



The Implications of Party Defection on Consolidation of Nigeria's Democracy Prior To 2015, 2019 and 2022

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Abstract. A major worry for Nigerian democracy, particularly with regard to its consolidation and longevity, is the absence of internal democracy and Godfatherism, which has led to enormous defections from one party to another and a growing estrangement between voters and their elected representatives. Therefore, this study evaluated the "implications of party defection for consolidation of Nigeria's democracy prior to the pre-election seasons of 2015, 2019 and 2022." For the examination of the research framework, the study used game theory. The study made use of the content analysis approach, which analyzes data from sources such as published books, journals, conference papers, and internet materials. The study comes to the conclusion that Nigeria's democracy is in danger and that party politics in Nigeria are suffering as a result of the rate at which political members have defected to other parties since 2015, 2019 and in 2022. The report suggests strengthening, amending the Nigerian constitution and election rules to control the alarming incidence of political defection, as well as reorganizing political parties to combat party monopoly, a lack of internal democracy, and indiscipline.

Keywords: Consolidation, Defection, Democracy, Political Party.

1. Introduction

Political parties have structures, rules, processes, conventions, and principles under a democratic form of governance because they are not meant to be personalized or confined to serving the interests of the elite. Political parties are present at all governmental levels, including the national, regional, district, constituency, and ward levels. They function within specific legal frameworks that specify their membership, composition, roles, financial foundation, operational standards, and disciplinary guidelines (Friedrich, 2010).

In the past twenty years, there have been a number of political defections from one political party to another, which have affected Nigeria's democracy over time. Party defection, cross-carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party-jumping, and a variety of other words used to describe this trend all relate to the same idea (Malthora, 2005). It has emerged as a very worrying aspect of Nigerian democracy, particularly in several states.

However, a candidate may leave a particular political party for a variety of reasons, including personality conflicts, power struggles, internal strife or division within the party, disagreements over the position taken on a particular issue, the fulfillment of personal political ambitions, party leaders breaking their word on political matters, likely in regard to the power-sharing formula, and differing viewpoints on the philosophy and ideology of a political party (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). The typical perception of party defection as it exists in the Nigerian political scene today does not accurately reflect the reasons why most defectors switch parties, as self-interest frequently takes the place of the party's and the governed interests, which is detrimental to the growth and survival of our democracy (Mbah, 2011).

For instance, Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele, the previous Caucus Leader for the All Progressive Congress (APC), left the party and joined the Labour Party in the lower house (African Herald Express, 2014). Additionally, five state governors who had previously belonged to the ruling party PDP—Bukola Saraki of Kwara, Rabiu Musa Kwankaso of Kano, Aliyu Wamakko of Sokoto, Murtala Nyako of Adamawa, and Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers—changed their party affiliation to the coalition of opposition party the APC before the 2015 General Elections, citing the president's refusal to pay attention to their demands regarding the (The Sunday Punch, 22nd December 2013, p.9).

It is well known that since Nigeria's restoration to democracy in 1999, the country's multi-party democracy has been facing difficulties that are viewed as harmful to the democratic system and to the life of the country as a whole. Godfatherism, internal party democracy, and the tricky issue of constant decamping, the attitude of card-carrying party members moving membership from one party to another, are a few of these difficulties. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate how party defection would affect the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy in the years leading up to 2015, 2019, and 2022.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

The context in which this study was conducted has been explained with regard to certain words. Party defection, political party, democracy, and democratic consolidation are a few of them.

Party Defection: Party flipping refers to the situation in which members of a political party (politicians and/or legislators) willingly quit their party for legitimate or invalid reasons. According to Malthora (2005) and Mbah (2011), party switching is the same as party defection, parties, cross-carpeting, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, and other related behaviors.

Political Party: A political party is a group of like-minded individuals that band together to influence politics and win elections. Political parties fight with one another for political influence and the capacity to implement their ideologies and programs (Randall and Svasand, 2013). (2002).

Democracy: According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is essentially the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people. A consensual administration that is freely chosen by the people to pursue ideas, aspirations, well-being, development, and the common interest of the people is implied by this sound and historical definition of democracy (Momoh, 2010).

Democratic Consolidation: Consolidation of democratic rule occurs when the actors in a system follow the formal rules of the democratic institution (Fayemi, 2012).

3. Theoretical Framework

For framework analysis, the Game Theory is used. The theory examines competitive scenarios in which two or more intelligent competitors engage in conflicting interests-based competition. The

participants in this tournament are given a variety of options, and each player aims to maximize his or her profit at the expense of the competition. In other words, critical interactions are examined using game theory. Since decisions made by two or more people can have an impact on one another's profits or losses at any time, their interaction is game-theoretical in nature (Morton, 2017). John Von Neumann, Schelling, Riker, Kaplan, and Raiffa are among of the theory's proponents who made significant contributions detailing the applicability of game theory to social sciences.

