

The Challenges of Internal Party Democracy to Nigerian Democratic Process: A Study of PDP and APC (1999-2023)

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian democracy has confronted series of challenges with the return to civil rule in 1999 among which include, the imposition of candidates, godfatherism, money politics, and injustice, lack of party manifestoes and ideology, party indiscipline and so on. The problem as a matter of fact, hinges on lack of internal (intra-party) democracy in political parties. This is attributable to the neglect of democratic tenets by the party elite, flouting of the party constitution, imposition of candidates, and concentration of political power in a small individual or group's hands. This problem, which has led to party defection, has remained a permanent feature in the Nigerian democracy. Methodologically, this study relied heavily on secondary materials such as books, journals, internet sources and other related documents. The data obtained were discussed, analyzed and interpreted using content analysis. Importantly, internal party democracy entails inclusiveness, democratic values, accountability and fairness in power distribution and decision-making. This makes internal democracy vital for the survival of any political party and democratic system. However, its lack leads to political party conflicts, threatening government stability and democratic governance. The objective of this paper therefore interrogates the role of political parties and internal democracy in Nigeria in the context of the two main parties the PDP and the APC - the rule of law, management of the economy, the fight against corruption and management of intra-party conflicts. This paper argues that non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the party elite accounts for lack of internal (intra-party) democracy in both the PDP and the APC. The climax of the analysis is the identified challenges plaguing internal party democracy to Nigerian democratic process such as the impropriety of the party primaries and the imposition of candidates, a lack of a clearly defined ideology, godfatherism, and the insufficiency of internal conflict resolution procedures. Also, the study found out that the party system in Nigeria is still weak and vulnerable with no visible signs of adding value to the democratic delivery and good governance. It is recommended that issues of organizational capacity, effective leadership, internal democracy, discipline, institutionalization and personalization, ideological platforms of mobilization and linkage to civil society and the masses should be addressed.

Keywords: Internal (Intra-Party) Democracy, Parties, Democratic Governance, Peoples Democratic Party, All Progressives Congress, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Duverger (1964) posits that political parties are essential components in the development of democratic governance, acting as significant measures of democracy within a political system. They are responsible for articulating diverse viewpoints and ideas, thereby fostering mass engagement and the representation of collective interests. The main aim of these parties is to gain and exercise control over state power. Nevertheless, the strategies they adopt to achieve these goals are fundamentally determined by the socio-economic and

political environments that influence their operations.

Nigeria was subjected to colonial rule by Britain, and to comprehend the evolution of its political parties before and after independence, it is important to analyze the rationale behind the British colonial mission. The colonial period in Africa spanned from 1900 to 1960. As highlighted by Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2005), the British colonial efforts in Nigeria were not motivated by altruism but were exploitative in nature, as demonstrated by their policies. After Nigeria achieved independence, the British

played a role in establishing political parties and leaders who subsequently took control of the political landscape. The political party system that developed was largely shaped by ethnic and cultural loyalties. Despite the military interventions that have occurred in Nigeria's political history, the influence of these primordial sentiments has also been a significant factor in the challenges faced by the political system.

In today's contemporary society, democracy operates within the framework of political parties, where internal party democracy is regarded as a fundamental set of principles. This framework facilitates a top-down decision-making process within political parties and promotes the distribution of power at various governmental levels and among different individuals or groups. These foundational principles encompass internal regulations and procedures that empower ordinary party members in critical areas such as the formulation of party policies and the selection of party leaders and candidates for general elections. Consequently, the most effective models of internal party democracy emphasize inclusivity, democratic values, accountability, and fairness in the allocation of state power. This underscores the importance of internal party democracy as a vital principle for the functioning and sustainability of any political party and democratic state globally. Conversely, the absence of such democracy can lead to significant internal strife within political parties, potentially threatening governmental stability and effective governance (Sule & Yahaya, 2019).

Nigeria commemorated 25 years of democracy on May 29, 2024, representing the longest uninterrupted period of civilian rule since the nation achieved independence 65 years ago. This milestone is particularly significant when compared to the three earlier republics: the First Republic lasted six years, the Second Republic four years and three months, and the Third Republic was cut short after the military annulled the presidential election on June 12, 1993. Throughout these years, democracy has faced numerous trials, experiencing both successes and significant challenges. Until recently, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which previously held power, was viewed as disorganized and plagued by internal conflicts. This fragmentation within the PDP allowed the All Progressives Congress (APC), established in 2013, to secure victory in the national elections of 2015. However, nearly a decade after its inception and almost eight years in power, the APC has demonstrated that it is merely a continuation of the issues that plagued the PDP, as the same problems that led to public discontent with the former administration now afflict the current governing party (Ayoade, 2019; Ashindorbe & Danjibo, 2024).

A report published by the Centre for Democracy and Development in 2020, commemorating the fifth anniversary of President Buhari's tenure and 21 years of continuous democracy, indicated that "President Buhari's

administration has exhibited the same detrimental practices and corrupt standards that have defined Nigeria's electoral politics since 1999. Consequently, the party's approach to governance and campaigning closely resembles that of its predecessors. The APC has rehabilitated the images of numerous corrupt officials, several of whom have received President Buhari's personal endorsement and support during campaigns."

This comparison is not entirely indisputable, as it is challenging to differentiate the ruling party from the one it succeeded in terms of philosophical perspectives, ideological inclinations, or moral principles. The PDP has been in operation since 1998 and was the governing party at the beginning of the democratic transition in 1999, while the APC was created through the merger of four major opposition parties to challenge the previous administration. Both parties lack organic origins and do not advocate for a unifying vision that could bring their members together. Therefore, it is not surprising that they exhibit similar features in their organizational structures and the ways in which internal conflicts arise and are managed (Adebayo, 2006; Ashindorbe & Danjibo, 2024). The political party system is shaped by various contextual environmental factors. In the case of Nigeria, historical influences also significantly contribute to the formation of its political party system. This study seeks to assess how effectively the party system in Nigeria's political landscape has fostered democratic practices. This study analyzed the impact of political parties and internal democratic practices in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, with particular emphasis on the two leading political parties, the PDP and APC.

Conceptual framework

Concept of democracy

The widespread adoption and growing acceptance of democracy as a suitable governance model have led to increased intellectual endeavours aimed at establishing a universal definition of the concept. Scholars (Schumpeter, 1990; Osaghae, 1992; Dahl, 2000; Ake, 2003; Nnoli, 2003; Appadorai, 2004) have continued to dissect the concept of democracy in a manner it would reflect global practices. Oyovbaire (1987) defines democracy as a governance system aimed at achieving a widely accepted common good through collective engagement and deliberation on policy matters related to public affairs. This system entrusts authority to representatives who carry out the broad decisions made by the populace via majority vote. Key characteristics of democracy encompass active public participation, the supremacy of the majority's will while honoring minority rights, the establishment of government through popular choice via regular elections, competition for public office, freedom of the press and association, an impartial

judiciary, adherence to the rule of law, transparent and accountable governance, and the presence of rival political parties that offer diverse programmes and candidates for voters to consider. According to Ojukwu, Umeifekwem & Okeke (2023) democracy implies that the people have the opportunity to decide who governs them. As a form of government, democracy appeals to both the government and the governed alike.

