INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES:  
THE CASE OF ALL PROGRESS CONGRESS (APC)

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\section*{ABSTRACT}

Internal democracy is an important principle in the operation and survival of any democratic regime globally. Lack of internal democracy creates serious intra-party conflict which can likely threaten regime stability and good governance. This work is an examination of internal democracy in the Nigerian context with reference to All Progressive Congress (APC) as the case study. The problem is the way the party becomes enmeshed in intra-party conflicts at all levels of government and its institutions barely five years into its emergence. The objective of the work is to examine scientifically the level of intra-party conflicts within the ruling APC in Nigeria and how the conflicts threaten good governance, campaign promises delivery and the danger it poses for the entire nascent democracy in the country. The paper used both primary and secondary sources of data. Some selected informants from the appropriate agencies and institutions related to the subject matter of study were interviewed. The secondary sources are books, articles, reports and internet sources. The data obtained were discussed using models and analytical themes and interpretations. The research discovered that the nature and pattern of intra-party conflicts in the ruling APC threaten the country’s democratic rule and has hindered the performance of the party at state
and federal levels. The paper recommends for ideological and party discipline as well as politics of non-zero sum games as the ways out of the conflicts.

**Keywords:** Internal democracy, Intra-party conflict, APC, Democracy, Political parties, Nigeria.

**INTRODUCTION**

Internal democracy is the process of consolidating wider democratic principles and the method of instituting party politics and discipline in political parties. It is an avenue where political parties foster the transparent means of party nomination or primaries, ideological underpinnings of members and maintenance of discipline and order. Internal democracy expresses the basic principles of democracy within political parties (Jude & Ika, 2013). Internal democracy is the assumption that transparency, accountability and fair play in terms of equal opportunity should be available and accessible to all party members as observed by (Okhaide, 2012, Ojukwu & Olaifa 2011, Liebowitz & Ibrahim 2013 and Hallberg 2008).

In the absence of internal democracy, a great problem ensued which tramples the tenets of democracy and democratic values and this problem is intra-party conflicts. Intra-party conflict has been known to have taken place in Nigerian democracy and Nigerian political parties since the First Republic (1960-1966). However, its manifestations become more pronounced in the Fourth Republic (1999-Date) perhaps, because of the longer democratisation period ever witnessed in the history of the country. Intra-party conflicts have many implications on Nigerian political parties and democratisation including cross-carpeting, violence, anti-party activities, instability, poor governance and other obstacles to proper democratisation as argued by Jude & Ika (2013), Toyin (2014) and Awofesu & Irabor (2016).

Intra-party conflicts and lack of internal democracy are the two major factors that grounded the former ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP)
which has ruled Nigeria for straight sixteen years (1999-2015). This is also agreed by many scholars (Paden 2015, Adibe 2015 and The Centre for Public Policy Alternative 2015) that it was what gave the then, opposition All Progressive Congress (APC) an edge in winning the 2015 General Election and toppling the PDP from power. However, less than two years into the leadership of the APC, it found itself in the middle of intra-party crises of variant magnitude ranging from states internal division, executive-legislative feud in an all intra-party show and the internal schism among the party executives.

This study examined precisely the basis for internal democracy and the need for promoting internal party democratic tenets in addition to the analysis of the nature, causes and manifestations of intra-party conflicts in the present ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) as well as the implications that these crises or conflicts have for the future of democracy and democratisation in Nigeria.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this section, various scholastic views are reviewed critically and analytically on the different thematic issues of concern on the subject matter including democracy, internal democracy, political parties, intra-party conflicts and the All Progressive Congress (APC).

**Democracy**

Democracy is a small participatory community where every citizen plays a role in political decision-making with a constitutional guarantee of individual rights/rules of an individual mass opinion and where decisions are made by all members of a society and all are rational and well-informed in a community where the common good is decided by consensus after full debate (Cunningham, 2002:4). In the 3rd century BC, Aristotle emphasised that government might be exercise by few powerful people which is Aristocracy, proper rule by few known as Oligarchy, rule by one person known as Monarchy and a rule by majority decision making which is Democracy (Aristotle, 1986). Surprisingly, of the above
four identified, Aristotle did not saw democracy as the best as he settled for aristocracy.

Democracy is the supremacy of the people over the political system. An illustrative example is given like the powers of the God over the universe is the way people have supreme power over American democracy being a foundation for modern democracy (Tocqueville, 1969:60). However, such an American democracy was made possible by the economic, social, political and cultural factors in the American environment. In contrary view, democracy is perceived as the government not run by the majority or collective decision making because states are governed not by the majority people but by elected officials along with unofficial political party members and technocrats (Schumpeter, 1942: 23).

Democracy can be either strong or weak. A strong democracy is where democratic institutions are adequately instituted such as parties, rule of law, constitutionalism and other principles of government and a free and fair periodic election with an equal opportunity for participation in decision making (Barber, 1984:47). Democracy is a system of government which is expensive and requires economic prosperity, equal economic opportunity and equitable distribution of resources for all members of the society (Dahl, 1985:59). Democracy is a system of government that fosters civic equality by allowing all members of the society that attained the maturity age to vote freely for their leaders and offer their part in running the affairs of their societies (Bowman & Allanheld, 1985:17).

