



## **Party defection and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Nigeria's fourth republic. A study of 2019 general election**

**Chijioke Basil Onuoha<sup>1</sup>, Ebong Ito Bassey<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1-2</sup>Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Uyo, Uyo Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the reason behind cross-carpeting in political system and to proffer a workable solution to the high incidence of party switching in Nigeria. Party defection has created a lot of controversy to the corporate existence and Democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The development which is generally referred to as party defection, cross-carpeting, party switching etc has become so popular that the average Nigerian sees it not only as a tradition but an indispensable feature of democracy. Indeed, this gives rise to unhealthy power contest and intra-party feuds. The rate of defection of party members from one political party to another in the present fourth republic has brought Nigeria's party system to mockery and disrepute. The scenario portrays Nigeria politicians not only as people without character and principle but also as people who are in politics for self-aggrandizement. This trend tends to make caricature of democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria fourth republic. The paper adopted the Elite theory to explain the impact of party defection on democratic consolidation. Historical and descriptive research design approach was adopted and data were collected from secondary sources. The population of the study was drawn from Nigeria 8<sup>th</sup> National assembly. Major finding of the study revealed among others that, lack of party ideology and internal party democracy appears to have ignited the prevailing squabbles that orchestrated the recent exodus in Nigeria's politics, there is increasing inculcation of undemocratic practices in Nigeria politics. Based on the above findings, the paper recommended among others that (i) transparency and accountability in the administration of the parties should be imbibed, to specify clearly that elected officials should not vacate their position when they defect to other parties that did not produce them, (ii) social re-engineering, reorientation and mobilization that is directed towards inculcation of new values and the essence of entrenching acceptable philosophy in Nigeria's party system should be encouraged.

**Keywords:** consolidation, democracy, and party defection

### **Introduction**

Nigeria political parties have had chequered history of defections and cross defections of party members from one political party to another from the colonial era to the present fourth republic. The country has struggled without success to evolve virile political parties that would fit into the role of what political parties represent in other democratic politics of the world, which advancement of national interest and development through is well thought out party ideologies and manifestos. In about 20 years, Nigeria democracy has witnessed series of political defections with politician decamping from one political party to another particularly from opposition parties to ruling political party. (Malthora, 2005) <sup>[14]</sup>.

However, the persistent party defection in Nigeria is not new. In fact it is a common phenomenon in both the developed and developing democracies. Basically, the decamppee feels dissatisfied and discontent with his or her former party from where he or she decamps without defection reflecting any ideological leaning. Scholars 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 reemerging on agreed issues of the political party probably on power sharing formula.

Absence of internal party democracy seems to have contributed to party defections in Nigeria. Indeed, this gives rise to unhealthy power contest and intra-party feuds. Arguably, while it could be stated that the defection by members of the ruling to opposition party was linked to the just concluded 2019 general elections, there is overwhelming evidence that crisis of internal party prompted the movement. As a result, intra-party squabbles, disputations have continued to energies the growth of what could be seen as a sordid act of party defection. Another strong argument is equally the ethnic nature of government and politics in Nigeria. Nigerian government and politics is ethnic and prebendal politics, by so doing Political parties are formed on ethnic and not on ideological basis, which in turn give birth to politicize political party.

A political party without ideology, or political party whose members does not believe in its ideology is better seen as interest groups, here it means that members merely joins the group because of their specific interest. However, where a member believes that he or she is a member of a political party he should accept the ideology and volition of the party. For instance, if one claims to be a Christian or Muslim, it means he has accepted the beliefs, tenets and doctrine of the said faith and so it is difficult for the said Christian to easily switch over to another faith or groups all of sudden. However, where political party are formed

on ideological bases, it will be very difficult for a member to switch over to the other at the slightest provocation.

As was seen, the recent massive party defections in Nigeria and the muzzy struggle that characterized the act were very fierce and intense, almost cutting the breath of the party politics in Nigeria. Indeed, the situation in the other parties, especially the party they defected to is not in any way better. There seems to be absence of internal party democracy in virtually all political parties in Nigeria which confirms the absence of lack of ideology. Following from the above, it is important to note that party defections are not exclusive character of one party in Nigeria. It is a general practice. Thus, the magnitude of the current defections and its impacts on the polity raises fundamental questions on the manifestation of the trend and sustainability of Nigerian democracy.

