

Peoples Democratic Party (Pdp) and the Challenges of Internal Party Democracy in Nigeria (1999-2015)

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Abstract: *For some time now since the dawn of democratic project in Nigeria in 1999, the problem of internal party democracy has been a source for concern towards effective party politics in the country. The paper therefore investigated the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Challenges of Internal Democracy in Nigeria political Parties 1999-2015. The paper adopted the Historical descriptive research as its method of investigation, while the elite theory of politics guided the paper as its theoretical framework. The paper in the course of its investigation found that as a result of lack of internal party democracy in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which manifested negatively in the party's governance of Nigeria between May 29, 1999 – May 29, 2015, it contributed to its loss of power at the federal level and some states it formally controlled to the opposition political party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2015 general elections. The paper therefore recommends that for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to reposition itself to regain power at federal level and some of the states it formally controlled, it must wean itself of all the political vices associated with its internal democratic practices during the period investigated.*

Keywords: Internal Democracy, Godfatherism, Intra Party Conflicts, Democratic Governance and Peoples Democratic Party.

Introduction

There is a growing evidence of declining public confidence and interest in parties and party politics, the world over. Political parties have deteriorated in membership, organization and popular involvement and commitment to democratic ideals (Maiyo, 2008). The Nigerian situation is not an exception. Since the Nigerian state returned to democratic governance in 1999, party activities, especially in the areas of selection of party candidates, election, accountability, discipline, etc, appear to be far below democratic requirements such that Nigeria democratic project has been the subject of intense debate in many quarters (Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013).

Besides, these political parties have been neck-dipped into all manners of anti-democratic activities including electoral manipulations and malpractices during primary and secondary elections. More often than not, both primary and main elections have been characterized by all kinds of unwholesome activities including thuggery, hooliganism, and vandalism, party cross-carpeting, political assassination of political opponents, all of which arise from unfair method of selecting party flag bearers and generally, lack of parties' internal democracy (Dike, 2003). Evidence from research reports has shown that most Nigerians believe that internal party democracy does not only affect the credibility of elections, but also the quality of leadership, governance and general welfare of the people (Sartori and Duverger in Okhaide, 2012). They stressed further that internal democracy is very critical for the functioning of democratic system in particular and overall development of the country in general.

Perhaps, no other political party in Nigeria has suffered from the said lack of internal democracy in Nigeria than the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Egboh and Aniche, 2012). Just as Odibachi (2010) has observed that party politics has exhibited more crisis than cohesion for national development such that virtually all the political parties have been perpetually enmeshed in conflicts owing to lack of internal democracy and imposition of party candidates and party leadership. Little wonder that the much expected "dividends of democracy" has continued to elude the generality of the people of Nigeria (Egboh and Aniche, 2012).

According to Okoli and Ali (2014) the intra-party opposition, with particular reference to the PDP's experience in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999 to date), has been complicated by gross ideological deficits of the party and even other political parties in Nigeria. They remarked that this anomalous phenomenon has led to some untoward outcomes that are inimical to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. To him, apart from the crude; and normless character that associates with party politics in Nigeria, intra-party opposition demonstrates the culture of partisan indiscipline, loyalty and supremacy in that context.

The issues that have been identified as the bane of party politics or internal democracy in Nigeria by many authors include among others: the issue of godfatherism, party funding, institutional weakness and miscarriage of justice due to corruption. However, the issue of godfatherism has been identified as the greatest problem confronting the parties by making them less cohesive and united. This is because it is the godfathers that raises the necessary funds for the party routine and campaign activities and as such, he/she has the power to decide the candidate to be imposed or substituted even after the primaries had been conducted (Ojukwu and Oiaifa, 2011; Erne and Nwoba, 2014; Nkwede, Ibeogu and Nwankwo, 2014; Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2013 and Nwagu, 2016).

The study therefore examines party politics and internal democracy in Nigeria with specific focus on PDP 1999-2015.

The Problematic

It has been generally observed in recent times that many political parties in Nigeria find it very difficult to adopt an open system that will not only allow members of the party to participate in decision-making but also give them unrestricted opportunity to contest in elections under the party's platform. Ojukwu and Oiaifa (2011) captured this by insisting that such restricted politics or contracted democratic space is poisonous. It is politics of war not of peace, of acrimony and hatred and mudslinging not of love and brotherhood, of anarchy and discord not of orderliness and concord. As such, Oyechiran (1999) has noted that this hinges on lack of internal democracy in political parties. And one of such parties where intra-party democracy has remained elusive is PDP.

Scholars like Ojukwu and Olaife (2011), Momodu and Matudi (2013), (Lamidi and Bello 2015) among others tried to identify various factors that have affected internal party democracy such as imposition of candidates, multiple candidate selections, party funding, lack of party ideology, leadership tussle among party members, etc. Mbah (2011). Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013), Kura (2014), Badejo and Obah-Akpowoghaha (2015), Okonkwo and Unaji (2016), Okafor and Aniche (2017) and others were concerned with the impacts of crisis of intra-party democracy on Nigerian political parties, party politics, party unity, party membership, and consolidation and sustenance of Nigeria's democracy.

However, these studies were generally on political parties in Nigeria, and thus failed to give adequate scholarly attention to PDP. Yet, most of the extant literature on party politics and internal party democracy in Nigeria focus on PDP. For instance, Aniche (2017) demonstrated how lack of internal party democracy within PDP shaped the outcomes of 2015 General Elections in Nigeria which turned PDP from ruling party to opposition political party and AFC from opposition political party to ruling party. But this study was on Nigeria generally and failed to focus on PDP.

Very few scholarly works have examined Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Challenges of Internal Democracy in Nigerian Political Parties. Yet most of them like Ogbuide (2012), Okoli and Ali (2014), Olorungbemi (2014), and CDD (2017) only discussed the cases of political godfatherism in PDP in terms of political unrest, impasse, crisis, and instability; as one of the instances of the challenges of internal party democracy in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Political Parties in Nigeria from 1999-2015. Thus, they were not able to adequately and empirically address; one, the nature of relationship between political 'godfatherism' and internal party democracy in People's Democratic Party (PDP); two, the nature of relationship between weaknesses of the regulatory institution and PDP's internal democracy in Nigeria.

