

Political Nomadism and Its Implications on Political Development in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Political nomadism; that is the nature of the game, politics without principles; understand it by whatever nomenclature, acronym or synonym you may so desire: political port - de - port, political party defection, cross carpeting, floor crossing, party defection or deflection, party decamping, political party prostitution and the likes; this writer prefers the term political nomadism not for any derogatory intent but for the primary purpose of capturing the vitiating nature of that phenomenon in the political prospect of Nigeria. Political nomadism is self-serving as it leaves the politician without a bus stop pursuant to self-aggrandizement. The concern of this paper however is not on political nomadism per se as much as it is on the political development of Nigeria viewed from the binocular of democratic consolidation. At the heart of Nigerian ruling class politics is a fundamental inability to serve the genuine interests of the Nigerian people. The APC's emergence represents a major gain for the historically fractious oppositional segment of the Nigerian ruling class and in truth; they must be commended for coming so far to the point where they are increasingly becoming a serious alternative to the PDP. As the battlefield 'election 2015' is drawing nearer, Nigeria is witnessing more and more political nomadic movements, which may spell impending doom to our fledgling democracy. Drawing extensively on secondary sources of literature and leaning on the post-colonial state framework, this paper exposes the historico-evolutionary trends of political nomadism, rationalizes its causative factors and critically analyses its implications on political development in Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study political nomadism rests on a tripod of factors, namely: constitutional or legal inadequacies, irresponsible political ruling class and absence of internal democracy. Recommendations are therefore suggested for policy cum legal reforms for strengthening democratic practices.

Key words: political nomadism, political development, democracy, party defection, internal democracy.

Introduction

Nomadism is no longer a term exclusive to Hausa/Fulani cattle rearers only; it has attracted to itself a wide array of connotations. In contemporary Nigerian politics the phenomenon has emerged as a rather problematic to democratic consolidation. Political nomadism as a practice is not new to Nigeria though the coinage of the term may seemingly be recent; a fact this paper intends to popularize. However, since the inception of the Fourth Republic Nigerian democracy has been marred by series of political nomadism with politicians decamping from one political party to the other particularly from opposition parties to the ruling Political Party both at the National and State levels.

Political nomadism as a phenomenon is generally referred to by Malthora (2005: 9) as "party defection, cross-carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party-jumping etc." In the context of this paper these are employed to mean the same thing as political nomadism. This has become a permanent feature of the Nigerian nascent democracy.

Political nomadism, party defection or party-switching, according to Hoeane (2008: 70) "is believed to have taken place when an elected political party representative within a legislative structure such as a parliament, embraces a different political or policy perspective that is incompatible with that of the party/parties he or she represents". Fundamentally, such movement is prompted by feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent with his or her former party from where he or she decamps without the defection reflecting any ideological leaning. In fact it is a common phenomenon in both the developed and the developing democracies for people to leave their political parties for another. But whereas in developed democracies it could be ideologically based in developing democracies it is materially based.

Scholars and commentators see the reasons as resulting from personality clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operations of a political party's philosophy, crisis or division within a given party, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal political ambition and party leaders renegeing on agreed issues

of the political party probably on power sharing formula. Defectors from All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) to PDP hinged their decision to dump ANPP on the dwindling fortunes of the party occasioned by its leadership crisis. Hoene (2008: 71) adduces that “the general reason underpinning floor-crossing is that given the dynamic nature of politics, public representatives should be allowed to change their political viewpoints to align them with what they perceive as changing political circumstances”.

However, the general view or reason for political nomadism seems simple but not entirely wrong. As a result, they need to be transcended in order to provide new concepts that better capture the contending problems of political nomadism. Our aim is not only to come up with an explanatory framework on political nomadism in Nigeria, but most importantly to analyze the framework and proffer explanations on why political nomadism has emerged as an increasingly permanent feature in the Nigerian political developmental process as well as to critically analyze the implications and challenges to political development particularly on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The concluding section also made recommendations intended to usher in meaningful legal and institutional reforms for sustainable political development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In our attempt to place this study in its proper perspective the need for a theoretical framework of analysis is quintessential. Consequently, the paper adopts the Marxist theory of the post-colonial state. The theory is important because of its relative proficiency in analysing post-colonial political economy. The major proponent of this theory is Karl Marx though he did not ab initio call it Marxist theory of post-colonial states, but he advanced the following attributes of the neo-colonial state:

- i) The post-colonial state is purely an instrument of class domination.
- ii) The primitive accumulation with state power is done by domestic dominant power and certain external forces.
- iii) post-colonial states are renter states parcelled out to the persons that use the state power for selfish ends.

