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Election and Politics of Party Defection in Nigeria: A Clue from Kogi State

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Abstract: Is there ‘true’ multiparty democracy in Nigeria? This is one of the political questions beg for answer among political scholars at various levels of government. The above question points our attention on if there is, also, any strong and credible opposition to sustain true democracy in Kogi State. Existing literature divulges that the concern of party defection is rampant in Nigeria’s democratic system due to some flaws in the country’s democratic process. This notwithstanding, the paper is borne out of the aftermath of the May 4, 2013 Local Government Elections in Kogi State. Our intention is to explain the rationale behind politicians cross carpeting to another political party and why they play ‘politics’ with such defection. It is on this premise that the paper maintains that accountability, fair representation, good governance, purpose of democracy and democratic consolidation will be defeated and by no means guaranteed if politics of party defection should continues. The paper argues that there is nothing wrong with party defection but, there is need for requisite for democratic consolidation, with great emphasis on strong and credible opposition choices. The paper then concludes that political order based on pluralism is needed if value should be added to the process of democratic consolidation in Kogi State and in Nigeria as a whole.

Keywords: Election, Democracy, Party Defection, Pluralism, Democratic Consolidation.

Introduction

Nigeria’s democracy is 14 years old since the country returns to a democratic government in May 29, 1999. Since then, there are different clogs in the wheel of democratic system in Nigeria which affect the country from having a ‘true’ multiparty democracy. One of these is party defection. Extant literature reveals that the issue of party defection, where politicians crossing

from one political party to the other, is rampant in Nigeria which cut across all levels of government from federal to local. 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria encourages political pluralism in which it reflects multiparty elections. A quite high number of these polls were flawed while few represent a reasonable reflection of voters’ wishes due to the obstacles to democratization. Although, the

holding of elections is not the sole prerequisite for democracy, but a mature democratic order requires that the rules of the political game endure between elections. A democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good. With an increasing disconnect between citizens and their elected leaders, a decline in political activism, and a growing sophistication of anti-democratic forces as a result of party defection, democratic political parties and democratic consolidation are continually challenged.

What democracy depicts in Nigeria continues to manifest clearly individual's quests for recognition or self-preservation rather than the greater purpose of service to the people and nation as enshrined in the letters of the definitions of democracy. This systemic behaviourism by so-called self-styled politicians in Nigeria and Kogi State (as it is our focus) has reduced the quality of opposition and regional balance affecting the capacity and ability for checks and balances which is compromised, weakening the process and system of governance for probity (Smith, 2012). Nigerian democracy has witnessed series of political defections in the last 14 years of democracy with politicians decamping from one political party to the other. This development which

is generally referred to as party defection, cross-carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party-jumping etc are employed to mean the same thing as defection (Malthora, 2005; Mbah, 2011). This has become a permanent feature of the Nigerian nascent democracy, especially, in Kogi State Local Government Areas. Political party defection or party-switching occurs due to myriad of reasons as resulting from personality clash, power tussles, crisis or division within a given party, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal political ambition, party leaders reneging on agreed issues of the political party probably on power sharing formula and divergent views on the operations of a political party's philosophy and ideology. There is nothing ideologically different in the manifestoes of all parties in Nigeria (see Abimbola and Adesote, 2012). The word "cross carpeting" in politics can only be relevant in a situation where parties have distinct ideologies and manifestoes. Some politicians take a deep plunge into politics and a political party because of their selfish interest and where their interest can be better served. Defectors from one political party to another hinged their decision on the dwindling fortunes of the party occasioned by its leadership crisis, lack of internal democracy and 'political' favouritism. All these reasons were the order of the day

previously in Kogi State and most especially in the May 4 2013 Local Government (LG) elections.