Conceptualizing Internal Party Democracy

Within the sphere of conceptual framework, major concepts such as godfather, political party funding, political party, etc have been scholarly defined. For instance, Orji (2014) has defined godfatherism as the power of an individual over the machinery of a political party, its constitution, statutory laws and Nigerian constitution. Therefore, godfathers are a major plague of party politics in the country and are specifically, responsible for factionalization, acrimony and conflict (International IDEA, 2006). To Ibeanu (2008), godfathers are the major financiers of PDP and its electoral candidates and they use the party as an "astutely thought out investment outlet to be recovered through frivolous and bloated government contracts, appointments of cronies into chosen public offices and other prebendal returns by the beneficiaries" godfatherism has led to the personalization of the party siphoning of public resources, embezzlement, mismanagement, and outright theft. According to Chukwuemeka, Oji and Chukwurah (2013), the concept of godfatherism is a kind of politics whereby an influential person in a popular or ruling party will assist someone usually a lucky. i.e., godson to emerge as the Presidential or governorship candidate of a party at all cost and either by hook or crook, he will help him to emerge victorious in the general or state governorship election irrespective of whether he is a popular candidate or not. Intuitively therefore, political godfatherism represents a self-seeking individuals out there to use the government for his own purposes. The cost of this incidence is enormous to the state as what usually obtains is that when the incumbent godson is at pains to satisfy the whims and caprices of the godfather among other competing demands on the scarce resources of the government, the larger members of the society suffers.

Effects of 'Godfatherism' On Internal Democracy

The emergence of godfather in the Nigerian political scene is posing great threat not only to political-parties but also to good governance, socio-economic development and stability of democratic governance (Chukwuemeka, 2012). He states that one of the most disturbing and damaging influence of godfatherism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is the domain of making nonsense of a truly free, fair and credible electoral process in which the electorates by right are expected to freely elect people of their choice into public office to represent their interests. In a study titled "political godfatherism and governance in a developing democracy: insight from Nigeria, Nkwede, Ibeogu and Nwankwo (2014) used descriptive and content analysis to investigate whether political godfatherism affects good governance in Nigeria. The study found that godfatherism has threatened the country's nascent democracy. The study concludes that among other thing, competitions among godfathers to control state powers and resources through their favoured godsons and daughters have denied the electorate the right to elect their candidates, thereby rendering elections and electoral processes ineffective to the disenchantment of other party members. Besides this, the struggle for control of state powers has also resulted in some worst electoral violence in the country.

In Nigeria, majority of the people regard godfather phenomenon as a huge challenge to internal party democracy. This is because the godfathers use their influence as the major financiers of the party to impose candidates on the people or substitute a candidate who has been duly elected to fly the flag of the party during general elections. The imposition or substitutions are always

necessitated by disagreement between the godfather and the godson on what should be gains of the godfather (Ikejiani-Clark, 2008). As Ngige (2008) has observed, the magnitude of the mafia-style phenomenon of godfathers is also demonstrated by how the godfathers decide party nomination and campaign outcomes. He noted further that when candidates resist the god, they use violence to deal with the situation. He posits that the godfathers are mainly interested in controlling the party machines instead of presenting popular candidates for healthy electoral competitions. He observes that with such control of the party organization, godfather cum PDP has various ways of eliminating popular candidates from the so-called party primaries. The problem, however, is that when such unpopular candidate eventually becomes the winner through manipulations in the election, he/she enjoys less support because the godfather will always be around to recoup his investment and when the godson refuses to honour the agreement, war always ensues between them.

For instance, Bassey and Edet (2008) observed that in Anambra State, the problem of godfatherism has done more harm in PDP than in any other place, particularly in the gubernatorial position taken at different times. As he recounted from 1999-2003, the battle was between Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju and his godfather Emeka Offor. Dr. Mbadinuju refused to dance to the tune of his godfather and as a consequence, Mbadinuju lost his bid for second tenure as the pressure from his godfather made him to perform far more below expectations in governance.

The bickering and acrimony raised by the two actors are yet to settle when two others emerged. Chief Chris Uba and Dr. Chris Ngige. Uba was the godfather of Ngige as the governor of Anambra State, 2003-2006. Ngige refused to pay back his godfather the necessary commission and patronage. Since then, peace never returned to the seat of power in Anambra State. Eventually, appeal court declared Mr. Peter Obi as the winner of 2003 gubernatorial election in Anambra State in March 2006 and this marked the beginning of scattered elections in Nigeria in this political dispensation (Ogbeide, 2012; Okoli and Ali. 2014: Olorungbemi, 2014; CDD, 2017). Similar situations occurred in Enugu State, Ebonyi and Oyo States. Therefore, candidate imposition by godfathers does not only affect the party's internal democracy but also the generality of the people who would be or are always at the mercy of the godfathers in terms of welfare that would have come from good governance (Kura, 2014; Badeio and Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2015; Okonkwo and Unaji, 2016; Okafor and Aniche, 2017).

Since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria in 1999, the case of Anambra State has been a confounding one. It was the only state that has paraded five governors under controversial circumstances from 1999-2007 (Ogbeide, 2012; CDD, 2017). The electoral history of the state since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999 is full of political notoriety. From 1999-2013, the State created a new record in godfatherism. First was the Offor-Mbadinuju saga (1999-2003), Uba-Ngige comedy (2002-2006) (Okoli and Ali, (2014) CDD (2010).

Challenges of Internal Party Democracy

In their work Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) studied the challenges of internal party democracy in Nigeria's political parties, perceiving it as the bane of intra-party conflicts in the Peoples Democratic Party in Nigeria. The study which adopted content analytical design found that non-observance of the code of conduct document which all the political parties assented to and endorsed to guide their conduct and performance, particularly during elections, was a major problem. It was also found that the non-transparent system of choosing or electing candidates (party flag-bearers) during primary elections as well as in choosing party leadership in addition to executive arrogance within the parties, have torn many parties apart thereby leading to decampment of many party stalwarts. It was concluded that there should be definitive respect for the will of the majority for intra-party conflicts to reduce so that internal party democracy may be achieved and sustained.