Democracy fundamentally represents a governance system where the populace holds authority over decision-making processes. It is designed to guarantee that power is genuinely vested in the hands of the people (Omotola, 2009). Schumpeter defines democracy as an "institutional framework for making political choices that achieves the common good by enabling citizens to resolve issues through the election of representatives tasked with executing the collective will" (in Omotola, 2009, p.27). Democracy can be defined as an institutional framework for making political decisions, where individuals gain the authority to make choices through a competitive process aimed at securing the public's vote (Omotola, 2009, p.27). In the context of this study, democracy is perceived as a governmental mechanism that involves competition for power to influence political decisions, all while ensuring the exercise of civil liberties. In contemporary society, democracy is regarded as a highly valued principle (Oji, 2024a). As noted by Ojukwu, Mbah, and Maduekwe (2019), the preference for democracy as a governing system over others is based on its unique capacity to facilitate meaningful public participation and engagement.

Internal party democracy

As articulated by Salih (2006), Internal Party Democracy (IPD) refers to the commitment to the collective interests of party members, the public, and the state. This concept underscores the importance of a participatory party structure and organization, which are crucial for nurturing developing democratic leadership and values. Key elements of internal party democracy include inclusiveness, adherence to democratic principles, accountability, and fairness in the allocation of power and decision-making. Yamanga (2006) posits that internal party democracy embodies the fundamental principles of democracy within political parties, reflecting how well these parties adhere to core democratic values in their internal operations. This includes processes such as candidate selection for elections, the management of member discipline, the organization of party congresses, and the overall administration of party activities. Consequently, internal party democracy signifies the degree and methods of inclusivity, highlighting the capacity of party structures to engage all members in decision-making and discussions. This aspect is crucial for the sustainability of both political parties and the

broader democratic framework. Conversely, a deficiency in internal democracy can lead to conflicts within political parties, jeopardizing governmental stability and the integrity of democratic governance.

Political parties serve as vital institutions that uphold democratic principles within organized societies. To effectively fulfill their roles in a democracy, these parties must adhere to several 'institutional guarantees.' A key requirement among these is the presence of internal (intra-party) democracy. As noted by Magolowondo (n.d.), this crucial aspect is often absent in numerous political parties, especially in emerging democracies. This raises an important question: what exactly is Internal Democracy?

Drawing from Susan Scarrow's 2004 analysis titled "Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Implementing Intra-party Democracy," internal democracy is a comprehensive term that encompasses various strategies for engaging party members in the deliberative and decision-making processes of the party. It signifies the practice of democracy within the party and the degree to which it adheres to essential democratic principles. Essentially, internal democracy pertains to the internal governance and operational practices of political parties and party systems, reflecting democratic values in aspects such as candidate and leadership selection, policy development, member relations, and considerations for gender, minorities, youth, and party funding (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). This conceptual clarification underscores the importance of ensuring that the selection or election of candidates for any party elective office is grounded in rational choices that reflect democratic values, aligning with the principles of democracy. Furthermore, the electoral process should be sufficiently accessible to allow for meaningful participation from all members. Such an approach will not only foster an ideal democratic environment but also contribute to the consolidation of democracy.

According to Tyoden (1994), a political system is rarely considered democratic without the significant role of political parties within its framework. Political parties serve as the primary means for articulating a fundamental aspect of the democratic process. In this context, the dynamics of inter and intra-party relationships are crucial, as they influence the vitality and robustness of the party system, which in turn affects the overall health of democracy and the characteristics of the political system. Similarly, Mersel (2006) points out that many contemporary democracies grapple with the challenge of nondemocratic political parties, where the majority of parties prioritize external engagements while neglecting internal organization and strategic planning. He emphasizes that evaluating a political party's democratic nature requires an examination of its objectives and operational practices, as some parties often overlook

critical components like their internal frameworks.

The principle asserts that political parties should operate democratically not just in their external dealings but also within their internal structures. The interaction between parties and democratic governance should illustrate the parties' commitment to democratic ideals and the establishment of internal democratic mechanisms (Mersel, 2006). Internal democracy seeks to foster political parties that are more transparent, effective, and democratic. It addresses specific challenges in the internal management and functioning of parties and party systems, including candidate and leadership selection, policy development, member relations, gender issues, minority representation, youth involvement, and funding. These challenges prompt critical inquiries, such as whether internal democracy enhances a party's appeal or if it threatens internal cohesion. Furthermore, what are the implications of increased internal democracy for the party's relationship with voters, particularly in terms of making party membership more appealing?

Penning and Hazan (2001) argue that in certain cases, open candidate selection methods can empower small elite groups, particularly political newcomers. This approach fosters a vital democratic culture both within the party and in the broader society. Furthermore, internal democratic processes can positively influence the representation of voters' ideas and enhance organizational strength by drawing in new members and encouraging innovative concepts. Additionally, these methods can establish essential vertical connections among various deliberative arenas, as well as horizontal connections between competing issues (Teorell, 1999).

In the analysis by Mimpen (n.d), two key instrumental aspects of internal democracy are highlighted. The first aspect pertains to the establishment of free, fair, and regular elections for internal positions and candidates for representative bodies. The second aspect involves ensuring that all members and member groups can participate equally and openly, thereby achieving a balanced representation of interests. These components are vital for developing a political party that is both open and deliberative, enabling members to engage in elections on equal footing and explore additional avenues for participation and representation.

The concept of political party

A political party is defined as a structured assembly of individuals who share similar political goals and viewpoints, aiming to sway public opinion and policy by electing their candidates to governmental positions (Likoti, 2005). Edmund Burke characterized a political party as a collective of individuals united to advance their shared objectives that align with national interests based on agreed-upon principles (cited in Ojo, 2009). According to this definition, the foundation of political parties should

be rooted in the promotion of national interests, as they are typically expected to have a diverse membership across the nation. This requirement is exemplified by the Nigerian constitution, which mandates that political parties reflect federal character for registration (Tordoff, 1999). In a similar vein, Osumah & Ikelegbe (2009) describe a political party as a voluntary association formed by individuals united by common interests or goals, seeking to gain or maintain power through the election of their candidates to public office. In this context, a political party is viewed as a means to attain political power for the purpose of implementing governmental policies.

Political parties play a crucial role in the establishment of democratic institutions. According to IDEA (2000), they are responsible for nominating candidates, defining the issues and agendas for elections, and are expected to carry out these responsibilities on a regular basis. Carr (as referenced in Egbewole and Etudaiye, 2010) outlined the functions of political parties as follows:

- a) Encouraging citizens to engage more actively in elections and governmental activities.
- b) Clarifying current political issues and enhancing the distinction between different options.
- c) Nominating candidates who are dedicated to articulating their positions on relevant issues.
- d) The majority party serves as the foundation for effective governance.
- e) Assuming the responsibility of governance upon electoral victory.

Furthermore, Huntington (1968) posits that political parties play a crucial role in organizing the political system. They help structure the political process and facilitate orderly citizen participation. Political parties aim to create a unique collective identity for their supporters, grounded in the acceptance of fundamental rules governing the national political landscape. Consequently, Diamond (1997) noted that political parties are vital, if not indispensable, for representing various political constituencies and interests, consolidating demands and preferences, recruiting and socializing new candidates for office, orchestrating electoral competition, developing policy alternatives, establishing the policy-making agenda, forming effective governments, and integrating individuals and groups into the democratic framework. To effectively fulfill these roles, a political party must be guided by a distinct ideology that resonates with a core group of voters and clearly differentiates it from other parties.

A Historical analysis of internal democratic practices in Nigerian political parties

The lack of internal democracy within political parties

often leads to party defection or cross-carpeting, a phenomenon that has historical significance in Nigeria. This issue is not new; it has been present since before Nigeria achieved political independence in 1960. A notable example occurred in 1951 when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who led the NCNC after Herbert Macaulay's death, was expected to become the Premier of Western Nigeria.

