

The Politics of Defection and Power Game in Nigeria: Insights from the 7th Lower Legislative Chamber

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Abstract

Does Nigeria have the culture of party politics? Do Nigerian politicians possess the quality of true patriots seeking for the good of the nation? These and many other questions beg for answers in view of the recent gale of defection across the political parties in Nigeria. This development draws attention to the intention of the defectors. The objective of the paper is to explain the politics and rationale behind defection of some law makers at the lower legislative chamber and its implication on democratic consolidation. The paper relies on secondary data with a functional theory to allow relevant data be put to contextual analyses. In analysing the data, descriptive analysis was used. The paper noted that the surge for party switching in Nigeria is becoming rather disturbing and could undermine the country's efforts at deepening her democracy, if strict sanctions are not taken against the defectors. The obvious in their behaviour was the craving for economic/political gains and power in subsequent elections. The paper concluded that the last paragraph of section 68(1) (g) of the 1999 constitution has been an alibi that unduly prompted lawmakers to unruly defect, and this in turn caused unhealthy rivalry among lawmakers at the lower legislative house and further distorts democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Defection, Legislative Chamber, Politics, Party, Power.

Introduction

The recent trend of political party defections in the lower house of legislature in Nigeria, points to the need to query the reason for defection of political leaders and federal lawmakers. The point must be made that although political party defections cannot be abolished in politics anywhere; however, its occurrence can be minimised such that they occur on valid grounds such as lack of political space, or divergence of opinions and ideology between the decamping member(s) and the party (Udo, 2014).

Paradoxically, party switching is fast characterising the Nigerian democratic experience (Mbah, 2011) and seem to be a strategy to ensure control and exploitation of the offices of the state (Mbah, 2011). Rather than be advocates of a wide-ranging democratic political culture, a greater number of politicians and law makers have made a mockery of the character of sound political leadership expected of political leaders as prescribed in any vigorous democracy (Okoye, 2014). It is sad to note that instead of lawmakers focusing on how to carry out their over-sight duties in a way to consolidate the country's democracy; they are busy playing the politics of power relevance and gains accretion.

The spate of defection from one political party to the other at all the levels of government is beginning to cause serious political tension, hostility and a source of worry to Nigerians (Okoye, 2014). The trend has become popular with lawmakers (especially those in the House of Representatives), members of House of Representatives and political parties passionately drumming up support to join their party, leaving their statutory duties of law making and good governance to dwindle. It is true that Section 68(1) g of Nigeria's constitution stipulates that politicians may switch party if there are obvious evidence of divisions, or when their party's ideology is no more upheld by their party executives and if their party deviates from laid down principles. The fundamental question then is what divisions, or ideological changes accounts for the recent defection of law makers at the lower house of legislature from the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to All Progressive Party (APC)? This trend if not properly checked by stringent laws will make mockery of the country's emerging democracy. The foregoing, not much academic works have been deployed to analysing the effect of defection on the quality of law making and oversight functions of the parliamentarians at the lower house of legislature. To this end, this paper is interested in exploring and revealing the implication of recent defection of lawmakers or parliamentarians on rules/law making and in the long run on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

The objective of this paper is to analyse the logic of unremitting defection of law makers at the lower legislative chamber and to show its effect on the country's political system and democracy. In doing this, the paper is discussed under several headings. The first section of the paper looks at the conceptual and theoretical framework, other sections examine the politics and rationale of party switching in Nigeria, cases of defection in the House of Representatives, the challenges of party switching and power game in Nigeria, policy recommendations and conclusion.