In a related study carried out by Obah-Akpowoghaha (2013) on party politics and the challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, descriptive survey design was used. Findings indicate that majority, more than 90 percent of the respondents agreed that money and class were the major factors that undermine or determine the position of candidates in Nigerian Election and not integrity or capacity. Also, more than 90 percent again agreed that the power of incumbency and godfatherism greatly determines the emergence of party candidates. The study concluded that party politics in the area of nomination, selection and elections have negative implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Also, Mommodu and Matudi (2013) did a work on the implications of intra-party conflicts on Nigeria's democratization. The study adopted content analysis. From the findings, it was concluded that intra-party conflicts are engendered primarily because of the insatiable greed of political elites which creates the access for primitive accumulation of the common wealth of the people. It has also led to fractionalization of some major political parties and the consequence of decamping of party members.

In addition, Lamidi and Bello (2015) on party politics and the future of Nigerian democracy: An examination of Fourth Republic, qualitative analysis was adopted. The study found that political parties since 1999 are yet to engage in issues that will consolidate democracy in Nigeria. Political parties that are expected to perform integrative roles and engage in nation building are busy with internal crisis; they fuelled the tension created by division and tribal loyalty, as they embrace exclusion politics such as denial of wider participation by the citizens. They spent more time on internal crisis, than implementation of policies that will affect majority of the electorates. Further, Aniche (2017) demonstrated how lack of internal party democracy within PDP served as one of the major variables determining the outcomes of 2015 general elections in Nigeria leading to emergence of APC as the ruling party. In other words, it turned PDP from ruling party to opposition political party and APC from opposition political party to ruling party. However, his study was on Nigeria political parties generally and not focused on the PDP.

Peoples Democratic Party and the Challenges of Internal Democracy in Nigeria (1999-2015)

It has been widely recognized by scholars and the general public worldwide that democratic governance or good governance generally entails popular participation in governance, transparency by government officials, accountability on their part, respect for the rule of law, free and fair elections, economic self sufficiency and above all, political stability and security of lives and properties. All of the above will bring about democratic consolidation, which is a core value of democratic governance. Under the PDP government to say that nothing was achieved with respect to the above requirements of democratic demands since May 29, 1999—May 29, 2015 is to be unfair to the party. Some achievements in this regard were made by PDP government within the period investigated but very little vis-a-vis the high expectations of Nigerians during the dawn of democracy in 1999.

The PDP government conducted four general elections in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 thereby sustaining the nation's nascent democracy for as long as sixteen years which was the first ever in the political history of Nigeria. But the first eight years of PDP rule witnessed a profound assault, rape, debasement, reversal and de-democratization of the Nigerian polity. The first two general elections in 2003 and 2007 under the PDP government were characterized by notorious electoral malpractices. In the words of (Osumah, 2007: 11), the two general elections were like warfare with as flurry of intimidation, thuggery, outright violence, widespread electoral irregularities, horse trading, ballot box snatching, election rigging, manipulation and falsification of election outcomes and announcement of preferred candidates as winner. Osumah contended further that the outcome of the two elections did not reflect the preference of the electorate rather that of the outlook of the PDP government.

Okolie (2009: 75) in his own contributions in this regard notes that the 2007 general election under the PDP government was the most abused electoral process which witnessed ignoring of intra-party democracy brazenly, substitution and re-substitution of candidates, unilateral disqualification of candidates became the norm, as bribery and corruption made the concept of settlement to become more precise and understandable. Indeed INEC superintended over the recklessness and subversion of the rule of law by the political parties as it became immersed in the bitter struggle of divide and attrition between the then president chief Olusegun Obasanjo and his vice Alhaji Atiku Abubakar: INEC according to him disqualified the vice president on flimsy political reasons. It took the intervention of the Supreme Court to clear him, at a much later date to contest the predetermined election. Okolie, (2009: 76) further notes that electoral fraud sharp practices and criminality pervaded the political landscape of Nigeria and rendered the power of the ballot boxes ineffectual and outlandish, winners of electoral contests were determined by-one's affiliation to political gladiators and to the extent to which you could surrender your rights and capacity to independent action to these gladiators. For him, the most intriguing and disturbing fact was that Obasanjo's administration revered and promoted acts of violence, lawlessness and total disregard of the rule of law as state apparatus became privatized and personalized. Incumbency factor was used to return all PDP Governors to power to the detriment of other political parties, equally, there was nothing that has compromised Obasanjo's claim to be democratic as much as the third term bid. The manner in which the project was pursued was militarist, corrupt and obscene. That shows that PDP as a party and the Obasanjo administration were not committed to the basic tenets of democracy (Momoh, 2006: 76).

However, the 2011 and 2015 elections under the government of PDP led by former president Jonathan were far better than that of 2003 and 2007. In 2011, former president Jonathan contested while he was an acting president and won convincingly, even though the opposition party then the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), which fielded the present president Muhammed Buhari protested the victory with a post election violence from Northern youths. The absence of good governance by the PDP government can be explained by the obvious fact that within the PDP there has been serious erosion of democratic values. The primaries, conventions and congresses, which are democratic means for monitoring party candidates for elections and electing party officials, have little or no regard in the party. The PDP government witnessed the evolution and development of "godfatherism", barbarism, personality and military cult of the highest order. Horse trading, browbeating, impositions of preferred candidates of the "godfathers" have characterized the party primaries, congresses and conventions. This situation continuously restricted the democratic space and above all denied the nation of credible political leaders required for running good government. This is so because electoral fraud strips elections of their essence as an instrument of holding leaders accountable to the electorate, election rigging serves as distinctive to the existence of formidable opposition needed to keep the ruling party on its toe. Equally government formed on the basis of electoral fraud can hardly endure. This is so because election rigging strips government of the legitimacy that popular election bestows.