Despite the NCNC winning 42 out of 80 seats in the elections, within 24 hours, 20 Yoruba members elected on the NCNC ticket switched allegiance to the Action Group (AG) to block Dr. Azikiwe's premiership in favor of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the opposition in the Regional House of Assembly (Natufe, 1999, p.3).

The phrase "cross-carpeting" became a notable part of Nigeria's political terminology, illustrating the ongoing challenges faced by its democracy. This term has endured, signifying the still-developing nature of democratic governance in the country.

Furthermore, the discord between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Samuel Ladoke Akintola during the First Republic serves as a case study of how insufficient internal democracy can lead to severe political crises in post-colonial Nigeria. Chief Akintola opposed the excessive influence exerted by Chief Awolowo, even as he held the position of Premier of the Western region. The resulting conflict from their disagreements eventually led to Akintola forming an alliance with the Northern People's Congress, which was in control of the central government.

After Chief Akintola became the Premier of the Western Region with the Action Group, he later abandoned the party to establish his own, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). This decision resulted in a brief and tumultuous period for both Chief Akintola and the NNDP (Babangida, 2011).

In the Second Republic, influential members of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) reportedly disregarded a well-planned strategy to nominate the late Chief MKO Abiola as their presidential candidate for the 1983 elections. Allegedly, he was misled and informed that the NPN's presidential nomination was not for sale, leading to Alhaji Shehu Shagari being selected instead (Babangida, 2011).

Oji (2024b) argues that this situation marked a significant failure in political conduct, creating a toxic atmosphere that made politics hazardous for both participants and onlookers. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, such irregularities have continued to manifest in various elections throughout the country.

The Fourth Republic has particularly seen a rise in the wrongful selection of candidates, especially within the Peoples' Democratic Party. From 1999 to the present, this troubling trend has escalated, posing a serious threat to the development of democracy in the country.

People's Democratic Party (PDP)

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was established on July 28, 1998, through a coalition of leaders from various political groups, including the G-34 and the People Democratic Movement (PDM). Recognized as the largest political party in Africa, the PDP was among the first nine parties to be registered at the provincial level during General Abubakar Abdulsalam's administration. This recognition was largely due to its commendable performance in the local government elections held on December 5, 1998, where chairmen and councilors were elected across all local government councils in Nigeria. The formation of the PDP is closely linked to the political changes that occurred following years of military rule, which fostered greater political participation and competitive electoral processes. Its membership included prominent figures from the Nigerian political elite, notably a number of former military officers who had held significant positions of power in the preceding years (Olarenwaju, 1999, p.15).

The context surrounding the formation of the PDP is clearly reflected in its mission, vision, and objectives, which include: safeguarding the integrity, unity, and sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as a singular political entity; ensuring the authentic restoration, lasting establishment, and practice of democracy, the rule of law, equity, and social justice; fostering national integration and peaceful coexistence among the diverse communities within our society; creating an egalitarian society based on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice; supporting the independence of the judiciary and a free press, while also championing freedom of speech and association; and ensuring that only qualified, committed, patriotic, and credible candidates are nominated for elective positions across all levels of governance.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that the PDP is focused on reinforcing democratic culture, advancing constitutionalism, ensuring social justice, safeguarding media freedom, promoting judicial independence, achieving socio-economic self-sufficiency, and cultivating trustworthy leadership. These aims are consistent with the core principles of democracy and good governance. Nevertheless, the degree to which the party has executed these objectives since its inception in May 1999 is a separate matter, which will be explored in the later sections of this analysis.

All Progressives Congress (APC)

Formed in 2013, the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerged from the merger of three significant opposition parties: the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), led by General Muhammadu Buhari; the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), under Ahmed Bola Tinubu; and the All

Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), headed by Chief Ogbonnaya Onu. The coalition also included a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), led by Imo State Governor Rochas Okorocha, as well as a faction of the new Peoples Democratic Party (nPDP), represented by Atiku Abubakar, Kawu Baraje, and several State Governors—Chief Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers, Abdulfatah Ahmed of Kwara, Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko of Sokoto, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of Kano, and Murtala Hammanero Nyako of Adamawa. The APC's first National Convention took place in 2014, where Muhammadu Buhari was selected as the party's candidate for the 2015 General Elections, leading to a victory over the incumbent PDP, which was led by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

The objectives of the Party are as follows: to enhance unity, political stability, and national consciousness among the citizens of Nigeria; to advocate for authentic federalism in the Federal Republic of Nigeria; to actively implement the party's policies and programs through its members who hold appointed or elected positions in government, legislative bodies, and boards nationwide; to protect the rights and interests of farmers, workers, women, youth, and persons with disabilities in Nigeria, while striving to ensure they receive the highest possible returns for their efforts and full participation in the national economy; to promote and uphold internal democracy at every level of the party's organization; to establish and maintain representative democracy, discipline, and strict adherence to the rule of law within the Federation of Nigeria; to vocally oppose and combat all forms of oppression and exploitation of Nigerians; and to advocate for social, political, and economic freedoms, as well as the general welfare of the people, with the goal of achieving enduring peace, freedom, dignity of labor, equity, fraternity, and happiness for all Nigerians.

The APC features a hierarchical organizational structure that extends from the Ward to the National level, incorporating the Local Government Area, State, and Zones. This structure is composed of seven levels: the Polling Unit, the Ward, the Local Government Area/Area Council, the Senatorial District, the State, the Zone, and the National level. Each level, with the exception of the Senatorial District and Polling Unit, will maintain a functional secretariat. Furthermore, the Party is supported by fourteen Principal Organs and other associated bodies.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) versus All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Dynamics of Internal Party Democracy in Nigeria

This study explores the significance of political parties and internal democracy in Nigeria, focusing on the two dominant parties: the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). It utilizes

specific criteria such as the rule of law, economic management, anti-corruption efforts, and the resolution of intra-party disputes to analyze their effectiveness. The primary aim of this section is to assess the extent to which both the PDP and APC governments in Nigeria have complied with these essential parameters.

Internal Party Democracy in Nigeria with Comparison of the PDP and the APC

Indicators

The rule of law

PDP

The rule of law implies that every citizen is subject to the law of the land including law makers themselves. It therefore stands in contrast to autocracy, dictatorship or oligarchy. From the foregoing it can be discerned that the rule of law is the bedrock of modern constitutional government. Throughout the eight years of former President Obasanjo's tenure, the rule of law was effectively replaced by the rule of force. The confrontation between Obasanjo and his Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, represented the height of intolerance and a blatant disregard for due process. This conflict led to Obasanjo's decision to expel Abubakar from the PDP and to declare the vice presidency seat vacant, however, this decision was overturned by the Supreme Court, which ruled that the president lacked the constitutional authority to remove the vice president. By the time he left office in 2007, Obasanjo had ensured that the party's constitution was amended to grant him the position of Chairman of the Board of Trustees, a role he held until resigning in 2012. He ultimately severed ties with the party by publicly tearing up his membership card in the lead-up to the 2015 General Elections. Additionally, the arbitrary removal of sitting governors, misuse of judicial processes, and the imposition of states of emergency and sole administrators painted a grim picture of the rule of law during the PDP's governance.

The 2007 election, which was marred by significant flaws, resulted in the ascension of the late President Yaradua. Despite unveiling his Seven Point Agenda, Yaradua's health challenges hindered his capacity to make significant progress. Consequently, his administration fell under the control of a group that operated without accountability.

The administration of Goodluck Jonathan operated in a manner that was not entirely aligned with the principles of the rule of law as outlined in the nation's constitution, despite its public claims to the contrary. In 2010, President Jonathan took the controversial step of suspending Justice Mustafa Salami, the president of the Appeal Court, and appointed an acting president to serve

until the end of Salami's term. This action was likely influenced by the numerous election results from 2007 that were overturned by the Appeal Court under Salami's leadership, a situation that was unfavorable to the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the time.