The general view or rationale for party defection is not entirely wrong, but in a situation where the ruling party repeatedly enjoys a landslide victory or where the whims and caprices of a political party belong to a single or group of dictators by not allowing internal democracy to overrule personal interest is injurious to any democracy. The paper however posits that, there is nothing wrong in people cross-carpeting if they do not find the programmes of their party in consonance with their ideals. It becomes dubious when politicians begin to mortgage their consciences as well as seek to pursue their private and selfish interest in the name of cross carpeting. This may have stemmed from the mere fact that politicians are poor and desperate to hold public office as a means of accumulating wealth. In advanced democracies, cross carpeting is done on principle, rather than on selfish and personal interest. What we are witnessing in Kogi State today is political prostitution which lacks political morality (see also Aziken, 2009). Our aim is not to come up with an explanatory framework on party defections in Kogi State and Nigeria as a whole, but most importantly to analyze a new framework and proffer explanations on why political party defection has become an increasingly permanent feature in Nigerian democratic experience. Then, find an

escape root towards a secure future for democratic process in Nigeria.

Kogi State: Historiography and Party Affiliation

Nigeria was a colonial creation since 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern protectorates. The country is endowed with different and incongruent ethnic groups (Omotola, 2008). To enhance integration and forge sustainable sense of nationhood and development of these disparate groups was the creation of states from the then three regions – Northern, Eastern and Western to thirty six states. Kogi State was borne out of the process of administrative and political structure of Nigerian federalism in August 27, 1991 from part of Kwara and Benue States. The attendant search for autonomy by each group and transformation of identity politics according to Omotola (2008), culminated to exert irresistible pressure on the state to adjust and readjust in many respect. People believe the surest way to gain access to the ‘national cake’ is the demand for state creation because state is the mean locus of revenue allocation in Nigeria.

Kogi is a heterogeneous state that is shared between three main ethnic groups who, interestingly, dominate each of the three senatorial districts. The eastern part of the state is mainly populated by Igala/Bassa people. The Igala people, not only monopolized the highest political office in the state, but also has been

producing Governor since inception; while the Ebiras hold sway in Kogi Central with a minority group known as Epira-Koto; and the Western Senatorial district is dominated by the Okun, the Yoruba speaking people, with Oworo and Nupe people as minorities (Yusuf, 2006; Omotola, 2008). Its capital is located on the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue at Lokoja.

The political composition and party affiliation is not different from squandering of hopes that accompanied the creation of Kogi state. At the inception of the democratization process in 1999, renewed faith and political hope seems elicited but as it is presently in the state, majority of people have lost hope in the democratic process in the state and even in Nigeria as a whole. The above statement is not unconnected with the charade way and manner the May 4, 2013 LG election was held. Serious questions needed to be asked if truly there is political pluralism in the state. There are three major political parties (PDP, ACN and CPC), among others, in the state. These parties are just there on paper but in the real sense, there is a one party state – the ruling PDP. Events in Kogi State since 2003 suggest that political pluralism has largely compromised which serve as a pointer to increase rate of party switching. The state has not been working towards a healthy democratic state. Credible opposition choices, however, have not always guaranteed and unfortunately, the

progresses in the political arrangements of the polling accompany by lack of any alternatives or even counter forces to the ruling party.

This brief examination of Kogi history and opposition groups indicates that the consolidation of multi-party democracy is still a long way off in Kogi state and Nigeria as a whole. Elections are not about charismatic leaders espousing little by the way of a policy platform. Nor should democratic polls merely require voters to select one ambitious political clique from another but it is an attempt made to brainwash electorates that politics is a leveler. Electoral contests cannot just be about a population offering predictable loyalty to the movement that historically won liberation for their society. Until Nigerians are offered a genuine choice between competing policy programmes, then ‘true’ multi-party democracy remains a distant goal.