However, in the 2015 election, the PDP despite all odds fielded former president Jonathan and he lost to the opposition candidate of the All Progressive Congress APC, Muhammed Buhari. The PDP presidential candidate, former president Jonathan immediately after the conclusion of the election and its outcome conceded to defeat and congratulated the victorious candidate the current president thereby showing a good mark of sportsmanship in politics. This singular act deepened the county's democracy. Whether former president Jonathan's democratic values under the government of PDP will be sustained by the current ruling party, the All Progressive Congress APC, only time shall tell.

PDP and Management of Intra-Party Conflicts

In all democracies, conflict is inevitable. This is so because democracy seeks effective ways through which a society is governed, borne out of contest either internally or externally. Conflict is inevitable in all human relations, conflict results when two

or more persons seek to possess object or occupy the same position and play incompatible means of achieving their purposes (Aleyomi, 2016:281).

Since its coming into power on May 29, 1999, the PDP has become a party of intrigues full of lack of coherence, cordiality, internal wrangling, squabbles, divisions, schisms and factious. This so manifest to the extent that the various levels of the party hierarchy have been factionalized. The PDP had problems at the various state branches such as Anambra, Edo, Delta, Oyo, Imo, Ekiti, Kwara, Plateau among others. The crises in the state branches and other levels of the party were induced by the ambition of the PDP headquarters to control, direct or influence the machinery of the party at the state level.

The inability of PDP to manage these conflicts have resulted in the withdrawal or decamping of many of the founding fathers and chieftains of the party, among them were: Chief Awoniyi, Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, Bamanga Tukur, Audu Oge former chairman of the party, Olabode George. The high level of these conflicts within the PDF resulted in the establishment of parallel PDP secretariats at the national level and state levels like: Delta, Edo and Imo. The problem also manifested in divisions in the state houses of assembly into two blocs along the line of rivalry within the party. (Osumah and Ikelegbe 2009: 194). In some occasions, former president Olusegun Obasanjo related with the national assembly (NASS), as though it was an extension of the executive arm of government. Any senate president or speaker of the House of Representatives that does not accept his views or who is not compliant was set for impeachment. Most of the bills that were passed into Act during Obasanjo's regime were executive bills and not private member bills.

Equally, the spirit of intolerance of the former president Obasanjo was carried into the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the then ruling party has had five national chairmen in seven years. The principal source of change has been personal disagreement with the president's style of governance which was authoritarian. Even the PDP's convention which produced Obasanjo as the presidential candidate for the 2003 election was a walkover and overbearingly dominated by the executive who ensured that all his appointees, including ministers and politically appointed Ambassadors were delegates to the party's convention. Former president Obasanjo ran the PDP more like a parastatal. All party executives were dissolved and party members de-registered and asked to re-register. In the process dissenting factions of the party were excluded or marginalized in the re-registration exercise thereby fuelling intra-party conflicts which resulted in forming a new PDP in August 2013 under Kawu Baraje. This showed the degree of disillusionment and disaffection among the gladiators in PDP. Subsequently, many of them left PDP to float other political parties, while a lot of them were to be found in ACN, ANPP, CPC and APGA, which subsequently metamorphosed into mega opposition party All Progressive Congress (APC) that wrestled power from PDP in 2015.

It is important to note that in resolving these conflicts the PDP had demonstrated preferences for the coercive or military strategies like: suspension, expulsion, intimidation, denial of privileges and outright violence against perceived political enemies e.g. in Ogun state, the schism between former Governor Gbenga Daniel and a PDP Senator, Ibikunle Amosun resulted in the masterminding of impeachment of two of its local council chairmen loyal to the senator.

The PDP during the period investigated by this paper was equally associated with the political killings of its members as a result of political squabbles or disagreements. Therefore, it is the resort to coercive measures rather than consensus and peace building in resolving intra party conflicts that made a prominent Nigerian professor Wole Soyinka to refer to the PDP as harbouring "nest of killers" (Okumo, 2004: 19).

In summary, the monumental crises that ravaged the PDP between 1999 and 2015, which has not abated are antithetical to democratic consolidation and good governance. The party's approach towards solving their crises can be summed up this way: First, the various crises apart from heating up the polity, undermines conditions necessary for the success of democracy and implementation of development programmes of the government led by the PDP within the period investigated. This is so because the various crises within the PDP since May 1999-May 29, 2015 created intense atmosphere across the nation and distracted the focus and attention of the elected representatives of the people. Second, the coercive or semi-military measures PDP leadership adopted in resolving these crises within it no doubt posed great danger to the rights of Nigerians across the nation thereby leaving the governance of Nigeria in the hands of mediocre, and political rascals which resulted in bad governance at all levels of government.

PDP and other Political Parties (The Opposition)

It is a known fact that the PDP government since 1999-May 29, 2015 liberalized the political space to accommodate the opposition party registration; laws under the PDP led government were reformed. This paved way for the growth of political parties from three in 1999 to fifty in 2007.

But the above situation notwithstanding the PDP government was on several occasions hostile to opposition parties, critical mass media and civil society organizations. Many of the opposition political parties struggled to remain politically afloat. During the period investigated about two-thirds of them were in danger of going into extinction. The PDP maintained hegemony over other political parties. Granted that the PDP led government liberalized the political space for opposition through the development of multi-party system, the multi-party system the PDP encouraged was not for liberal purpose or for genuine democratic culture to thrive but rather to fragment the opposition political parties, thereby controlling them for its own advantage.

The PDP took advantage of its control of the federal bureaucracy and the executive arm of the federal government to poach on members of the other political parties in order to whittle their ability to challenge its dominance of the nation's political landscape. This they did through the weapon of appointment which enabled the PDP to break the ranks of the other parties especially the former

AD and ANPP parties whose members held government appointments.

Furthermore, the then ruling PDP has been alleged of sponsoring internal crises in the opposition parties. For instance, the PDP/AD electoral pact made the AD to lose five out of the six states in the 2003 general election (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009: 193).

Equally, the PDP starved the opposition parties of legitimate funding; the PDP led federal government also did deny opposition parties to hold rallies. While during PDP's reign police and other security operatives have broken some opposition parties' rallies in defiance of police permit. For instance, the CNPP was denied police permit to hold rally in protest of the questionable victory of the PDP in the 2003 general election while the rally that was organized in Kano state without police permit was broken into by the police and the organizers were brutalized and teargassed. Its resultant effect was the death of former president of the senate and a former chieftain of the ANPP, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo.

