Intra Party Relations and Conflict in Nigeria

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Abstract: Any form of human collection presupposes inevitability of interaction among them. Such interaction may at times be harmonious while in other circumstances, it may be conflicting. In the case of political parties, they are usually composed of peoples with divergent interests and orientations. This in any case produces discordant tunes manifesting in intra party conflicts. This study takes a cursory look at intra party relations in Nigeria. Following observable trends, it is argued that intra party relations have oscillated in the direction of conflict and harmony but more to the former than the latter. This situation which is explained partly by the nature of the Nigerian state and partly by the operating environment of the parties often magnifies into larger conflicts that threaten democratic stability. In order to arrest the situation, some attitudinal reforms are suggested both on the part of citizens as well as political actors.

Key words: Intra party, relation, conflicts, orientations, divergent in terests, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, there is a consensus among scholars, politicians and the public in general that parties are the major lubricants of democracy. This is evidently because without parties, democracy based on the liberal majoritarian model would be practically impossible. In other words, they provide alterative world views and a means of expression of alterative preferences by the citizens. In fact it is a major institution of democratic sustenance as it provides a viable means of harnessing multitudes of opinion requisite for democratic growth. Perhaps this inform why most conceptions of parties have revolved around its being instrumental to fielding candidates for elections and capturing or exercising political power (Yaqub, 2002; Onuoha, 2003; Janda, 1993; 1980). Yet, the scope of party activities must not be confined to the narrow, albeit important function of electioneering and control of governmental powers. This is because parties are expected to discharge other functions which are essential in democratic growth. These include, aggregation of opinion, political communication, socialization, political recruitment and education and, consensus building among others (Okoosi and Anthonia, 2004; Onuoha, 2003; Aina, 2002; Yaqub, 2002). Added to this is that where parties are able to discharge, effectively, the above functions, it thus assist in the task of national integration especially in culturally variegated societies. This role of parties in national integration has long been articulated by Chambers (1966) when he posited that political parties create a sense of political community and efficacy necessary for national integration. This according to him can be achieved in three ways:

- By supporting new constitutional order in its hour of uncertainty and testing even in the face of disagreement over specific interpretation of the constitution itself
- By strengthening and maintaining communication and a sense of shared stakes among different groups in the state and
- By undertaking recruitment and socialization and providing popular education in politics on an informal basis (Chamber, 1966).

Of utmost importance, however, is that for parties to effectively perform its role in a democratic society requires some level of coherence in party structures and organisation. This imperative, no doubt, is *sine qua non* to harmonious intra party relations requisite for the advancement of democracy. Equally, while the above represents the ideal for any democratic society, intra party relations in some democracies are often beclouded by myriad of circumstances that at times generate conflict. This situation is apt of most developing democracies where the institution of partism is either weak, underdeveloped or yet to be fully institutionalised. For instance in Nigeria, since its evolvement of the idea of party politics, there has been a general trend of fluctuating fortunes in intra party relations much as it is characterised by democratic instability. Noteworthy is that, democratic instability in Nigeria is usually preceded

by political conflicts triggered by harsh terrain of either intra or inter party relations. The intent of this study therefore is to examine the issue of intra party relations and conflict in Nigeria. What has been the nature of intra party relations in Nigeria? When and how do intra party relations breed conflict? What implication(s) does this have for democratic sustenance in Nigeria? These and some others constitute our concern in this research. But before the specifics, some theoretical discussion is essential.

INTRA PARTY RELATIONS AND CONFLICT: SOME THEORETICAL INSIGHT

Intra party relations connote a pattern of relationship that exists within the rank and file of a political party. Such relations are usually guided by letters of the party's constitution. The constitution usually establish and define the party structure and hierarchy of authority as well as a standard code of behaviour expected among party members. The essence is to generate discipline and coherence in the behaviour of party members. In fact, coherence, defined as 'the degree of congruence in the attitude and behaviour of party members' (Janda, 1980; 1993), constitutes an important factor in intra party relations as the extent to which it exist can help explain the extent of conflict or harmony within the party. In other words, the degree of party cohesion underlies the nature of intra party relations. But while party constitutions exist to regulate intra party relations, there are yet some other factors that generally often influence intra party relations across systems. This according to Tyoden (2002) includes