Evidently, this shows a clear indication that the phenomenon has the capacity of either derailing Nigerian democracy or reinforcing opposition with the capacity to provide a guide for democratic consolidation. In fact, its persistency, ubiquity and growth could provide a bleak future on the sustainability of party politics in Nigerian political system. However, the general view or reason for cross-carpeting 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 cross-carpeting.

As institutions, political parties usually consist of more than a single interest in the society and so, to some degrees, attempt to aggregate interest. It is this interest articulation and aggregation that drive the parties to seek influence in a state by attempting to take power and control the machinery of government. Conversely, political parties In Nigeria seem to have remained mere platforms for the advancement of ethnic and individual interest and ambitions. Where these selfish interests are not served or threatened, Nigeria politicians have evolved the culture of defections and cross-carpeting in desperate bids to serve individual, sectional or group interest. Hence defection from one party to another has characterized the political landscape of Nigeria. It has become an established political culture in the Nigeria case to defect. This comes with a lot of deliberating challenges and implications for democracy and party politics in the country (Bafo- Arthur, 2003) <sup>[6]</sup>.

The rate of defection of party members from one political party to another in the present fourth republic has brought Nigeria's party system to a theatre of mockery and disrepute. The scenario portrays Nigeria politicians not only as people without character and principle but also as people who are in politics for self-aggrandizement. In the 20 years of democracy, Nigeria has witnessed' unprecedented drama of party prostitution by self-styled political leaders at the various levels of democratic setting. The development which is generally refer to as party defection, cross-carpeting, party switching etc. has become so popular that the average Nigerian sees it not only as a tradition but an indispensable feature of democracy (Mbah, 2011, Malthora, 2005) <sup>[13, 14]</sup>. Those who defect sometimes compose song dipping their regrets for previous movement from one party to the other, sometime they even compose songs to show their predicament and frustration.

This trend tends to make caricature of democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria fourth republic. Considering its implications on quality

of governance, peace, stability and the challenge of sustenance of Nigeria's democracy, this paper seeks to establish the critical link between defections arising from internal party crisis and the extent it has impacted on sustainability of Nigeria's democracy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over many years of democracy in Nigeria, the trend of party defection has become a phenomenon that poses serious threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria due to lack of internal cohesion, imposition of candidate, paucity of ideas, non-inclusiveness and inability to promote individual interest within the party. Thus, where this selfish interest is not served or threatened, Nigeria politicians have evolved a culture of party defection in desperate bids to serve sectional individual or group interest. However, this situation lend credence to party defection from one political party to other which has characterized the political landscape of Nigeria, which come with a lot of deleterious and debilitating challenges on democratic consolidation in Nigeria fourth republic, but the fact remains that there is clear distinction between individuals based on the collective good and mindless sharing of the national wealth exacerbating by lack of party ideologies, principles, lack of transparency and accountability within the party. In the light of the foregoing, this paper is sets to analyze the impacts of party defection on the democratic consolidation in Nigeria fourth republic.

### **Conceptual clarification Democracy**

There is no general acceptable definition of what constitute democracy as many scholars and writers have increased intellectual effort at achieving universality in the accepted definition of the concept. Scholars have continued to define the concept of democracy in a manner it would reflect global best practices. More succinctly, Diamond e tal (1989) posited that democracy is a system of government that congregates three vital stipulations of governance: (a) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties for political offices at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; (b) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and (c) a level of civil and political liberties. For them, these are requisite conditions.

Nnoli (2003), in his explanation defines democracy as a system of government usually involving freedom of individuals in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens and justice in the relations between the people and the government and the participation of the people in choosing those in government.

Schumpeter in his opinion (1990) defined democracy as an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide, by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. It is a state with unlimited opportunities for adult participation in political life.

Democracy does not function in isolation, it is about the people. And its success is measured or dependent on the extent it has empowered people to surmount their basic needs and enjoy unrestrained participation in the policy process (Unah, 1993). In fact, what gives democracy meaning and substance is

participation and authority of the people to determine who rules. The extent of involvement encompasses the power to decide who rules, what policy to support and decision which would benefit the greatest number of people. The absence of the above contaminates the functionality and operation of democracy and democratization process. In such condition, democratic values inherently imbedded in its operations tend to be neutralized making democracy to produce contradictory results. On the other hand, defection could be seen as an act of swapping. Thus, party defection is the act of switching from one party to another.

