The Dynamics of Internal Party Conflict and Democratic Governance in Nigeria, 2012-2023

By

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Abstract

Political parties as conveyors of democracy and vehicles for democratic participation play the critical roles of nomination and sponsorship of candidates for elective positions. However, the ways and manner of performance of these functions in Nigeria have often resulted in internal party conflict thus undermining the internal cohesion of such political parties. It is against this background that this paper sets out to interrogate the impact of internal party conflict on democratic government in Nigeria from 2015 – 2022. The overall aim of this paper was therefore to examine the impact of internal party conflict on democratic governance in Nigeria.The theoretical tool of analysis used in this paper was the David Easton's systems theory. As a qualitative paper it relied on secondary data and participant observation for primary data. The ex-post facto research design was adopted. The findings of this study showed there is absence of interest articulation, aggregation and harmonization in the political parties. These have exacerbated intra-party conflict leading also to distraction, draining of state resources in pursuit of selfish political interest and, ultimately, the distortion of governance. Based on these findings, the paper recommended for the return of decision making powers of the political parties to the general congress of the party; operation of the doctrine of the mass line and instilling internal party discipline, bottom-top leadership recruitment and decision making procedure in the parties as well as curtailment of court interference in internal affairs of parties through amendment of the Electoral Act.

Keywords: Political party, internal party conflict, internal cohesion, political opportunism, democratic governance

Introduction

In modern democracies political parties are the conveyors and vehicle for political participation. They perform the critical roles of nominating candidates for elections, campaigning and working for the victory of the candidate, monitoring the activities and performance of the candidate, as well as acting as watchdog against arbitrary governance (where the party is in opposition). However, the effective performance of these democratic roles is a function of internal party democracy allowed within the party. It is the presence of internal cohesion that will give rise to or undermine democratic consolidation and good governance.

Political party or party politics in Nigeria essentially began with introduction of the elective principles by the Clifford constitution of 1922 (Jinadu, 2011). However elective representation was first introduced by Township Ordinance of May 29th, 1919 which ushered in elections into Lagos Town Council. The election led to the emergence of three Nigerians as the first elected Africans into the Lagos Town Council on zero party basis (Jinadu, 2011). Subsequently, and sequel to the Clifford Constitution of 1922, the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed for the 1923 Legislative Council election (Jinadu, 2011). In essence the Clifford Constitution introduced party politics and also multi-party democracy into Nigeria. Other parties that followed subsequently after NNDP were: Nigeria Peoples' Union (1923), Nigerian Youth Movement (1937), National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (1944), Northern Elements Progressive Association (1945), Northern Elements Progressive Union (1950), Action Group (1951), Northern Peoples' Congress (1951) etc (Jinadu, 2011). The multi-party electoral framework introduced in 1922 was carried through into independence and ushered in Nigeria's first republic. Sklar (2004) remarked that the formative bases of these parties bore rough edges of nationalistic, cultural, and parochial class intents. They however later "constituted themselves as political expressions of ethno-regional associations" whose character embodied dysfunctionalities that led to their early demise following the first military coup (Liebowitz & Ibrahim, 2013).

The second effort at democratization (2nd republic) and trial of party politics had six political parties viz: Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP), Nigeria People's Party (NPP), People's Redemption Party (PRP), and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). However,

internal democracy and restraint were lost as their founding fathers constituted and conducted themselves as the usual Nigerian political class. Consequently, following massive intra-party decay unhealthy party competition became pervasive through internal party corruption; almost all the parties became factionalized (Liebowitz& Ibrahim (2013). The system became overheated and the state fell to military rule again. The third republic had two political parties: The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) registered by the Military government. Both parties were also bereft of democratic ideal and were funded by the state under the undemocratic tyrant leader of that moment, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. As such the SDP and NRC were not parties of the people but state parties formed at its whims and caprices (Dode, 2010).

The Nigerian Fourth Republic was launched by provisions of the 1999 Constitution and party democracy (party politics) returned with three political parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and People Democratic Party (PDP) The PDP won at the national and sub-national levels and did control the national government from 1999 to 2015 when it was defeated by an emerging All Progressive Congress (APC). The circumstance that led to the emergency and victory of the APC in 2015 remains historical in the annals of internal party conflict in Nigeria. Political contestations, particularly the process leading to party leadership elections and nomination of party candidates for the general elections had been rife. The spate of conflict arising from these processes had threatened the soul, survival and electioneering prospects of the political parties. The present paper is therefore concerned with the dynamics of internal party conflicts and how it impact on democratic governance in Nigeria.

Problem Statement

The extent to which a political party or political parties perform the central function of conveyor of democracy is a function of capability of the party to foster internal unity, and cohesion among its members. Overtime political parties in emerging democracies and particularly in Nigeria had been defective in maintaining cohesion within it. The parties had for the greater part been enmeshed in internal conflicts. Conflict itself is inevitable in human society, but adhering to the virtues of societal peaceful co-existence is a sine-qua-non for managing

conflict. Unfortunately, adhering to democratic ideals and effectively managing internal party conflict has remained a herculean task in Nigeria's party politics and democracy.