- Societal factors which relates to origin of the party and the identification of interests between hegemonic forces in the parties and the larger society. In other words, the interest of the dominant socio-political forces or the creating authority that saw to their formation will usually have overriding influence on relationships between various organs and structures of the party.
- The contending ideological and political view points within the party and
- The personal idiosyncrasies of party leaders and elders. Tyoden noted further that, the impact of ideology on intra party relations essentially depends on the level of contradiction between the various view-points in the party. As he puts its;

Ideological differences are likely to make for greater conflict within parties than between parties because here, issues of ideological purity / correctedness [sic]

will be entangled with the egos of the personalities leading the various ideological factions.

In such a situation therefore, conflict becomes inevitable as the various factions enter into a race of ascendancy.

But while ideology may the basis of factionalism in most political parties especially in developed democracies of Europe and America for instance, there are yet some other factors that lead to factionalism. If we conceive of factionalism as did by Zariski (1960, quoted in Janda, 1993) as 'any intra party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of the common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collectively... as a distinct bloc within the party... to achieve their goals' then, it follows that factionalism could be informed by factors such as leadership tussle, approach or strategy as well as specific interests of groups. These latter factors are most typical of developing or nascent democracies in which the parties have not assume full state of institutionalisation or develop a strong internal regulatory mechanism. Worthy of note is that because the above mentioned influences on intra party relations often occurred in different environment contexts, the nature of intra party relations differ from one political system to another. But a common trend of all systems is that, a cohesive party organisation more often than not produces a harmonious relation between party structures and machineries while a factionalised organisation, irrespective of the nature or basis of factionalism ends in a conflict situation. While it could be reasoned that since parties generally are composed of people sharing same or similar world view and therefore, expected to always reach a consensus on issues, it must equally be noted that their coming together does not totally dissolve the interest of the various amalgamating groups. In such a situation of divergence in interests therefore, conflict is an evitable occurrence. Against the background of this theoretical discourse, what then is the nature of intra party relations in Nigeria?

INTRA PARTY RELATIONS IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

Taking a cursory look at Nigeria's political landscape in general and party issues in particular, one would no doubt discover a close link between political dynamics and nature of the Nigeria society. In addition to its description as 10th most populous country in the world (Gulrez, 2002) and among five most populous in the tropics (Adelemo and Baba, 1993), Nigeria represents a plural and culturally variegated society per excellence

(Muhammad, 2003; Ojo, 2005; Tyoden, 2002). It has ethnic groups variously estimated by scholars to be between 250 and over 400 and an array of autochthonous and foreign inspired religious groups. Curiously, its ethnic and religious character (especially the two dominant Christian and Islamic religion) closely intertwined among geographic lines. Thus, the Northern Hausa is predominantly Muslim, Eastern Ibo and Southern groups predominantly Christian while the Western Yoruba are partly Christians and partly Muslims (Kurian, 1979; Suleiman, 2004). The implication of these segmental cleavages is that it has come to define the nature of political interaction among the various groups in the country. This is to the extent that these cleavages constitute serious influence on party politics and party formation in the country. Within this context, intra party relation is no exemption. What is however remarkable at this point is that, intra party relations in Nigeria since inception of party politics have been characterised by both harmony and conflict situations with a gradual decline in the former and a kind of progression in the latter at different epoch of its history.

For instance, among political parties of the pre independence period up to the first republic, considerable harmony was generated in intra party relations especially at the early states of their existence. Notable among these parties are the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was founded by Hubert Macaulay in 1922; the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC)[1]. The NCNC later became National Council of Nigerian Citizens. Perhaps what is accountable for the low salient of intra party conflict at this period could partly be explained by the context in which they emerge and the goals they sought to achieve. Essentially, parties at this period emerged within the context of nationalist struggles for independence therefore, all attempts were made to achieve maximum mobilisation of the citizenry to end colonialism and achieve self rule. Achieving this involves downplaying, where need be, all forms of segmental interests and a focus on issues of common interest. Thus as Yaqub (2002) remarked:

> Despite their limitations, the parties did not fail completely to canvass for votes, to recruit members from diverse religious, ethnic and communal backgrounds, to become successful at the polls and thus institute government structures at various levels.