Despite their travails, the opposition political parties did not despair. As a prelude to 2015, general elections, the opposition parties of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and decampers from the then ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). assembled themselves together and approached the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to register them and formed a mega opposition political party known as the All Progressive Congress (APC). The opposition APC contested the 2015 elections in which the incumbent president and PDP presidential nominee, Goodluck Jonathan was defeated by retired General Muhammed Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) by 55% to 45%, losing by 2.6 million votes, out of approximately 28.6 million valid votes cast out of Nigeria's thirty six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory, General Muhammed Buhari of APC, won 21 states, while former president Goodluck Jonathan won 15 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia file://c: Chibuike).

In fact, the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, the eighth since 1979, Nigeria adopted presidential system and the fifth since 1999, when the military returned democratic system of government to Nigeria, was the first time the opposition wrestled power from the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP had always benefitted for the very fact that opposition parties before the emergence of APC in 2013, had always and mostly fragmented along regional and ethnic lines thereby making it impossible for them to be a credible challenge to the ruling PDP.

PDP and the Rule of Law

The rule of law implies that every citizen is subject to the law of the land including law makers themselves. It therefore stands in contrast to autocracy, dictatorship or oligarchy. From the foregoing it can be discerned that the rule of law is the bedrock of modern constitutional government. The fine essence of this sub section is to examine how much the rule of law have been adhered to by the PDP led government in Nigeria between 1999-2015, since the emergence of the new democratic order.

In the eight years of former president Obasanjo's presidency, the Rule of Law became the Rule of force; it was indeed a re-enactment of Executive Lawlessness and recklessness of the Kabiyesi syndrome under General Ibrahim Babangida era. The faceoff between the former president and his vice Atiku Abubakar was the peak of intolerance and lack of regards for due process and rule of law, where he eventually expelled the vice president Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from the PDP and the declaration of the office of the vice president vacant. This was however reversed when the Supreme Court ruled that the president had no constitutional powers to remove the vice-president. Besides by the time he was leaving office in 2007, he made sure he influenced the changing of the party's constitution ceding the office of the chairman of Board of Trustees to himself. He only resigned from that office in 2012 and later left the party altogether by tearing his membership-card in public in the wake of the 2015 general elections. Further, the Gestapo like removal of serving governors and their arbitrary replacement, the abuse of court processes and the imposition of state of Emergency and sole Administrators as if Nigeria were a huge garrison command, all bear testimony against the Rule of Law under PDP government.

Obasanjo equally treated interest groups and popular forces with disdain, contempt and repression. The trade union Act of 2005 was aimed at weakening the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), by fragmenting the central labour union and making union membership and collection of check off voluntary. He threatened to make unionism in tertiary institutions a branch rather than a national issue. His objective was also to fragment and decimate the ranks of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). He was insensitive to trade union demands. That was why his regime witnessed more industrial actions than other governments in Nigeria.

The government led by former president Obasanjo was also highly autocratic and "lawless" in terms of party administration. Due process was never followed in taking decisions for party administration. This can be seen in the constant loggerheads between former president Obasanjo and former PDP, national chairman and presidential candidate Chief Barnabas Gemade over party administration and discipline. The former president had reinstated Chief Tony Anenih erstwhile minister of works and former PDP Board of Trustee (BOT) chairman after being suspended by Chief Gemade for indiscipline and insubordination. Chief Gemade was shoved aside and replaced by Chief Audu Ogbeh. Chief Obasanjo's intolerance of criticism and advice soon led to the forcing out of chief Ogbeh as PDP chairman at gun point over a letter he wrote to former president Obasanjo over Anambra crises between the Ubas and the then Governor Dr. Chris Ngige. The former president's decision to replace Ogbeh was a unilateral decision that has no democratic consensus by the hierarchy of the party. The lack of internal democracy never existed in the PDP alone but in all facets cum tiers of governance (Efebeh, 2015: 75).

The launching of the presidential library on May 14, 2005, by former president Obasanjo in Abeokuta, the Ogun state capital, has been described as an abuse of power. The former president launched the presidential library project and in the process he received gifts of money for that purpose from federal government contractors, arm twisted some state governors to make donations amounting to ten million naira each and other beneficiaries, bank executives and others. In the process about ₦6 billion was realized from individuals and corporate bodies at the event. (Borodo, 2005) notes that this triggered a wide range of condemnation from across the country. Nobel Laureate professor Wole Soyinka described this act as "executive extortion" on the part of former president Obasanjo's government. On the other hand, late Gani Fawehimi saw the launching of the library as illegal and unconstitutional. He further contended that this amounts to corrupt practices and abuse of power contrary to section 15 sub sections 5 of the 1999 constitution.

Outside from the above, former president Obasanjo constantly withdrew billions of naira and spent same from the consolidated revenue account without the written or verbal expressed consent of the National Assembly. PDP government led by chief Obasanjo also consistently disobeyed judgment of the Supreme Court especially the order of the court to release over 38 billion naira of local government funds owed Lagos state government. Petroleum pump prices were increased six times during Obasanjo's tenure as president without due process. It was one breach or the other resulting to insecurity, insensitivity, lack of transparency in public affairs and therefore poor governance.

The highly flawed 2007 election brought in former late president Yaradua to power. Yaradua after announcing his seven point agenda could not do much due to his state of health. As a result of the former president's ill health, his administration was hijacked by a cabal who acted with impunity, but all in his name, his administration was full of controversies as regards his state of health. When he was on a medical trip to Saudi Arabia for more than forty one (41), days, he never authorized his vice former president Goodluck Jonathan to act as president on his behalf and without Nigerians knowing his true state of health, thereby keeping the country at standstill in terms of the day to day administration of the country. This generated heated controversy across the country until he was smuggled into the country in a commando style.