Politics of Party Defection: The Effects

The democratization process in Nigeria, following the successful completion of what Omotola (2008) called “the longest and most expensive transition program in the country (1986-1999)” with the handing over of power to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who was democratically elected and sworn in on May 29, 1999, radiates new hopes and faltering prospects (see Aremu and Omotola 2006). One threatening dimension is the unprecedented rate

of political party defections. Party (political) defection or cross-carpeting certainly predates Nigeria's independence and is older than her sovereignty. However, this has been shaped and sharpened by colonialism and sustained by the structures of post-colonial state (Mbah, 2011). It was colonialism that set the pace for modernization and economic development in Nigeria, while dramatically changing the existing patterns of social, political and economic interactions among peoples and groups. Colonialism had far reaching and uniform impact on the development of the character and behaviour of Nigerian ruling class. There are two ways the defections occur. First, there is great movement of politicians from different political parties into the ruling party towards the time of the general elections. The idea is to participate in party primaries of the ruling party. The second movement starts after the party primaries. At this point those who lost in the party primaries move to their former parties or to new ones or even to form a new party under which they intend to contest the coming elections. Our clue from Kogi State is premise on the latter. Virtually in all the 21 LGs in Kogi State, politicians who felt cheated and short changed in the conduct of the 'selection process' called primary election decamped the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to join an alternative party (Bello, 2013). Some of the chairmanship

aspirants who decamped due to the above reason include among others Hon. Olamife Ade-Raphael from Kabba/Bunu LGA, Hon Olumoko Funsho from Ijumu LGA. The duo joined Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Apart from the chairmanship positions, the councillorship aspirants on the same platform were not left out. Their cross-carpeting, except few councillorship positions, was not rewarded as they were not elected in a highly described sham election.

Political defections on the other hand, take place outside the walls of congress and the actors are not elected members of legislative body. This act is for local politicians, not elected political office holders (Kamara, 2012). In the society, there are people of immense influence who can galvanize popular support in their communities. Having the support of such people in a political party brings good accolades to the party in the area of electoral advantage. The success of a party in a certain area depends to a great extent on their support. These people according to Kamara (2012) are known as populist leaders who are more powerful than the electorate. To win the support of such people brings rewards to the party at election time. The governing party therefore always tries to weaken an opposition party by persuading such community leaders and buy them over to the government side as it brings benefits to them (ruling party). Must a governing party at all

times weaken the opponent? If a political leader wielding political power cannot show that he has power, then he may just as well pack up and quit the stage as unfit for leadership. This is what the people of Kogi State learned and witnessed from the political theater of Capt. Idris Wada, the Governor, during the May 4, 2013 LG elections. He threatened to show all the political office holders - commissioners, special assistants, board members and head of parastatal - the way out of the government if they failed to win their ward for PDP in the local government election, stressing that they are in the government because they are members of the ruling party (Adebayo, 2013). Another significant oppression to the opposition by the ruling government was the appointment and imposition of a ruling PDP card carrying member, Hon. Ayo Abraham Olaniran, who one time contested the House of Assembly primaries in Kabba/Bunu constituency as the Kogi State Independent Electoral Commission (KOSIEC) Chairman. The state government made use of state apparatus to suppress the opposition. KOSIEC refused to display and publish copies of voter's list for verification before the election which negates the 2010 Electoral Act, among other obvious irregularities to the detriment of the opposition.

Lack of viable party ideology in Nigeria is a serious *raison d'être* for cross-carpeting. The PDP, Action

Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and among other parties in recent times continue to exert authority with the large numbers of decampees, especially in the battle for supremacy. Of course, these choices could be strongly influenced by a large number of politically motivated reasons. Policy disagreement, politics of godfathers, tribal and regional sentiments and personal conflicts are but a few of such peccadilloes (Bakare, 2013). In time past, we usually witness the occasional parliamentary cross carpeting (see Mba, 2011), but in the present day, it is like a virus. The alarming rate of defects to another party cringes on the lack of strong party political ideology. Political parties in Nigeria are not driven by any ideology other than making money. They all claim to be democratic just to deceive the public. Yes, majority carries the vote, but it must not be a majority made up of zombies or illiterates (Robinson, 2010). It is obvious that one cannot play honest party politics in Nigeria unless he is ready to discard some principles that may not go well with his party. Unfortunately there are some principles one cannot part with, even after becoming a member of a political party because Nigeria's democracy is still fashioned towards military mentality and tied with regional interest. One may have decided not to lie or be involved in rigging elections. As far as Nigeria politics is concerned, politicians find