Marxist scholars like Vladimir Lenin, Claude Ake, Eme Ekekwe and Miliband have in their separate studies contributed to the development of the post-colonial theory of the state. Lenin (1984:10-11) noted that the state is a product of class struggle in society. The state emerged so that antagonistic groups will not consume themselves in fruitless struggle over the ownership of means of production. Hence the state emerged to moderate class struggle in advanced bourgeoisie states unlike in neo-colonial states where states are parts and parcels of class antagonisms it was supposed to moderate. Thus post colonial states rather than maintain or moderate economic relations, became an instrument of domination, exploitation and intimidation of the subjects (Ekekwe, 1986:12). The post-colonial state became a specific modality of class antagonism.

Similarly, Miliband (1977:109) insist that post-colonial states are dependent on the alien forces that colonized them and thus the state is both the source of economic power and an instrument of accumulation of economic power as the state is the major means of production. This however was a colonial heritage as colonial character has matured when independence was achieved in most post-colonial states who inherited these colonial traits with little or no modification. After independence in the periphery, there was a mere change of leadership position from foreigners to natives while the policies remained largely unchanged (Ake 1981:88).

The Nigerian State as a post-colonial state or a periphery nation is characterized by these factors discussed above. Like other colonial states, Nigeria lacks the capacity to moderate the struggles which is pronounced between or among the various ethnic groups and states that make up Nigeria. Hence political and economic imbalances exist among and between the various states or ethnic groups that make up Nigeria. These imbalances exist in almost every sector of the economy hence most people feel marginalized a situation which predisposes politicians to endless port de port called in this context political nomadism. This theoretical framework therefore holistically captures and explains the ramifications of socio-economic cum political relations in Nigeria within which the study is located.

Evolutionary Trend of Political Nomadism in Nigeria Politics

Political nomadism or what is known as decamping in Nigeria pre-dates independence. Therefore, it is as old as Nigerian politics. In 1951 the first celebrated cross-carpeting episode occurred in Nigeria. This cross-carpeting

scenario robbed Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the chance to lead the government business of the Western Nigeria. Mbah (2011: 3) reporting the incident based on Nnanna's (2010: 3) account captures it this way:

This was the most celebrated cross-carpet episode in Nigeria. The Yoruba members of the National Council for Nigerian and the Cameroon (NCNC) were lobbied to cross over to the Action Group (AG) to stop Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, from becoming the premier of Western Region. When the House met, there was a red carpet, and the speaker's bench was in the centre; the government side was on the right whereas the opposition bench was on the left side. The NCNC, the majority party occupying the government side, had the red carpet separating them from the opposition. The Governor was then the Speaker or the Chairman of the House. He took his seat. Chief Awolowo got up and announced that he had a matter of urgency to raise in order to forestall a situation that could lead to riots and anarchy, and which many members of the House had decided to correct. One of the NCNC members got up and remarked "Your Excellency, I do not want to be part of a situation where Yorubaland would be set on fire". So I am crossing over to the other side. Consequently, the gentleman crossed over to AG on the floor of the Western House of Assembly.

This seemingly acclaimed matter of urgency resulted in 'nomadic' or massive movement to the Action Group to forestall the leader of the NCNC, Nnamdi Azikiwe from becoming the Premier of Western region following and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba man, and the leader of Action Group, the leader of the opposition in the Regional House of Assembly. The NCNC won 42 seats out of 80, but within 24 hours, 20 of them had cross carpeted to AG. It was Chief Awolowo that exerted pressure on a number of Yoruba elected members on the NCNC platform to act "nomadically" in the House and join the AG, in order to deny Dr. Azikiwe the premiership in favour of Awolowo. Azikiwe had assumed the leadership of the NCNC following the death of Herbert Macaulay. There would have been no basis for carpet crossing if Macaulay a Yoruba man, and not Azikiwe, were elected Premier of Western Region on the NCNC platform in 1951.

Consequent upon the above infiltration of ethnic rivalry into Nigerian politics Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was according to Nafute (1999:3) compelled to "return home" to the East where he became the premier of the regional government. The history of Nigeria politics cannot be comprehensively elucidated without mention been made of this dangerous precedent, which set the pace for the development of Nigerian politics built around ethnic and regional rivalry as well as crisis and instability that followed later. These conditions according to Mbah (2011: 4) "gave birth to an increase in the number of ethnic based political parties in the country till today. These ethnic groups are entangled in perpetual conflicts such as the current issue of zoning".

The above incident simply marked the evolution of political nomadism or what was then tagged cross carpeting. The First Republic (1960-1966), was not absolved from the nomadic movement as the former Premier of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola left the then Action Group based on personality clash between him and Chief Obafemi Awolowo and on personal principle, necessitated by the need to move the Yoruba people into Nigeria's mainstream politics. In the same way as it happened between Akintola and Awolowo, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC and Dr Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe had an occasion to fall apart in their political relationship which led to Mbadiwe's formation of the Democratic Party of Nigeria Citizens (DPNC), which sought a working relationship with the AG at the Federal Elections in 1959.