Still on the PDP and Rule of Law during its sixteen years rule over Nigeria, the 170 count charges of corruption against James Ibori during his eight year tenure as governor has left much to be desired. First, Ibori objected to being tried by the Federal High Court in Kaduna. Rather, he wanted the case transferred close home in Benin. But the authorities in the Judiciary led by the Attorney General of the federation and minister for Justice Michael Aodoaka did more than he asked for by establishing a Federal High Court at his doorstep in Asaba, Delta state. Low and behold, Ibori got the judgment he wanted as he was acquitted of the 170 count charges. The judgment has been criticized as the exact opposite of what the administration of justice is and public perception of Ibori's material possession. Some on the other hand petitioned the appropriate authorities that the trial judge compromised.

The Goodluck Jonathan's administration was not free acting outside the realm of the rule of law as stipulated in the constitution of the nation despite the regimes public posturing on its positive stand on the rule of law. In 2010, President Jonathan suspended the president of the Appeal Court, Justice Mustafa Salami from office and appointed an acting president for the appeal court until the expiration of Salami's tenure. His "sins" may not be far away from the many 2007 election results that were overturned by the appeal court under the leadership of justice Mustapha Salami, a trend which the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) did not like. Former president Jonathan's government also went against the rule of law when it grounded the chartered helicopter through the Nigeria Air Space Management Authority, which was to take former Governor Adams Oshiomhole to Ekiti state to join the campaign train of his party man Kayode Fayemi who was vying for re-election as governor of the state.

Equally, the Nigerian Air Space Management Authority grounded the private jet belonging to the Rivers state government used by Rotimi Amaechi, withdrew his security details and planned to impeach him for the misunderstanding the former Governor had with Mrs. Patience Jonathan over the development of a Slum in Port-Harcourt called the "water front". Also in 2014, the speaker of the House of Representatives Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal of the then ruling PDP defected to the opposition party APC, the government of Jonathan illegally withdrew his security details and further locked him and his supporters out of their offices at the National Assembly complex. Another illegality of former president Goodluck Jonathan's administration was when he attempted to rename the University of Lagos to Mushood Abiola University without due process. It took the protests of present and past students of the institution before Mr. President could send the proposal to the National Assembly for approval.

All in all, frequent disregard for the rule of law by the PDP led government in Nigeria between 1999-2015 were as a result of the fact that the institutions of governance were built around the individual leaders—that is members of the governing elites and their cronies, and this makes it impossible for such institutions to function appropriately and independently as political corruption, abuse of power, judicial ineptitude, poor leadership and absence of due process has further pauperized majority of the citizenry.

PDP and Management of the Economy

The PDP led government between 1999-2015 favoured free market economic policies which support economic liberalism and limited government regulation. When the PDP took over the reign of government in 1999, the Nigerian economy was in shambles as a result of long years of military rule. But actually, in response to the problem, the PDP government embarked on a number of programmes, policies and reforms of the public sector, financial and monetary institutions to enhance macro-economic stability and public financial management as well as resource mobilization. Some of these economic reforms include: the programme of privatization and commercialization act, bank consolidation, budgetary control, eradication of poverty and pursuit of the policy of

foreign direct investment (FDI). The PDP government equally launched Nigeria's first National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), to ensure that every Nigerian has access to basic health care services. The PDP, again strived to maintain the status quo on oil revenue distribution, the PDP government set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), to address the needs of the oil producing Niger Delta States, it rebuffed repeated efforts to revert to the 50% to 50% federal to state government revenue allocation agreement established in 1966, during the First Republic.

Be that as it may, the PDP economic reforms policies were right wing, pro, Brettonwoods institutions (BWIs) and anti the people. In seven years of president Obasanjo's presidency, the PDP government increased prices of petroleum products six times. In 2003 alone the PDP government increased the prices three times. Obasanjo does not engage in consultation before taking decisions. And even where he calls groups to meeting he always wants to have his way because he comes with a mind set to such meetings, what ensures is not a dialogue but monologue.

Obasanjo equally celebrates the Ivy League trained manpower that he has recruited into government. Many of them are very eloquent and elegant with language and their overbearing and emotional commitment to market reforms in Nigeria is unspeakable. Their commitment to privatization and the market ideology is unrepentant. To them, the market is not only an ideology but an article of faith. It became a religion during PDP reign. The economists among them continued to make fetish of statistics whereas the actual material conditions of the ordinary Nigerians worsened. More Youths dropped out of schools during the PDP days. Social conditions increasingly became deplorable and social amenities were lacking while Nigeria was being sold to the private sector, foreign business and the BWIs. While criticizing the past leaders for profligacy and waste, the Obasanjo administration deeply sank into the same economic philosophy of the market.

The implementation of the privatization and commercialization programmes merely helped some powerful Nigerians to pocket our national silver like the Nigerian national Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigerian Telecommunications Limited NITEL), and National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), later Power Holding of Nigeria (PHCN). The privatization programmes also resulted in the mass retrenchment of workers in the affected public organizations.

Also, the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the PDP led federal government has been fundamentally flawed. Chunk of the financial resources committed for the implementation of the poverty alleviation could not be accounted for. At the same time the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), saddled with the responsibility of privatization and commercialization has itself been enmeshed in allegation of corrupt practices.

Although, the PDP government made the Paris club to write off Nigeria's debt after paying \$ 12 billion out of \$18 billion, the World Bank has classified Nigeria as heavily indebted country, as there has been substantial increase in domestic debt. There has also been unprecedented increase in the rate of inflation and steady decline in the Gross Domestic Product (Momoh, 2006 and Osumah, 2007).

The reason for the above situation is not fare fetched, since the budget is perhaps the most powerful instrument in the hands of modern governments because of its potential to shape politics, economy and society. For an understanding of the Obasanjo's administration; the budget is significant in understanding how the PDP led federal government performed within its first eight years vis-a-vis the economy. This is so because of the repeated controversies that have dogged budgets at the federal level since 1999. It is said that the Obasanjo's government has implemented none of the appropriation acts passed by the National Assembly. In fact, this formed one of the articles of impeachment "the Assembly raised in the threatened impeachment of the president in 2002". Top members of the National Assembly continued to complain about the levity with which the presidency treats appropriation issues. Among other things they bemoan the return of extra budgetary spending. For instance they complained that a supplementary Appropriation Bill foisted on the Assembly in 2003. The Bill was passed on December 18, 2003, a few weeks before the end of the financial year. That is to say, the former president was always at dagger drawn with the National Assembly in implementing budgets passed by the Assembly thereby creating economic management crises (Ibeanu, 2008: 235-6).