delight in lies. It is anti-party to proclaim that opposition party is performing well even when it looks so obvious. Despite all pretences to the contrary through their manifestoes, as much as the superficial classifications as the “left” and “right”, “progressive” and “conservative”, Nigerian parties seem to be bereft of clear ideological commitments. Whatever the case, it is important to note that at the very heart of the success or otherwise of political party is the important question of political ideology (Omotola, 2009). The ideological principle of political parties in Nigeria is all about politics of ‘winner takes all’ syndrome.

The unfaithfulness of some politicians to philosophical level of their party is another reason for cross carpeting. Many sign up to one party or the other as students or as young professionals, trade unionists or whatever. And they usually continue to be members of the same party for the rest of their lives. They doggedly stick with their party through thick and thin. They stay despite occasional or regular conflicts with fellow party members. They stay even when they think their party has made mistakes. They stay even if their party does not provide them with the advancement they feel they deserve. According to Okolabah (2011), many stay because they see their parties as the bigger picture and any disappointments or tensions that their parties inflict on them as the smaller picture. This could only have

happened in advance countries like US and UK where politicians would never have an illusion of moving to other parties because other parties cannot satisfy them on a philosophical level (see also Okolabah, 2011). In Nigeria, most especially, Kogi state, the complete reverse is the case. Most Nigerian politicians are cantankerous losers. Most are bad tempered who are always complaining and feel entitled and relieved to prestigious jobs in perpetuity. Cross carpeting comes very naturally to them even when they are founding fathers of various parties they flounce off to join a new party. Some chairmanship aspirants in the May 4, 2013 LG election in Kogi state abandoned their original parties in because they did not get the rock- solid assurances they required from the powers-that-be and want to maximize their chances of becoming chairmen.

The truth is that many who have found it expedient to dump any party will opportunistically flock back if the party they dumped wins the election. This is where politicians play politics with defection. Nigerian grandees specialize in this kind of aggressive, shame- free jockeying for eternal relevance; and some, to be fair, do not even have to do any jockeying at all. On reflection, we could criticize politicians for behaving like spoiled sports stars who have no serious plans for developing the nation. But one could vividly understand why they are so lamentably fickle, mobile, ruthless

and shallow. Nigeria is not a place that encourages good behaviour or deeply held convictions. This is a country where decent and potentially productive folks are oppressed and excluded. People who try to cling to ethical codes are regarded as mad, daft or suicidal (Aleyomi, 2012). Nigeria is a country in which unbecoming conduct delivers fantastic benefits, so can one totally blame those who decide to go with the flow for survival's sake? However, the development of dishonest traits in some politicians resulting in the tainting of good and credible democratic practice is a serious underlying problem with political party defection (Hoeane, 2008).

Another important reason for party defection is lack of party internal democracy. Intra party democracy signifies the active participation of all party members to contest any position both within the party and for public offices. Since 1999 when Nigeria joined the comity of democratic states, political parties have faced the problem of nondemocratic practices. The expectation generally is that since the country has embraced democracy, its political parties must be democratic not only externally, in their goals but also democratic internally in their organizational practices and behaviour (Mbah, 2011). Political parties across the states take advantage of conflict in opposition parties, internal rancour, power tussle and bitter rivalries to