Games theory is predicated on a number of presumptions, including the following: (i) that there must be at least two players in any game; (ii) that each player of the game only cares about decisions that will benefit him; (iii) that every game has a tactic, which is chosen by the player; (iv) that the players of the game are motivated by reason; and (v) that the player is well aware of the options available to him and chooses one or two (Burns and Roszkowska, 2005).

Games theory's significance depends on its capacity to be applied to a variety of political situations. For instance, the game theory's "players" or "actors" may be compared to defection candidates in Nigeria's political arena who view the 2015, 2019 and upcoming 2023 general elections as a game that must be played to acquire absolute power importance. Each participant tries to use the best logical strategy to win in accordance with the optimum maximization concept. Two key actors, the PDP and APC, who were vying for rewards in the general elections of 2015 and 2019 become apparent when one examines the wave of defection among the registered political parties. Payoffs can imply various things to different presidential candidates; for some, it means joining the party that appears to have a good chance of winning the 2015 and 2019 elections, while for others, it means joining the party where their political and financial advantages are guaranteed.

The Game theory is disputed, nonetheless, on the grounds that political activity, such as switching political parties, especially during election seasons, should not be viewed as a game but rather as a logical decision to realize one's desire connected to the growth of the entire society. Additionally, the theory is more of a mathematical study than it is used to analyze political-relevant topics, therefore it should be used cautiously when drawing conclusions about politics.

4. Complexities surrounding Nigeria's High Rate of Party Defections

Politicians in Nigeria have a checkered history of switching from one political party to another dating back before the country gained its independence. According to Mbah (2011), the unheard-of party faults are a dangerous dimension. Nigeria's independence is older than sovereignty and undoubtedly before a political conflict between parties or a crossing. This was shaped by colonialism, emphasized by it, and sustained by post-colonial governmental systems.

However, Bello (2013) noted that in numerous states throughout Nigeria before to the 2019 elections, lawmakers defected to other political parties because they felt betrayed and angry of how their respective party's primaries were organized.

According to Kamara (2012), some people in every culture have a significant impact that might motivate members of their community to support them. In terms of electoral advantages, a political party greatly benefits from having these individuals' assistance. They are known as populist leaders, who are more influential than voters, and their support is crucial to a party's success in a certain area.

Adebayo, Ugiomoh, and Abdulmalik (2013) underlined that winning these people's support benefits the party at election time. Because doing so affords them advantages, the governing party always seeks to undermine an opposition party by convincing its leaders to defect to the government.

According to Bakare (2013), one justification for cross-campaigning in Nigeria is the absence of a strong political ideology. Party defectors are still attracted in huge numbers to the PDP, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), among others. Political divergences, interpersonal disputes, godfatherism, ethnoreligious emotions, and regional feelings are only a few of these elements. Of course, numerous politically driven motives might have a substantial influence on these decisions.

Mbah (2011) emphasized that whereas historically we would occasionally attend legislative cross-carpeting, it has now spread like a virus. The lack of a strong political philosophy is to blame for the detrimental and disruptive amount of defects impacting parties. Robinson (2010) said that political parties in Nigeria do not have an ideology aside from generating money at the same time. Everyone tries to fool the people by claiming to be democratic.

According to Omotola (2009), the Nigerian parties don't appear to have any distinct ideological convictions, despite all of the assertions to the contrary made through their manifestations and superficial labels like "left" and "right," "progressive," and "conservative." In any event, it is crucial to keep in mind that the crucial issue of political philosophy lies at the core of whether a political party succeeds or fails.

Most politicians in Nigeria, particularly at the state level, were unable to advance by winning elections, whether in primary or general elections. As a result, even though they are the parties' founders, they frequently compete against one other and readily switch sides at the first sign of an opening. In order to increase their chances of being chosen as the party's flag bearer, certain candidates from the three major political parties—PDP, APC, and APGA—for the 2019 general elections have left their original organizations. Politicians use Nigeria's defection to their advantage here.

According to Aleyomi (2012), Nigerian politicians are known for their aggressive, sleazy, and audacious maneuvers since they ensure their continued relevance. Some people at their events don't even need to move around. However, it is obvious why they are so callous and conceited. Since the country is a place where dignified and potentially productive individuals are mistreated and marginalized, neither good behavior nor strong convictions are encouraged. People who adhere to moral principles are viewed as eccentric, dumb, or suicidal.