Political nomadism was not exclusive to the First Republic. It's also evidenced in the Second Republic (1979-1983), as the Action Group reproduced the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Chief Awolowo's loyalists such as Adisa Oladosu Akintola, Anthony Enahoro, Richard Akinjide, and S.G. Ikoku reconsidered their loyalty to the party. According to Mbah's (2011: 5) report;

A number of them defected to National Party of Nigeria (NPN). One important issue of the cross-carpeting of the Second Republic was the decamping of Chief Akin Omoboriowo from UPN to NPN as the Ondo state gubernatorial candidate. In the same manner, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi was elected under the ticket of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and Rimi later decamped to the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), on which platform he sought re-election in 1983. Many politicians from the opposition parties decamped to join NPN during this period.

Nigeria Third Republic was opprobrium and therefore does not necessitate any analysis here. However, since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic on 29th May 1999, incidences of political nomadism have been legion; from one party to another, from smaller party to a bigger and stronger one and a losing party to a ruling one. In the submission of Dum (2002:4) “the pattern (that is defection) appeared better defined on ideological ground, the nature of formation and decamping up to the set of parties between 1979 and 1983”. He adumbrates that the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) of 1979 was a semblance of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) of old; Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) like the NCNC before it; Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) like the Action Group (AG) and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) wearing the cloak of Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) of old. The three major parties beget the old order of parties in the First Republic.

Conversely, at the inception of the Fourth Republic political development it was only the Old Alliance for Democracy (AD) (1999-2003) seemingly had ideological semblance to the Second Republic UPN, and both parties maintaining the Southwest of Nigeria as their stronghold. Other parties did not have any significant identity of the parties of the old. The series and rate of decamping explains the emphasis on private interest as no politician wants to remain in a losing party. It also explains one fact that political parties in Nigeria lack ideological base. Essentially, politicians who stick together on ideological understanding make for a better strength and cohesion in the party, and contribute immensely to the political development of Nigeria.

In a succinct overview of political nomadism during the initial stage of the Fourth Republic Odum (2002: 4) asserts as follows:

The movement into the ruling PDP does not augur well for democratic consolidation. Every game has its own rule(s) or it ends up in a storm of confusion. In 1999, Chief Evan Enwerem, having lost the gubernatorial primaries in the All Peoples Party (APP) in Imo State, decamped and joined the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) on whose ticket he won a senatorial seat. His cross carpeting was rewarded as he was elected the Senate President. In Plateau State Alhaji Alhassan Shaibu decamped from the APP and joined the PDP in 1999. He is now a leading member of the Northern Nigeria Development Company (NNDC). In Cross River State, not less than seven prominent APP and AD members have cross-carpeted to the PDP so that today, Cross River State is PDP state in every respect.

The prevalent fact during this period is that, the direction of defection is one-sided, and is essentially into the ruling party; predominantly the PDP. Only little percentage seems to be decamping from PDP to other parties or to form a new political organization. Whereas this paper is convinced that there is nothing wrong in people cross-carpeting if they do not find the programme of their party in consonance with their ideals. It is rather 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, political nomadism is done on principle, rather than on selfish and personal interest. What we are witnessing today is political prostitution which lacks political morality.

A chronicle of defection under the Obasanjo Fourth Republic has as its high point the cross-carpeting of the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. He was a founding member of the PDP, and defected to the Action Congress (AC) after a running battle with the former President Olusegun Obasanjo. In 2007 he contested the presidential elections on the platform of AC, but lost to the late President Umaru Yar’Adua. A few months to the 2011 General elections, Atiku went back to the PDP where he contested the presidential primaries. Agina (2010: 3) adds that “prior Atiku’s defection, Ondo and Edo States witnessed cross-carpeting of members of the opposition parties to the party of the incumbent governor. Edo State witnessed a large defection of members of the PDP to the AC, which is the Governor’s party”. In the case of Ondo state, there was a mass political nomadic movement of PDP members to the Labour Party (LP) of which the incumbent governor is a member. In both cases, the cross-carpeting were an aftermath of political battles and in-fighting. We must not forget that today’s Ondo state still led by the Labour Party elected Governor has again redirected its way back to the PDP in another round of political nomadic movement.