The first political party formed in Nigeria was wrecked by personal jealousies and quarrels over the sharing of the spoils of office. Intra party squabbles between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Samuel Akintola split the Action Group, the splinter formed or resurrected the NNDP an alternative political platform (Nnadozie, 2005; Mbah, 2001). Jinadu (2001) opined that almost all the political parties that participated in the 2nd democratic election suffered one form of intra-party disputes or other. The crisis in NPP led to the formation of GNPP and PRP by the two different splinter groups. Infact, internal party conflict accentuated the collapse of the 2nd republic. Internal party rift was less in the short-lived military democratization process of the third republic. In the 4th republic the People's Democratic Party had changed thirteen of its national chairmen in controversial circumstances. Penultimate to the 2023 general election its chairman, Iyorchia Ayu, was under pressure by G5 governors to resign in adherence to the party's power sharing principle. The APC which benefitted from the internal conflict in PDP to win the presidency in 2015 seems not to have learnt from the experience of the PDP. From 2014 to 2022 except for the incumbent all its Chairmen had assumed and vacated office in controversial circumstances.

The point is that conflict has become a defining character of Nigeria party politics and electoral democracy. Nigerian political parties over the years have become ideologically barren and theoretically bereft of constitutional qualities that will enhance internal democracy. The non- adherence to principles of internal democracy, especially in the process of leadership recruitment either for party positions or general elections has triggered conflict in Nigeria political parties. This has adversely affected the Peoples Democratic Party at the national level and the All Progressives Congress in Rivers State from 2015 2023. It also undermines the electoral fortunes of the party. The multiple ripple effects are capable of undermining democratic governance.

It is against the above background that this paper sets out to interrogate the impact of internal party conflict on democratic governance in Nigeria from 2015 – 2023.

The overall aim of this paper is to examine the impact of internal party conflict on democratic governance in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives are to: interrogate how the lack of internal party democracy contributed to the intraparty conflict in APC and PDP; examine the effect of internal party conflict on the fortune of APC and PDP; evaluate the impact of internal party conflict on democratic governance. The questions guided the path to arriving at these objectives were: how has the lack of internal party democracy contributed to the intra party conflict in APC and PDP? In what ways has internal party conflict undermined the fortunes of APC and PDP in the general elections conducted within the period under review? What is the impact of internal party conflict on democratic governance? The next section is concerned with conceptual review, theoretical framework and the method of the study.

Conceptual Clarifications

Political Party

Lemay (2001) defined a political party as "any group of politically active persons outside a government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who thereby control the operations of government and determine its policies" (p.2). The clause "any group of politically active persons outside a government" weakens the definition as it seems to give the impression that a party in government is no longer a political party or that elected or appointed leaders are no longer members of a political party because they are in government. While it is expected that elected officials live above the party and governance in public interest, they also use the government to project the programme and policies of the party as well as the public office to strengthen the structure and fortunes of the party.

For Umar and Kura (2004), a political party is an organized formal avenue of interest aggregation that gives candidates the political and ideological platform to canvas for the support of the electorates through setting of policy goals and agenda with the sole intent of capturing or maintaining legal power to control government within a particular period of time. Shale and Maltosa (2008) equally sees a political party as "an organised group of people with at least roughly similar political aims and opinions that seek to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public office." (p.16). Section 152 of Nigeria's Electoral Act 2022 (EA, 2022)

defines a "political party to include any association of persons whose activities include canvassing for votes in support of a candidate for election under (the) Act and registered by the Commission" (INEC, 2022, p.109). The phrase 'under the Act' means that the association (i.e. political party) "shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and may sue or be sued in its corporate name." A political party is therefore an organized group of people informed by shared ideologies and principles encapsulated in a manifesto; formed for the purpose of contesting for political power and seizing political power through legally permissible and democratic means for the purpose of using it to improve the general welfare of the people and not just its party members.

The defining characteristic of a political party is the struggle to capture political power. When state power is captured through the ballot, the party controls the policy decision mechanism of the state. From the definitions also, the primary functions of political parties include: linking people with government through aggregation of diverse interests; leadership recruitment and selection for various elective and appointive positions; articulating and implementing different policy alternatives for national policy agenda setting; participation in electoral competition and facilitating governance either as ruling party or opposition members.

Political parties in contemporary times as the lifelines of modern-day democracy.For a democracy to be truly representative, political parties must have the capacity and willingness to produce people who can provide for the welfare of the people and protect interest (Okonkwo & Felix cited in Atelhe, *et al*, 2019). The programmes and policies of government as driven by the ideology of theparty is conveyed in the party manifesto and sold to the electorate during electioneering campaigns. The manifesto is structured to accommodate interest, provide development policy direction in manners that attract followership and sustain allegiance or support the political party. The manifesto and constitution therefore provide functional and administrative framework as well as breathe life into the party.

Internal Party Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in any society and results from human interactions in the contestations for ends and values, especially where one's ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices, decisions and behaviour of others. When people are denied their basic human needs for identity, equality, recognition, security, dignity and participation and where party policy is biased in favor of a certain group the result of contestation over these values become conflictual. This is the case with internal party conflict.

Internal party conflict also referred to as intra-party conflict, is a situation of prolonged disagreement by members of same political party which threatens the harmony and smooth running of the party (Atelhe, *et al*, 2019). Okoli (2001) described intra-party conflict as having an opposition within a political party, whereby dissident groups of a party constitute themselves into a splinter movement that stands to oppose the decision and activities of the parent party thereby affecting internal party cohesion and the electoral fortunes of the party.

The phenomenon of internal or intra-party conflict is a reflection of lack of internal party democracy. Internal party democracy is a function of the level to which popular participation in decision making is allowed within the party, as well the level of adherence to democratic rules, fairness and justice in the contest for positions within the party, most especially in the internal selection process of party candidates for general elections. These principles and values build cohesion, stabilize and strengthen representative democracy (Randull & Svasand, 1999). It is also the non-adherence to the above principles and values that ultimately results in internal or intra-party conflict.