However, Hoeane (2008) suggested that the major issue causing the defection within the political parties is the emergence of dishonest tendencies in some politicians that have caused the contamination of outstanding and genuine democratic processes.

According to Bakare (2013), political parties in all states take advantage of rivalries among opposition parties, internal tragedies, power struggles, and acrimonious disputes to enrage people who are displeased with change and advancement. This is the circumstance in Nigeria, which is handled in a Nigerian manner. Political parties are organizations that carry out and improve upon democratic ideas in a structured democratic society, according to Aleyomi (2010). To effectively fulfill what they should and are expected to perform in a democracy, they must adhere to a number of "institutional guarantees."

According to Baiyewu (2012), since democracy was restored in 1999, the political landscape in Nigeria

has seen a steady level of lawmakers who occasionally switch parties, especially between 2014 and 2019. This has never happened in the country's history of politics.

Since the first republic, switching parties has never been an impossible job for politicians in Nigeria, according to Baiyewu (2012); instead, history has demonstrated that incidents of party members who switched over were frequently met with fanfare and speculation about their true motivations. The high rate of defection, as observed before the general elections in 2015 and 2019 is the only distinction between the past style of defection and the present one.

Politicians frequently use the justification "I quit the party because some others hijacked it for their selfish purpose" when apologizing to voters. While some people point to issues with marginalization inside their party, others have offered explanations including the lack of internal party democracy. But only in Nigeria may a politician switch parties as frequently as four times each year. He will be welcomed by the other side with wide arms, to the point where they will host a feast in his honor.

The way Nigerian politicians defect is so harmful to our democracy that occasionally politicians who were elected on the platforms of opposition parties joined the governing party without any good reason—just a desire to ride the ruling party's bandwagon. These tendencies have affected both state and federal lawmakers, including certain state governors, like Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers, Aliyu Wamakko of Sokoto, Rabiu Musa Kwankaso of Kano, and Murtala Nyako of Adamawa. They were elected on the PDP platform but eventually switched to the APC in November 2013, midway through their term (Premium Times, May 20th, 2015).

Prior to the 2015 and 2019 general elections, it was observed that politicians who were primarily focused on vying for their party's political positions engaged in a variety of schemes to represent their party in the upcoming general elections by any means necessary, rejecting the idea of holding party primaries that are a prerequisite for true internal democracy within their parties (NBF News, January 4th 2011).

5. The Relationship in Nigeria between Political Parties and Internal Democracy

According to Ukaeje (2011), internal democracy inside a political party may be characterized as a democratic process that calls for accountability and transparency from all participants, particularly when

choosing party leaders, flag bearers, and other party members.

As a result, internal democracy, in the words of Kari and Uchenna (2011), refers to political parties that ensure unfettered speech and unrestricted access for their members to participate in decision-making. Additionally, it implies that parties do business openly and fairly while upholding the established norms. Political parties' degrees and methods of including party members in debate and decision-making within the party structure are also referred to as internal democracy.

Simbine (2013) argues that holding party congresses and implementing open and efficient leader-election primaries are some of the most fundamental and important parts of political growth in a democracy (i.e. flag bearers). Since 1999, godfathers who have the last say in choosing party leaders and candidates have a propensity to predetermine the party pre-selections of almost all political parties in Nigeria.

According to Ikelegbe (2013), political parties lack internal democracy and exhibit poor governance, which leads to exclusionary participation and decision-making processes, a lack of opportunities for widespread participation, a lack of structures, rules, and concepts, a lack of clearly defined processes, the rejection of individuals and groups, and inadequate complaint resolution procedures.

According to Simbine (2013), political sponsors are not always prepared to implement internal democracy, which results in frequent disputes and hinders the growth of parties as well-liked organizations. This causes a crisis inside the party, as is to be expected, and corrupt politicians frequently defect to other political parties whose goals can be considered.

According to Ukaeje (2011), political party operations in Nigeria are somewhat paradoxical since they don't adhere to the normal party principles of internal discipline and coherence. Political parties in Nigeria have failed to adhere to these values. On the other hand, the absence of an internal party democracy, which now stands as one of the major barriers to establishing a functioning and participatory democracy in Nigeria, is evidence that the reverse of what should be attained is never done.

Ukaeje (2011) added support to the idea that blatant misuse of partisan democracy is what gives rise to party crises, either because of the commotion it produces inside the party or because of the

circumstances it creates. In Nigeria, internal party democracy is a major source of friction between political parties, either directly or indirectly. This evolution has limited political parties' opportunities and, as a result, has made it extremely difficult to establish durable democratic administration and consolidate it in our nation.