### **Democratic Consolidation**

Democratic consolidation is a contested concept. It is defined 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 (Wikipedia, 2009:1). Contrarily to the forgoing, unconsolidated democracies suffer from formalized but intermittent elections and clientelism (Donnel, O 1996).

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 behaviorally 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 laws.

Democracies can be considered consolidated when democracy becomes institutionalized behaviorally, attitudinally and constitutionally. Behaviorally, 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 alternative 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 (Linz and Stephen, 1996:20).

### **Party Defection**

According to Malhotra (2005) <sup>[14]</sup> party defection is known by different nomenclatures—such as “floor-crossing,” “carpet crossing,” “party hopping,” “dispute” and “waka [canoe]-jumping” (cited in Janada 2009; Mbah 2011) <sup>[13]</sup>. Indeed, party defection occurs in every political system. It is a global reality and an integral part of political process. King and Benjamin (1986) investigated the rationale behind party defections especially in America, and came to conclusion that party defection is most likely to coincide with important political events such as changes in partisan control of political institutions, with changes in key economic indicators, and in times of military conflict.

For Castle and Fett, (1996) it is the ideologically cross-pressured members who are most likely to change parties (cited in Nokken

and Poole 2002). However, Malhotra, in his analysis observed that in some countries party defections “are a non-issue and not perceived as a problem,” whereas in others the practice threatens government stability and is taken as very serious (Janada 2009). Understandably, this threat and instability arising from defections especially in emerging democracies prompted enactment of anti-defection laws in some societies. Most of the anti-defection laws emphasize parliamentary defection. For instance, India enacted various anti defection laws in 1973, 1985 and presently the 2003 anti-defection law.

According to Malhotra, the 2003 law provides that a person can be disqualified from serving in parliament for “voluntarily giving up the membership of his original party (cited in Janada 2009). The above legal provision appears to have reduced drastically cases of defection in the polity since one finds it difficult to forfeit one’s position or faces parliamentary expulsion. Interestingly, a similar law (anti defection law) exists in Nigeria.

However, major deficiencies and incongruence that fraught the 1999 constitution, its operation and function have stalled the achievement of gains derivable from the law. For instance, the conflicting positions of section 68 (1g) and 109(1) tends to weaken the enforcement. For instance, section 68 (1a) states that: 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).

The fluidity in formations, mergers and demergers including the orchestrations of internal party crisis has made that section difficult in application as the boundaries between mergers and demergers in Nigeria party politics appear too thin, thereby creating justification for parliamentary defections. In the other vein, it is imperative to note that in most developing political system especially in Latin America and Africa, party defections seem not to be motivated by ideological consideration but several other mundane factors not unconnected with the foundations of party politics in the regions. For instance, in most postcolonial states, parties emerged within the context of religious, ethnic consideration and the financial capacity of few elites. In fact, many of them are driven by such considerations and are ultimately seen as devoid of ideological coherence, heavily personality-driven and relying on an ethnic support base (Carothers 2006).

Nnoli (2003) explaining that ideology is a very crucial aspect of politics, not only by serving as a cognitive structure for looking at society generally and providing a prescriptive formula, that is, a guide to individual action and judgment, but also as a powerful instrument of conflict management, self-identification, popular mobilization and legitimization. In fact, intra party crisis in Nigeria underlies the burgeoning state of party defections in Nigeria. For instance, major parties in Nigeria, like the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) People’s Democratic Party, among others are in severe internal crisis. These crises have corresponding impact on the political system, and sometimes ensue in members defecting to other parties. Essentially, internal

party democracy is a sine qua non for redressing deep rooted animosity among members and reactivating the fortunes of these parties, since they have lost ideological content. It is through this that parties would be able to select candidates that are capable and alluring for elections.

Scarrow (2004) <sup>[21]</sup> In fact, internal party democracy would serve as a veritable platform for mediation and conflict resolution among party faithful. Following from the above, it could be hypothesized that there are serious ideological poverty in virtually all Nigerian political parties which appeared to have generated intra party conflicts and in turn increased the rate of party defections.

### Review of related literature

Extant literature are of the view that the reasons for the spate of party defection in Nigeria are as a result of the parties having no ideological base or clear-cut ideology and manifesto and the politicians having no principles. Sagay (2015), Falaiye (2015), Falana (2015) cited in Akinkuotu (2015:3) <sup>[1]</sup> are of the view that the trend of defection is a reflection of the decay in the larger society where ideology, morality and principle have taken the back seat. They maintained that as a result of lack of political ideology among the parties, politicians now see power as the only ideology. They advocated that the constitution should be amended such that defectors should lose their seat and/or office on defection because it is unfair to those who voted for them.