The Character of Nigerian Politics and Intra Party Conflict

Nigeria politics runs on an pervasively unethical and unscrupulous philosophy of anything and everything goes. There is the brazen lack of moral character which propels the desperate Nigerian *homo politikus* to stop at nothing in his bid for power. In any case the character of the Nigerian state informs the character of her politics. The character of the Nigerian state has been shown to be criminalized, exploitative, negligent, predatory, rentier, and *prebendal* (Agbesa & Kieh, 2014). These are opportunist and self-interested characters. These same characters

inform the character of Nigerian politics, which rules out moderation but mandates lawlessness and extremism. This is for the simple reason that the nature of state makes the capture of power irresistibly attractive. This is so much so that the winner in the competition for power wins everything, and the looser loses everything. Ake (1996), contends that what emerges from where nothing is worse than loosing and nothing is be better than winning is a form of politics with utter disregard for legitimacy or legality - can only be expediency.

It is the above character of the Nigerian state extended into the political parties that has exacerbated internal party conflict. The driving force of politics in Nigeria is sheer opportunism not values, morality or principles. This is so because the pursuit or struggle for state power is not done with the intendment of service to the people but for selfish and personal aggrandizement, the selfish accumulation of *res proprietas or res publica* (public property or wealth) into *peculium privatae* or *peculium proprietas* (private property or wealth). This is equally why the stake in political competition assumes a *Hobbesian* character of a do-or-die affair, because political competition is driven by opportunism.

Political conflict including intra-party conflict in Nigeria is accentuated by political opportunism. Opportunism here implies "the conscious policy and politics of taking selfish advantage of circumstance with little regard for principles or what the consequences are for others" (Okoli & Orinya, 2014, p. 1479). Political opportunism is the manifestation of particularistic and opportunistic behavior in politics or political relations. These opportunists are self-interested people; who take advantage of situation or opportunity to increase their influence, support, wealth, etc even against moral and democratic principles. Opportunists may also refuse to respond to an opportunity if doing so might undermine their self-interest such as forfeiture of influence, support, wealth etc. Political opportunism includes lying, deceit, blackmailing, double-dealing, stealing, killing, destroying, abusing, and doing the likes, all in the name of politics. Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* relays an *a*-moral philosophy of politics and statecraft; a thesis on political opportunism. Machiavellianism showcased unscrupulous politicking and statesmanship where the end is said to justify the means (Machiavelli, 1961). It is this a-moral philosophy that has essentially driven internal or intra-party conflict in Nigeria and perhaps other parts of the developing world.

Historical Trends in Intra-Party Conflicts in Nigeria

Nigerian political parties since the introduction of party politics had been enmeshed in intra-party conflicts of different dimensions; with serious implications for the political system. The first political party in Nigeria, NNDP was wrecked by personal jealousies and quarrels over the spoils of office. The demand for openness in the Lagos Youth Movement caused serious political rift which led to the emergence of Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936. Intra party conflict fueled mainly by tribal sentiments reduced the NCNC to a regional party. The dramatic intra party conflict between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his deputy leader, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola of the Action Group Party led to the popular Action Group crisis of 1962 which also led to the formation of and re-emergence of the Nigerian Democratic Party (NNDP) (Nnadozie, 2005;Mbah, 2001).

In the second republic, almost all the political parties that registered and competed for elections in the 1979 general elections suffered intra-party crises. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) and the Nigeria Advanced Party (NAP) had their fair share of internal crisis. The rift in NPN and NPP caused its splinter group to form the GNPP and PRP. The unresolved conflict in All Peoples Party (APP) later All Nigeria Peoples' Party over name finally caused the Southern Leaders Forum led by Late Chief Bola Ige, to abandon the party (Mbah, 2001; Jinadu, 2001). The third republic party politics was unique in sense that there were no serious internal party politics. The political activities of the diarchy period were seriously controlled by the military under whose supervision the elections were conducted. The fourth republic has equally recorded unwholesome intra-party conflict. It has become a dominant feature of partisan politics of Nigeria's fourth republic. The Peoples' Democratic Party has contended with the most dramatic series of intra-party crises both at the national and state levels in Nigeria's fourth republic. This is further show-cased in Table 3.1 and in subsequent section of this paper.

Democratic Governance

Democratic governance, a coinage from democracy and governance is concerned with citizens' participation in decision making. It is built on the principles of

participation, representation, fair conduct of election, inclusiveness, responsiveness, accountability and transparency in the activities of government (UNMIT, 2012; Council of Europe, 2022). The culture of democratic governance therefore extends beyond periodic procedural elections and the presence of democratic institutions such as the legislature, political parties, and civil organization.

The Council of Europe (2022) identified the two types of democratic governance as constitutional democracy which is governed by constitution and the rule of law. The second is deliberative democracy, one in which authentic deliberation, and not only voting, is central to legitimate decision making. This is very paramount to internal party democracy. Both constitutional and deliberative democracy dwells on the rule of law not the rule of might. According to the Council of Europe (2022), democratic governance is built on trust, transparency and accessible democratic institutions. Largely democracy and governance reinforce each other and have become the fundamentals for preventing conflict, promoting stability, managing crisis and facilitating economic growth and development.

Theoretical Explication and Methodology

The theoretical tool of analysis used in this paper is the systems theory of David Easton (Easton, 1957; 1965). David Easton used the general system theory to explain the working of political systems. Other pioneers of the system theory are Gabriel Almond, G. C Powell, Morton Kaplan, Karl Deutsch and Robert Dahl. The system theory is the behavioural approach to the study of politics. As such it can be used to study political institutions such as structure and behaviour of government or the state, political party, judiciary, etc. A system is a set of elements standing in interaction, and a political system is a system of interactions found within societies performing the functions of integration and adaptation (both internally and vis-à-vis other systems in the environment) (Dahl, 1971). The fundamental assumptions of the system theory according to Easton (1967) are:

(i) Political system works in an environment with boundaries. The environment generates different demands from different sections of the environment (society) and in this case the political party;

(ii) Changes in the social and political environment wherein the system operates produce demands and support as inputs - some of which may support or demand a change in the status quo;

(iii) the demand and support stimulate competition into the political system leading to decisions (outputs) released into the environment which also return to interact with the environment thereby creating new demands and support;

(iv) Feedback leads back to step 1 forming a never-ending cycle of demands, support, inputs and feedbacks.