In summary, the persistent neglect of the rule of law by the PDP-led government in Nigeria from 1999 to 2015 stemmed from the fact that governance institutions were primarily centered around individual leaders, specifically the governing elites and their associates. This structure hindered the proper and independent functioning of these institutions, leading to political corruption, abuse of power, judicial incompetence, ineffective leadership, and a lack of due process, which collectively impoverished a significant portion of the population.

APC

The significance of internal democracy is paramount for the All Progressives Congress (APC), as it directly impacts the party's legitimacy, unity, and electoral performance. The National Convention was marred by constitutional irregularities that were so apparent that no reasonable observer could argue that a legitimate and lawful executive was produced from that event. In 2018, the organizing Committee's Chairman, Governor Alhaji Mohammed Badaru Abubakar of Jigawa State, declared 18 positions as unopposed, citing that only one valid candidate emerged from a severely manipulated nomination process for each office. Consequently, he announced these individuals as duly elected, which constituted a clear violation of the APC Constitution. Leading up to the 2019 General Elections, numerous lawsuits were filed nationwide, challenging the legality of both the congresses and the National Convention.

The APC-led government appears to be gravitating towards authoritarianism, as evidenced by its persistent disregard for judicial decisions. The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nigeria faces significant challenges that jeopardize its internal democratic processes. The recent Congresses and Convention of the APC were marred by controversy, characterized by a blatant disregard for due process, the party's Constitution, and an overt display of power. In 24 states, including Abia, Adamawa, and Bauchi, parallel congresses were held, resulting in the emergence of conflicting sets of delegates from various Wards, Local Government Areas, and States across the nation. This has led to a troubling scenario where the party is deeply factionalized and divided.

According to Galadima (2018), the APC has led a government characterized by a lack of direction, incompetence, and ineffectiveness, failing to provide good governance to the citizens of Nigeria. Instead, it has established a regime marked by dictatorship, impunity, and the misuse of power, while neglecting its

constitutional and statutory obligations. The party has not ensured the security and welfare of the Nigerian people and has allowed nepotism to flourish to an unacceptable degree. The APC has not met its essential promises to the nation, and there is little indication of any political will to reverse the party's downward trajectory, with leaders acting as if Nigerians are inherently obligated to vote for them (Vanguard Media News, 2018). Galadima further remarked that the APC government has been a considerable failure, even more so than the administration it succeeded. The political party that was supposed to support this government has been weakened by manipulation and a total lack of adherence to due process.

Management of the Economy

PDP

From 1999 to 2015, Nigeria's economy witnessed significant and consistent growth, averaging over 7% annually. This growth was driven by favorable global conditions, along with macroeconomic and initial structural reforms. The government led by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) embraced free market economic policies that promoted economic liberalism and minimized government intervention.

Upon assuming power in 1999, the PDP inherited an economy in disarray due to years of military governance. In response to these challenges, the PDP administration initiated various programmes, policies, and reforms targeting the public sector, financial institutions, and monetary systems to improve macroeconomic stability, public financial management, and resource mobilization. Some of these economic reforms include: the programme of Privatization and Commercialization Act, Bank Consolidation, Budgetary Control, Eradication of Poverty and pursuit of the policy of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The PDP government equally launched Nigeria's first National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to ensure that every Nigerian has access to basic health care services. The PDP, again strived to maintain the status quo on oil revenue distribution, the PDP government set up the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), to address the needs of the oil producing Niger Delta States, it rebuffed repeated efforts to revert to the 50% to 50% federal to state government revenue allocation agreement established in 1966, during the First Republic. In any case, the PDP's economic reform policies were predominantly right-leaning, supportive of Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), and not in the best interest of the citizens. Over the course of President Obasanjo's seven-year administration, the PDP raised petroleum product prices six times, with three of those increases occurring in 2003 alone. Additionally, Obasanjo failed to consult with stakeholders before making these critical decisions.

The implementation of the privatization and commercialization programmes merely helped some powerful Nigerians to pocket our national silver like the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), and National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), later Power Holding of Nigeria (PHCN). The privatization programmes also resulted in the mass retrenchment of workers in the affected public organizations. Also, the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the PDP led federal government has been fundamentally flawed. A portion of the financial resources allocated for poverty alleviation efforts remains unaccounted for. Concurrently, the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), which is tasked with the responsibilities of privatization and commercialization, has faced allegations of corrupt practices. Despite the PDP government's success in negotiating a debt write-off from the Paris Club after remitting \$12 billion of the \$18 billion owed, the World Bank continues to categorize Nigeria as a heavily indebted nation due to a significant rise in domestic debt. Additionally, there has been an unprecedented surge in inflation rates alongside a consistent decline in Gross Domestic Product (Momoh, 2006; Osumah, 2007).

Under the leadership of the late President Musa Umaru Yar Adua, a Seven Point Agenda was established, addressing critical issues including power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and empowerment, mass transportation and land reforms, security, quality education, and adherence to the rule of law. Tragically, Yar'Adua's untimely death prevented the execution of this agenda, leading to his vice president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, stepping in first as acting President and later as the President and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The economic programme of the PDP government under Goodluck Jonathan has been a subject of considerable debate, as its evaluation often contrasts the theoretical framework with the practical realities experienced by citizens. One of Jonathan's most significant early actions following his election was the elimination of the fuel subsidy, a decision that faced widespread criticism from Nigerians, particularly among the impoverished and human rights advocates. This decision came at a time when many Nigerians were struggling to survive on approximately \$2 a day. The public was apprehensive that this policy would exacerbate their financial hardships; however, the government maintained that it would stimulate economic growth, arguing that the funds previously allocated for fuel subsidies were a burden on the federal treasury and capital expenditures. Regrettably, the collective donations intended for public benefit were revealed to have primarily enriched a select group of government officials and individuals. Reports indicated that the funds allocated to the "subsidy" account were either

inaccurately reported or misappropriated by both governing and non-governing elites associated with the PDP. Consequently, by the end of Jonathan's administration, the anticipated benefits of the subsidy removal were not evident in the lives of Nigerians, as critical sectors of the economy remained stagnant or in decline, while corruption in the crude oil sector continued to escalate. In response to these challenges, Jonathan initiated several policies aimed at revitalizing the economy, focusing on the inclusion and diversification of neglected sectors such as agriculture, telecommunications, and entertainment.

APC

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has held power since May 29, 2015, when Muhammadu Buhari assumed office, marking a historic moment as he became the first candidate to defeat an incumbent president in an election. After eight years in leadership, he transferred authority to Bola Tinubu, the former governor of Lagos State, which serves as Nigeria's commercial hub.

Between 2015 and 2022, the country experienced a decline in growth rates, resulting in stagnant GDP per capita. This stagnation was influenced by distortions in monetary and exchange rate policies, rising fiscal deficits stemming from reduced oil production and an expensive fuel subsidy program, heightened trade protectionism, and external shocks, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of weakened economic fundamentals, inflation surged to a 24-year peak of 31.7% in February 2024. This inflation, coupled with sluggish economic growth, has driven millions of Nigerians into poverty. Despite the federal government's attempts to address this issue, the All Progressives Congress (APC) has been in power for over eight years, yet poverty levels have continued to rise. In 2021, President Buhari initiated the Steering Committee on the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy, aiming to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty over the next ten years. However, a 2022 report from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicated that approximately 133 million Nigerians were experiencing multidimensional poverty. The report highlighted that sluggish economic growth and escalating inflation had caused the poverty rate to rise from 40 percent in 2018 to 46 percent in 2023, resulting in an additional 24 million individuals falling below the national poverty threshold. Furthermore, it noted an increase in the number of impoverished Nigerians from 79 million in 2018 to 104 million in 2023, with urban poverty rising from 13 million to 20 million and rural poverty increasing from 67 million to 84 million.