Okwaraji, (2010) <sup>[17]</sup> also opined that party defectors are political prostitutes without political principle, morality and conscience who lack political ideology to champion the course of leadership. Awanem (2010), cited in Okwaraji (2010:1) <sup>[17]</sup>, adduced reasons for defection of politicians in the last three republics as resulting from personality clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operation of political party's philosophy, crises within a political party, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal ambition and party leaders reneging on agreed issues of political party like on power sharing formula. He however lamented that politicians have consistently defected from one party to another in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic; some abandoning the parties on whose platform they were elected, while others after losing elections found it best to cross carpet to the party in power.

Abbiye- Suku, (cited in Okwaraji 2012:2), warned that defection portends danger for the political system. He explained that the trend shows the despicable chameleon character of Nigeria politicians and struggle for relevance without conscience and political ideologies as a driving force while they are in politics. Ikharale (2015:5) contends that Africa opposition political parties have not learned their lessons, and it is even worse in Nigeria where neither ideology nor principles are part of the political process. According to him, "people are in opposition because they have no quick access to power and whenever they are called over by the ruling party, the promptly forget their earlier stand, criticisms, and shamelessly join the party in power for the fleeting opportunity to eat".

Also commenting on the effect of defection on democracy, Ejio (2014:3) lamented that the series of political defections merely reflect the level of desperation for political relevance in pursuit of public office. He maintained that the present crops of Nigerian politicians are not statesmen and they do not believe in party ideologies, rather they are just power-drunk.

Lamenting on the ideological bankruptcy of Nigerian politician, Ilo (2014:2) noted that great countries are not built on an ideologically- retarded political class. Exclaimed that most of our politicians stand for nothing, which means they are effectually "open to everything". It therefore premature for Nigerians to celebrate their political 'choice'. What the people have now is not only a contaminated pool of parties, but also a structurally-debased political culture that relegates the need of the people behind the greed of the few. The reality is that most Nigerian politicians are currently tarred with same brush. The compromises they have made, the characters they have welcome, and the inconsistencies they have shown underscore the value-free nature of country's politics.

On the other hand, Aleyomi (2013) <sup>[3]</sup> argues that there is nothing wrong with party defection. He opined that it is a prerequisite for democratic consolidation, with great emphasis on strong and credible opposition choices. He concluded that order based on pluralism is needed if valued should be added to the process of democratic consolidation.

Asinugo (2014) <sup>[5]</sup> though observes that the series of high profile defections in the eve of the 2015 general elections is not only pathetic but makes a mockery of the nation's democratic evolution, as well as degrade and humiliate the political class in the eyes of a civilized society. He contends, however that the pleasant thing about recent political defections in Nigeria is that it has curiously thrown up new challenges to Nigeria's voting masses. They have presented an escape route for the electorates who over these years have seen themselves as mere victims and caprices of a mindless political class, and an even more mindless business community.

He maintained that a mega opposition party has become necessary to contain the excesses of the ruling-party. Robinson (2010) <sup>[20]</sup> argues that defection is not a crime in Nigerian politics because there is nothing ideologically different in the manifestos of all parties in Nigeria. In his word "the word "cross-carpeting" in politics can only be relevant in a situation where parties have distinct ideologies and manifestos. According to him, every one joins a party where his interest can be better served. Why should one continue to remain in a party that does not have his interest at heart?

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 must it be a majority made up zombies or illiterates? 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. One may have decided not to be involved in rigging elections (Robinson 2010) <sup>[20]</sup>.

Oke (2014) also opines that defection is not unexpected in a growing democracy like Nigeria as the country is going through a critical period of transition from experimental democracy to true democracy. He contends that at the beginning of dispensation, parties were not driven by philosophies or ideologies, rather, friends and strange bed fellows were just coming together. It was therefore expected that there would be period of purification where people of unlike minds would part and people of like minds will come together.