The Concept of Political Party

Political party has no single definition. It is a concept that has varied interpretations but with similar basic

universal consensus. A political party is an alliance of like-minded people who work together to win elections and control government. Political parties compete against one another for political power and for the ability to put their philosophies and policies into effect (SparkNotes, 2013). As political organisations, they aggregate, articulate, and promote public interests (Aliyu, 2013). According to Randall and Svasand (2002), political parties are vehicles through which the pursuit of power in the political system becomes legitimate. In the same vein, Schlesinger (1991) contends that a party is a group organised to gain control of government in the name of the group by winning election to public office. Corroborating this view, Aldrich (1995) argues that parties symbolise coalitions of the elites who wish to capture instruments of policymaking through legitimate means in a community. A critical look at Schlesinger and Aldrich views reveals that though parties in Nigeria are organisation that seeks to contest in an election with the hope to control the government, but in terms of getting the power to control government legitimately, Nigeria's political parties have been object of caricature.

The Concept of Party Switching/Defection

Party switching describes the circumstance whereby members (politicians and/or lawmakers) of a political party willingly leave their party for another whether for just or unjust reasons. Party switching in the views of Malthora (2005) and Mbah (2011) is the same as the following: party defection, cross-carpeting, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party- jumping etc. According to Aleyomi (2013) political party defection or party-switching

occurs as a result of personality clash, power tussles, crisis or division within a given party, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realization of one's personal political ambition, party leaders reneging on agreed issues of the political party probably on power sharing formula and divergent views on the operations of a political party's philosophy and ideology.

From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that members of political parties in Nigeria may have switched party and may switch party on account of some of the aforementioned reasons but which necessarily must include switching to align with a more high-ranking political head that decamps. A case in point is that of Nigeria's federal law makers who decamped from their party, following the defection of their State Governors to the opposition party. It can therefore be inferred that the spate and direction of floor-crossing at the lower legislative chamber in Nigeria is largely dependent upon Governor's defection decision.

It is important to note that defection is not unlawful, but it becomes illegal when such move is not based on concrete and proved sign of internal divisions or conflict or the lack of ideological commitment. It is clearly stated in Section 68(1)(g) of the Nigeria constitution that "a member of the Senate or House of Representatives shall vacate his seat in the House if being a person whose election to the House was sponsored by a political party, he becomes a member of another political party before the expiration of the period for which that House was elected, provided that his membership of the latter 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" (Okoh, 2012).

The general view or rationale for party defection is not entirely wrong, but in a situation where the ruling party repeatedly enjoys a landslide victory or where the whims and caprices of a political party belong to a single or group of dictators by not allowing internal democracy to overrule personal interest is injurious to any democracy (Aleyomi, 2013).

The Concept of Politics

The concept of politics is ubiquitous in nature because it is of variant practices. Hence, we can talk of 'politics of integration', power politics, 'ethnic politics', 'politics of oil' among others (Oshewolo, 2011). It is important to note that the Marxists contend that politics is conflict between antagonistic classes in the society. In essence, politics connotes class struggle and the state is an oppressive instrument in the hand of the ruling class (Oshewolo, 2011). Natufe (quoted in Oshewolo, 2011) points out that 'politics is about power and influence. It is a struggle of contending ideological viewpoints on the allocation and distribution of resources. It determines who gets what, when and why.' Politics is a process by which groups of people make collective decision.

Extrapolation from the Marxists point of view, politics can be defined as the struggle for power and influence between two or more political parties in a country. The recent scramble for power relevance and crave for control of the government between the dominant parties in Nigeria (PDP and APC) in the coming 2015 general election could be interpreted to mean politics. Since 1999, the People Democratic Party has been dominating the country's political system with majority members in the National Assembly while other parties find it very difficult at the floor of the Houses of Representatives and Senate to challenge some of the decisions of the governing party because of their small numbers. This view was corroborated by Natufe (cited in Oshewolo, 2011) when he argues that the oppression of the disadvantaged groups and the desire to consolidate power will give birth to the twin concepts of 'resistance politics' and 'resistance to change'. Resistance politics could be likened to the recent activities of All Progressives Congress (APC) that is bent on gaining control of government