Under Buhari's administration, Nigeria faced a dire economic outlook characterized by high poverty rates, significant unemployment, poor access to basic amenities, volatile exchange rates, and rising inflation.

These issues raised alarming concerns about increasing national debt and a concealed risk of dwindling reserves, exacerbated by reports of underdevelopment, mismanagement, and corruption. Following the transition of power in May 2023, the new administration has initiated comprehensive reforms aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability and promoting growth. Key measures include the partial removal of the petrol fiscal subsidy and reforms in the Foreign Exchange Market (FX), which have resulted in a unified FX market and a more accurate market exchange rate. To support the most vulnerable citizens amid inflationary pressures, the government is implementing temporary cash transfers to 15 million households. Furthermore, efforts are underway to tighten monetary policy and ensure that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) focuses on its essential role of maintaining price stability..

Anti-corruption efforts

PDP

Upon assuming office, former President Obasanjo prominently championed an anti-corruption agenda, which included the retirement of many military personnel linked to earlier regimes, aiming to re-establish a professional military force. He took significant measures by freezing numerous suspicious accounts and revoking contracts that had been rapidly awarded by previous administrations. Additionally, he formed more than twelve committees to investigate various corruption-related issues, including abuses and violations. His actions received commendation, as highlighted by Momoh (2006, p.70). However, the momentum of these initiatives waned, and the latter part of his administration reverted to the status quo.

The anti-corruption efforts of the Obasanjo administration reached a peak when the former Acting Auditor-General of the federation, Mr. Azie, was unjustly criticized and removed from his position for presenting a damaging report on corruption across various government sectors. This incident served as clear evidence that the government's anti-corruption campaign was merely a façade. Another prominent illustration of the pervasive corruption within the PDP government during Obasanjo's tenure was the notorious financial misconduct associated with the All Africa Games (COJA). The expenditures related to COJA lacked adherence to due process, a fact confirmed by the presidential Adviser on due process, who stated to the media that COJA expenses were misclassified as recurrent rather than capital expenditures to circumvent due process (Ibeanu, 2008, p.243). Throughout the administration, there were also instances of extra-budgetary spending and the failure to release capital funds.

During Musa Yar'Adua's presidency, the anti-corruption

initiatives of the PDP-led government were effectively stalled due to the President's declining health, which ultimately led to his passing. While he was receiving treatment in distant Saudi Arabia, a group of elites close to him exploited the situation, managing the nation's finances without adherence to legal protocols or respect for the rule of law.

The anti-corruption efforts of the PDP-led government during Jonathan's administration were often perceived as ineffective or lenient towards corruption. This perception stemmed from numerous reports of corruption that plagued Jonathan's tenure, particularly concerning the Pension Fund, Agricultural Project Fund, Fuel Subsidy, and the case involving Stella Oduah and the missing \$20 billion, among others. In a media interaction, former President Jonathan stated that stealing does not equate to corruption and asserted that corruption is not Nigeria's most pressing issue (The Guardian, 2015, p.16). This perspective heightened the pace and public perception of corruption within the political landscape during Jonathan's tenure. Furthermore, the Jonathan administration engaged in the operation of an illegal crude oil account, contravening Section 162 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which mandates that all funds accruing to the government be deposited into the Federation Account. Most concerning is the fact that the Jonathan administration rarely investigated or prosecuted ministers accused of corruption. Additionally, some governors under investigation appointed personal aides and relatives to key positions within the EFCC. It can be reasonably concluded that the Jonathan administration's failure to address corruption, similar to previous PDP administrations, significantly contributed to the party's defeat in the 2015 federal elections.

APC

The All Progressive Congress (APC) came to power following the 2015 General Elections, winning the polls with a strong anti-corruption platform, which was underscored by the change mantra (Okechukwu, Aderinto & Lawal, 2024). President Muhammadu Buhari implemented significant measures to advance the anti-corruption agenda in Nigeria, as evidenced by numerous high-profile cases from 2015 to 2023. According to a report by Premium Times on April 2, 2021, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had seized land and real estate valued at 44 million US dollars from the former Petroleum Minister, purportedly acquired through corrupt practices. Additionally, on November 26, 2021, the Lagos Division of the Appeal Court upheld the final forfeiture of jewelry worth US \$40 million, which had been confiscated from the former minister's residence at No. 10 Fredrick Chiluba Close, Asokoro, Abuja. Ayodele Oke, the former Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), was dismissed due to his

failure to account for the presence of \$43.4 million, £27,800, and N23.2 million discovered in his Osborne Tower Apartment in Ikoyi, Lagos. His termination was promptly executed by former President Buhari. Additionally, Babachir David Lawal, the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, was also removed from his position by President Buhari due to his involvement in questionable contracts related to the Grass-Cutting project at Internally Displaced Persons Camps. Furthermore, President Buhari took the allegations against Obolo-Obla, the former Chairman of the Special Investigation Panel for the Recovery of Public Property (SIRPP), seriously. Obolo-Obla faced accusations of administrative misconduct and the use of a forged WAEC certificate to gain admission to the University of Jos for a Law degree, among other corruption allegations, which he could not adequately defend. Consequently, he was swiftly relieved of his duties by the President.

While the Buhari administration achieved several notable prosecutions, it fell short in terms of securing a significant number of convictions and recoveries, which is typically anticipated from a government that ascended to power on an anti-corruption platform. Additionally, there were numerous corrupt activities committed by government officials during this period. A case in point is the ongoing trial of the Central Bank Governor for corruption-related offenses that occurred while he was in office under the Buhari administration.

Ultimately, the Buhari administration's campaign against corruption, which began with high expectations from the Nigerian populace, fell short of significant achievements. The unceremonious dismissal of Ibrahim Magu, the anti-corruption leader, suggests a power struggle rather than a focused initiative against corruption (Okechukwu, Aderinto & Lawal, 2024).

Management of intra-party conflicts

PDP

In every democracy, conflict is an unavoidable reality. This arises from the nature of democracy, which aims to establish effective governance within a society, often resulting from both internal and external contests. Conflict is a fundamental aspect of human interactions, occurring when individuals or groups strive to obtain the same resources or positions while employing incompatible methods to achieve their goals (Aleyomi, 2016, p.281). Since its rise to power on May 29, 1999, the PDP has evolved into a party characterized by intrigue, inconsistency, and internal discord. This fragmentation is evident across various levels of the party hierarchy, leading to significant factionalization. The PDP has faced challenges within its state branches, including Anambra, Edo, Delta, Oyo, Imo, Ekiti, Kwara, and Plateau, among

others. These crises have largely stemmed from the headquarters' ambition to exert control over the party's operations at the state level. The party's failure to effectively manage these conflicts has resulted in the departure of several founding members and prominent leaders, such as Chief Awoniyi, Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, Bamanga Tukur, Audu Ogbe, and Olabode George. The intensity of these internal conflicts has led to the creation of parallel PDP secretariats at both national and state levels, particularly in Delta, Edo, and Imo. Additionally, divisions have emerged within State Houses of Assembly, splitting into rival blocs reflective of the ongoing intra-party rivalries (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009, p.194).

