

1 Politics of Defection and its Implications on Nigeria's Democracy

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6 Abstract

7 This study examines the politics of defection and its implications on Nigeria's
8 democracy. Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 ushered in a great hope of democratic
9 dividend and heralded a rare opportunity for the country to launch a new democratic strategy,
10 after years of military dictatorship. The emergence of multiparty democracy in Nigeria since
11 1999 has been seen as a major breakthrough in the democratic process. However, the way and
12 manner politicians in Nigeria defect from one party to the other has not only constituted
13 democratic nuisance, but has continued to raise serious concern among political observers and
14 participants in Nigeria. This have lend credence to lack of clear ideology and manifesto among
15 political parties in Nigeria. The issue of defection has been one of the major bane of
16 democratic process in Nigeria.

17 *Index terms*— democracy, defection, political culture, political party, political socialization.

19 1 Introduction

20 he practice of defection from one party to the other appears to have become a necessary attribute of party politics
21 in Nigeria. Politics of defection in Nigeria can be traced to 1951, when several members of National Council
22 of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) defect to the Action Group (AG) just to deny Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and his
23 party (NCNC) the majority in the Western Regional House of Assembly, which the party required to form the
24 government in the Western Region (Adejuwon, 2013). Within the Action Group (AG), Ladoké Akintola, a deputy
25 leader of AG, left the party in a crisis of personality and ideology between him and the party leader, Obafemi
26 Awolowo, to form United Democratic Party (UNDP). UNDP then entered into alliance with Northern People's
27 Congress (NPC) to frustrate AG dominance of the Western Region.

28 Lending credence to the above, Mbah (2011) argued that defection has become not only a norm but an
29 increasingly permanent feature in the Nigerians democratic culture. Party defections and political instability are
30 the greatest challenges confronting Nigeria's democracy (Nwanegboet al., 2014). The usual practice is politicians
31 defecting to other political parties if they fail to secure party nominations during own party's primaries, while
32 some who felt disillusioned, cheated or denied free and fair primaries, defect to other parties so as to participate
33 in the elections, with the intention of returning to their original parties after such elections. This has been the
34 practice during election periods in Nigeria since democratic resurrection in Nigeria in 1999.

35 One of the issues that has contributed to party defections in Nigeria is lack of internal democracy within
36 political parties. In Nigeria, recognition of candidates for nomination and selection for primary elections depends
37 on the strength of the candidate in area of economic and political power, without any due consideration of the
38 integrity and capability/capacity of the candidate involved (Jinadu, 2014). These acts have led to political crises
39 leading to individuals defecting to other parties and/or forming new parties as a result of dissatisfaction with
40 party operation and general voter's apathy in the democratic process. (Badejo et al., 2015). For instance, the
41 unhealthy power contest and intra-party crises prompted incessant defections of prominent members of People's
42 Democratic Party (PDP) between 2013-2015 to the opposition party-the All Progressive Congress (APC). In
43 Nigeria, no political party has clear ideology and this has accounted for incessant internal party crises which
44 usually leads to defections. But in some cases, politicians still defect to another party even when there is no

45 crisis within their political parties. As a result of the above scenario, it is necessary to note that party defections
46 in Nigeria are not restricted to one party, but has become a political norm in Nigeria's democracy. Therefore,
47 the spate of defections and its implications on Nigeria's democracy has raised a fundamental question on the
48 sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

49 However, the study intends to answer the following questions:

50 i. What are the factors responsible for party defections in Nigeria? ii. What are the implications of party
51 defections on Nigeria's democracy?

52 2 II. Conceptual Exploration of Defection and Democracy

53 Conceptual exploration of defection and democracy is necessary in this study to give clear understanding of
54 the terms and their impact on each other. Defection is an act of swapping political parties. It is an act of
55 changing party allegiance or moving from one party to another. This particular term is known by different
56 nomenclatures- "decamping," "crosscarpeting", "party hopping, "party switching," "party crossover" and canoe-
57 jumping" (Malhotra, 2005). Some scholars has argued party defection is caused by political events involving
58 political institutions while others concluded that it is as a result of ideological pressure (Nokken and Poole,
59 2002).