Coming to the PDP government led by the late president Musa Umaru Yar Adua, he enumerated his seven point agenda as power and energy; food security and agriculture, wealth creation and empowerment, mass transportation and land reforms; security, qualitative and functional education and pursuance of the rule of law.

However, the question many asked during his short lived tenure was whether the famed seven point agenda were capable of lifting the economy from the doldrums? This is because Nigeria has seen such economic packages before that gave hope to many, only to be dashed.

But before Yar'Adua could implement his seven point agenda death took him away from the turbulent Nigerian political landscape, then came his vice, first as an acting president and later President and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian armed forces Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. The PDP government led by Goodluck Jonathan economic programme could be ruled the most arguable, as the administration's rating stands between that which is on paper and the otherwise pictured in real world.

Jonathan's first notable decision next to his election was the removal of fuel subsidy a move jointly decried by Nigerians especially the poor and human rights activists. This move had happened in the period at which average Nigerians were living close to penury may be \$2 per day. The masses feared such decision would further impoverish them but the government at any event assured it will boost the economy, as the sum which the government spends on the fuel - refinery as relief for citizens was a restraint on the federal governments' treasury account and capital budget. But the citizens were compelled to this reason, although over 75% of Nigerians were yet bemused by this initiative by the PDP government. Unfortunately and pathetically, the dividends of their

collective donations was rather divulged to have enriched pockets of few government officials and individuals, as the reports which emanated into "subsidy" account, conjectured subsidy gains as either miscounted or siphoned by the governing and non-governing elites within and outside the PDP. So that by the time Jonathan tenure lapsed, the essence of the removed subsidy could not be seen in the life of Nigerians while key sectors of the economy were still stagnated or recessed, even as corruption reports into the crude oil sector reached high.

However, in the wake of this storm, Jonathan embarked on a number of policies to twist the economy's predictability, by inclusion of or diversification of abandoned sectors like agriculture, telecommunications, entertainment sectors among others. The administration and BWIs praised the Nigerian economy by scoring the Jonathan administration high. The management of the Nigerian economy by early 2014, said that Nigeria has emerged the largest economy in Africa and the 26th largest in the world with \$ 510 billion in GDP and about US \$ 2,500 per capita income.

Analytically, the respite had seen windfall in the country's oil business in which the fuel price had risen to US\$ 100 per barrel, a whopping 128% rise against those traded by the past regimes. This could have been thanks to political showdowns between certain endowed countries in Europe, Middle East and North Africa and or against powers -in which sanctions were placed on those countries energy exchange.

But in reality, however, the economy outlook of Nigeria was rather critical under Jonathan administration, adjudged from poverty level, unemployment rate, basic amenities state, exchange rates, inflation as well as its medium term economic implications on the other side during the life of the administration were some alarming speculations of rising debt as well as a coded suspectability of depleting reserve amidst underdevelopment, mismanagement and corruption reports. This state of affairs may have led the former finance minister and head of the economic team during the life of the administration to hastily admit that "administering Nigeria economy", was giving her and her team" a high blood pressure".

PDP and the Fight against Corruption

The anti-corruption campaign of the PDP led Federal Government clearly brings out the problems of the internal workings of the PDP, characterized as it were by arbitrary use of power to oppress perceived political enemies or opposition political parties. The PDP government anti-corruption campaign especially in its first eight years under former president Obasanjo brought to fore the internal contradictions of the party with the governing elites in the party's hierarchy using the anti-graft agencies of the federal government it controlled to silence other members of the governing elites and even the non-governing elites outside the PDP. But the unfortunate aspect of the anti-corruption campaign during the reign of the PDP was that the more the years passed, the more the country climbed up the ladder of the most corrupt country in the World.

Precisely, former president Obasanjo started off with an anti-corruption slogan when he retired many military officers who served previous military administrations in the hope of re-professionalizing the army. He froze several questionable accounts, and cancelled contracts that were hurriedly awarded by the erstwhile administrations. He set up more than twelve committees to probe different issues bothering on corruption abuses, violations and arbitrariness. He was hailed for these so says (Momoh, 2006: 70). But the story ended there. The rest period of his tenure became business as usual.

Former president Obasanjo constantly used his office as commander-in-chief to prosecute real and perceived political opponents. When opposition mounted against his bid to succeed himself in 2007 for a third term, in retaliation Dr. Chimaraoke Nnamani, former Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu former governor of Abia State, Mr. Boni Haruna former governor of Adamawa State, Senator Sola Ahmed Tinubu former governor of Lagos State and Dr. George Akume, former governor of Benue State were some of the former governors that he consistently harassed with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), over their roles in the botched third term bid of chief Obasanjo. Not only governors were harassed but other prominent citizens like former chief of army staff Rt. General Victor Malu, former senate president, Ken Nnamani and late chief Sunday Awoniyi former PDP chieftain were equally harassed.

The selective anti-corruption crusade of the Obasanjo administration reached its climax in the way the former Acting Auditor-General of the federation Mr. Azie was maligned and dismissed from office for putting damning report on corruption in various arms of government, this was seen as a clear evidence that the anti-corruption crusade of the government was only a ruse. Another open example of the high degree of corruption within the PDP government under Obasanjo was the famed financial impropriety of the All Africa Games (COJA). There was no due process in all the COJA expenses and the presidential Adviser on due process even corroborated this when he told the press that COJA spending was concealed as recurrent expenditure instead of capital expenditure in order to evade due process (Ibeanu, 2008: 243).

During the life of the administration, there were incidences of extra-budgetary expenditure and non release of capital funds.

For Musa YarAdua's presidency, the anti-corruption campaign of the PDP led government was in limbo as a result of Mr. President's ill health which later took his life. But while he was around and away to far away Saudi Arabia nursing his ill health elites cabal close to him had a field day running the country's treasury as it pleased them without due process and regard to the laws of the land.