Incidences of political nomadism remain a hallmark of Nigeria political development, especially in contemporary times. There again came defection of state governors to the ruling party, the PDP. For instance, the incumbent governor of Bauchi State, Isa Yaguda who had won the governorship election on the platform of the

All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), but defected to the PDP with a large number of his supporters. Others include the incumbent governor of Imo state, Ikedi Ohakim, who won the governorship election on the platform of the Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA) but defected to the PDP. Aliyu Shinkafi of Zamfara State (ANPP) and Saminu Turaki of Jigawa state (ANPP) all defected to PDP.

Political nomadism in Nigeria obviously is not exclusive to state governors or the executive arm alone, recently it has become more evident in the legislature; among Senators, members of the House of Representatives and state assemblies across Nigeria. To kick start this movement, Mbah (2011: 7) asserts;

Were six senators who were elected on the platform of the ANPP, the Accord Party (AP) and the Action Congress (AC) who cross-carpeted to PDP. These include Senators Sali Gogwin(AC, Plateau state), Patrick Osakwe (AP, Delta state), Patricia Akawasike, (ANPP, Nassarawa state) and Sa'di Yauo (ANPP, Zamfara state). Since 2007 when the present National Assembly was inaugurated, no fewer than 13 Senators and 15 members of the House of Representatives have defected to the PDP.

The above illustrations clearly depict the facticity of political nomadism or cross-carpeting in Nigeria. Whereas this phenomenon predates Nigeria's independence, however, it has been shaped and sharpened by colonialism; sustained and perpetuated by the structures of post-colonial state. 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 Nigerian ruling class, their character and behaviours.

Forms of Political Nomadism in Nigeria

Political nomadism understood from the perspective of its myriad connotations may occur in several different ways, namely:

1. Great or mass movement of politicians from different political parties into the ruling party towards the time of the general elections. The idea is to belong to the mainstream party and thus participate in party primaries of the ruling party.
2. The 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.

In the above two variants, the direction of nomadic movement is largely determined by the personal ambition of one or two seemingly great politicians to emerge as flag bearers and contest in the general elections. Usually such movements are massive as such politicians in their intent to be viewed as equal stakeholders will like to display their strong followership perhaps to the chagrin of their initial party.

Other variants of political nomadism are in the form of;

3. Elected executive officeholders mainly state Governors abandoning or defecting from the political parties under which they got elected into office to join another political party usually the ruling national party as in the case of Chief Ikedi Ohakim a defunct governor of Imo state defecting from the Progressives Peoples' Party (PPA) to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), after the 2007 general elections and in the same state the incumbent governor Owelle Anayo Rochas Okorochoa decamping to the All Progressives Congress (APC), from the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) after the 2011 elections. These forms of executive political nomadism usually result in the last but not the least variant.
4. Political nomadism in legislative chambers, which has become pronounced in recent times in Nigeria. In fact, this seems to have become the most common dimension of political nomadism in contemporary Nigeria politics, where legislators move, sometimes in their numbers to join the party in control of the executive arm of government both at the states and national level. In rare occasions such movements could be from a ruling party to a seemingly emergent opposition party as in the cases of defections witnessed from the PDP to the APC necessitated by internal democratic challenges within the ruling national party.

Legal Deficiencies that Exacerbate Political Nomadism in Nigeria

It has so far been established in this paper that since the commencement of Nigeria's apparently new found democracy of about one decade and half experiences has been replete with series of party defections or nomadic tendencies, with politicians jumping from one party to the other especially to the ruling party and otherwise both at the national and state levels. This phenomenon has generated heated criticisms and debates on whether the constitution is good for it. In liberal democracies that we purport to practice in Nigeria, constitutions are supposed to emerge by popular consent to give vent and legitimacy to political realities. In the case of Africa, albeit Nigeria in parenthesis, no sooner than independence was attained, the elaborate framework was dismantled, ushering in an era of military authoritarian rule. The rest of the events are reminiscent of the travails of democratic governance in Nigeria.

In ways most remarkable than ever, the period and circumstance under which the 1999 constitution was enacted predisposes it 'ab initio' to myriad ambiguities as it was bereft of participation and discussion by Nigerians of how it was likely to work in practice and how far the structure would be affected by the activities and outlook of the Nigerian political parties and their leaders. It was against the above backdrop that Mba (2011: 12) asserts that:

Generals Abacha and Abubakar did not intend to put in place a democratic government based on popular consent. For Abacha, the 1999 constitution was meant for self succession, while for Abubakar it was rather a mechanism for quick handover to civilian elected democratic government. The constitution, therefore, did not address the national question and other nagging issues pertaining to Nigerian federalism. In all, the process that culminated in the constitution ignored the structural issues that have bedeviled the country's ability to enthrone a truly accountable, transparent and democratic political order.