60 However, Malhotra (2005) observed that in some nations, party defection are not taken seriously whereas, in
61 some countries, such actions are seen as threat to democratic stability. This threat prompted the enactment of
62 laws against defection in some countries. For instance, India enacted laws against defection in 1973, 1985 and
63 2003. The law provides that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for withdrawing membership
64 of his original political party (Janada, 2009). The law reduce cases of party defection in the Indian polity since
65 it was difficult for Indian public office holders to forfeit their position. In Nigeria, there exist also allow aim
66 at checkmating the rate of defection in sections 68 and 109 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution (as amended).
67 However, inherent deficiencies in the law have frustrated the achievements of the purpose of the law. For instance,
68 section 68 (1g) states thus:

69 A member of the senate or the House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House of which he is a
70 member if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member
71 of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected. Provided that
72 his membership of the latter political party is not as a result of a division in the political party of which he
73 was previously a member or of a merger of two or more political parties or factions by one of which he was
74 previously sponsored (Constitution of Federal of Nigeria, 1999, p.34) However, Winston Churchill remained one
75 of the foremost political defector. He first joined the British parliament as a Conservative in 1901, defected to
76 the Liberal in 1904, and defected back to the Conservative in 1925 (Wikipedia-The Free Encyclopedia, 2014).
77 In Nigeria, the former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar seems to be the most defected PDP politician in
78 recent times, he defected to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) from Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), then
79 moved back to PDP and then moved back to APC Progressive Congress (APC). On the other hand, democracy
80 is a system of government that encapsulates three vital components: meaningful competition among individuals
81 for public office using political parties at periodic intervals, inclusive participation of the citizens in the selection
82 of leaders and policies formation/ implementation and considerable level of civil and political liberties (Diamond
83 et al., 1989). Nnoli (2003) see democracy as a system of government involving freedom of individuals' political
84 life, equality of citizens before the law, social justice in the relations between the people and government as
85 well as free choice of individuals in deciding political leaders. Schumpeter (1990) conceptualize democracy as an
86 institutional arrangement for reaching political decisions through which individuals acquire the power to decide,
87 by means of a free and competitive struggle for the people's votes. Democracy cannot function effectively and
88 efficiently without political parties and individual belonging to political parties can retard democratic process
89 through their actions within the political parties. Democratic success is measured on the extent to which people
90 have unrestrained access to participation in the policy processes (Unah, 1993).

91 3 III.

92 4 Ideological Confusion and the

93 Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria

94 The alarming rate of defection of politicians and instability within political parties occasioned by lack of internal
95 democracy tends to obstruct democratic sustenance in Nigeria. Political party is one of the major institutions
96 prerequisite for democratization and democratic sustenance. In advance democracies such as U.S.A., Britain,
97 Germany, etc. parties have been known to exist on sustained ideological base, not just platform for ascending to
98 political power. Ideology, according to Christenson (1981) is seen as a belief system that justifies chosen political
99 order for the society. It is a set of shared beliefs regarding the proper order of a society (Omotola, 2009). Omotola
100 (2009) avers that ideology constitute the hallmark of social political identification as well as mobilization and
101 unifying factor. Ideology as a set of beliefs has the potency of unifying people of different cultures, ethnic groups,
102 religion, gender and orientation.

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104 What really gives democracy meaning is the right of citizens to freely participate and choose their leaders. The
105 extent of citizens' involvement in decisionmaking relates directly to the type of policies government make. The
106 absence of the above elements retards any democratic efforts.

107 Galvanizing the concept of political ideology in Nigerian politics will prove clearly that Nigerian political
108 parties lacks clear ideology and in fact, suffering from ideological confusion. Since Nigeria's independence
109 in 1960, Nigerian parties have been established on baseless foundations. This has accounted for unnecessary
110 defections of Nigerian politicians because these parties lack clear ideology. While Omotola (2009) argued that
111 this baseless foundation of Nigerian political parties is responsible for party's ideological barrenness, we conclude
112 that complete absence of ideology in Nigerian political parties has accounted for the prevailing party crossover
113 and party switching in Nigeria.

114 For instance, all political parties in Nigeria have one internal crisis or the other. Often, these crises led to
115 conflict, division, factionalization and killing of party members. Example, the killing of former Justice Minister,
116 Bola Ige after he indicated his interest to resign his position in PDP-led government and return to help his party,
117 Alliance for Democracy (AD) for the 2003 elections, the killing of PDP South-South leader, Harry Marshall
118 after he cross-carpeted to All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP), the killing of former Deputy Speaker, Akwa Ibom
119 State House of Assembly after he defected from PDP to All Progressive Congress (APC) to contest 2015 general
120 elections for the State House of Assembly, etc. are all clear instances that party politics in Nigeria is not rooted
121 on ideological democratic principles.