But with the approach of independence, there was a total change in the operating environment of the political parties defined, by the certainty of independence and the need for new set of leaders to emerge among the nationalists. The change no doubt brought about serious changes in the nature and form of inter and intra party relations. With regards to the former, it was a struggle for who controls the centre and in the latter; it was a struggle for relevance, regional hegemony and overbearing control over party machineries etc among party members. Intra party relations thus began to assume a conflict dimension leading at tines to carpet crossings as was the case with a member of the NCNC in the Western House of Assembly who cross carpeted to the AG in late 1950 (OKoosi-Simbine, 2005).

In noting the impact of the operating environment on intra party relations in Nigeria's first republic, Tyoden (2002) noted that, the criss-crossing of relationships and personalities between the NPC and the traditional socio-political order in the old Northern Nigeria gave the party some level of cohesion and a unity of purpose lacking in other two parties. Intra party differences in the NPC therefore never got beyond acceptable limits because of the continuous influence of the traditional authorities in the life of the party. This was contrary to situation in the NCNC and AG whose leadership had little or no links with the traditional socio-political system in their respective regions. Rather, what operates what 'the pre-eminence of personality factor in their operation'. Thus, as Tyoden (2002) puts it,

> While you had Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe battling to assert his authority in the NCNC in the face of challenges from lieutenants such as professor Eya Ita and Kingley Mbadiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was struggling it out with the likes of Chief Samuel Akintola.

In fact, the AG crises between Awolowo and Akintola not only led to alignment of the latter with the NPC but equally degenerated into a serious political conflict that engulfed the whole of the Western region leading to declaration of a state of emergency there. (For indebt accounts of this trend, Osaghae, 1998; Akinwunmu, 2004; Nwosu *et al.*, 1998).

The second republic: In Nigeria's second Republic (1979-1983), five political associations were registered formally as political parties and to contest for various political offices. These are the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Great Nigeria Peoples' Party (GNPP), Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) and Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP). A sixth one, Nigeria Advance Party (NAP), was registered in 1982. However as noted by

Yaqab (2002), 'from a variety of analytical standpoints', with the exception of GNPP, all other parties were to an extent, a reincarnate of parties of the first Republic (Joseph, 1991). In terms of intra party relations, this varied considerably from one party to another. For instance, due to its relatively 'wider social base and cosmopolitan outlook' (Tyoden, 2002) and absence of a single personality influence, the NPN was able to achieve a high level of cohesion in intra party relations. This is not, however, to suggest that there were no elements of strained relation in the party but it was considerably limited. For instance, in the early years of the party, Alhaji Aminu Kano (who later became founder and leader of the PRP) left the party because his presidential ambition was thwarted when to his disappointment, the best job he could be offered was the party's National Political Secretary (Osaghae, 1998). Equally important was when M.K.O Abiola was refused presidential candidateship of the party in the run up to the 1983 general elections.

But while the NPN was able to minimise the effects of strained relations, it was not really so in other parties. For one, domineering character of a single personality in each of these parties had negative impacts on harmonious intra party relations. This is because:

> To continue to be in the good books of the party, one needed to be in the good books of these founders and leaders first. Thus the parties' candidates for elections and the choice of who occupied what position in the party depended largely on the decision of the founder and/or leader (Tydoen, 2002).

Infact in the UPN and GNPP, as noted by Tyoden (2002), autocratic and authoritarian tendencies were encouraged as the presidential and gubernatorial candidates also doubled as party chairmen at various levels'. The overall consequence was dissatisfactions leading to split as witnessed in the PRP between Aminu Kano and Imodu factions (Tyoden, 2002) and in series of cross-carpeting that occurred in the NPP and UPN. For instance, Arthur Nzeribe deflected from the NPP to NPN while Sunday Afolabi and Akin Omoboriowo, both deputy governors of Oyo and Ondo states respectively cross carpeted from the UPN to NPN shortly before the 1983 elections (Okoosi-Simbine, 2005). What is perhaps worthy of note in intra party relations in the second republic is that although there were strains and stresses, it however did not degenerate into violent conflicts or pervasive situation as witnessed in the first republic.