Consequently, it produced a document that was inherently ambiguous in most of its provisions, which have engendered increasing rate of party defections immediately it came into operation, on May 29, 1999 and by the gravity of such deficit endangers democratic practices in Nigeria.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is copiously marred with deficiencies especially in sections 68 1(g) and 109(1). Although section 68 1(a) states:

A member of the Senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a member if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before 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" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:34).

This last part of the foregoing section provided an escape root for politicians to cross-carpet since there are always divisions within the political parties. It provided the platform for many legislators and governors who defected to justify their actions on the grounds of divisions or crisis within their political parties since the 1999 constitution is not definitive of crisis or division that could cause defection or cross-carpet. Three AD senators, in 1999, Wahab Dosunmu, Yemi Brimoh and Fidelis Okoro who defected to the PDP exploited the constitutional provision which grants an elected member the right to defect if there is a division in his party.

The provisions of these sections of the constitution were explicit in matter which concerned the legislature. It clearly mandates that any member of the legislature, who intends to defect to another party, must prove that division or factions exists in the party of which he was a member, or that his party has merged with other or more parties or factions. While the constitution made provisions for legislators, it was silent on those of the members of the executive arm such as the president, the vice president, the Governors and the Deputy Governors. The ambiguity of the constitution caused defections among Nigerian politicians to be on the increase, with the greatest casualty being the opposition parties. The country has in recent times witnessed a great deal of defections among legislators, governors, deputy governors, party members and other political office holders,

who in most cases defect to the national ruling party the Peoples Democratic Party, the paradoxical big umbrella that accommodates everyone.

Constitutional controversy and struggle for state power have been the recurring themes in Nigeria's political history. The constitutional crisis in Nigeria between 1962 (Western Nigeria Crisis) and 1964 and the issue of two-thirds majority of 19 states in 1979 readily comes to mind. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria, rather in the words of Anifowose (1982: viii) "it characterizes nearly all developing nations where politics is primarily concerned with the sharing of scarce resources among various competing groups". Today, it is no longer the sharing of pitifully small resources, but huge resources that makes the struggle for state power fiercely intense.

Since the capture of state power guarantees control of the allocative power of State over scarce economic resources, including the spoils of office and patronage, the ruling party simply opens its arms to embrace decampees (the political nomads) from opposition parties in order to mitigate serious competition and wresting of power away from it. In the prevailing scenario competition between the ruling party and the opposition is as a consequence weakened. Political nomadism is therefore, a by product of the pattern of guaranteed patronage and the spoils of office. As a result of the above, the ultimate technique of politics in Nigeria is the distribution of material benefit among the major players and among the members of the ruling party. To be excluded from politics means outright ruin and to be included means outright prosperity (zero – sum game). In order to avoid economic cum political marginalization as a political weapon in the hands of the ruling party, every politician seems to be moving into the ruling party in their large numbers in order to be included in the distribution of economic largesse accruing from state power.

The loopholes in the 1999 constitution were immediately taken advantage of as the basis for retaining their position as political office holders while defecting to the ruling party. The country gradually gravitates towards a one party state with its harmful implications to the nascent democracy. In this way, political parties exist in Nigeria as both material and social forces. The social forces include ethnic based political parties which to a great extent have been deemphasized, but they still exist. This emphasizes the centrality of political power in Nigeria.

The following words by Joab-Peterside (2007: 6); "the 1999 Nigerian constitution was promulgated into law by a military regime characterized by autocracy and arbitrariness" largely portrays the inherent deficiencies therein. The Constitution was not people's constitution; rather it was a constitution that was hurriedly put in place and as such was accepted by Nigerians in order to return to democratic governance; at least half bread they say is better than none at all.

Internal Democracy in Political Parties as a factor of Political Nomadism in Nigeria

In discussing the challenges of Nigeria's political system in general and especially the problems of weak democratic institutions, special mention must be made of the state of the political party system in the country. It could be recalled that political parties stand indicted in the crisis of the First Republic. Those parties, formed and managed along ethno-cultural lines, exacerbated the then existing regional/ethnic fault-lines and schism in the country. Subsequent efforts at party formation however tried with significant degrees of success to avoid this pitfall.

The Final Report of the Nigeria National Conference (2014: 341) observed as follows:

The current political party system in Nigeria continues to be beset with problems which include a lack of internal democracy and of accountability; poor funding and the absence of an ideology; god-fatherism and a flagrant disregard for the rules of the game; the marginalisation of women and youth to mention but a few. These problems in themselves have given rise to new fault-lines of their own; they have engendered profound alienation and disaffection between and within political classes, threatening to heat up the polity in some instances, while actually leading to the outbreak of violence in others as several electoral and post-electoral crises have shown. Almost invariably, in such instances, it could be said that the notion of a free and fair election, the hall mark of a democratic political system, has been vitiated.