122 In Nigeria, issues such as ethnicity, religion, language, culture, money, etc. have considerable role in the
123 formation and management of political parties and thus, it is pertinent to note that democratic sustenance
124 in Nigeria has remained a "tall dream" that may not be achieved. Nigerian political parties are riddled with
125 ideological confusion, internal crisis and lack of capacity to sustain itself. This has accounted for parties changing
126 names, merging with other parties and sometimes form alliance but still face peculiar problems. Ideological
127 principles is necessary in party formation, structure and management. This is why Seliger (1976) averred
128 that politics interconnect with ideology. Fundamental in party ideology is the entrenchment of internal party
129 democracy to guarantee equal opportunity for participation and protest. The above is just an abridged version
130 of catalogues of political cross-carpeting in Nigeria. However, it could be noted that the "political prostitution"
131 in Nigeria is permitted in the executive the arm of government under the 1999 constitution. The provisions
132 of section 68 (1g) only affects the legislature and to some extent, ambiguous. This is so because the issue of
133 division in political party or factions within a political party is a relative term that can be interpreted different.
134 Someone might defects from his original party to another as a result of minor disagreement and claim the party
135 was factionalized or divided. Section 68 and 109 of the 199 constitution (as amended) have not empower any
136 agency to determine when a political party is factionalized or divided and this has reduce these constitutional
137 provisions to a fallacy and ambiguity. This has further created unnecessary confrontation in the political system.
138 This is so, because the processes of conducting party affairs and regulating the behaviour of party members have
139 remained largely irreconcilable.

140 Therefore, the major source of confusion, conflict and lack of focus in both ruling and opposition parties in
141 Nigeria is that they lack ideological foundation. The truth is that both the old and new parties in Nigeria
142 are virtually the same in terms of attributes and characteristics. Defection in Nigeria have been more confusing,
143 conflicting and cannot promote democratic stability. This scenario has been obstructing democratic consolidation
144 and growth in Nigeria. For political party to promote democratic sustainability, it must be rooted in clear ideology.
145 Political party is the fruit of ideology and ideology is the root of political party. Political party is vulgar when
146 not liberalized by ideology and ideology fades into a mere literal concept when it loses sight of its relations with
147 political party.

148 IV.

149 6 Defection and its Implication on Sustenance of Democracy in 150 Nigeria

151 The act of defection in Nigeria is traceable to the emphasis on the primacy of political power. Easton (1965) see
152 politics as an avenue for authoritative allocation of values for the society. People struggle for political power so
153 as to be able to preside over the allocation of resources for the society. This is because the possession of state
154 power directly give access to economic power. By implication, those who hold political positions determine the
155 allocation and distribution of economic resources and political rewards. The alarming rate of political defection
156 in Nigeria and the increasing number of party defectors remains a serious source of concern. This concern,
157 according to Ogundiya (2011) revolve around the role of political parties in the collapse of first, second and
158 third republics. Mbah (2011) averred that desperation to hold public office as means of accumulating wealth
159 make Nigerian politicians to cross-carpet without justifications. In advance democracies such as U.S.A. Britain,
160 Germany, Australia, etc. cross-carpeting is done on ideological principles, rather than on selfish and personal
161 interest. For instance, a member of Republic Party in the USA can express support for Democratic Party member
162 or aspirant without necessarily defecting to Democratic Party. In 2008, Collin Powell, a former US secretary
163 of Defence publicly supported Democratic Party candidate, Barrack Obama for the US presidential elections

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

164 without defecting to Democratic Party. Why political defection in Nigeria is almost becoming a culture is that
165 there is paucity of ideas, collapse of political values and norm, lack of principles based on shared beliefs and the
166 selfish interest of Nigerian politicians. Under this circumstance, democracy as built on faulty and false foundation.
167 Issues such as ethnicity, religion, individual personality and language influence the formation of political parties
168 and movement of politicians to a particular party.

169 Momoh (2010) noted that political parties in Nigeria have manifestoes that are all virtually the same. These
170 manifestoes are formulated by consultants, not party members or activists. This may have been the reason why
171 Nigerian political parties always look up to electoral commissions to help in educating the voters. Oyebode
172 (2012) submits that it is difficult to have democracy without genuine and committed political parties. Political
173 parties operating in Nigeria are nothing but an organization managed by opportunists. In Nigerian democracy,
174 there is lack of internal democracy within political parties as a result of frequent conflicts, crises and imposition
175 of candidates for elections. While Aina (2002) doubt the integrity of political participation and competitions
176 in Nigeria of which parties are the basis, Mbah (2011) portend Nigerian political party as strip of ideological
177 foundation, deficit in ideas and principles. This ideological bankruptcy has reduced Nigerian political parties to a
178 mere organization that survive on monetization as the basis for loyalty and support. This act erodes the efficacy
179 of democratic sustenance through party processes. In Nigeria, politicians only defect from one party to another
180 to contest elections or get favour not on the basis of party ideological differences.