The third republic: There is no doubt, that experiences with political parties of the second republic greatly

influenced the emergence and course of partisan politics in the third republic. Much of the manoeuvres surrounding the emergence of the parties have been documented in detail by scholars (Osaghae, 1998; Adele, 2001; Yaqub, 2002). What is perhaps of concern to us here is the fact that circumstance of their birth (being state imposed) and government insistence on separation of party office from government positions greatly impacted on intra party relations. This is because the idea greatly eliminated the overbearing influence of leaders and/or founders (personality influence) as witnessed in the previous republic (Tyoden, 2002). Although the republic was later to become moribund, it could be gleaned from various occurrences that intra party relations were heading towards a conflictual situation before the demise of the republic. Moreover, since only two parties are allowed *de jury*, all the array of political associations with differing world views hitherto existing are expected to come under the two parties. The implication is that each of the parties, SDP and NRC became an amalgam of so many associations each struggling to have control of party structures and machineries. It thus needed not to be surprising that despite the short life span of the parties, factional feud and in-fighting had characterised intra party relations. For instance, the SDP was reported to be characterised by struggle for control of the party by the unregistered People's Solidarity Forum and the People's Front while the NRC also became divided into factions such as Republican Action Committee led by the party chairman, Tom Ikime; the NRC consultative Forum led by Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu and Republican Solidarity jointly led by three of its former presidential aspirants-Adamu Ciroma, Umaru Shinkafi and Bamanga Tukur (Tyoden, 2002). In fact, it was reported further by Tyoden (2002) that as at the time of its dissolution in 1993, the NRC leadership was embroiled in a court case with eleven of its prominent members who had been suspended for anti party activities[2]. All the same, intra party relations in Nigeria's third republic, even though it produced outbursts similar to those of earlier republic was not as convulsive and pervasive as the earlier ones. Happenings following the demise of the republic viz Abacha's rise to power and his political manoeuvrings, his sudden transfiguration instead of transmutation and the coming of General Abdulsalam in 1998, are now history and have been well documented by scholars (Olurode, 2004; Akinwumi, 2004; Yaqub, 2004; Aina, 2002). It must however be stated that the various events cumulatively ushered in the current fourth republic which began in May, 1999.

The fourth republic: A major landmark event that signalled a fourth Nigerian republic was the registration of

political parties in 1998. The transition programme that ushered in the republic spanning a period of eleven months and supervised by the then military regime of General Abdulsalam, has been adjudged as the shortest in the history of the country (Yaqub, 2004). Implicit in the above statement therefore is that political parties of the current dispensation where created in a matter of weeks and prepared for election in a matter of days (Tyoden, 2002). In other words, the parties did not evolve organically to produce a prior long term political association between the various groups that come together. Obviously, this trend combined with some others to impact on party relations in the fourth republic.

Interestingly, parties of the current fourth republic emerged through a phased process. This was because, shortly after the ban on party politics was lifted by the military, about 26 political associations filed papers for registration with the Independent national Electoral Commission (INEC). Of these, only 9 were giving provisional registration subject to their performance in the then forth coming local government elections in December. For the list of the nine parties see Onuoha (2002). In other words, the formal and final registration of any association among the nine will be based on their electoral performance. For an association to be finally registered, it was expected to score at least 10% of total votes cast in not less than 24 states of the federation. Consequently after the election of December 5 1998, only the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples' Party (APP) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) were able to secure INEC's registration[3]. It was only the three parties that equally fielded candidates in the 1999 general elections. However, due to a number of factors after the 1999 elections and climaxed by the rulings of a federal high court, Abuja in 2002 that there is no constitutional limitation on the number of political parties that may stand elections (Anifowoshe, 2004), 27 additional associations were formally registered to contest along side earlier 3 in the 2003 and perhaps, subsequent elections in Nigeria. (For more about the parties, Olaniyi, 2004; www. inecnigeria.org). It must be stated that although there about 30 political parties in existence, the trio of PDP, ANPP and the AD have come to remain most prominent in partisan politics in the country. Needless to argue, their electoral strength in various elections (though in varying degrees) serves to explain their *de facto* status. To this extent, the three provide a good laboratory for assessing intra party relations in the current fourth republic.