The system theory is relevant for the understanding of internal party conflict and democratic governance in Nigeria. Political parties are systems within the larger Nigeria's democratic environment. The environment of the Nigerian political party system has boundaries which are defined rules for inclusivity from sections or interests in the system. This paper posits that political parties receive demand from the environment as inputs for inclusiveness, fairness, justice, adequate and fair representation, power sharing, and rotation of party and elective offices within the control of the party. Sometimes, the inputs may come as support for the status quo, same time or other times as demand for change in the status quo - such as change in party leadership. The manner of conversion of these demands and support into decision (authoritative allocation of the values) may stabilize or destabilize the party and the system. Where inputs are properly converted for balanced decisions (output) that ensure fairness and inclusivity, there will be less conflict or it at least becomes manageable. Where the inputs are not properly converted, the output produces failures that create disturbance. This is how internal party conflict that stresses the system with adverse effect on democratic governance is generated.

The understanding the system theory provides is that a political system adapts to genuine demands and supports and stabilizes or repudiates the genuine demands and support and destroys itself. The argument of this paper therefore is that conversion of demands from the parties' environment represented by its members, interest and stakeholders of the APC and PDP for inclusivity, justice, adequate and fair representation, power sharing, and rotation of party and elective offices within the control of the party had been poorly converted into output. These have created

disturbances and stress for the system. Importantly, these disturbances and stresses stretch the parties due to political opportunism and degenerate into conflict within the party.

This is a qualitative paper adopted the *ex-post* facto research design. The researcher interrogated the covariance relationship between the variables of this study with the purpose of explaining the effect the internal party conflict on democratic governance in Nigeria, however with greater focus on Rivers State. Data used for this study were basically sourced from secondary sources such as journals, newspapers, books and dairies. Participant observation was however a major source of primary data. The qualitative method of content analysis was adopted for data analysis. The next section deals with data presentation and analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Lack of Intra-Party Democracy, Party Conflicts in PDP and the emergence of APC

In this section attempt is made at demonstrating how the lack of internal party democracy drove intra party conflicts in PDP which consequently led to the formation of the APC and its subsequent victory in the 2015 general elections. Table 1 below shows leadership crises and leadership changes in the PDP from 1999-2021.

Table 1: Timelines of PDP Leadership Crisis

S/No	Leadership	Period		ıuences
	Dr. Alex Ekwueme		Resigned to contest for Presidential primaries	Vacuum for replacement
	Chief Solomon Lar	999	Forced out by President Obasanjo for personal motive	Internal leadership tussle in the Party
	Barnabas Gemade	)01	Forced out by President Obasanjo for 2003 ambition	Internal leadership crises
	Chief Audu Ogbeh	05	Forced out by President Obasanjo due to his stand for internal justice	Internal leadership crises and struggles

Dr. Ahmadu Ali	08	Victim of political machinations of zoning of power	Internal leadership crises and the struggles
Vincent Ogbulafor	10	Personal hostility with his State Governor Theodore Orji on allegations of stealing of State funds worth N100 million	Vacuum for deepening leadership crises and intensified struggles for replacement
Okwesiliezi Nwodo		Left controversially after a face-off with his State Governor Sullivan Chime of Enugu	Continuous leadership crises and battles for supremacy by party members
lo Haliru umed		Interim leadership not confirmed after a year	A continuous search for an elusive party leadership
Saraje	12	Interim leadership ousted by some forces in the Presidency	Leadership struggle continuous
;a Tukur	14	Resigned due to incessant crises and hostilities and polarization from some State Governors (PDP and PDP)	Leadership crises which occasioned loss of the PDP to APC in 2015 General Election
Muazu	15	Forced to resign on allegations of anti-party activities in the 2015 General Election	Leadership crises continued even in defeat without learning any lesson
Ali Modu Sheriff	16	Disputed Party leader with a faction of leadership leading to resignation after a court order	Parallel party leadership putting the party in disarrayed opposition and internal leadership crises
Makarfi	17	Disputed Party leader with a faction of leadership leading to confirmation after a court order but was forced out by the forces within the party	Parallel Party leadership putting the party in disarrayed opposition and internal leadership crises
econdus	20	Sacrificed on the altar of the presidential ambition of Governor Nyesom Wike	An opposition without a sound leadership for challenging the ruling party
a Ayu	sent	Was under pressure by Governor Nyesom Wike and G-five Governors to resign in satisfaction of an earlier jettisoned zoning formula	Political fortunes in the 2023 presidential election was undermined. The party lost the presidential election in states under its control because many sitting governors worked against the interest of its presidential candidate.

Sources: Ekoh (2014); Ikenwa (2019); Sambo *et al*, (2022); updated by the Researcher.