6. Party Defection's Effects on Nigeria's Democratic Consolidation

Nigeria's defection-related events demonstrate that political parties are not founded on or entrenched in ideas and ideals. Due to this ideological gap, Nigerian political parties are now nothing more than money-making enterprises that depend on the support and devotion of their constituents. The effectiveness of democratic sustenance through party mechanisms is undermined by this action. Politicians in Nigeria only switch parties in order to run for office or gain favor; they do not do so because of differences in party ideologies.

Such parties are compelled to present respectable alternatives in the shape of development strategies by the idea of opposition in a democracy. A dominant party may occasionally appropriate an opposition viewpoint and adopt it as its own. However, because everyone wants to be a part of the governing party, the notion of a powerful opposition party, which is the core of a multiparty system, is opposed for personal gain. This is a terrible reflection of Nigeria's current democratic situation. As a result, the ruling parties frequently lack a potent rival to assist rein in their excesses.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, when an opposition party or individual members attempt to criticize actions taken by the government, the administration use government apparatus to bring charges against them. In our fight against corruption, which has done so much harm to our collective growth, the thought of courting or welcoming politicians from other political parties and writing off their dishonest acts against the state is unhealthy. This behavior has damaged our reputation on a global scale. Good governance results from a persistent perspective that prioritizes personal interests over those of the public. In Nigeria, defections frequently violate the requirements of the constitution, mocking our laws. For instance, the 2011 amendment to Section 68 (1. g) of the 1999 Constitution reads as follows:

If a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party joins another political party before the end of the term for which that House was elected, that person must resign from his or her

position in the House of which he or she is a member. As long as his affiliation with the later party is not the consequence of a split within the political party he previously belonged to or of a union of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he previously was sponsored (p.34).

Every time a topic comes up on the house floor, nasty politics are played at the cost of reliable sources and impartial legislation. The unpleasant rivalry and unproductive criticism between PDP and APC lawmakers in the lower legislative chamber is thus one of the most frequent obstacles to defection.

The MPs of the two major parties, the APC and PDP, got into a heated argument and verbally attacked each other during a session over the subject of South Africa's seizure of Nigerian cash for the purchase of weaponry in September 2014 (Premium Times, 18th July 2015). The PDP, on the other hand, views the APC as a potential enemy, even though some of its criticisms may be helpful to strengthen our democracy. The APC legislators, on the other hand, do not see anything positive in PDP programs and policies, even though some of these programs are credible and laudable.

So, according to Abimbola and Adesote (2012), defection has led to an unhealthy and unfriendly relationship between APC and PDP lawmakers in the lower legislative chamber. Numerous members of the house are politicizing the issue of the insurgency in the nation's northeast; rather than coming together to offer ideas on how to defeat Boko-Haram, they are playing politics with it by pointing the finger at one another and dividing up the limited resources of the nation among various rival groups.

Tatalo (2013) stressed that political parties in Nigeria sadly focused on improving societal structure via a certain ideology, and it is utterly devoid of constructive social purpose. A genuine political opposition group, for instance, should be aware of elected officials of a ruling party who drastically defect to boost their numbers for better or worse if the contrary occurs.

It is noteworthy to observe that in recent years, party alignment or defection has caused voters to lose trust in their representatives in the lower chamber of the legislature. It has degenerated to a scenario in which the lower house lawmakers were ridiculed, made fun of, and humiliated for their defection without regard for the benefit of the country. However, this has made voters believe that there is no positive outcome that can come from our politicians' approach toward Nigerian lawmakers and politicians. An instance in point occurred when party members accused former

members who defected to another party but remained silent and overlooked the defector's offenses when they were with them.

The instance of Ali-Modu Sherrif, who was accused of funding Boko-Haram militants by APC members because he had quit the party, was supported by Udo (2014) as evidence for this. Here, it is important to note why it took the APC so long to realize that Sherrif was funding rebels in Borno just a few days after he defected. Why did they not accuse him when he was present? These inquiries demonstrate the absence of ideology and the dishonesty of our political parties' leaders.

Especially with today's politicians, Odum (2002) emphasized that the consideration is where bets might be smaller and gain more. The nature of the offer is irrelevant. Therefore, in this game of defection, politicians switch parties just as prostitutes change their beds. As a reasonable inference from the foregoing remark, lower chamber defections of federal lawmakers who refuse to give up their initial platforms for political.