in 2015. The recent floor-crossing of some members of lower legislative arm from the ruling party to the opposition party was an attempt to resist the oppression of the ruling party over other parties in the House. The ruling party on the other hand is fighting to suppress this trend in the House of Representatives by promising the Deputy Governors of the five defected governors Governorship seats (see the National Dailies of the time). Buttressing this view Natufe (cited in Oshewolo, 2011) reiterates that ‘resistance to change’ is championed by members of the ruling class, which include representatives of the military and civilians in politics.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the study adopts the zero-sum game of the game theory as its framework for understanding of recent gale of defection at the lower legislative house of the National Assembly. A game in this context is seen as a gamble or chancy affair. It denotes a decision problem involving at least two actors or players whose decisions are guided by rules, with available options, pay-offs or gains resulting from the interconnected decisions of the players. The features of this theory according to Leeds (1981) include “flexibility, survival, conditions of uncertainty and conditions of pay-offs, in which players are rewarded or penalized in terms of what they see as their interest”. The players or actors as described by the game theory above could be likened to defected federal lawmakers in the Nigeria’s House of Representatives who consider the 2015 general elections as a game that must be played to win power relevance in absolute terms. The pay-offs is fixed, player A gains what B loses that is, if PDP wins the presidential election, the APC loses and vice-versa. Each player therefore in line with the principle of optimal maximization, seeks to employ the best rational strategy to win.

A look at the wave of defection at the lower legislative chamber reveals two major players, the PDP and APC who are in contention for pay-offs in the 2015 general elections. Pay-offs means different thing to different lawmakers, to some, it is joining the party that seem likely to win the 2015 presidential election, while to some others, pay-offs is to join the party where their political/economic gains can be guaranteed. The need for political survival drives lawmakers of Nigeria’s lower legislative house to battle for political relevance and opportunities both in their states and in the House of Representatives irrespective of the means and cost. Alan Cowell (cited in Joseph, 1991) aptly captures the situation of party politics in Nigeria. According to him

A man who supports the party in office will be rewarded with contracts for official projects, enabling him to pass on a large size to those further down the line that looks to him for generosity. The system helps those in power to perpetuate their rule because they are at the fountainhead of wealth.

In Nigeria, the zero sum nature of politics leaves members of the opposition at the receiving end of a lot of injustices. In Nigeria, ‘the-winner-takes-all’ approach to politics implies that the loss of an election is synonymous with the loss of patronage and access to socio-economic benefits.

Cases of Party Defection in Lower Legislative Chamber

Since 1999 when the Fourth Republic was inaugurated, political parties have faced intra-party crisis. The expectation generally is that since the country has embraced democracy, its political parties must be democratic not only externally, in their goals but also democratic internally in their organizational practices and behaviour. However, lack of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties has become a persistent threat to the country's nascent democracy and has given the room for incessant defection. One vital reason for defection was lack of internal democracy and imposition of candidate on other members of the party and this has often forced those cheated to defect to another party. For instance, All Progressives Congress (APC) lost its former Caucus Leader in the House of Representatives, Opeyemi Bamidele, who formally informed the House that he was no longer a member of the APC. He has now joined the Labour Party (African Herald Express, 2014).

Also, in December 19, 2013, 37 members of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in the lower chamber of the federal legislature had formally announced their defection to the All Progressives Congress (APC) citing division, factions and other alleged infraction in the ruling political grouping as the reason why they defected. As a result, the APC leads the House with 175 members ahead of PDP’s 171. The remaining seats are shared by Labour Party, Democratic People’s Party, All Progressive Grand Alliance and Accord Party. This defection came more than a week after five state governors defected from the PDP to the opposition coalition, APC; after months of failed attempts at reconciling with the presidency and the leadership of the party (Sunday Punch, 2013 December 22, p16)