The primary internal disputes within the PDP reached a climax in 2007, particularly between Obasanjo and his Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, culminating in Obasanjo's expulsion from the party. Obasanjo managed the PDP in a manner akin to a government agency, leading to the dissolution of all party executives and the de-registration of members, who were then required to re-register. This re-registration process effectively marginalized dissenting factions, exacerbating intra-party tensions. The crisis during the 2013 National Convention resulted in the formation of the new Peoples Democratic Party (nPDP) by the Kawu Baraje faction, which broke away from the Bamanga Tukur-led PDP. Many members subsequently departed to establish new political parties, with a significant number joining the ACN, ANPP, CPC, and APGA, which later evolved into the All Progressives Congress (APC), a formidable opposition that succeeded in displacing the PDP in 2015.

It is crucial to highlight that the PDP has exhibited a preference for coercive and military approaches when dealing with conflicts. Such approaches encompass actions like suspension, expulsion, intimidation, the revocation of privileges, and outright violence against perceived political foes. For instance, in Ogun State, the conflict between former Governor Gbenga Daniel and PDP Senator Ibikunle Amosun led to the strategic impeachment of two local council chairmen who supported the senator. During the timeframe examined in this study, the PDP was also linked to the political assassinations of its own members due to internal disputes. Consequently, the reliance on coercive strategies instead of fostering consensus and peace has prompted prominent Nigerian scholar Wole Soyinka to label the PDP as a "nest of killers" (Okumo, 2004, p.19). In summary, the profound crises that ravaged the PDP from 1999 to 2015 not only heightened political instability but also weakened the fundamental conditions necessary for democratic success and the effective delivery of government development programs during the examined period. The internal turmoil within the PDP generated a tense atmosphere nationwide, diverting the focus of elected officials from their obligations. Moreover, the

coercive or semi-military strategies employed by the PDP leadership to resolve these issues posed significant risks to the rights of Nigerians, resulting in governance being managed by individuals of questionable capability and integrity, which contributed to inadequate governance at all levels.

APC

A key indicator of a political party's strength is its internal democracy, reflecting the robustness of its foundational support. The APC is increasingly exhibiting intolerance towards its members. There is a growing divide between the original founders of the party and those who joined post-2015 elections, as evidenced by conflicts among governors and party leaders in states such as Imo, Kaduna, Zamfara, Ogun, Ondo, Kwara, Adamawa, and Bauchi. The mishandling of the disqualification of Adebayo Shittu, the Minister of Communication, over his NYSC certificate, and Aisha Alhassan, the Minister of Women Affairs, due to perceived disloyalty, resulted in significant fallout. Alhassan's subsequent resignation and shift to the United Democratic Party (UDP) further diminished the party's influence in Taraba state. In Adamawa, the APC faced internal strife as former Governor Murtala Nyako clashed with the current Governor Mohammed Jibrilla Bindow, contributing to the party's defeat in both the presidential and gubernatorial elections to the opposition PDP. Similarly, in Bauchi state, tensions among Speaker Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, Senator Sulaiman Nazeef, Senator Hamma Misau, and the Governor led to Dogara's departure to the PDP. Although the two senators lost their re-election bids, the APC ultimately lost the governorship to the PDP in Bauchi.

The political landscape in Rivers State has been marred by a crisis that has divided long-time friends, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi and Senator Magnus Abbey, over issues related to congresses and primaries. This conflict is regarded as one of the most severe intra-party disputes in the Fourth Republic. The fallout from this crisis resulted in multiple court cases, ultimately barring the APC from fielding a candidate in the 2019 General Elections in Rivers State. The political landscape in Imo State has become contentious, with Governor Rochas Okorocha at odds with Osita Izunaso, the National Organizing Secretary of the APC, and Senator Hope Uzodinma over the conduct of congresses and primaries. Okorocha endorsed his Chief of Staff and son-in-law, Uche Nwosu, whereas the National Executive Committee supported Senator Uzodinma. This rift led to Okorocha's son-in-law defecting to the AA party and Izunaso aligning with APGA. As a result, the APC encountered significant obstacles in its efforts to retain the Governorship, which was ultimately won by the PDP candidate, Rt. Hon. Emeka Ihedioha.

The situation in Zamfara state sees Governor Abdulaziz Yari at odds with Senator Kabiru Marafa. In contrast, in Kaduna state, Senators Shehu Sani and Hunkuyi have voiced their grievances regarding Governor Nasir El-Rufai's management of the Ward, Local Government, and State Congresses, highlighting numerous issues that the Odigie-Oyegun National Working Committee did not rectify.

To address conflicts, the APC has implemented strategies such as forming reconciliation committees that interact with aggrieved parties. Key efforts include the Ngige fact-finding committee focused on Bauchi State, the Tony Momoh committee for Kogi State, the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Committee, and the Peace and Reconciliation Committees established in every geopolitical zone.

Challenges of Internal Party Democracy in Nigeria

The absence of internal democracy is a prevalent issue across all political parties in Nigeria. The current political landscape is marked by a lack of ideological foundation, unity, and discipline within these parties. For example, both the PDP and APC have disregarded their party manifestos in their governance practices, resulting in a significant lack of direction in the administration of the country. This deficiency in internal democracy has led to various intra-party conflicts, manifesting in defections, factional splits, and shifts between parties such as PDP and APC. Additionally, the political environment has been marred by authoritarian leadership, the influence of political godfathers, electoral fraud, and the misuse of incumbency, all contributing to internal strife. The ineffective management of the economy and societal issues by both the PDP and APC since May 29, 1999, has become a significant liability for these parties in recent elections. It is evident that internal democracy faces numerous challenges.

A lack of a clearly defined ideology

Ideology serves as a fundamental component that both unifies and constrains any political party. It acts as a framework upon which all other elements are constructed. The ideology of a party is foundational, taking precedence over its structure, manifesto, and organizational aspects. This ideology encompasses a collection of ideas, beliefs, and representations that are shared by a particular social group. It includes ethical interpretations and principles that define the aims, structures, and limits of political engagement. According to Nnoli (2003), ideology plays a vital role in politics as it emerges from the collective understanding, emotional connections, and assessments of reality by the populace. Essentially, it directs, supports, restricts, and justifies political actions (Mbah, 2006).

Political parties are established by individuals who share a common political ideology and vision. Regrettably, Nigeria has struggled since its inception as a sovereign nation to develop political parties with a robust ideological foundation, leading to persistent issues of internal democracy within both the PDP and the APC.

The earliest political entities in Nigeria, including the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and the Action Group (AG), were significantly shaped by ethnic considerations and the influence of traditional political allegiances. Consequently, they were devoid of a substantial political ideology that could underpin the future of the nation. According to Nwankwo (1992), this lack of ideological clarity has resulted in a political environment where party politics is primarily a matter of economic gain, with the monetization of political engagement serving as the foundation for loyalty and support. The NPC espoused the principle of "One North, One Destiny, and One God," whereas the NCNC maintained its inclusive vision for Nigeria until the incident of carpet-crossing effectively relegated it to a regional status.

Currently, nearly all registered political parties operate without a clearly defined ideology. This raises the question: what ideologies do the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) adhere to? Are they progressive, conservative, leftist, rightist, reactionary, or revolutionary? Until these questions are answered, the issue of internal democracy will continue to plague the PDP, APC, and other political entities in Nigeria. From the beginning, both the PDP and APC have lacked a foundational ideology that would help clarify and guide their policy objectives. This absence of a well-defined ideology is evident in the internal disputes within the parties, weak governance structures, lack of unity, and a disconnect with grassroots members. These issues have significantly hindered the parties' ability to meet expectations, especially in their failure to endorse popular candidates during party primaries.