In unjustifiable circumstances when there have been several failures by lawmakers, governors, chairmen, and other party members of the party or opposition, Mbah (2011) suggested that the withdrawal of party members harms the consolidation of democracy. This trend has a negative impact on Nigeria's democratic consolidation and opposition groups' commitment to democracy.

The separation of the opposition parties from the ruling party, according to Mbah (2011), further emphasizes the significance of political power in Nigeria. This is so because having governmental power immediately translates into having economic power. The placement and distribution of economic resources and political incentives are decided by those in positions of power. This position's omission is expensive.

According to Ogundiya (2011), the alarming trend of politicians leaving Nigeria and the rise in party flipping after 2015 continue to be sources of anxiety for observers, political analysts, and scholars of Nigerian politics. The issue was justified since party exchange and related issues may have contributed to the demise of the previous republics.

According to Elombah (2010), who accurately summarized the situation, "In the past, we have sporadically had parliamentary deficits, today it is a complete government. from local governing councils

to the State Assembly and Executive Governor. Politics is affected, much like an epidemic.

In comparison to politicians everywhere, they have provided a plethora of justifications for switching parties. However, in the eyes of the electorate, these justifications are nebulous and irrelevant because politicians appear to have abandoned their original goals in favor of pursuing personal fulfillment and growth.

Momoh (2010) pointed out that one of the difficult problems with the nation's ongoing democratic experiment is that the political elite can only change from a ruling party to an opposition party. He emphasizes that because it was a component of the Second Progressive Alliance of the Second Republic's (PPA) ideology-based policy against the National Party of Nigeria, the progressive reactionary split does not comply with the present policy (NPN). Additionally, he emphasized that politicians do not separate themselves from other political parties based on party ideology or policies, but rather because doing so gives them a platform to run on during elections.

7. Discussion of Findings

According to information analysis, lawmakers who felt mistreated and angry about how their parties' primaries were conducted ahead to the 2015, 2019 and upcoming 2023 general elections in several states throughout Nigeria defected to other political parties.

According to Bello, these grudges and deceit could be observed in the way that Godfatherism used to sway primary elections in parties, leading to discord among party members who held membership cards (2013).

The absence of a strong partisan ideology in Nigeria is also cited as a justification for cross-campaigning, and Bakare supports this claim by citing political disputes, interpersonal conflicts, godfatherism, and regional and ethno-religious feelings as causes of party defection (2013).

The study's findings undoubtedly supported Baiyewu (2012)'s assertion that switching political parties in Nigerian politics has never been a herculean undertaking since the establishment of the first republic. History demonstrates that incidents of party card-carrying members defecting to other parties were frequently met with hoopla without asking about their true motivations. The high rate of defection, as observed before the general elections in

2015 and 2019 is the sole distinction between the current style of defection and it.

Because of the debate it stirs up inside the party or because of the crisis it produces, the gross misuse of partisan democracy has been highlighted as the cause of crisis within the party. The issue of internal party democracy, which has limited political parties' potential and as a result negatively impacted internal party conflict, is directly or indirectly connected to the majority of internal political party conflict in Nigeria.

According to the study, when elected officials, governors, chairmen, and other party members of the party or opposition repeatedly fail in their duties, it negatively affects the consolidation of democracy. According to Mbah, this tendency has a propensity to caricature democracy and undermine the spirit of opposition parties and the strengthening of democracy in Nigeria.

8. Conclusion

In order to achieve this, this study identified the lack of internal democracy and Godfatherism, which led to a mass exodus from one party to another prior to the general elections in 2015, 2019, and 2023, as the issue that is contributing to the growing disengagement between the electorate and their elected representatives.

As a result, the electoral process, party affiliations, and political leadership came to be seen with apathy and mistrust, which caused problems for democratic political parties, the consolidation of democracy, and elections in the Nigerian context. The study comes to the conclusion that Nigeria's democracy is in danger and that party politics in Nigeria are suffering as a result of the rate at which political members have defected to other parties since 2015, 2019 and in 2022.

9. Recommendations

As a result, the following recommendations are made by this study:

- Party members should be made more aware of the need of comprehending political parties' existence and functioning as a sine qua non for the survival of democracy in Nigeria.
- To stop the excesses of cross-carpeting inside political parties, INEC, the organization in charge of conducting general elections in Nigeria, should review and change current electoral rules.

- Political parties need to be reorganized in order to combat the monopoly of party decision-making, a lack of internal democracy, and party indiscipline.
- To prevent unhealthy rivalry among party members that might lead to party switching, the government should make all elected and political posts less appealing.
- The excessive use of money in the political sphere should be checked and reduced to the bare minimum and required by both the Nigerian state authorities and the leadership of the political parties.

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