### Theoretical framework

The study adopted the elite theory in explaining the interplay in the political horse trading and its impact in evolving credible and open market democracy in Nigeria. The elite theory as developed by Vilfredo, Pareto, Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Jose Ortega Gassat among others, hinges on the fact that every society is composed of two classes of people (Varma 1975). The two classes are made of minority group who rule and the majority being ruled. More specifically, Roberto Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" dwells on element of organization, which exists in every kind of human society that strives for the attainment of a definite end (Varma 1975). In fact, Michels concluded that as a movement or party grows in size, more and more functions are to be delegated to an inner circle of leaders (elites), and, in course of time, the members of the organization are rendered less competent to direct and control them (Varma 1975).

The above postulations mirror vividly the state of Nigerian political society. Arguably, the Nigerian elites appeared to have succeeded in rendering the majority incapable of controlling them through the perfected process of managing electoral frauds and heinous manipulation of state institutions. This is manifest in the total delusion of the basic electoral principles symptomatic of the market democracy. Instead of opening up the democratic space genuinely for people's participation, they created the kind of politics which places in the hands of the very few elite the ultimate control of the political system, including the institutions; the political parties, electoral institutions and agencies, security agencies, judicial organs, etc. That is 'machine politics' (see Ibeanu, 2007).

Control of these institutions by the members of the ruling class creates a lot of fierce contests, bad bloods and crisis in the political system. Attached to this contest is the bad governance principles associated therewith in such societies. Ultimately, associated with machine politics is the control of the state economy by such group of persons (the elites) and the indulgence in the act of buying people's support and conscience and in forcing such support when corrupt mobilization becomes difficult. Further to this is sharing the state resources among the members of the ruling class.

Considering that the society including the members of the class is not a monolithic existence, there is a sustained contest among members of that class for the control of the machine as that also means control of the distributive power. The winner usually takes all and the looser loses everything. Hence, the contest is usually very fierce and petty. In the face of this contest, several activities take place, all surrounding the struggles for the acquisition and utilization of the state power. They become victorious or to avert losing out, they play dirty and sometimes, depending on their place in every power equation, engage in act of destabilization and in some occasions, persistent defections.

This is in their desperate move to align with other parties or groups where they feel that their individual interest would be secured and by this heating up the polity. People tend to be deluded into accepting flimsy reasons such as crisis, as what propels such defections without emphasizing their (defectors) role in those crises. In many cases political elites tend to manipulate ethno-religious sentiments as tools for gathering political support after defection (see the instance of the Western Regional House of Assembly). Interestingly, the recipient parties in their desperation to get more members and strength accept the

defectors and present them in a manner they could be seen as political "saints" regardless of their previous misdemeanor.

### Party defections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria

Party defection has negative impact in the process of consolidating democracy under unwarranted situation of plethora of defection among legislators, governors, deputy governors and other party members to the ruling party. This trend tends to make caricature of 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 Akwa Ibom State became illustrative at this juncture. Senator Godswill Akpabio who was the senator representing the good people of Ikot Ekpene senatorial district under the platform of PDP defected to APC. 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 defection to the APC and the 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. One of the greatest fears of the current defection from other parties to the APC is that it is leading to a further fragmentation of opposition parties from where politician 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. 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 interest. The type of allowances they allocate to themselves make the ideology based political parties impossible. Another underlying problem with political party defection is 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 (hoeane, 2008:74) <sup>[8]</sup>.

One of the way through which floor-crossing does this is that politician become political prostitutes. Odum (2002:1) <sup>[19]</sup> captures this when he argues that: politician 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 gain 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 in trust. It has become a fraud which every politician is clamoring to hold.

From the foregoing, there is increasing inculcation of ndemocratic 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 APC is devastated by the potential severe loss of members to the PDP.

This has also affected the leadership of the party and its effort to hold a credible convention or congress since the past few months. It could also lead to outright political instability if not checked. This is because in countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, political party defection is regarded sufficiently threatening to the stability of the political system.

Hoeane, (2008:71) <sup>[8]</sup> argues that in extreme cases of cross-carpeting, where the number of public representatives who have defected has been significantly high, and such shifts of allegiance have led to the collapse of democratically elected governments, such as in Lesotho in 1997. Political 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.