In addition to the above stated there still remains the critical challenge of improving the governance mechanism of political parties in Nigeria and making it a functional instrument for the development of the country's nascent democracy. As it is today, it has failed to be properly focused and issue-driven with lack of commitment to faithfully respect party constitutions and guidelines, particularly in the distribution of power and functions among its ranks.

The foregoing has serious implications for national development in terms of the prospect for evolving a systematic, efficient and efficacious leadership recruitment/selection process, capable of crystalizing the ideals of good governance, while promoting the ideals of integrity, honesty, commitment to and respect for the rules of law, to an effective reward system as well as disciplined approach to the management of the commonwealth.

Pursuant to the above Mba (2011: 15) opines that;

The basis of the political parties and their activities as aspect of the guiding principle of political party organizational structure, democratic system and internal 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 the Fourth Republic was inaugurated, 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. However, lack of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties has become a persistent threat to the country's nascent democracy. Party primaries throughout the country clearly show that Nigeria political parties are not operating within norms of democratic principles. Various political parties have failed to adopt the provisions of the party's constitutions to all party members who are eligible and want to run for office in their party primaries. Some candidates were imposed on the party without election and due process.

One major issue that has increased the rate of defection is the Amended Electoral Act 2010 which removed section 87(9) of the 2006 Act. The National Assembly in the process of amending the 2006 Electoral Act amended the section in such a way that it completely strips Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of any say in the matter of disqualification of nominees submitted by political parties. Consequently, in the amended Electoral Act 2010, this provision has been expunged by the National Assembly in order to render section 87(9) ineffective or irrelevant.

This section of the previous Act underscores the inherent inability of INEC as a commission to arbitrate timely on contentious party nominations which do not follow stated party guidelines by specifying in section 87(9) of the old Electoral Act 2006 that: "where a political party fails to comply with the provision of this Act in the conduct of its primaries, its candidates for elections shall not be included in the election for the particular position in issue". In the amended Electoral Act 2010, the provision was expunged by the lawmakers. It however, introduced a new provision to section 31(1) which completely strips INEC of any authority in the matter of disqualification of nominees submitted by political parties. This new provision states that:

Every political party shall not later than 60 days before the date appointed for a general election under the provisions of this Bill, submit to the commission in the prescribed forms, the list of candidates the party proposes to sponsor at the elections, provided that the commission shall not reject or disqualify candidates for any reason whatsoever.

By using the blanket phrase "any reason whatsoever", in the above section Mbah (2011: 16) explains that "the National Assembly stripped INEC, the supposed umpire of the ability to determine the qualification or status of any candidate submitted by a party, irrespective of any circumstances surrounding a candidate's status". Consequently, the party now dictates, imposes, and determines how, who and why a candidate can contest in an election in which they are participating, even if INEC has doubts over the candidate's credibility. Therefore, INEC's supervisory role in ensuring internal democracy in selecting party candidates was then eroded. Consequently, litigations and court injunctions and counter orders stopping candidates from parading themselves as party flag bearers/duly elected have become quite high.

Political Nomadism and Implications on Political Development in Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

According to Alhaji Balarabe Musa the national chairman of Conference of Nigerian Political Parties, in an interview with News Agency Nigeria (2014: Feb 12), “defection undermines the quality of politics in Nigeria. Defection of politicians from one party to another undermined the political development of Nigeria”. While describing as “mindless” the manner in which politicians defect to other political parties, he said there was the need to check the trend for stability within the polity. In the words of Musa in NAN (2014: Feb 12), he further commented that:

The defection by members of political parties is mindless. This is because there is a lot of loose money in the country and anybody with sufficient money can go to any other party to achieve his ambition....The root of defection is money politics..., another reason why politicians decamp is due to lack of internal democracy within political parties. This lack of internal democracy is what results to this threatening level of defection in the country.... Normally there is nothing wrong with defection, it is democratic, and it is the utilization of the constitutional provision for freedom of association and choice. The phenomenon happens in all countries of the world... in advanced countries defection happened rarely and if it happened, there must be honourable reasons for it.

Taking political development to be akin to democratic sustainability or consolidation is apparently helpful for measurability. In that wise it is defined Wikipedia (2009: 1) as “the process by which a new democracy matures in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock”.

Linz and Stepan (1996:20) opine that “democracies can be considered consolidated when democracy becomes institutionalized behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally”. Behaviourally, a democracy is consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a non-democratic regime or by seceding from the state. Attitudinally, a democracy is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion, even in the midst of major economic problems and deep dissatisfaction with the incumbent, holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life, and when support for anti-system alternatives is quite small or isolated from pro-democratic forces. Constitutionally, a democracy is consolidated when governmental and non-governmental forces alike become subject to, and habituated to the resolution of conflict within the bounds of the specific laws, and produces institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process. The above factors are synonymous to political development.