Governors who defected are Chibuike Amaechi, Rivers; Aliyu Wammako, Sokoto; Murtala Nyako, Adamawa; Abdulfatah Ahmed of Kwara; and Rabiun Kwankwaso of Kano. Defecting lawmakers are known supporters of the governors, and their decision was apparently to conform to their principals’, except for members from Adamawa state. The names of lawmakers who defected are as follows: Abdulahi Balarabe (Sokoto), Abudulmumin Jibrin (Kano), Ali Ahmad (PDP, Kwara), Abudulahi Wamako (Sokoto), Aliyu Pategi (Kwara), Ahmed Zerewa, Aishatu Ahmed (Adamawa), Aiyedun Olayinka (Kwara), Alhassan Garba (Kano), Aliyu Madaki (Kano), Aliyu Shehu (Sokoto) and Aminu Shagari (Sokoto) (*The Punch*, December 18, 2013).

Others include Aminu Suleiman (Kano), Aminu Tukur (Adamawa), Andrew Uchendu (Rivers), Asita Honourable (Rivers), Bashir Babale (Kano), Blessing Usiegbe (Rivers), Dakuku Peterside (Rivers), Dawari George (Rivers), Gibson Nathaniel (Adamawa), Gogo Bright Tamuno (Rivers), Isa Bashir (Sokoto), Kabiru Achida (Sokoto), and Maurice Pronen (Rivers) (*The Punch*, December 18, 2013). Also in the group are Sabo Mohammed, Mpigi Barinada (Rivers), Mukhtari Muhammad, Musa Ado (Kano), Musa Sarkin-Adar (Sokoto), Mustapha Dawaki (Kano), Mustapha Mashood (Kwara), Ogbonna Nwuke (Rivers), Rafiu Ibrahim (Kwara), Sa'ad Nabunkari (Sokoto), Sani Aliyu (Kano), Shuaibu Gobir (Sokoto), Sokonte Davies (Rivers), Umar Bature (Sokoto), Yusuph Dunari Sule (Jigawa), and Zakari Mohammed (Kwara) (*The Punch*, December 18, 2013). But recently in January 2104, five of the defected lawmakers have also defected back to their original party, PDP.

All these cases constitute major, howbeit, worrisome events that have made headlines. Worrisome because it exposed the crude display of greed and opportunism of the political class, whether in the ruling party or in the opposition political party. It equally demonstrates to Nigerian electorate that there are really no principled and ideologically sound alternatives for them to pick from in the ruling political elite (see National Mirror, Monday 2014 p, 11).

Furthermore, the issue of defection now seem more important to our parliamentarians than their legislative roles to the nation, this is not good for the country's democracy, consequently leading to witch-hunting of opponents and unhealthy rivalry among the lawmakers. A good example of this can be seen when the APC instructed all its members at the lower chamber to block all the executive bills, passage of budget, including approval of appointment of key officers earlier this year. This witch-hunting can only slow down the stride of development and deepening of democracy in the country.

Rationale and Politics of Defection in Nigeria

Despite different conceptions and meanings ascribed to party switching (see Mbah, 2011) the meaning of defection can no longer be regarded as vague. Party defection essentially refers to the joining or moving from one political party to the other having calculated the pay-offs and the consequences (Okparaji, 2010). One of the rationales for recent party defection in Nigeria and particularly at the lower legislative chamber is the craving to win 2015 general election. Defection is considered as that strategy necessary to provide better chances of either picking election tickets or returning as political officers in on-coming general elections. Parties want to win election and gain control of government in 2015.

More shameful still is the reason being advanced by some of the legislators and governors who left the PDP based on perceived feeling of former President Goodluck Jonathan's ambition to seek re-election in 2015 is the source of the rancor in the ruling party. This view was supported when Udo (2014) asks the question that 'need they be reminded that squabbles and discord are congenital with the PDP, as it had formed the 'Accord Party' in the past to provide a leeway for disgruntled members who had threatened to defect to other parties?' Assuming for the sake of argument that the majority of PDP members do not want Jonathan to seek re-election in 2015, why can they not wait to reject him at the party's primaries, where interested candidates lobby for and seek to be its presidential flag bearer? (Udo, 2014). The obvious is the fear of lack of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties where party primaries show that Nigeria political parties are not operating within norms of democratic principles and candidates can be imposed on the party without election and due process (Mbah, 2011).