woo disgruntled members to their fold, while others take advantage of a weak or lack of virile opposition to strengthen existing members and win bystanders desirous of changes and development (Bakare, 2013). This is the Nigerian situation, keenly handled the Nigerian way. Political parties are one of the institutions that carryout and actualize the democratic principles in any organized democratic society. They have to perform a number of 'institutional guarantees' to effectively discharge what is expected of them in any democracies (see Aleyomi, 2010). Intra-party democracy is one of the institutional requirements. Before a country can be sanitized and developed, there must be a number of internal sanitation and development in the prospective parties that look forward to form government in such society. Internal democracy describes a wide range of methods for including party members in party deliberation and decision-making. Some advocates for intra-party democracy argue, on a pragmatic level, that parties using internally democratic procedures are likely to select more capable and appealing leaders, to have more responsive policies, and, as a result, to enjoy greater electoral success. Some, moreover, converge on the premise that parties that "practice what they preach," in the sense of using internally democratic procedures for their deliberation and decisions, strengthen democratic culture generally (see Abia, 2013).

This was not the situation in Kogi during the May 4, 2013 local government election. Many decampers from PDP to opposition parties blame lack of party democracy in the PDP most especially, choosing party candidates for election in their primary elections (see Bello, 2013).

Constitutional ambiguity and loophole is another serious reason for party defection. In the last decade of democratic governance in Nigeria, the country has witnessed series of carpet crossing, with politicians jumping from one party to the other especially to the ruling party, the PDP. This development has generated heated debates on whether the constitution should allow carpet crossing or not. The 1999 constitution did not address the national question and other nagging issues pertaining to Nigerian federalism simply because Generals Abacha and Abubakar did not intend to put in place a democratic government based on popular consent (Mbah, 2011). While Abacha was looking and drafting 1999 constitution ab initio, for self succession, Abdulsalam Abubakar saw it as a mechanism for quick handover to civilian elected democratic government. Be that as it may, the process that culminated in the drafting of 1999 constitution ignored the structural issues that have bedeviled the country's ability to enthrone a truly accountable, transparent and democratic political order (Mbah, 2011). Consequently, it

produced a draft that was full of ambiguities, which have led to the increasing rate of party defections immediately it came into operation, in May 29, 1999 (see sections 68(1) and 109(1) of the 1999 constitution).

There are various lacunas in some sections in the 1999 constitution that have provided an escape root for politicians to 'party switch' anyhow. Section 68 (1) (g) of the constitution states a member of Senate of House of Representative may vacate his seat if:

“being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected; Provided that his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was previously sponsored”. (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

Notwithstanding the above constitutional provisions, the last part of the section gave an escape root and platform for many politicians to cross-carpet since there are always divisions within the political parties. The ambiguity of

the constitution caused defections among Nigerian politicians to be on the increase, with the greatest casualty being the opposition parties. The politician who decamped in Kogi state during the local government election to either the ruling party (PDP) or opposition parties justified their action on the grounds that series of irregularities occurred during the primary elections of parties most especially the PDP. After all, the 1999 constitution does not have a perfect definition of crisis or division that could cause defection or cross-carpeting. Politicians defect to another party to prosecute their political ambition. This situation is so peculiar because politics is primarily concerned with the sharing of huge scarce resources which makes the struggle for state power brutal among various competing groups.

Cross carpeting from one political party to the other may seem graceful to those who are doing it, but it is rather harmful to their integrity but maybe profitable to their vices and personal aggrandizement which contaminates the future of democracy. In a civilize democracy like England, France, Germany, even USA where we borrowed our dispensation and governance, party defection is frequently not common. Even, in some Africa countries like Ghana, Liberia, Guinea such tendency is in a very low threshold not even advertised or promoted as we are ceremoniously doing in

Nigeria. Apart from daunting the democratic sustainability, it also affects the political progress and stand of the decamped politician. What happens to the hierarchy and structure of the party which membership and status should be determined by an individual party membership standing as a criteria? It is rather impossible for a politician to join a political party today becoming a member number 15,001 for instance and move straight away to the top echelon bypassing all those ardent members who have worked hard to preserve the party's integrity. An individual who moves from one party to another engages in political prostitution because he is not different from a man who moves from one woman to the other always leaving them in pain and sorrow, as well as women who do the same (see Odum, 2002). It is common sense to note that individuals or people who changes friends all the time cannot be trusted because it ends up in betrayal. Politicians indulging in party switching are just betraying their conscience and the integrity of our democracy (Smith, 2012).