Coming to the anti-corruption campaign of the PDP led government during Jonathan administration, the regime was regarded as corrupt or soft on graft. This is so because various corruption reports, trailed the whole history of Jonathan's administration in the scope of pension fund, agricultural project fund, fuel subsidy, Stella Oduah suits, missing 20 billion dollar

among others.

In one of his media chats, former president Jonathan told the press that stealing is not corruption and that corruption is not Nigeria's greatest problem (The Guardian, 2015: 16). This view increased the tempo and citizen's perception of corruption in the polity during Jonathan's administration.

Equally, the Jonathan administration operated illegal crude oil account in violation of section 162 of the 1999, constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, this section allows for all monies accruable to the government of Nigeria to be paid into the federation Account. The worst of it all, is that Jonathan administration seldom probe nor arraign some of his ministers alleged of graft offence, and under his administration, some governors under investigation posted orderlies and relations to man departments in the EFCC.

We can safely infer that the inability of Jonathan administration to tackle corruption like other PDP administrations before him was one of the major factors that contributed to the failure of PDP government at the federal level during the 2015 elections.

Summary

In the course of this study the following findings were made:

1. That lack of internal democracy was common in all Nigerian political parties between May 29, 1999-May 29, 2015. This was characterized by authoritarian party leadership, godfatherism, electoral manipulations and wrongful use of power of incumbency which led to intra-party conflicts that culminated in PDP losing power to the opposition party (APC).
2. There was also the problem of non adherence to the power sharing formula of PDP since 1999 after the death of late President Musa Yar'Adua by his successor former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.
3. The existing political parties in Nigeria lack ideological base, cohesion, discipline and lack internal democracy for instance, PDP abandoned its party manifesto in running the affairs of the party and the country in general, thereby lacking in direction in the country's governance.
4. The problems in 1 above created intra-party crises, which led to a number of consequences like, defection, fractionalization and cross carpeting from PDP to other political parties.
5. The poor management of the economy and society generally by the then ruling PDP from May 29, 1999-May 29, 2015, became the party's albatross in the 2015 elections.
6. The merger of ACN, CPC, ANPP, a faction of APGA and decampers from the PDP led to the formation of a mega opposition party the APC, that wrestled power from a ruling party for the first time in Nigeria during the 2015 elections.
7. The loosing of power in 2015 elections by the PDP at the federal level, was a demonstration of the capacity of Nigerian electorates to vote out inept and bad government.
8. Finally, the paper observed that the PDP with its successes in past elections and the strength of its opposition is a political party to watch by the present ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), despite the party's present travails.

Conclusion

For the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to get out of its current crises arising from the problems of its internal workings since May 29, 1999-29, May 2015, the party needs to empower its members contrary to the current elite dominance of the party. The party, PDP, needs to restore confidence on its internal workings to its members provide a level playing ground for all its members, encourage issue based politics, sanitize instruments (including elections in the party), that service democracy, ensure that the party is socially sensitive and responsible to its members and by extension the people.

Ultimately, any form of party politics that creates mass poverty, illiteracy and diseases will only further alienate the people from the party and hence make politics an affair of the elite. Although, this will also bring its backlash, mass resistance from the people or at a mild level voting out of power of a bad government as the PDP experienced in 2015 elections.

However, despite the PDP situation, no political party in Nigeria is immuned from the problem of internal democracy and its consequent effect of intra party conflicts. Therefore, all political parties in Nigeria including the ruling All Progressive Congress should learn from the mistakes of PDP by putting their parties' organization in line with democratic demands for sustainable party development and stability as the Nigerian electorates have shown its capacity to vote out a non-performing political party in 2015 elections,

Based on the above the paper made the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. For the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to reposition itself as a formidable party to win elections at the federal level and state levels as it did before its defeat in 2015 elections it should respect internal democracy as a means through which the party can expand and retain its membership. This recommendation is not only meant for PDP, but also for other Nigerian political parties as they all suffer from the problem of internal democracy.
2. To achieve internal democracy in PDP, there should be party structure that is highly institutionalized. That is party's autonomy from other actors or self acclaimed or anointed "godfathers", this will democratize PDP's internal workings and the extent to which supporters identify with the party, so that the party's slogan of "power belongs to the people" will

become a reality instead of the power in the PDP belonging only to a pocket of elites in the party.

3. There should be ideological commitment and transparency in PDP. Ideology plays an important role in party organization and in its direction when it comes to power. This is so because party ideology works like a compass directing the movement of a political party and its membership discipline. For a party that does not follow its ideology which manifests in its manifesto during elections is like a ship without a shepherd.
4. PDP should embark on reforms and review its zoning arrangements. Even though the 1999 constitution is quite silent on political parties and zoning of offices, the party should nevertheless embark on genuine reform agenda mainly on the issue of zoning to allow an improvement into the party and the entire country as this was one of its major undoing in 2015 elections. Even though the 1999 constitution is silent on zoning, considering the diverse nature of Nigerian federation, the ruling party and opposition parties should come to terms with power shift / zoning formula in order to accommodate the diverse interests that make up Nigeria.
5. The current ruling party APC and its leadership should learn lessons from what befell the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), by acting actively and be corrupt free in the management of the Nigerian economy and society generally.
6. The imposition of candidates into any elective position should be abolished in PDP. The right of every party member must be respected and preserved whether an elite or non-elite. Consensus candidature must be played down at all levels of the party structure. This will reduce the rate at which its members are decamping into other political parties. This at the moment will make PDP to maintain credible opposition which will guarantee a brighter future for the party in its struggle for power in Nigeria and deepen Nigeria's democracy.
7. Nigerian electorates should remain resolute and maintain their capacity and commitment in the electoral process in voting out parties that cannot fulfill their electoral promises as they did in 2015 elections.
8. PDP remains the party to watch by the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). This is so because given its strength and past electoral victories, if the ruling party ignores it. It will be doing so at its own peril. APC therefore, must work hard to surpass the achievements of the PDP while in office, if not, Nigerian electorates are ready to use their votes to bring change as they did in 2015.

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