Udo (2014) argues that Nigerian lawmakers' leave one party to the other in order to satisfy their selfish interest. He further to asked that how do we explain a situation where lawmakers defect from one party to another and then defect back to their original party in the space of only one month and under circumstances that celebrate disregard for principles. Party leaders in Party A suddenly move to Party B and begin to contradict everything they had done in Party A. How do we explain the claim that political office holders are paid to remain in their party? How do we explain that negotiations for party allegiance is premised on automatic ticket and pre-determined political posts? In all these types of horse-trading and deal-making, nobody is talking about the people or securing obligations or commitments on infrastructural development. Nobody is raising the issue of free education or healthcare, let alone anything remotely representative of the needs of the people. What manner of politics in Nigeria are we playing exactly? (Udo, 2014).

Intra-party crisis within PDP is also one reason that has made lawmakers at the lower legislative chamber to defect to other party. A great battle is raging in the People's Democratic Party (PDP). It is a conflict by party men and women to outwit one another in the control of party machinery ahead of the 2015 general election (Orji, 2013). It is important to note that defection of some PDP lawmakers to APC was borne out of numerous crisis ravaging the party ranging from choice of Babanga Tukur as the National Chairman, to the suspension of Nigerian chairman Governors Forum (NGF) Amaechi Rotimi, and the Governor of Sokoto for acting against the party decision not to run as NGF chairman and voting against the party choice respectively and also the crisis of who becomes the party national secretary among others. These actions further widened the gulf in the party, as the governors against the national chairman became adamant in their quest to sack him from

office (Orji, 2013).

It is equally of great value to note that the defection of some lawmakers was to a larger extent influenced by the defection patterns of their State Governors. Most lawmakers' do not defect until their governors defects. The governors who had earlier defected before their lawmakers' defects are Chibuike Amaechi (Rivers), Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto), Rabi'u Kwankwaso (Kano), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa) and Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara). And a good example of lawmakers who defects after their governors defection are eleven (11) lawmakers from Kano, 10 from (Sokoto), eight from (Rivers) and six from (Kwara), while one each defected from Katsina and Bauchi respectively though for Kastina and Bauchi, their governor has not defected. Also, in Ondo State, just because the Governor, Olusegun Mimiko defects to PDP from Labour Party, 23 out of 24 lawmakers at the state house of Assembly have defected, following the Governor's direction (see National Dailies of the time).

Cases of Defection in other countries of the world: A Comparative Analysis

It is important to note that defection is not peculiar to Nigeria alone but the motive with which it is practiced in Nigeria by politicians and parliamentarians differs clearly from how it is practiced in most developed democracies like US, Britain and others. In many countries of the world, party-switching or defection takes the form of politicians refusing to support their political parties in coalition governments. This happens particularly commonly in countries without firmly-established political parties, such as Vanuatu and French Polynesia where in 2004, a few members of various parties left the governing coalition, forcing it to collapse. As in the United States, party switches seems to occur with the formation of new parties, also in the United Kingdom, there are likely cases where some Liberals moved to the Labour Party in the early twentieth century. In formerly communist countries in Europe, de-Sovietisation saw many Communist-Party representatives switch to other parties ranging on the political spectrum from socialist to conservative. In some cases, the defectors from an opposition party may choose to support a ruling coalition. In Poland, for example, the exit of the populist Samoobrona party from the government prompted a number of its members to leave and form a new parliamentary group. Party switching also occurs quite commonly in Italy, Ukraine, India, and Philippines (Howard and Mario, 1999).