Cross-carpeting by non-politician no doubt poses a threat to the stability of the multi-party system; it is arguably as a result of the malaise in our democratic system, evidenced by the bankruptcy of political belief, policies and ideals in the ruling and opposition parties most especially in Kogi State. Party defection has impacted negatively in the process of consolidating democracy under

unwarranted situations of plethora defections among party members. The intimidating potentials of the opposition parties in Kogi are thoroughly overbearing to the PDP. The party (PDP) structural alignment not to meet the yearnings of the people by providing a sense of belonging to some minor and major stakeholders in the State is second to none. This is responsible for the reasons while some opposition parties' members in Kogi are angling not to join the ruling party who is purely for self-aggrandizement rather than attempt to build a strong party structure. And on the other hand, some politicians believe in their hanky-panky traits. This trend tends to make caricature of democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Political party defection is sufficient enough to lead to outright political instability if not checked.

The hallmark of the unstable and violent headship enjoyed from the People's Democratic Party in Kogi is the political foolishness and leadership inexperience of the former Governor of the State, Ibrahim Idris. The most intriguing aspect of this phenomenon in a state like Kogi has been the participation of the youth, who until recently had stood largely outside the political stream, in election violent with localized concerns and predominantly conservative political outlook. This is not a sudden event, it has its root in the momentous and quality effort

laid as foundation by the successive Kogi government since 2003 coupled with heinous activities of some 'do or die' politicians. The youths' hostile conditions during the 2013 local government election in Kogi state encumber not so much transition to democracy as the consolidation of enduring democracy in Nigeria.

Towards Securing Nigeria's Democratic Future

The concepts of democratization have been extensively debated in the literature over the years. Whitehead (2002:26) observes that if democracy itself is an essentially contested concept, then democratization "cannot be defined by some fixed and timeless objective criterion". However, democratization is generally seen as the movement from authoritarianism to a stable democracy, which ideally should transform various aspects of national life for the better. On the other hand, Osaghae (1999:7), defines democratization as "the process of establishing, strengthening, or extending the principles, mechanisms and institutions that define a democratic regime". For Whitehead (2002:28), democratization is a complex process that involves "political competition and the transition from one state to the other can be brought about rapidly, unambiguously and permanently, provided some of the prescribed institutional changes are implemented." The effective functioning and sustenance of such a

society largely depends on the institutionalization of key elements that discourage party defection and enthrone political stability. It also requires an open, free, and independent press that provides alternative sources of information, education, and socialization while holding the government accountable for its actions and inactions.

There is also need for the rule of law, which includes the political equality of citizens and the protection of their rights not minding party affiliations (ruling or opposition parties); and the availability of an independent judiciary within a culture of respect for judicial pronouncements by the other arms of the state, particularly the executive. These are not as simplistic and straightforward as they seem because they require the existence of people with democratic mind-set, capable of managing these structures and institutions in line with democratic demands. But often, these requirements are grossly lacking, especially in developing countries including Nigeria. For example, the press is not only dominated by state-owned media. The rise of independent media, both print and electronic, has been unable to completely transform the political landscape (Omotola, 2008), although it had a positive impact on the political terrain. Media activities are still censored, and media practitioners have been constant victims of state violence through closure, seizure, and unlawful arrest and detention even under a

“democratic” regime. Core political actors have also been known for the flagrant violation of rules in order to remain in power, as the 2007 general elections showed. There is no separation between state and ruling party. Reports of Kogi LG election recently conducted in 2013 and the resulting political impasse and sham conduct and announcement of election results confirm this (Bello, 2013). The perverse manifestations of these requisites for democratic and political development have tended to cripple efforts at securing better future for Nigeria’s democracy.