Perhaps a good way to begin an assessment of intra party relations in Nigeria's fourth republic is the statement of a frontline politician thus:

The PDP is a marriage of strange quarrelsome bed fellows who do not only misunderstood themselves but are regularly feuding, APP is virtually moribund while AD is split into 2 contentious camps (Aina, 2002).

If anything, intra party feud has remained a predominant feature of partisan politics in Nigeria since 1999. But as Muhammad (2005) noted, the magnitude of intra party feud tend to be according to the size and strength of the parties. Thus, the PDP which is the largest and ruling party is renowned to have greater number of intra party conflicts than the AD and ANPP. As will be revealed later, some factors serves to explain this. In capturing the nature and intensity of party competition nay inter and intra party relations, Anifowoshe (2004) noted that since inception of the present civil rule;

The political scene has witnessed frequent discords, unresolved political issues, recriminations, threats of impeachments of executives, treacheries, flagrant breach of party rules, carpet-crossings... and resurgence of factional cleavages within the parties which have continued to threaten the functioning of democracy in Nigeria.

As noted above, the PDP has been more engrossed in intra party feuds which in many instances have resulted in violent conflicts, suspension of party stalwarts among others. A typical instance was the crises that erupted within the Anambra state PDP as a result of disagreement between the incumbent Governor, Chris Ngige and his acclaimed political godfather, Chris Uba. The crises which started in July 2003 shortly after inauguration of the Ngige-led government witnessed a wanton display of anti democratic tendencies such as adoption of the state governor, destruction of lives and properties by conflicting factions among others (Muhammad, 2005; Ologbenla, 2004). Ironically, the crisis which began in the rank and file of state party machineries was soon to osmosise to one that engulfed the party at the national level.

In fact, the crises took a new trend when it degenerated into a public exchange of letters and words between the President and the party's national chairman, Audu Ogbe (The Guardian, December 13, 2004 December 23, 2004). The episode eventually culminated in the resignation of the national chairman from office. Yet, before the dust generated by this crisis could settle, another which is currently threatening foundation of the party sprang up between the President and the Vice

President and their different supporters. This was partly as a result of misgivings generated by the registration exercise embarked upon by the party and partly by what is considered by many as overbearing influence of the president over affairs of the party and lack of trust between the president and his vice. Consequently, there has arisen a realignment of forces among party faithful resulting in the emergence of 2 political movements, the MDD and MRD. Both associations are now working together to get registered formally as a political party (The Punch, December 23, 2005:6; Saturday Independent, December 10 2005: A3; Daily Trust November 21, 2005:2.

Again at the states level, series of factional fighting among party faithful have continued to render the party apart. Examples include in fighting between PDP "landlords" and "joiners" in Kwara state which began prelude to 2003 elections and has continued till date[4]; personality clash in Enugu state between the governor, Chimaroke Nnamani and his political godfather. (Ologbenla, 2004); factional crises in Delta state chapter which recently resurfaced at the screening of commissioners designate in the state (The Punch, December 22, 2005:13). Also included is the personality clash between the Oyo state governor, Rashidi Ladoja and his acclaimed political godfather, Lamidi Adedibu which is currently tearing not only the party apart but threatening peace and order in the state (The Punch, December 23, 2005:1-2; This day, January 4, 2006: 1 and 4). With these and many others, we may perhaps be justified to say that intra party relations within the PDP have been more conflicting than harmonious. Of course this is not exclusive to the PDP alone. It is the bane of both the ANPP as well as the AD. Both parties have and are still characterised by factional and leadership crises both at federal and state levels such as between Don Etiebet and Jerry Useni factions in the ANPP and between Bisi Akande and Mojisola Akinfenwa factions in the AD (The Punch, August 12, 2003: 39; *The Sun,* September 12, 2005; *Thisday*, January 4, 2006: 6; Abatan, 2006); deflection of party faithful to other party and in some instances, physical combat among party factions (Lawal, 2005; Sambo, 2005; Aina, 2002; The Guardian, May 20, 2002:14; April 11, 2002:1; CDD, 2003)

It must be noted that, while conflict and accommodation are part of the processes of intra party relations, the rate of conflict and the dimension it takes must not be profound so as to impact negatively on party strength and cohesion. Else, the party becomes weak and feeble failing to perform the roles expected of it and constitutes threat to democratic growth. Unfortunately, this is the Nigerian dilemma. But what accounts for this state of affairs?