In the United States' political landscape, dominated by its two-party system, switches generally occur between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, although a number of notable switches to and from third parties (and even between different third parties) have occurred. Since 2004, in a reversal of a trend that had seen predominantly Democratic office-holders switching labels, a number of Republican elected officials in states throughout the country have opted to become Democrats. One other notable "switch" took place in 2001 when Senator Jim Jeffords defected from the Republican Party to become a political independent, which placed the Senate in Democratic control. The majority of party-switchers in the modern era have switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. This behavior has occurred mostly in the South, due to the gains of the Republican Party since 1950 and has proven somewhat beneficial to the Democrats overall, resulting in increasing the ideological coherence of the Democratic Party as Southern conservative Democrats left the party (Howard and Mario,1999).

Defection is not new to African countries, but some countries have devise a means of checking against it, others have abolished it. South Africa, was among those that have been able to put a stop to illicit practice of defection, for instance in South Africa, there was a controversial system under which members of Parliament, members of provincial legislatures and local government councilors could change political party (or form a new party) and take their seats with them when they did so. Floor crossing or defection in South Africa was abolished in January 2009, (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2002). Floor crossing was originally enabled by amendments to the Constitution of South Africa and other legislation passed by Parliament (DJCD, 2002). The amendments removed clauses requiring members of the National Assembly to give up their seats if they change parties. According to the void amendments, floor crossing was only permitted twice in an electoral term, in the second and fourth years after the general elections, from 1 to 15 September (DJCD, 2002). In bid to abolish defection in South Africa, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) unsuccessfully challenged the constitutionality of floor crossing (Idasa, 2014). A bill to amend the constitution to again prevent politicians from keeping their seats when joining other parties, dubbed "crosstitutes", was tabled in Parliament in 2008. This was a consequence of the decision of the African National Congress at its December 2007 national congress in Polokwane to reject floor crossing (Carter, 2008). The bill was passed by Parliament and floor crossing was subsequently abolished when President Kgalema Motlanthe assented to the constitutional amendment 6 January 2009 (Government Gazette, Republic of South Africa, 2009).

Comparatively, some of the reasons for defecting in Nigeria are not based on ideological difference nor coalition government or formation of new parties but mainly on self-aggrandizement, consideration for economic gains and the ploy to be relevant in terms of power control in 2015 election. This view was corroborated by President Mangosuthu Buthelezi (quoted in South African Press Association, 2006) who said

that:

Floor-crossing or defection is like the HIV virus because it robs the political system of all honor, holding political parties hostage by rendering them unable to discipline their own members. It allows the emergence of careerists, self-serving politicians, which are a very strange breed because they do not honor the sanctity of the vote cast in the ballot box (South African Press Association, 2006)

In South Africa, party defection has been abolished because of its inherent challenges. The system was the source of much controversy, with many commentators arguing that it disenfranchised voters, by effectively allowing politicians to 'reallocate' votes as they saw fit. Other critics of floor crossing also argued that it lend itself to bribery and corruption. The official opposition, the Democratic Alliance, has pointed out that during the 2002 floor crossing window period in Cape Town, 87% of National Party Councilors that crossed to the ANC were appointed to a position with a better salary. Floor crossing was particularly controversial because South African members of parliamentarians (MPs) are elected by proportional representation, and are nominated by political parties on a closed party list before a general election. Voters thus vote for a political party rather than for an individual MP. However, floor crossing allowed MPs to change parties, with the possible result that the composition of the elected bodies no longer represented the original vote count (Idasa, 2014).