The issue of party defection or cross carpeting is becoming vital and a serious threat to democracy in Nigeria with special significant increase in Kogi State which must be faced squarely. According to Smith (2012), one cannot be disgruntled over the end of the story without having been disgruntled at the beginning over the poaching of politicians because of the purchase of votes. Often, he who sowed wind ends up reaping a storm. Nigeria does not need insecure individuals or so called politicians with many tricks up their sleeves to promote personal agendas and self patronage at this point in time when the country is at the phase of its ‘Transformation Agenda’ but needing people with integrity and sincerity of purpose exhibited in their conduct to garner the respect of the people to moving the nation forward. When any one political party moves this far

poaching or close to elections accepting members switching from another party, it makes it nearly impossible for the political system to deal constructively with the country's diversities which is affecting unity. It is morally questionable, and will always leave a bitter taste in the mouth of our politics, but it seems individuals have chosen between survival and extinction from the political and social landscape for self-preservation.

Despite such moves creating chaos and mistrust in our politics, there is no political will among the parties and the system to amend the law and disable such changing of party jerseys. Today, the public (Nigeria electorates) does not expect much from politicians, hence moral condemnation is unlikely as a sanction. That is why the leaders of parties must foremost take responsibility for personal policy and take care who they recommend in joining their fold ensuring it is not with hidden agendas. All these can be achieved considering the following suggested way out or recommendations.

It is abundantly clear that lack of internal democracy among the Nigerian political parties is one of the reasons inhibitive to democratic consolidation as discussed in the previous section of this work. The ideological thesis that human beings are equal is the basis of democracy (Toyo, 1994). The acceptability that every man is equal will facilitates the workability of internal party

democracy. The essential elements of internal democracy which include equal participation among party members especially the involvement of all ranks and files in the party's policies, as well as representation at party activities; inclusiveness and institutionalization that demonstrates the degree to which internal decisions and procedures are formalized are lacking within the Nigerian political parties. Besides, the assumption is that internal democracy in political parties thrives more in societies that strongly uphold democratic principles and ethos. For a state to be democratic with the practice of a true multiparty democracy there is need for some accepted criteria which have been put forwarded by Dahl (1971) to include: civil and political rights, fair, competitive, and inclusive elections. To him, countries that meet these criteria are called 'polyarchies', but they are more commonly referred to as liberal democracies. Be that as it may, there is need for a provision and sustainable internal democracy in all registered political parties in Nigeria. This will not only secure the future of Nigeria's democracy but also knit high-quality ideology in the party that will streamlines the incessant rate of cross carpeting among politicians.

It is also obvious that the Nigeria's political party lacks social capital culture and it may be difficult for any institution or party that lacks social capital to function maximally.

Social capital is a mechanism for social harmony and peace building. The phenomenon refers to those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. It also represents the degree of social cohesion in communities and associational life. The key elements of social capital include, social trust, mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperation, reciprocity and other networks of civic engagement that facilitate coordination and communication through which information about trustworthiness of other individuals and groups can flow, and be tested and verified (see Paden, 2013). Social capital describes the relations that bind communities, parties through a sharing of trust together. It also emphasizes that for an institution such as political party to be orderly and prosperous; these basic norms must be embedded in the system (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). Therefore, social capital culture is advocated and recommended to be infused into Nigeria's political system most especially, the political parties. This will not only encourage people to endure their parties but also limits (if not put an end to) political prostitutions.