One of the greatest elements of democratic consolidation is free, fair and credible elections for transition from one administration to another. The above seems to be absent in Nigeria. This is because it has not internalized democratic ideals and does not exhibit them behaviourally and constitutionally. The nature and the character of the neo-colonial state exhibit inhibitive characteristics that do not allow competitive elections to ensure liberty, responsiveness and rule of law.

Political nomadism therefore, has negative impact in the process of consolidating democracy under unwarranted situations of myriad defections among legislators, governors, deputy governors, and other party members to the ruling party. This trend tends to make caricature of our politics and particularly nascent democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This is because there is a great movement of members of the opposition to the ruling party. The case of Bauchi state becomes illustrative at this juncture. Isa Yaguda who is the current governor of Bauchi state was elected in 2007 under the platform of the ANPP, but he defected to the PDP with a large number of his supporters including the members of the State House of Assembly. But in a dramatic twist, his deputy governor, Garba Gadi who adamantly refused to go the way of his governor by joining the PDP was impeached by the members of the State House of Assembly. Due to the unlawful impeachment, he went to court to contest his removal. Recently, the court ruled in his favour, and he was reinstated as the deputy governor. The governor is a PDP member and his deputy an ANPP member. What a divided House? It will be very difficult for both of them to work in harmony and make a sensible progress politically. The deputy governor is likely to be subordinated and subjugated in all areas of public service.

It is morally wrong for an aspirant to use one political platform to ascend power only to dump that platform at the least opportunity for another party. With the growing cases of political nomadic defections to the PDP and the apparently depleting member of the opposition, there is a mounting fear that Nigeria may gradually be moving toward a one –party state which may be harmful to the nation’s nascent democracy and its consolidation.

Commenting on the implications of political nomadism Mbah (2011: 18) asserts thus;

One of the greatest fears of the current defection from other parties to the PDP is that it is leading to a further fragmentation of opposition parties from where politicians have defected to the ruling party. It also creates chances for the emergence of new political parties that lack strength and focus on the political scene. Today, Nigeria has 62 registered political parties from three in 1999 when the Fourth Republic was enthroned. As a result, this situation of defection leads to mushrooming of political parties and reinforces the weakness of opposition parties. This does not augur well for the development of party politics because it promotes money-bag-politics. This does not give room for ideology-based political parties to thrive and develop. Parties are formed and joined for personal interests. The type of allowances they allocate to themselves make the ideology-based political parties impossible.

Furthermore, underlying political nomadism, according to Hoeane (2008: 74) “is the problem of the development of dishonest traits in some politicians that have accompanied the introduction of floor-crossing, resulting in the tainting of good and credible democratic practice”. One of the ways through which floor-crossing does this is that politicians become political prostitutes. Odum (2002:1) vividly captures this when he postulates that:

Politicians and prostitutes are two seemingly parallel professions. One supposedly displaying constitutional leadership virtue in governance is the latter revealing social vice – the fabric of a decadent society. Incidentally, one common denominator for both appears to be their loyalty, which stands on quick sand, shifting as mundane attractions glow in their adulterous eyes. The consideration, especially with the modern day politician is where stakes may be lower and gains higher. It does not matter who is the offer. So, while the prostitutes switch beds, the politicians change camp in this game of cross-carpeting. That simply put, is the internal ordering of our nascent democracy. Power is no longer a thing held in trust. It has become a fraud which every politician is clamouring to hold.

Cognizance of the foregoing statement, there is increasing inculcation of undemocratic practices in our polity, indicative of poor leadership of political parties where different political views do not exist and if they exist they are not accommodated. For example, the ANPP became devastated by the potential severe loss of members to the PDP. Over 15 members of the ANPP in the National Assembly have defected to the PDP since 2007. This development affected the leadership of the party and gradually predisposed it to extinction.

Political nomadism could also lead to outright political instability if not checked. This is because in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malawi and Zambia, political party defection is regarded as sufficient threat to the stability of the political systems. Hoeane (2008:71) concurs to the above when he argues that “in extreme cases of floor-crossing, where the number of public representatives who have defected has been significantly high, such shifts of allegiance have led to the collapse of democratically elected governments, such as in Lesotho in 1997”. Political nomadism or party defections of political office holders who do not resign the first platform for coming to political position do not add value to the process of democratic consolidation.

Challenges and Prospects for Political Development

It is a truism to boldly assert that were the parties to be ideologically driven and the political class to be ideologically focused, the political process would have been better strengthened than it is presently, and our

democratic governance would have been better for it, with ample evidence of democratic dividends for the people.