The impropriety of the party primaries and the imposition of candidates

To promote transparency, fairness, and representation in candidate selection and decision-making processes, political parties must embrace internal democracy. The candidate selection process is of paramount importance to political parties, as the choices and affiliations of candidates significantly influence the party's reputation during elections and governance. While it is the responsibility of a political party to establish eligibility criteria for election candidates, it is widely recognized that this selection should prioritize the good standing of members and be free from discrimination, including racial or ethnic biases. This raises critical questions:

who is responsible for selecting party members who wish to run for office? What established procedures govern the candidate selection within a party? Are candidates chosen based on their qualifications and loyalty to the party, or do financial resources and connections to influential figures play a more significant role?

According to Scarrow (2005), the recruitment and selection of candidates is a vital responsibility for political parties, as the profiles of these parties during elections and their tenure in office are significantly influenced by the candidates they select and their affiliations. Regardless of the method employed, it is the party's duty to determine who qualifies to run or engage in the electoral process. The expectation is that candidate selection should reflect the good standing of members, free from bias, classism, and ethnic favoritism. This issue is notably prevalent in both the PDP and APC. Anyaoku (2010) contends that attributing excessive influence, particularly self-serving interests, to the party's parliamentary group in candidate selection can severely compromise the democratic process. The APC's candidate selection process has often faced criticism for its lack of inclusivity and transparency. A persistent issue has been the imposition of candidates by party elites rather than through democratic primaries. For example, President Muhammadu Buhari's demand for rival candidates to withdraw facilitated Abdullahi Adamu's rise to the position of APC National chairman, highlighting the top-down dynamics that can hinder broader party participation (Tino, Danbala & Fwaje, 2020). The aftermath of various state congresses, which saw conflicts arise over alleged unfair practices, illustrates how such actions can lead to dissatisfaction among party members and foster factionalism (Folorunso & Naeem, 2022).

The role of money in politics

Money politics has become a widely accepted aspect of Nigerian political culture, evident both before and after general elections since the return to democratic governance in the Fourth Republic in 1999. In earlier times, political parties were financed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) through public funds. This practice has ceased, and political parties now depend on various funding sources, such as membership fees, nomination fees, sales of party manifestos and promotional items, as well as donations and individual contributions. The income from membership fees and the sale of party materials is relatively low, necessitating that parties seek additional funding options. Moreover, the nomination fees for those aiming for political office are often deemed excessive, making them inaccessible to individuals with limited financial means, particularly young people and women (Olukotun, 2022; Itodo, 2022).

The landscape of money politics in Nigeria has evolved

significantly. Notably, the two dominant political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), generate substantial income from nomination fees charged to potential candidates. For example, during the 2015 General Elections, the PDP set its presidential nomination fee at NGN 22 million (approximately USD 110,792), while the APC's fee was NGN 27 million (around USD 135,972).

In the lead-up to the 2019 General Elections, both parties engaged in unprecedented financial expenditures during their primaries held in September and October 2018. The nomination fee for the APC in 2019 reached NGN 45 million (USD 147,183), whereas the PDP's fee was NGN 12 million (USD 39,250) (Adetula, 2024).

In 2023, the All Progressives Congress (APC) established the nomination fees for various political positions: NGN 100 million (USD 242,600) for presidential candidates, NGN 50 million (USD 121,300) for governorship positions, NGN 20 million (USD 48,520) for Senate nominations, NGN 10 million (USD 24,260) for House of Representatives nominations, and NGN 2 million (USD 4,852) for State Assembly nominations (Ojo, 2022).

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) set comparable fees, charging NGN 40 million (USD 97,040) for presidential nominations, NGN 21 million (USD 50,945) for governorship, NGN 3.5 million (USD 8,490) for Senate, NGN 2.5 million (USD 6,065) for House of Representatives, and NGN 600,000 (USD 1,455) for House of Assembly nominations (Ojo, 2022). This trend of monetizing party primaries and electoral participation arguably limits access to affluent elites who possess significant political influence due to their financial resources (Olukotun, 2022). Political actors are expected to adhere to the established laws and regulations governing political activities (Ojukwu, Okoye, Okeke & Umeh, 2023).

Party funding

What makes any political party solid is funding, that is, the amount of financial backing it enjoys from members. That is why most times founders of political parties are more interested in attracting members who have economic power than those who have the intellectual capital. This buttresses Marx's argument on the 'materialist conception of history', that it is the economy (economic power) that serves as the foundation upon which is erected the superstructure of culture, law and government. Similarly, C. Wright Mills, in his famous work, 'The Power Elite' (1956), argues that political power resides in the controlling positions of powerful institutions. The means of exercising power in any institution or social groups are narrowly concentrated in a few hands. He puts it thus: They rule the big corporations; they run the machinery of the State, Political Parties and claim its

prerogatives. They direct the military establishment and occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure in which are now centred the effective means of the power and the wealth and celebrity which they enjoy. To be celebrated, to be wealthy, to be in power requires access to major institutions, for the institutional positions men occupy determines in large part their chances to have and to hold valued experience (Mills, 1956).

As Griner & Zovatto (2005) advance, money and democracy have a complex relationship, especially since the affluent role of private money in politics can have many distorting effects such as, corruption, buying of votes and clientelism. When a party is well funded, it may be able to achieve a lot of things. But the financiers usually have some strings attached to it. International IDEA (2006) expatiates this when it argued that the 'illiberal' nature of the legal framework that governs party activities in Nigeria is empowering those individuals within a party who, through political (including violent means or thuggery) or financial control, wield enormous power in how parties function. They ultimately determine who is nominated or elected within the party or to public office.

This group of people relies on hierarchy, patronage, the spoils system and 'behind the scenes' control of the party. The group is corrupt and undemocratic though somehow organized and responsive. Political machine dates back to late 19th Century and early 20th Century in the United States where it existed in some municipalities and States such as, Boston, Chicago and New York City (Gosnell, 1968; Clifford, 1975).

Kleptocrats and plutocrats on the other hand, are those individuals (scattered all over political parties) that steal from the State coffers and practice extortion as their modus operandi. They do not only appropriate State wealth and the benefits that accrue but also use their elected and appointed offices in the government to enrich themselves and their cronies. These are the likes of James Ibori of Delta state, Joshua Dariye of Plateau state, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia state, Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu state, Lucky Igbinedion of Edo state, Alamesighe of Bayelsa state and Nyesom Wike of Rivers state.

Zoning Formula

The term "zoning" in the context of political positions refers to the practice of distributing, rotating, or reallocating political roles across different regions or groups. This can occur on a geographical basis, such as moving positions from the North to the South or East to West, or vice versa. Additionally, zoning may be influenced by ethnic affiliations among major ethnic groups or by religious considerations among predominant faiths. Chuba Okadigbo, a former President of the

Nigerian Senate, observed that Nigerian political parties implemented the zoning strategy to facilitate a rotational presidency and the distribution of other significant offices. Since 1999, this approach has been a critical factor in how political offices are allocated by parties in Nigeria. Zoning can be seen as a variation of the elite coalition principle and the concept of proportional representation (Okonkwo, 2015). A particularly sensitive aspect of this strategy is the "rotational presidency," which mandates the alternation of power between the predominantly Muslim North and the predominantly Christian South, thereby alleviating political tensions. The concept of zoning in Nigerian politics seeks to promote political fairness, allowing regions to forgo aspirations for key political roles in favor of the designated zone. While zoning is not explicitly mentioned in the 1999 Constitution or the Electoral Act, it was a pragmatic approach adopted by the People's Democratic Party in 1999, following the return to civilian governance, to foster equity, justice, and a sense of ownership in political representation.