The table above shows that the Peoples' Democratic Party has had fifteen national chairmen from inception to 2023. Except for Chief Audu Ogbe, none of the chairmen successfully completed their statutory four terms. All of them left office in very controversial circumstances, in many cases without adherence to the constitution of the party. In some other cases, unresolved disputes emanated from the process of internal power distribution, such that the principles of inclusivity, participation, representation, transparency, were equally undermined. The absence of the institutionalization of these norms which provide support for democracy was seen to be lacking in both the APC and PDP. The processes of leadership recruitment (party congresses and primary elections) are not open, inclusive and transparent. It is the will of "one big man" that controls that often that prevails. Demand for change in status quo and for openness has resulted in internal party crises/conflicts. In 2013, there was an intense internal crisis in the PDP over Goodluck Jonathan's second term presidential ambition. The unresolved crisis caused splinter group wherein the n-PDP (New PDP) led by Rotimi Amaechi and Nasir El-Rufai both as serving Governors of Rivers and Kaduna States respectively broke to join the then newly formed All Progressives Congress. This contributed to the failure of PDP in the 2015 presidential elections and the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari on the APC platform as President. The APC had also got it own crisis. Table 2 below also present the leadership crisis APC from 2018-2022.

Table 2: Timelines of APC Leadership Crisis

	ip	Period	Crisis	Consequences
	John Odigie Oyegun	2014-2018	Edged out by Bola Ahmed Tinubu due to his alleged ambition for the 2023 Presidency	Set the foundation for the internal leadership crisis
2.	Adams Oshiomhole	2018-2020	His leadership was opposed from inception leading to an internal crisis ahead of the 2019 General Election	The internal leadership crisis led the party to lose many States including, Rivers Zamfara, Bauchi, Oyo and Adamawa.

	APC splits into two: Adams Oshiomhole led faction and R-APC under Buba Galadima	2018	The split of the party into APC and Reformed-APC or R-APC (under Buba Galadima) threatened to scatter the Party and affected its chances in the 2019 General Election	Many APC stalwarts decamped to PDP and the party lost many seats and States from the crisis
4.4.	Oshiomhole was suspended and reinstated		Tussle with Godwin Obaseki, his successor as Governor of his State.	Godwin Obaseki denied the right of first refusal to APC Governorship ticket in Edo as sitting Governor. Party lost the Edo 2020. Governorship to PDP with Godwin Obaseki as PDP candidate.
5.	Abdullahi Adamu	2022 and present	Imposed by alleged cabals in the Presidency together with most of his executive members in a convention that is bereft of internal democracy but forceful imposition and arm-twisting.	Attempted to impose Ahmed Lawan, the Senate President as the APC flagbearer for the 2023 Presidential Election; caused a rebellion by state Governors and soured relationship between the party leadership and many members.

Source: Sambo, *et al*, (2022); Updated by the Researcher

The All Progressive Congress was roughly nine years old on the political scene as at 2023. The table above shows that the party which came to limelight due to the internal conflict that rocked the PDP in 2014 had also has its fair share of internal party crisis. This has led to many of the national leadership of the party also been changed in controversial circumstances. None of the national chairmen of the party from John Oyegun to Abdullahi Adamu successfully completed their tenure. He was forced out. Adams Oshiomhole also did not also complete his tenure before he was suspended following of leadership between himself and predecessor as Governor, Godwin Obaseki. Abdullahi Adamu was also replaced in controversial circumstances after the 2023 general elections and replaced with HE Adamu Ganduje.

Internal Party Conflict and the Electoral fortunes PDP and APC

The PDP had ruled Nigeria since the return to the current democratic dispensation from 1999-2015. Available records indicated that the PDP as at 2007, were in firm control of 31 states in Nigeria. The states were Abia, Adamawa, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kastina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Nigeria, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, and Zamfara states; while the Defunct All Nigeria People Party, had Yobe, Kano, Bauchi and Bornu, state. The Defunct Action Congress had only Lagos (IFES, 2011). However, internal party conflict within the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in 2013 led to the emergence of the All Progressive Congress (APC) to capture power at the centre in 2015. The APC was formally inaugurated on the 6th February, 2013. It was formed by the breakaway factions of the Peoples' Democratic Party then referred to as the new PDP, faction of the All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) that became the APC. The outcome of the unresolved crises of the PDP especially during mini convention in 2013 gave strength to the APC. It was at that convention or the outcome of it that led to the decampment of Atiku Abulkakar, Ibrahim Shekaru, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, Rotimi Amaechi, Bugudu, Bukola Saraki and many others PDP stalwarts of the PDP to the APC.

The tables below present the results of the 2015, 2019 and 2013 general elections, particularly, Presidential, Governorship, Senate and House of Representatives. The intention is to demonstrate how internal party conflicts undermined the fortunes of the major political parties at the elections.

Table 3: Major the Political Parties in the 4th Republic Presidential Elections 2021 – 2023

S/N0.	Year	Party	Vote won	% of vote cast	Remark
1	2015	APC	15,424,921	53.96	APC Won
		PDP	12,853,161	44.96	
2	2019	APC	15,191,847	53.21	APC Won
		PDP	11,262,978	43.96	
3	2023	APC	8,794,726	37	APC Won
		PDP	6,984,520	29	
		LP	6,101,533	25	
		NNPP	1,496,687	6.23	

Sources: INEC (2015 ; 2019; 2023) ; IFES (2021) Compiled the Researcher

Table 4: Governorship Elections

S/N0.	Year	Party	No. of States Won
1	2015	APC	22
		PDP	13
		APGA	1
			36
2	2019	APC	20
		PDP	15
		APGA	1
			36
3	2023	APC	20
		PDP	13
		APGA	1
		LP	1
		NNPP	1
			36

Sources**:** INEC (2015; 2019; 2020; 2024; Compiled the Researcher)

Table 5: National Assembly Elections (Senate)

