation should be the guiding light of all activities of political parties in Nigeria.

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