As history holds during the 1954 pre-independence elections in Nigeria, it was the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was reputed to have engineered the infamous cross-carpeting in the Western Regional House of Assembly, which short-changed the then National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun – later known as National Council of Nigerian Citizens – (NCNC) that won the election from forming the government of the region and bestowed power on the Awolowo-led Action Group (AG). It was a sad breach of Nigeria's developing political process and the nation's unity. Perhaps, it was in recognition of the sad experience that those who drafted the constitution of the Second Republic forbid cross carpeting of elected legislators in the 1979 constitution. The same clause is embedded in the 1999 Constitution of this Fourth Republic.

We must note that this particular clause has been observed mainly in the breach since 1999 by the ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which has been in control of the National Assembly. While it suited the PDP, it embraced legislators who defected from other political parties to its fold until the hurricane political nomadism came early this year, when about 47 Representatives and seven senators of PDP sought to decamp to the All Progressive Congress (APC). But much more than the National Assembly, we note that the gales of decamping know no bound, bringing to question the issue of ideology amongst the political class. Already a school of thought believes that Nigerian politicians lack ideological focus, and that they are driven by the selfish interest of what they could make out of politics as political jobbers.

This is rather sad. The tales of political nomads from one party to the other since 1999 are monumental, raising the doubts as to whether the political parties are founded by men of the same ideological conviction or they are an assemblage of buccaneers whose only interest is to lay siege to the spoils of the nation's political offices. Or else how does one classify the lack of ideology that pervades the Nigerian political landscape. Neither the PDP nor the APC has been able to tell Nigerians in clear terms their ideological directions 15 years into our democratic pursuits.

It is well taken that because of the dearth of ideological direction, the politicians are simply out, looking for the platform where their perceived greed could be serviced the most; they are simply not out to give the nation any form of good leadership. It best explains the nomadic movement of politicians from one party to the other as presently being witnessed; of course, without regards for honour and integrity.

The implication of this is that the citizenry is left helpless, having discerned the lack of honour among the politicians on the one hand and the lack of ideology in the political parties on the other. The general assumption, therefore, is that the parties and the politicians only exist to scramble for spoils of governance; and when mandated through electoral victories, only dispense government resources in favour of personal interest and those of their cronies. Isn't that the reason why Nigerians find it difficult to draw the line between one politician and the other, one party or the other; and that after 15 years of democracy, the citizenry is yet to truly reap the dividends of democratic governance?

The paper make bold reiterate that were the parties to be ideologically driven and the political class to be ideologically focused, the political process would have been better strengthened than it is presently, and our democratic governance would have been better for it, with ample evidence of democratic dividends for the people. Indeed, we are compelled, in this situation of lack of ideological focus of the political class, to call on the political parties to define their mission and vision, and to publicly present their ideology and manifestoes. In that way, Nigerians can hold the politicians accountable in line with their ideological divide. This will to a large extent mitigate the unwholesome decamping, which, no doubt, is not helping our democracy.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Policy

Ideology based politics and principles are long cremated in Nigeria. It no longer exists in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria. What exists is a crop of politicians so mindful of their private interests that they are mindless of the common good of Nigerians. The driving force is how to capture state power for private gains. In search of this is the great movement of politicians from one party to the other. This movement has been lucidly captured in the paper as political nomadism to portray the back and forth and seemingly endless nature of party defection in Nigeria. This trend shows that Nigerian politicians have no democratic values and our political

system is awash with professional politicians who are devoid of modern political ideology and therefore are suitable as political prostitutes, ever disposed for political harlotry and ready to romance and bedmate any party that holds the ace to guarantee their mindless self interest.

This paper therefore submits that for the purposes of sustainable political development with recourse to deepening the practice of democracy in Nigeria, legal cum political reforms are more apt today than ever before to institutionalize internal democracy, do away with overbearing godfatherism, place sanction on defection of elected officials so that any elected politician that defects to another party should be made to stand down and seek reelection. The Independent National Electoral Commission must also be legally reenergized to enforce discipline among political parties and not just to conduct election alone. Other recommendations are:

- To evolve a systematic leadership selection process to facilitate the emergence of good leaders;
- Select/elect the best people for leadership positions at all times, promote the virtues of effective reward and disciplinary system, integrity, honesty, commitment, dedication and respect for the Rule of Law; and
- To institutionalize the culture of good leadership by example, and ensure the introduction of effective schools curricula as effective instruments for instilling discipline in the society.
- To promote a stable, broad based democratic system that is inclusive, cost effective and which promotes competition, and discourages rent-seeking activities;
- Ensure consensus- building in governance, guided by respect for the rule of law.

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