S/N0.	Year	Party	No. of States Won
1	2015	APC	66
		PDP	38
		NNPP	1
		YPP	1
2	2019	APC	59
		PDP	40
		NNPP	2
		YPP	2
		APGA	1
		LP	1
3	2023	APC	59
		PDP	37
		NNPP	2
		ADP	1
		APGA	1
		LP	7
		SDP	2
			109

Source: INEC (2015; 2019; 2023); NASS (2016; 2019; 2024) Compiled the Researcher

Table 6: National Assembly Elections (House of Representatives)

S/N0.	Year	Party	No. of States Won
1	2015	APC	227
		PDP	121
		APGA	4
		NNPP	3
		ADC	1
		PRP	1
2	2019	APC	197
		PDP	124
		NNPP	10
		YPP	1
		APGA	5
		LP	8
		SDP	5
		ADP	1
		ADC	2
		PRP	2
		APM	1
		ACCORD	1
3	2023	APC	178
		PDP	118
		LP	35
		NNPP	19
		APGA	5
		ADC	2
		SDP	2
		YPP	1

Source: INEC (2015; 2019; 2023); NASS (2016; 2020; 2024);Compiled the Researcher

Table 3 above shows results of the 2015, 2019 and 2013 general elections, particularly the presidential elections. In the 2015 general elections the newly registered APC then, won the presidential election with 15,424,921 (53.96%) with Muhammadu Buhari declared the winner beating Jonathan Goodluck of the PDP who scored 12,853,161 (44.96%) votes.The 2019 results above showed that APC (with Muhamadu Buhari as it presidential candidate) still held sway scoring 15,191,847 (53.20%) votes wining PDP (Atiku Abukabar) which scored 11,262,978 (45.16%) votes. In the 2023 presidential election, the result showed that the All Progressives Congress and its presidential candidate Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu scored 8, 794, 7266 (37%) of the total votes to emerge winner of the presidential election. His closest rival, Atiku Abukabar of the People Democratic Party got

6,984,520 (29%) of the total votes cast. Peter Obi of the LP scored 6,101,533 votes representing 25(%).

Table 4 showed that in the 2015 Governorship election APC won 22 states, PDP won 13 states and APGA won one state. For the 2019 governorship elections APC won 20 states, PDP 15 States and APGA 1 states. In the 2023 elections APC won 20 states, PDP 13 states, APGA 1, LP 1, and NNPP 1 state respectively.

Table 5 showed that for the Senate in 2015, 2019 and 2013. In 2025, APC won 66 seats, PDP 38, NNPP, 1 and YPP 1 seat. In the senatorial elections of 2019, APC won 59 seats, PDP 40, NNPP 2, YPP 2, APGA 1, and Accord 1 respectively. For 2023 APC won 59 seats, PDP 35, NNPP 2, ADP 1, APGA 1, LP 7 and SDP 2.

Table 6 showed strength of the political parties in the House of Representatives. The tbale showed that for 2015, APC won 227 seats; PDP won 121 seats, APGA 4, NNPP 3, ADC 1 and PRP 2. In 2019 APC won 197 seats, PDP 124 seats, NNPP 10, LP 8, APGA 5, APM 1, YPP 1, ADC 2, PRP 2, SDP 5, ADP 1, and Accord 2. In2023, the APC also won majority in the House of Representative with 178 seats, PDP 112, LP 35, NNPP 19, APGA 5, ADC 2, SDP 2 and YPP 1 seat respectively

For the presidential elections, the point been made is that the outcome of the internal crisis in the PDP and subsequent political alignment and re-alignment led to the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari of the APC as President after the defeat of the then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. The event of the emergence of APC and defeat of the PDP at the presidential election in 2015 remains historical in Nigeria democratic experience. In 2019, there was a similar attempt at re-alignment and re-decamping by Atiku Abubakar, Senator Bukola Saraki, Senator Dino Melaye, Rt. Hon Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto amongstothers back to PDP in 2018 in the hope change the political equation as it did in 2015.

The dynamics of the 2023 general is that Labour Party (LP) particularly its presidential candidate Mr. Peter Obi left the People Democratic Party (PDP) few month the 2023 general elections. This was after the party had renege on zoning the presidential ticket of the fourth. Given the 6,101,533 votes of Peter Obi's Labour would have added with Atiku's 6,984,520 to give the PDP an edge in the 2023

presidential election. Another case consolidates this position. Had the crisis not pushed Nyesom Wike to Sabotage his party PDP and worked for APC in the 2023 presidential election the fortune of the PDP would have been righter.

In Rivers State, PDP worked to deliver its candidate in the governorship and national assembly elections but worked against its presidential candidate. It rather worked for the presidential candidate of the APC. Similar scenario played out in Oyo State, where Governor Seyi Makinde of PDP worked at cross purpose in the presidential election to secure his return. Gov. Makinde delivered the state to the APC in the presidential elections and the APC also worked for his victory in the governorship elections.

It is worthy of note that some state run staggered governorship election. Such states are Edo, Bayelsa, Anambra, Ekiti and Osun. However, these states are captured in the table above. Meanwhile the table above showed that in 2023 the PDP due to the bank wagon effect of the Peter Obi presidential race and perhaps some others factor lost one of its stronghold, Abia State to the Labour Party. Similarly APC also Kano State one of its stronghold, to the new NNPP. Meanwhile, prior to the 2023 general elections internal crisis within the APC Kano caused some of its members including its incumbent Deputy Governor to cross-carpet to the NNPP.