181 V.

182 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

183 This paper examines the politics of defection and its implications on Nigeria's democracy. From the analysis,
184 it could be stated party defection arising from internal party conflict remained a serious challenge to Nigeria's
185 democracy. Party defection and ideological confusion in the present republic constitute a major problem to
186 democratic stability. Politicians defect from one party to another not on the basis of ideological disagreement,
187 but on selfish interest. Mbah (2011) submitted that party defection has serious negative impact on democratic
188 stability and consolidation. The trend of baseless defections among Nigerian politicians makes mockery of Nigerian
189 democracy, negates the values of opposition parties in democratic system, invalidate opposing views and reduce
190 the efficacy of alterative democratic choices.

191 Party defection if not checked, could move Nigeria into a system without viable opposition to serve as watchdog
192 to the ruling party. Momoh (2010) linked party defection to political culture and suggest the emergence of
193 new political culture to build on new values and virtues, to reinforce the democratic practice in Nigeria. It is
194 also worthy to note that the nature and character of political parties can frustrate members seeking to defect.
195 Democracy is built on ideologically sustained political parties and the extent to which this is derailed can exert
196 negative influence on democratic stability and consolidation.

197 However, this paper acknowledge the critical role of civil society groups, non-governmental organizations and
198 pro-democracy groups in reversing

1

Names	Old Party	New Party	Names	Old Party	New Party
Alhaji Kwatalo (Dep. Gov.)	ANPP	PDP	ChubaOkadigbo (Senator)	PDP	ANPP
AdamuArgungu (Dep. Gov.)	ANPP	PDP	Ike Nwachukwu (Senator)	PDP	NDP
EnyinayaAbaribe (Dep. Gov.)	PDP	ANPP	Jim Nwobodo (Senator)	PDP	UNDP
John Okpa (Dep. Gov.)	PDP	ANPP	Chukwemeka Ezeife	AD	UNPP
BuckmorAkerele (Dep. Gov.)	AD	NDP	Mohammed Goni	PDP	UNPP
GbengaAluko (Senator)	PDP	ANPP	Chris Okotie	NDP	JP
Khadirat A. Gwadabe	PDP	ANPP	ObinnaUzor (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	NDP
Daniel Saro (Senator)	PDP	UNPP	HarunaAbubakar (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	NDP
Peter Ajuwa	ANPP	LDP	Nuhu Audu (Gov. Aspirant)	PDP	UNPP
Mala Kachala (Gov. Asp.)	ANPP	AD	NnannaOnyenekon	ANPP	PDP
Mike Mku	PDP	UNPP	Catherine Acholonu	PDP	UNPP
GbengaOlawepo (Gov. Asp.)	PDP	NDP	Emma Bassey (HOR)	PDP	ANPP
Matthew T. Mbu Jnr. (Senator)	PDP	ANPP	Graham Ipingasi (HOR)	PDP	ANPP
OmololuMeroyi (Senator)	AD	PDP	GbengaOgunniyi	AD	PDP
AlliBalogun (HOR)	AD	UNPP	Kingsley Ogunlewe (HOR)	AD	PDP
AppolosAmodi (HOR)	PDP	NDP	Dorcas Odunjiri (HOR)	AD	PDP
Alh. M. Koirana-jana	UNPP	PDP	Roland Owie	PDP	ANPP
UcheOgbonnaya	PDP	ANPP	Marshall Harry	PDP	ANPP
Ukeje O.J. Nwokeforo	UNPP	AD	SergentAwuse	PDP	ANPP
Emmanuel Okocha	APGA	PAC	WahabDounmu (Senator)	AD	PDP
Adamu Bulkachuwa	PDP	ANPP	Emmanuel Iwanyanwu	ANPP	PDP
Kura Mohammed	PDP	ANPP	IyolaOmisore (Dep. Gov.)	AD	PDP
Chief IdowuOdeyemi	PDP	AD	Jonan Jang	PDP	ANPP
Chief Ade Akilaya	PDP	AD	YemiBrinmo-Yusuf	AD	PDP
Olufemi Ojo	PDP	AD	FedelisOkoro	AD	PDP
KayodeOguntoye	PDP	AD	GbolahanOkuneye (HOR)	AD	PDP
James Mako	AD	PDP	AuthurNzeribe	ANPP	PDP
FedelisOgodo	AD	PDP	LakenBalogun (Senator)	AD	PDP
Arinze Egwu	ANPP	PDP	Alex Kadiri (Senator)	ANPP	PDP
Patrick Edediugwu	ANPP	PDP	Funso Williams	AD	PDP
Ray Akanwa	PDP	ANPP	RochasOkorochoa	PDP	ANPP

Figure 1: Table 1 :

199 Year 2017 this "democratic confusion". The study recommended the strengthening and amendment of the
200 constitution and electoral laws to regulate the alarming rate of defection of politicians in Nigeria. Strengthening
201 and sustaining Nigeria's democracy requires a social reorientation, consistent political education and mobilization
202 based on democratic culture directed towards inculcation of new values in the political system.

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