EXPLAINING INTRA PARTY RELATIONS AND CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

From our discussion so far, certain inferences could be drawn about intra party relations in Nigeria. The first obvious thing is that the mode of emergence as well as the context in which they operate usually impact on the nature and trend of intra party relations. Political parties in Nigeria, as elsewhere, do not operate in a vacuum neither are their activities immune from the prevailing socio-political and economic interests. These forces, both within and outside the parties, therefore combine to shape intra party relations. The case of conflicting identity between the AD and Afenifere, a pan Yoruba socio-cultural organisation attests to this (Abatan, 2006). Moreover, since these parties are an agglomeration of many different groups, relations are usually determined by self interest of the amalgamating associations hence, a weak internal cohesion and high propensity of conflict situations.

It is within this context that we can equally understand some factional crises leading to break away of some factions within a political party and their subsequent metamorphosing into a new political party. The case of the GNPP/NPP of the second republic and AD/APP in the fourth republic are glaring examples. The parties started first as NPP and APP before factional break ups produced GNPP and AD respectively. The high rate of intra party squabbles within the PDP can equally be explained partly within this matrix. For instance, the PDP was believed to originate from a conglomeration of over fifteen disparate political associations representing contrasting political convictions but united by their determination to put an end to military rule (Anifowoshe, 2004). The party was therefore concerned more on winning election and control of governmental machineries yet lacking in the ability to formulate an elaborate development plan or ideology that would bring party members together. Consequently as Anifowoshe concluded, the PDP has become the strongest apposition to itself with sporadic quarrels because people believe they are still representing their various groups instead of seeing themselves as members of PDP.

Another factor that serves to explain the nature of intra party relations in Nigeria is the fact that virtually all these parties operate in ideological vacuum. None was able to come up with a clearly distinct ideology or world view that gives direction to the citizens on what the societal ideals should be and how this is going to be achieved. Such ideology if expounded provides a rallying point for citizen's mobilization. In the face of profound ideological emptiness therefore, political parties become held hostage by individual differences.

Institutionalisation is yet another problem of Nigeria political parties and which makes cohesion difficult in intra party relations. Institutionalisation according to scholars is the degree to which parties become established, acquire value, continuity and stability and this is measured by indices such as party age, count of splits and mergers, leadership change and electoral stability among others (Janda, 1993). However, due to the phenomenon of military rule that had punctuated the country's political history, Nigerian parties have not been able to acquire continuity or stability in their existence as new parties usually spring up at any moment of transition. Akin to this and relating specifically to parties of the current dispensation is the short gestation period of the parties which did not allow them to dissolve their differences and become an organic whole before going for elections. As it has been remarked, the current parties for instance were created in matter of weeks and prepared for election in a matter of days (Tyoden, 2002).

Also important is the fact that, central to intra party conflicts in Nigeria is the issue of control of political power and access to resource otherwise referred to as a self serving and pathological conception of politics (Maduekwe, 2006). This involves going into politics to promote self interest rather than national interest. On the one hand, Nigeria harbours great number of power potentates. While some have tasted power or come close to the corridor and wants to remain there, some others want to acquire power irrespective of what it takes. These divergent forces often rely on hijacking party machineries to achieve their ambition. In the face of rabid and uncontrolled selfish ambition coupled with hegemonic tendencies of party stalwarts or leaders, intra party squabbles become an inevitable occurrence-a trend which has continued to play itself out in partisan politics in the country. On the other hand, politics is seen by many politicians as a highway to unearned wealth and so it becomes a do-or-die affair. In other words, since politicians tend to view politics as the pursuit of money, wealth, position and power to oppress or create personal advantage, playing by the rules becomes an uncomfortable restraint (Maduekwe, 2005). This accounted for the series of party indiscipline, flagrant violation of party rules, cross carpeting to gain advantage elsewhere among others that have plagued intra party affairs in Nigeria.