For the National Assembly elections, many of these new parties emerged following internal conflict within the dominant political parties shared seats with the dominant political parties. For instance, in the 10th National Assembly the bandwagon effect of the Peter Obi's shot at the presidency gave Labour Party seven (7) seats in the Senates and Thirty-five (35) seats in the House of Representatives. In the House of Representatives all other smaller parties together with the PDP making up 182 seats could in a coalition muscles a formidable opposition against the APC. This is also very likely for the Senates. Unfortunately they are estranged members of one old family.

Impacts of Internal Party Conflict on Democratic Governance in Nigeria

In Rivers State, crisis brewed in the PDP when the carpet of the power structure was pulled from beneath the feet of Rotimi Amaechi as governor of Rivers State.

This occurred at a time when bickering between the governor and President Goodluck Johnathan resulted in the ouster of Chief G. U. Ake as PDP chair andhis replacement with Bro Felix Obuah through a controversial court judgment. The circumstances surrounding it were quite complex and perplexing. This also contributed to Rotimi Amaechi leaving the PDP and pitching tent with APC. This heralded the death of governance in Rivers State within that epoch. The bickering arising from this event had shaped and altered the pattern and character of party politics and governance.

Also, in Rivers State under Amaechi, between 2014 and 2015 the Rivers State House of Assembly became divided. At a point it could no longer sit at the Assembly Complex to do its legislative business. Suddenly faction loyal to Wike as the arrow head of the opposition to Amaechi purportedly impeached a sitting speaker, Rt. Hon. Otelemaba Dan Amachree and replaced him with Hon. Evans Bapakaye Bipi. There was a general state of insecurity and near anarchy. The state assembly was closed down and the national assembly later declared it had taken over the responsibility of the former. The Nigerian Police Force, especially Rivers State Police Command under CP Joseph Mbu with the backing of the federal government under President Goodluck Jonathan influenced by politics and self-serving tendencies, contributed in making Rivers State ungovernable. The pointis that in a situation where politics and struggle for power takes a do-or-die approach (the Hobbesian cloak), the resulting effect becomes chaos in the state under the spectre of internal party conflict. After the 2022 PDP presidential primary election, dangerous internal party conflict has resurfaced with the G5-governors emerging and demanding sack of the PDP national chairman. The spill over from this crisis has caused cracks in the rank and file of the state party structure. The governor was now fighting all perceived enemies. Celestine Omehia, once recognized as governor, was de-recognized. The certificate of occupancy of Senator Lee Meeba's property was cancelled. Governing councils of state higher institutions were dissolved due to political differences. These are some of the indicators of crisis of governance.

In Zamfara, internal crisis cost the APC the governorship. Internal wrangling among the leaders led to the inability of the party to hold primaries within the stipulated time. The crisis split the party into factions, one loyal to Abdulaziz Yari

and another to Bello Matawalle. The crisis went unsettled into the 2019 APC Governorship primaries. When the primaries were conducted, INEC however recognized the primary conducted by Matawalle's faction which was also recognized by the national secretariat of the party. However, the Supreme Court later de-recognized the primaries leading to the non-filling of candidate in the2019 general election (Iroansi, 2019).

In Edo State, 2020 struggle over control of the state chapter of the APC between Adams Oshiomhole as national chairman of APC and Godwin Obaseki as APC serving governor cost the party in the state a humongous fortune. After a complex and perplexing series of shenanigans and power play between the duo, and the support at the national levels of the party, Gaius Obaseki lost control of the party in the state and consequently the governorship ticket of his party. He was refused the "right of first refusal" as a sitting governor to the party ticket. In the orchestrated power play that also followed, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole also lost the chairmanship of the party. Both the governorship of Edo and national chairmanship of the APC were lost due to internal party conflict. Obaseki immediately decamped to the PDP, picked the governorship ticket of the PDP and won the Edo State governorship election of 2020. In all, the APC lost. In the 2023 general elections, the Peoples' Democratic Party in Rivers State worked against its presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. On the instruction of the then leader of the party and governor in the state, the PDP in Rivers State voted massively for the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This, in all estimation, is against the tenets of party democracy. Yet the party could not wield the big stick against the self-styled G5 governors and their supporters for anti-party activities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data presented above are discussed as consequences of internal party conflict on democratic governance. Political parties are the conveyors of democratic governance. They play the role of leadership recruitment, political awareness, opposition, agenda setting and execution. For these to be actualized by a political party there must be internal cohesion. Where internal cohesion is lacking, the winning chances and the survival of the party is threatened

and, in many circumstances, adversely undermined. Consequently there is the need for parties to harmonize conflictual interests within it.

(i) Non-harmonization of Interest and Intra Party Conflict

Lack of harmonization of conflicting interests within the party exposes the lack of ideology in Nigerian political parties. It equally shows their disjointed, disorganized, uncoordinated posture and character. These according to Adejumobi (2010) are reflections of "narrower version of African parties." This is what resulted in the personalization of governance and failure of institutionalized process of democratic governance.

The issue of internal or intra-party conflict has remained a recurring decimal in Nigeria's democracy. The consequences of this on democratic governance have been quite untoward. This is more-so when the party in conflict is a ruling party at the national or state level. Characteristically, intra/internal party conflict for a party in power at any level undermines governance. This is because it diverts energy, state resources and attention from governance to fighting real and perceived enemies. In such situations, government loses direction. The cases of Rivers State under Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi between 2014 to 2015, and Rivers State under the current dispensation of Chief Ezenwo Nyesom Wike demonstrate this clearly.