Internal democracy across Nigeria's political parties is notably restricted. Despite the existence of guidelines for primary and internal elections, parties often bypass, alter, or circumvent these regulations, resulting in candidate selection that relies on negotiation, manipulation, or other questionable practices. Furthermore, the zoning principle, which aims to provide fair opportunities based on geographical distribution, can sometimes disenfranchise potential candidates who might otherwise participate in the electoral process.

Godfatherism

The rise of godfathers is anticipated to have a negative impact on the internal democracy of political parties in Nigeria (Anene & Ndubuisi, 2024). Majekodunmi & Awosika (2013) describe this phenomenon as a scenario where influential elite members leverage their power, wealth, and connections to dictate who should hold political office, often imposing leaders contrary to the preferences of the majority. Chukwuemeka, Okoye & Egboh (2012) highlight that one of the most troubling consequences of godfatherism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is its ability to undermine a genuinely free, fair, and credible electoral process, which should allow voters to select representatives who align with their interests. Many Nigerians view the godfather phenomenon as a significant obstacle to internal party democracy, as these powerful figures often use their financial clout to impose candidates or replace duly elected representatives during general elections, typically due to conflicts over the expected benefits for the godfather (Ikejiani-Clark, 2008). Ngige (2008) highlights the significant influence of godfathers in the political landscape, particularly in their control over party nominations and election results. He further notes that candidates who oppose these

godfathers often face violent repercussions. According to him, the primary goal of godfathers is to dominate party machinery rather than to promote candidates who would foster genuine electoral competition. He points out that this control allows godfathers within the PDP/APC to systematically eliminate popular candidates during party primaries. The challenge arises when an unpopular candidate wins through electoral manipulation; such a candidate typically lacks robust support, as the godfather remains involved to reclaim his investment, leading to conflict if the candidate fails to adhere to their agreement. Bassey and Edet (2008) noted that between 1999 and 2003, the political landscape in Anambra State was characterized by a rivalry between Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju and his political mentor, Emeka Ofor. Similar dynamics were observed in Enugu, Ebonyi, and Oyo states. This phenomenon of candidate imposition by political godfathers not only undermines the internal democracy of political parties but also adversely impacts the populace, who often find themselves dependent on these godfathers for the benefits of effective governance (Badeio & Obah-Akpowoghaha, 2015; Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). Recently, one of the significant challenges to internal democracy within the APC has been the influence of godfathers, who wield considerable power to sway party decisions in favor of their preferred candidates, often at the expense of the broader party membership's preferences (Anyaoaku, 2010). A notable instance of this is the relationship between former governor Nyesom Wike and his protégé, Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State.

An examination of the internal dynamics within various political parties reveals that, despite their claims of diverse membership and extensive National Executive Committee rosters, the actual control often lies with a select few individuals who finance operations and influence decision-making. This situation, as noted by Majekodunmi & Awosika (2013), undermines the fundamental tenets of democracy and poses a significant threat to the authentic practice of democracy in Nigeria. A closer look at the internal governance of these parties shows that, while they possess constitutions and manifestos outlining their principles and operational guidelines, critical aspects of party functioning are predominantly managed by a small group of influential figures, commonly referred to as godfathers or money bags. Awosika (2009) further emphasized that the phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigeria has led to numerous challenges, adversely affecting elections, political processes, governance, and the development of democracy.

The insufficiency of internal conflict resolution procedures

Intra-party conflicts have long been a significant

challenge for political parties in Nigeria, particularly during the Fourth Republic, largely due to the absence of internal democracy. Such conflicts are common in political parties worldwide, where diverse ideological perspectives often lead to disagreements among members regarding their sociopolitical interests. It is evident that the differing beliefs of party members frequently clash, resulting in persistent disputes that hinder the selection and election of candidates representing the party. Research by Momodu & Matudi (2013) indicates that many political parties face crises, factional divisions, and defections due to a lack of internal democratic processes. To foster democracy, political parties must prioritize internal democracy, as competition is expected to occur between parties rather than within them. Within the APC, unhealthy rivalries among members have allowed alternative factions to emerge, highlighting the adage that a divided house cannot stand. The significant crises that plagued the PDP from 1999 to 2015, which continue to persist, are fundamentally opposed to the principles of democratic consolidation and effective governance. The party's methods for addressing these issues reveal a tendency towards coercive tactics, such as suspension, expulsion, intimidation, denial of privileges, and even violence against those viewed as political adversaries. In contrast, the APC has employed conflict management strategies that include the establishment of reconciliation committees to engage with dis-satisfied party members. Notable examples include the Ngige fact-finding committee for Bauchi, the Tony Momoh committee for Kogi State, the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Committee, and various Peace and Reconciliation Committees across the geopolitical zones.

To prevent conflict, it is essential to uphold the integrity of internal democracy, promote collective bargaining, and adopt a reconciliatory approach in managing disputes among party members. Political parties should leverage internal dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods, to effectively address conflicts. As noted by Chukwuemerie (2009), ADR approaches focus on delivering lasting justice rather than merely technical solutions, while also restoring pre-dispute relationships that are vital for maintaining harmony within political parties and the broader democratic environment. These methods serve as a versatile toolkit, offering diverse and appropriate strategies for various conflict scenarios.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The focus of this study was to assess the role of political parties and internal democracy in Nigeria in the context of the two main parties the PDP and the APC using yardstick as the rule of law, management of the economy, the fight against corruption and management of intra-party conflicts. The 2023 elections showed a

shortfall of internal democracy in the PDP and the APC, as a result of the overwhelming petitions and court cases by party orchestrated by party members against the party's leaders' impositions. This in turn affected the moral right of the opponent party to complain inordinately about the outcome of the general election. The study essentially examined some of the challenges of internal democracy in Nigeria's political parties especially in the PDP and the APC. These include, non-observance of the code of conduct document which all the political parties assented to and endorsed to guide their conduit and performance particularly during elections, the non-transparent system of choosing candidates in primary elections as well as in party leadership executive positions, and the executive arrogance within the parties which have not only torn many parties apart but also occasioned the decampment of many party stalwarts. On the basis of these findings, conclusion and recommendations were made.

Specifically, the lack of fair share in the national politics stemmed from the party, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) The research highlights the urgent need to tackle the absence of internal democracy within political parties to prevent Nigeria from experiencing a cycle of transient parties that seize power without clear objectives, only to disintegrate and allow opportunistic parties to emerge. This scenario poses a significant threat to the health of Nigerian democracy. To mitigate this issue, it is essential for the PDP and APC to promptly restructure and create genuine party frameworks that can rebuild public trust, enabling them to effectively guide the political landscape of Nigeria in a progressive and interchangeable manner in the future.
- 2) It is crucial that party constitutions undergo a thorough review to create a more inclusive democratic environment for underrepresented groups, especially the youth and individuals with disabilities. Political parties should strive to widely disseminate their constitutions and manifestos while educating their members at all levels to foster a culture of party supremacy, particularly concerning internal democracy, inclusivity, enforcement, and avenues for appeal. Additionally, parties need to reassess their leadership structures and clearly define disciplinary measures for members who violate party rules.
- 3) It is essential for the party to focus significantly on the candidate selection process for elections. This process should be driven by consensus rather than loyalty to high-ranking officials within the party. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should monitor the candidate selection process, and those responsible for it must be informed about the adverse consequences of a lack of internal party democracy. This step is vital for reinforcing the foundations of Nigeria's developing

democracy.

4) Political parties should not only embrace Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) but also integrate ADR methodologies into their organizational framework. This integration should be reflected in the party's Constitution. Additionally, the Constitution must include a provision that requires all party members to fully utilize internal dispute resolution mechanisms prior to seeking legal recourse for any disputes among members.

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