Challenges of Party Defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Whatever are the reasons for party defections in Nigeria, the fact is that defections have created more enmity among members of lower legislative chamber such that they play bad politics with every issue at the floor of the house at the expense of credible and objective legislation. One of the commonest challenge of defection is the unhealthy rivalry and unconstructive criticism between PDP and APC lawmakers at the lower house of legislature. The case of recent seizure of Nigeria's money for procurement of weapons by South Africa has made the parliamentarians from the two leading parties argued and openly abuse themselves at their session. The APC lawmakers do not see anything good in PDP policy and programmes even when some of these policies are credible and commendable, the PDP on the other hand sees the APC as their potential enemy, even when some of their criticism can be helpful in deepening our democracy. Defection has generated unhealthy and hostile relationship between parliamentarians of APC and PDP in the lower legislative house. Defection has also led to over politicisation of Boko-Haram insurgents in Nigeria. A lot of the lawmakers in the house are playing politics with insurgents in the North East, instead of them joining hands to fight and win the war against Boko-Haram they are rather playing politics with it by apportioning blames on one another. Sadly, defection has promoted and established a situation where lawmakers play politics with the sharing of country's scarce resources among various competing groups. This view was aptly supported by Anifowose (1982) when he averred that: Constitutional controversy and struggle for state power have been the recurring themes in Nigeria's political history. The constitutional crisis in Nigeria between 1962 (Western Nigeria crisis) and 1964 as well as two-third majority of 19 states in 1979 readily comes to mind. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria rather it characterizes nearly all developing nations where politics is primarily concerned with the sharing of scarce resources among various competing groups.

While the practice of party defection is not new in the country's political landscape, the recent development established beyond reasonable doubt that politics in Nigeria is totally bereft of ideological commitment to the welfare and sensibilities of the people. The issue of ideology has been central to politics, democracy and activities of political parties across time and space (Shola, 2009). Unfortunately, political parties in Nigeria lay less emphasis on organizing the society better through a given ideology (Tatalo, 2013). It is irredeemably bankrupt of positive social purpose. For instance, in a situation where the contrary were to be the case, a serious opposition political party should be wary of elected public officers of a ruling party defecting en masse to swell its ranks for good or for ill. Much as the development exposed the rump of the PDP as home to many frivolous and self-seeking politicians interested only in the acquisition of political power for personal, parochial purposes, celebrating the defection by the opposition camp shows that there is no credible alternative political party on ground as yet with clearly defined manifesto and programme of action different from that of the ruling party (National Mirror, 2014).

It is interesting to note that defection or party alignment in recent years have made the electorate lost faith in their representatives at the lower house of legislature. It has resorted into a situation where lawmakers at the lower house have been object of ridicule, laughter and shame because of the way and manner they defect without any sense of national interest. This has however prompted electorates to have a stereo-type mind (such as "noting good can come out of our politicians") towards lawmakers and politicians in Nigeria. A good example of case to buttress this view was the case of APC members who accused their former member who defects to PDP, but kept quiet and overlooked his offences when he was with them. The case of Ali-Moodu Sherrif who was accused of sponsoring Boko-Haram insurgents by APC members because he left the party was a good one to confirm this. The point being made here, is that why does it took APC so long a time, to identify suddenly that Sherrif was sponsoring insurgency in Borno after few days he defects? Why didn't they accuse him when he was

with them? These questions show that our political parties lack ideologies and parties leaders are shameless. One of the ways defections has adversely affected the country's democracy is that it has made these parliamentarians or politicians a political prostitute. Odum (2002) captures this when he argues that:

Politicians and prostitutes are two seeming parallel professions. One supposedly displaying constitutional leadership virtue in governance is that the latter revealing social vice-the fabric of a decadent society. Incidentally, one common denominator for both appears to be their loyalty, which stands on quick sand, shifting as mundane attractions glow in their adulterous eyes. The consideration, especially with the modern day politician is where stakes may be lower and gains higher. It does not matter who is the offer. So, while the prostitutes switch beds, the politicians change camp in this game of defection.

From the above assertion, it can be reasonably deduced that party defection of federal lawmakers at the lower house of legislature who do not resign their first platform for coming to political position, do not add any value to the process of democratic consolidation but rather pose grave danger to it. Countries like Zambia, Pakistan and Bangladesh are clear evidence that party defection is a threat to the stability of political system. Corroborating this view was Hoeane (2008), who contends that in extreme cases of defection or floor-crossing, where a number of representatives at the lower house of legislature who defected has been significantly high, such shifts of allegiance have led to the collapse of democratically elected governments, such as in Lesotho in 1997.