Perhaps we may add that the self-serving perception of politics by politicians in Nigeria also create a tendency for them to side with comfort or seek for greater pasture which they could not realise in their current party, elsewhere. This tendency underlies why series of cross carpeting has been in most cases from other parties to a ruling party. For instances in the second republic, cross carpeting was mostly to the NPN being the party in control of political power and which distributes political largess to party faithful. The same account goes for the current dispensation where most cross-carpeting has been to the ruling PDP.

CONCLUSION

From our analysis so far in this work, it could be deduced that the coming together of different individuals or groups under the label of a political party (and indeed any organisation) presupposes inevitability of a pattern of interaction among them. Such interactions usually produce impulses either in the direction of conflict or harmony. In Nigeria, intra party relations are seen to oscillate between these two ends but more in the direction of the former than the latter. Among the underlying factors of this state of affairs are the nature of the Nigerian society and operating environment of the parties; dominant interest or personality influence; ideological emptiness of the parties; flawed understanding of the meaning and purpose of politics among others. The situation, however, not only constitutes serious threat to democratic existence but as well, affect the growth and fortunes of the parties. First, party growth depends largely on elements such as its degree of institutionalisation, coherence and discipline among party members. In other words, a party grows when it is able to reduce the extent of factionalism and splits through development of an effective internal regulatory mechanism strong enough to command obedience and support of members. Such party no doubt would be strong enough to stand for competitive elections as well as be able to garner the peoples' support for electoral success. On the other hand, where a party is divided against itself, this reduces its mobilisation capacity and is at the risk of fading away with time. A case in point was the case of the SDP in Lagos state during gubernatorial election of the aborted third republic. The party was apparently the most favoured in terms of electoral support. However, inability of the party to manage the feud between 2 of its gubernatorial aspirants, Femi Agbalajobi and Dapo Sarumi, at the level of party primaries not only led to protest votes by supporters of the former against the latter who eventually was the party's flag bearer, it was equally a factor in the eventual victory of Michael Otedola, the NRC candidate in the governorship election.

Second, intra party relations that is conflict ridding as is currently the case in Nigeria bare parties from performing their universally acclaimed roles in a

democracy viz. political communication, socialisation, education and above all, integration. The point is, precious time are wasted on trying to settle or cope with one intra party feud or the other rather than concentrating on activities that will further deepen the democratic process. On the one hand, where the party in crises happens to be the ruling party as it is currently with the PDP, governmental activities become slowed down as more time is spent appeasing party faithful and resolving disputes. On the other hand, non ruling parties become weak in providing effective opposition. This is because for reasons adduced above, they will be unable to digest government policies properly not to talk of providing constructive criticisms. This accounts for why none of the current parties has been able to come out strongly on some policies of the PDP-led government. At best, opposition politics is confined to sporadic and spontaneous reactions of individual members to some issues rather than a strong and articulate response from the party. Although Nigerian political parties at the moment has come up with an association-Congress of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP)-under which they hope to put up effective opposition to the PDP, but it can only act on issues upon which they have same world view. As it is presently, the CNPP has remained a marriage of convenience among the parties.

Above all, intra party conflict constitutes an ominous threat to democratic survival. It would be recalled that intra party feud within the AG in Nigeria's first republic not only led to prolonged and destructive crises in the western region, but as well, a major factor that precipitated the military coup which terminated the first republic. While present outbursts may in a way and to some extent different from those of the first republic, there is yet nothing to suggest that that there will not be a re-enactment of history in the present circumstance.

Against the background of the foregoing, it is suggested that the political class need to act with moderation while playing politics. There is need for attitudinal change accompanied by a reorientation in their perception of politics and democratic practice. Politics is about conflict and its resolution while democracy is built on the spirit of tolerance and compromise in an attempt to reconcile conflicting societal forces. The political class must wake up to this realisation in order to build a peaceful and harmonious democratic society founded on multi party politics. Equally, the political class must learn to play party politics around sound ideological foundations in order to give meaning to the content and context of partisan politics in Nigeria. It is expected that giving consideration to all the above would no doubt, advance the country in the direction of a harmonious and consolidated multi party democracy.

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