No doubt, multi-party democracies need multiple parties, where one serves as the ruling party and others as oppositions as alternatives or even counterforce to the ruling party. This gives electorates opportunity to vote out irresponsible government's

policies and conducts and vote in a more proactive and functional one due to the presence of alternatives. This can only be effectively achieved where there are credible opposition choices. Therefore, there is need for credible, coherent and tenable oppositions not numerous vanity parties with limited support. In a country where the opposition is very strong and acceptable, there would not be need for cross carpeting because it will build up the trust one has in his/her party. Not only that, when all the political parties are credible with strong internal democracy, party defection will be discouraged and atypical. Indeed, free and fair elections have to result in two turnovers of government before a state can be properly classified as a democracy. This showcases that pluralism is sincerely working according to Huntington (1991) and that both incumbent and opposition are committed to the rules of the political game, and, above all, that parties will be willing to concede defeat if that is the wish of the people. To secure democracy, a state requires more than one party with a realistic chance of being elected. However, democracy cannot be measured by the quantity of competitors alone but the quality of these parties is equally important.

Another prerequisite to combat the negative impact of party defection and underpin the future of Nigeria's democracy is the need for strong civil society. Healthy associational activity can act as a powerful

independent counter-force to prevent the state from monopolizing the political process. The corporation with and challenge the government in a multiparty democracy is an essential role of civil society. This will ensure that the public interest is paramount and that governments continue to respect the rules of the democratic process. Another related point to strong civil society is that, government should make all elective and political positions less attractive. This will discourage unhealthy competitions among the party members that might warrant party switching.

The legislatures should summon the courage to make law that will abolish state independent electoral commission from conducting local elections. And if that would not be possible, there should be a uniform state electoral commission under the constitution that will cut across all the 36 states in Nigeria. The last paragraph of section 68 (1) (g) should be amended and restructured to solve the ambiguity caused as a loopholes for politicians to defect. Proper interpretation is required on the concept of 'division'. In line with the solution to constitutional ambiguity, there is need for independent candidacy in any election. Sections 7(4), 65 (2) (b), 106 (d), 131 (c) and 177 (c) of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999, prohibit independent candidacy in elections. For a vibrant democracy, independent candidates should be allowed.

There is need for a neutral state whose institutions provide a 'level playing-field' on which political parties can compete fairly. The national interest (interest of all) should be the concern of a ruling party not the interest of the party. By winning an election, a party has the right to rule through the institutions that provide a level playing ground for all citizens. The issue of winner takes all politics in Nigeria should be abolished and embrace collective responsibility. This act will help to separate state from political party in a multiparty democracy and hence help to sustain democratic regime in Nigeria. The clear distinction between the state and the ruling party is yet to emerge in Nigeria. Even at the state level most especially in Kogi state, it is difficult to separate PDP from the state government because of some political activities and appointments that do not enhance collaboration with the opposition parties. Despite the room giving to multiparty to compete in a multiparty democracy, opposition groups often do so at a clear disadvantage. To ensure longevity of Nigeria's democratic system, there is need for the ruling party to guarantee free and fair elections and avoid manipulation of electoral process. The constitutions should not be amended solely to suit the interests of the ruling party. The state resources should not be used to bolster ruling party electoral campaign. All parties should have equal access to state-owned media

and in conclusion, the state security forces to strengthen democracy, and not to be used to intimidate the opposition.

Finally, every political party should uphold political culture as an ideology. All the above recommendations for democratic sustainability can be achieved through the idea of political culture. Political culture is the shared political ideas, attitudes and beliefs that bring about a society. By nature of man, all individuals have their own views and interests, but more stable societies usually have some general political principles held in common. Every individual should respect and defend the rules of the political game irrespective of party affiliation (be it ruling or opposition

party) and there should be no abandoning of pluralism once in power. Also, the opposition should have respect for democracy and desist from abandoning democratic process if fail to win power. Nigeria's democracy should be linked with the liberal democratic ideology that will permeate the entire society. The respect for democracy and no deferral to a state that abandons the democratic process does not exclude the civil society. Democracy is a method of conflict resolution which is valued in institutions throughout both the state and civil society. Nigerian polity should have a replicate of this political culture if multi-party democracy is to survive.

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