### **Reason for party defection in Nigeria**

Various factors have contributed immensely to party cross carpeting and defection in Nigeria. Most of these factors are discuss below

#### **1. Weak Formation of Political Parties**

Political parties formed from the second to the present fourth republic in Nigeria were formed with utmost aim of wresting power from the military and so, they were not rooted in strong ideological base and common vision. According to Tyoden (2000), former shehu Shagari observed that the political parties in the republic “ were created within a matter of weeks, and prepared for elections within days”. lacking the required social and political foundations of normal political parties, they were nothing more than electoral machines, put together by individuals for the contest to fill the power vacuum that would be available with the then impending departure of the military. They, therefore lack the elementary characteristics of political parties. As aptly put by professor Ntalaja (2000), these parties were mostly electoral coalitions put together to satisfy organizational criteria laid down by transitional authorities, rather than groups that have grown organically with a clear cut and long term political project or vision for the society.

Collaborating with Ntalaja opinion, Ake’s Tyoden pointed out that Nigerian politics was dissociated from issue of ideology and social forces”. Political parties were created, abstracted from social realities- ‘ ‘ they belonged to everyone in general and no one in particular and thus constituted ‘ ‘ anarchy of ambitions” (Tyoden, 2000:14). In the face of this, seemingly visionless formation and mixture of strange bed fellows, it is expected that the parties would be characterized by intra-party crises that would result in persistent defections.

#### **2. Lack of internal Democracy**

Internal democracy describes a wide range of methods for including party members in party deliberations and decision making (Aleyomi,2013:77) <sup>[3]</sup>. It allows the registered party members the opportunity to exercise their franchise in the selection of delegates to party conventions as well as candidates that contest general elections for the parties. Critical decisions like amendment of party constitutions and election of new party executives require the input of party members through conventions and congress. It is common Knowledge that political parties in Nigeria do not practice free and fair elections in the nomination of candidates that contest elections for their parties.

Results of party conventions or primaries proper are conducted as mere formalities. Candidates are selected and picked against the will and desire of the majority of party members, and in most cases, names substituted in Abuja without due regards to results from their constituencies. Most candidates that stand for general elections are anointed or selected by a few godfather against the wishes of the masses. In most cases, the most popular and credible candidates are not given a chance to be selected; rather a gullible, naive political neophyte who would maintain asymmetrical relationship with the godfather is ‘anointed’. It is based on the premise that most of the aspirants who are denied fairness defect to other political parties to prosecute their political ambition kleptocracys.

#### **3. Failure to Adhere To Party Ideologies and Manifestoes**

Few political parties have ideological persuasion and manifestoes which they use to convince the electorates and secure victory; unfortunately most of them derail or even circumvent the implementation of those manifestoes when voted into power. As a result of this act, most of the party’s founding fathers and some principled members leave the party in anger to another party or to form new political parties.

As is often the cases, once the elections are over, the interest of the common man is no longer in the opposition party’s agenda; rather, they would be struggling to be part a unity government, if offered by the ruling party. For Example member of the all Nigerian people’s party (ANPP), after 2007 general elections for example, abandoned their party and presidential candidate to be part of the unity Government introduced by the ruling party (PDP). The presidential candidate (Muhammed Buhari) of the party (ANPP) was persuaded by his party leaders to drop his case against the ruling party despite the admission of the president that the election was characterized by fraud (Gabriel, 2012, cited in Lamidi and Bello, 2014:176) <sup>[12]</sup>.

After a fruitless struggle to secure justice through the judiciary, Buhari dumped the (ANPP) due to what he described as “verifiable irreconcilable differences”, and founded the Congress for progressive change (CPC) as s “solution to the debilitating, ethical and ideological conflict in the ANPP”.

#### **4. Constitutional deficiency**

Section 177 of the 1999 constitution clearly states that a person shall only be qualified for election into the office of the governor of the state if he or she is a member of a political party and sponsored by a political party. The same 1999 constitution fail to state that such a person cannot leave that party after achieving electoral victory. But in respect of elected senators, House of Representatives members and state legislators, the 1999 constitution specifically in section 68(1) (g) and (2) and 109 (i)(g) clearly states that a state or federal lawmaker must vacate his or her seat after defecting to another political party, members of the senate or House of Representative shall vacate his or her 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 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 faction by one of which he was previously sponsored”.

The provision has been explored by elected politicians to defect from their political party to another. Though it is evident that the constitution stipulated that one can leave a political party on the ground of factional crisis within a given political party, it did not define “Division”. It is as a result of this constitutional flaw that elected officials defect to other parties at the slightest provocation.