Party defection has negative impact in the process of consolidating democracy under unwarranted situations of plethora of defections among legislators, governors, deputy governors, and other party members to the ruling party or opposition party. This trend tends to make caricature of democracy and belittles the spirit of opposition parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Mbah, 2011).

Policy Redress for Party Defection in Nigeria

This paper argues that the survival of Nigeria's democracy rests on the deepening of democratic culture through principled activities of the political parties. Therefore, for a state like Nigeria to be democratic with the practice of a true multiparty democracy there is need for some accepted criteria which have been put forwarded by Dahl (1989) in his book titled "Democracy and its critics" to include: civil and political rights, fair, competitive, and inclusive elections. According to him, countries that meet these criteria are called polyarchies', but they are more commonly referred to as liberal democracies. Be that as it may, there is need for a provision and sustainable internal democracy in all registered political parties in Nigeria. This will not only secure the future of Nigeria's democracy but also knit high-quality ideology in the party that will streamline the incessant rate of cross carpeting among politicians.

Also, Nigerian political parties and leaders should show spirit of tolerance, social trust, mutual understanding, cooperation, reciprocity and other networks of civic engagement during and after election period, as this will go a long way in facilitating coordination and communication through which information about trustworthiness of other individuals and groups can flow, and be tested and verified (Paden, 2013).

Beside this, it is important that leaders and politicians should have a reflection and deep thinking and rational reasoning of how they got into power or their elective positions before considering defection to other party, this will help to inculcate moral consciousness into them any time they consider defecting. They should also put into consideration that the people voted for them and that the interest of the people is essential for consolidation of democracy. This will help to check against baseless defection of lawmakers and politicians.

Strong civil society is another antidote that can help check against incessant defection of lawmakers and politicians in Nigeria. Healthy cordial relationships among the civil society group can act as a powerful self-regulating counter-force to prevent the state from cartelizing the political process. The corporation with and challenge of some government decisions and policies in a multiparty democracy is an essential role of civil society. This will ensure that the public interest is paramount and that lawmakers and politicians continue to respect the rules of the democratic process.

The Judiciary through the law court should be very clear in its determinant of what constitutes divisions, factions and crisis in parties in Nigeria. This should be handled with great deal of attention and efforts should be made to circulate to the parties the interpretations of the basis upon which any member can defect legally. And anybody who is found guilty of defecting illegally should be made to vacate his seat.

Conclusion

In accordance with experiences from across the modern world, the actualisation of democracy in 1999 in Nigeria brought a lot of hope for national development in the country, however, more than fifteen years after the euphoric beginning of the Fourth Republic, there is scant evidence of credible elections, strong internal democracy in political parties, ideological defections and institutional capacity building that can effectively propel overall development in the country. With particular reference to parliamentarians at the lower legislative chamber, the custodian of country's law and democratic rule, this paper traced the sources of recent gale of

defection that have overshadow the legislative duties of the lawmakers to inordinate craving for power and control of government in the 2015 general election. Why didn't we have cases of en mass defection before now at the lower chamber of National Assembly? This shows that the calculated selfish interests by lawmakers in upcoming 2015 general election to a larger extent was the main reason for defection. In more concrete terms, defection or party switching like it is done in Nigeria where we have politicians defecting back and forth in a space of few months is not helpful to the Nigeria's democracy and good governance. Obviously, this impediment to democracy can be effectively addressed and corrected through identification and election of of transformational representatives and other selfless leaders who will hold in high esteem the deepening of the country's emerging democracy. To make this possible, there is the need for a large number of professionals, highly skilled individuals especially those with broad understanding of universal best practices and even civil society organizations to engage more in public affairs and governance in general. One immediate utility of this, is that, the influx and influence of political "jobbers", uninformed money bags and their cohorts shall no more win in elections at the lower chamber of the National Assembly, while the political space shall continue to widen and accommodate more individuals that are required for Nigeria's transformation, purposive democratization and, ultimately, national development.

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