(ii) Political Opportunism Accentuates Internal Party Conflict and Governance Failure

It is now evidently clear that political opportunism within the political parties accentuate internal party conflict. 'This is my turn' leads to governance failure. Many of the intra or internal conflicts as showed in the tables above are driven by ego and personality clash. As the data in table 1 above indicated, the personality clash between Vincent Ogbulafor as PDP national chairman and Chief Theodore Orji as governor of Abia State (the home state of Ogbulafor) led to the former's ouster in 2010. Similar fate befell Ezekwesili Nwodo as PDP national chairman and his then state governor Sullivan Chime of Enugu State. In fact, it got to a crescendo in the

PDP in 2020 where the ambition and ego of Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State also led to the ouster of kinsman, Prince Uche Secondus, as PDP national chairman.

Internal party conflict has often resulted in sabotage, disloyalty and other forms of anti-party activities. Where there is internal party conflict, especially for party in government, political opportunists within the rank and file take advantage of same to undermine governance. This is done through the illegitimate use of state power causing crisis in governance. Internal party conflict would often result in "negative turning points in the sequence of use of power and authority, the nations *(in this case the state)* experience alienation and instability and sometimes, it experiences extreme trouble and grave danger (Oyovbare (2007, p. 5). What is further found in that circumstance is self-service and other forms of opportunistic tendencies. In all, it is governance that suffers and as a result the citizens suffer. The education system fails, infrastructure fails, poverty increases and insecurity heightens - all because governance is abandoned for self-serving politics of opportunism.

Meanwhile, inclusiveness and responsiveness are two of the principles of democratic governance. Internal party conflict weakens the political party. At various times party faithfuls decamp to other political parties. Also, it distracts the government from engaging in active policies that will enhance and improve the standard of living of its people; but rather trying to resolve the crisis generated amongst members and finding ways to calm tempers of aggrieved members.

(iii) Internal Party Conflict Drains Resources of the State

The current study shows that in internal party conflict situation political opportunists, where they are saddled with governance of the state, use state resources to pursue their personal survival. In doing this, state resources are used for political patronage and to underwrite favour and sympathy. Rivers State from 2015 to date has been under this spectre. In 2015, report indicated that Amaechi used Rivers State resources to sponsor the APC at the national level. Events have shown that this was not for the

interest of the state, but for his personal interest and survival. Similarly, as event unfolded under Governor Nyesom Wike for the presidency, it was reported that he had gifted over ₦7.5billion of state funds to other states. Since he lost the bid, the donation spree continued till his last days in office. These are resources that would have been used to attend to the development needs of the state.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, this paper posits that Nigerian political parties have lost all democratic ideals and are therefore enmeshed in incessant intra-party conflicts. These crises are indications of lack of internal party discipline. Lack of internal party discipline re-alignment and counter-re-alignment, frequent changes in party leadership, de-camping and re-decamping; cross-carpeting are indications of *lack of values* and *normlessness* in Nigerian party politics and democratic practice. These also point to the overwhelming, overbearing and unrestrained influence of a man or few men in determining a situation where the party is *stolen* from the people. Decisions of the party no longer become that of its members but that of an overbearing strong or mighty man. The doctrine of the mass-line where party decisions emanate from bottom-top is therefore absent in Nigerian democracy. Party decision has no longer become the views of the members but the whims and caprices of a certain leader. In effect, Nigerian political parties are no longer parties of the people, but parties of the leader(s). What is essentially lost in these imbroglios is governance. Accountability, transparency, responsiveness and development are sacrificed on the altar of party politics. Sycophancy and grandstanding by the politically and economically zombified *hallelujah boys and bellyticians* now take the front seat of the political vehicle. There is no questioning and demand for accountability from those whose collective patrimony is lost to the egoistic and self-serving politics of the deified political leaders.

This study concludes that the causes of internal party conflict mostly stems from personal ego, lack of inclusiveness and political opportunism. This has cost the fortune, stability and survival of almost all Nigeria's political parties from independence to date. Just as it added up to the factors that led to the collapse of the first and second republic, it is equally threatening the survival of Nigeria's "nascent democracy." It has largely undermined democratic governance as

political opportunists take advantage of these conflict or crisis to entrench their personal interests. The ravaging conflicts also provide avenues for political opportunists' underperformance and delivery of democratic benefits.

From the arguments, findings and conclusion of this paper, the following recommendations become imperative:

1. Return of decision-making powers of the political parties to the people

The members of a political party are one of the most critical electoral assets of the party. The party should therefore be strongly built on the people, without whom there is no political party. Effective decision-making power of the party should be returned to the people. In this light, decision should be made bottom-up from the lowest level such as the political units to the ward, LGA, state, zonal and then the national level of the party. The decision role lies on the members of the political not the leaders. They must struggle to democratize all decision-making organs of the party.

2. Introduction of the doctrine of the mass-line

Through the struggle of members, the political parties should return to adopting bottom-up decision-making approach. This would mean the decisions of the party have to cascade from the electoral unit levels of the party where every member of the party belongs and move up to its top hierarchy. Those uncomfortable with such decision should be compelled to leave the party. They can find their fortunes on other political platforms.

3. Enhancement of internal party discipline and internal democracy

One of the factors of internal party crisis is the lack of internal party discipline. The parties' constitution has to be amended in a manner that the powers of parties are returned to the members of the political parties. The constitution of the political parties should be amended such that members of the party must be seen to be greater than the leadership of the party; and members must be disciplined to respect the will of majority of the party members and not the personal idiosyncrasies of the leaders.

4. Curtailment of court interference in internal party affairs

The findings of the study also showed that the court has at several times, upon invitation, interfered in the internal affairs of the political parties sometimes without public restraint and morality in their decisions. In the cases earlier shown in this paper, the attitudes and actions of the court had rather unsettled the party instead of settling internal party crisis. The national assembly should amend the electoral law and every other statute governing the conduct of the political parties should to forestall indiscriminate court interference and other externally controlled manipulations.

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