### 5. Conclusion

Remarkably, the glorious days of politicians who carry on politics based on ideology and principles no longer exist in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria, what exist is a group of politicians so mindful of their private interests not 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 politician from one party to the other. This trend of cross-carpeting shows that Nigerian politicians have no democratic values and our political system is awash with professional politician who are devoid of modern political ideology.

### 6. Recommendations

Base on the above Findings, the paper recommended that

1. all the activities and system within parties should be guided by internal rules and procedures consistent with the expectation of party members and the legally established statutory organs. More so, transparency and accountability in the administration of the parties should be encouraged.
2. Democratization of party funding should be encourage in such a way that party does not rely on a few wealthy individuals only for its financing, and equally fundamental, there should be the adoption of inclusive, democratic processes for the holding of party convention or congress, and selection of the party’s elections candidates, that is, the use of primaries.
3. To specify clearly that elected officials should indicate their positions when they defect to other parties that did not produce them. This would curtail the level of political renegades as unbridled political defection is a grave danger to the country’s democratic consolidation.

### References

1. AKinkuotu E. 2015 and Politicians without Ideology; <http://www.Punchnewspaper.ng.co> retrieved on Sept. 4, 2018.
2. Aleyomi P. “Political Parties: Formation, Development, Performance and Prospects” in Ojo, E. (ed) *Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*, Ibadan: John Archers, 2008.
3. Aleyomi M. Election and politics of Party Defection in Nigeria: A Clue from Kogi State. *Covenant University. Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 1, 2013.
4. Anifowose R. *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The TIV and Yoruba Experience*, NOK Publishers Ltd, Enugu, 1982.
5. Asinugo E. *THE sweet Thing About Recent Political Defections in Nigeria*: Sahara Reporters, 2014.
6. Bafo-Author. *Political Parties and Democratic Sustainability in Ghana, 1992-2000*’ in Sith, M.A. Mohammed (ed) (2003) *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalization and Governance*. Virginia: Pluto Press, London, 2013.

7. Ejiofor C. Recent Political Defections Not Good For Nigerias Democracy. *Naija.com Newsletter*. Retrieved on, 2018.
8. Hoeane T. ‘Floor Crossing in South Africa: Entrenching or Undermining Democracy’ *South African Journal for Political Science and Public Administration*, 2008.
9. Igwe O. *Politics and Globe Dictionary (New Edition)*. Eagle Publishers. Aba, 2005.
10. Ikhariale. *The Dilema of African Opposition Parties*. Daily Independent, 2015.
11. Joab-peterside S. *Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, in S. Joab-peterside and U. Ukiwo (eds), *The Travails and Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria, 1999-2003 and Beyond*, Port Harcourt; Centre for Advanced Social Science, 2007.
12. Lamidi K, Bello M. *Party Politics and Future of Nigerian Democracy: An Examination of Fourth Republic*. *European Scientific Journal*, 2014.
13. Mbah P. *Party Defection and Democratic Consolidation in 1999-2009* *Afro-Asian Journal of Social Science*, 2011, 2(23).
14. Mathora G. *Anti-defection Law in India and the commonwealth*, New Delhi: Metrooolitan Book CO Pvt. Ltd, 2005.
15. Ntalaja N. *The Guardian*, Lagos. 2000; 200:31.
16. Oke O. *Defection: PDP Merely Shredded Loads*. This day Live, 2014.
17. Okwaraji P. *Political Part, Defection and Law: The Tide*, November 16, 2014. [www.thetideonline.ng.com](http://www.thetideonline.ng.com) Retrived on, 2010.
18. Olaniyan Z. “Inter and intra party squabbles in Nigeria” in Ogundiya, S. etal (eds) *A Decade of Re-democratization in Nigeria (1999-2009)*. Department of Political Science, Usman Danfodio University Sokoto, 2009.
19. Omoruyi O. *Parties and Political in Nigeria: Variable Party System as Basis of Democracy*. Vanguard, 2002.
20. Robinson F. *Cross Carpeting: Not a Crime*, 2010. <http://www.focusnigeria.com/cross-carpeting>. Retrieved on July 2018
21. Simbine A. *Impact of More Parties on Democratic Project*’ in Saliu, H. A (eds) *Nigeria Under Democratic Rule 1999-2003*, Ibadan University Press Ltd, 2004.
22. Tyodem S. *Inter and intra Party Relations: Towards a more stable Party System for Nigeria*. Centre for constitutionalism and Demilitarization (CENCOD). *The Constitution. A Journal of Constitutional Development*, 2000.