Modern scholars have given democracy a thorough and concise meaning in different ways for instance; Appadorai (2004), Varma (2005), Laski (2011), Kapur (2012), Johari (2014) and Arora (2016) identified democracy as a form of government that is operated base on the principle of collective decision, majority participation, supremacy of the electorates and a system in which people participate freely by contributing their quota in the running of their state. Democracy can be either liberal or social as the name implies. Liberal Western democracy is anchored along liberal values where the society is free for equal participation and free participation in
the affairs of their state. It is a system encourages by the USA and Western European countries. Socialist democracy is the one practice mainly by Eastern communist countries of Europe and China where freedom of participation is limited, and decision making is restricted (Appadorai, 2004: 74). Democracy in its current form traced its root from the ancient Greek City States of Athens and Sparta where people gathered in the market square for collective decision making (Kapur, 2012: 143). In the modern days, population explosion made it impossible to practice such collective decision at once and that led to modern representative democracy where people elected their leaders through a popular vote to decide on their behalf (Johari, 2014:111).

**Internal Democracy**

Internal democracy denotes various means of carrying along all party members in internal party decision making and other deliberations (Scarrow, 2004). Duverger (1963) emphasises that internal democracy is the pillar behind a proper functioning of democratic system. In n different way, Sartori (1977) observed that the logic of party competition is what made a vibrant functioning democracy and not internal democracy. Internal democracy is an all inclusive top to bottom approach party decision making involving party primaries, representation, accountability and fair ground for all members to be carried on board by the party internally (Okhaide, 2012).

Internal democracy or intra-party democracy means parties have an agreement laid down procedure and principles of mutual decision making and avoiding of conflict or managing it in order to prevent arbitrary decision or imposition of candidates as against the majority members wish. Internal democracy is vital for democratic consolidation and representation. It provides a room for proper recruitment of members, socialisation, training, discipline, accountability and transparency. Any party that lacks internal democracy is considered as undemocratic even though no political party can declare itself as undemocratic even if it is so. Some factors can undermine internal
democracy by arbitrary leadership in the party and marginalisation of some party members. The effects of absence of internal democracy create anti-party activities, conflicts, failure in election and deviation from the principles of democracy (Omilusi, 2016).

Internal democracy involves parties’ selection of candidates, consultation, internal principles of party discipline and sanction, promotion of parties’ ideology, accountability (Awofeso, Obah-Akpowaghaga & Ogunmilade, 2017). Hallberg (2008) identified two major methods of promoting internal democracy: the advocacy and legal/regulatory measures. The advocacy perspective includes selection of party leaders, party representative for election, collective decision making and peaceful negotiation. The second aspect is legal/regulatory means which should consist of party constitution, gentleman agreement on principles and regulations governing representation, minority consideration, negotiation and punishment for members.

**Democracy and Democratisation in Nigeria**

Democratisation is a well-prepared agenda and a dedicated attempt to institute enduring democratic principles and values in practice (Jude & Ika, 2013). It is often associated in modern times with countries like Nigeria that witnessed intermittent military rule which initiated a setback for democratic rule. Any time such interruption occurred, the countries have to start a fresh process and rebuild democratic institutions. It is a gradual and persistent process of political growth to attain good governance, sustainability and better means of governance. Democratisation has basically three phases. The stages are the fall or demise of the authoritarian regime, consolidation and lasting democracy (Gunther, Diamandurous & Puhle, 1995). The above assertion by Gunther et al. (1995) disclosed that democratisation is a process of gradual development of a political system. Just like Gunther et al. (1995), Huntington (1995) identified that there are “Third Waves of Democratisation” in newly emerging democracies like Nigeria in the late 21st century. He identified the three waves as i. reforming authoritarian
systems; overthrowing authoritarian regimes and negotiating regime changes. Huntington (1995) further emphasised that, democratisation has many characteristics such as compromising and the participation, moderation trade-off, election and low levels of violence. This, according to Huntington (1968) resulted from the political order in changing societies like that of Nigeria which were battling to democratize and to shake up military in political offices.

This study identified democracy and democratisation in Nigeria in five stages in the history of the country. The first stage is pre-colonial period where states emerged around 11th century AD with a well-organised state structures and institutions that resembled democracy in terms of decision making most especially in centralized areas of Yoruba Kingdom in the Southwestern Nigeria of today and the Hausa States in the Northern part of Nigeria today. The second stage is the colonial period where democracy and democratisation took a different dimension in which Western modern political institutions along liberal democracy were introduced. Political parties and contest for elective offices started from 1922 until 1960 when the political independence was finally secured. The third democratisation process in Nigeria is the post-colonial period during the First Republic (1960-1966) where indigenous democratically elected officers led Nigeria under a Republic before the bloody military coup in 1966 which terminated the democratisation process. The fourth stage is the intermittent democratisation in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s with incessant military incursion in-between as in 1984 coup, 1985 coup, interim civilian government of 1992, coup of 1993 and democratisation in 1999 under the current Fourth Republic (1999-to date) which is the longest democratic experiment in Nigeria.

Nigerian democracy and democratisation is mostly a transitional process after prolonged exeravating military rule and this is why it is almost enshrouded in problems particularly internal democracy which created intra-party conflicts. The transition is faulty as in most African countries (Salih, 2001:20) because there are flaws that made the process weak such as military imposition (Nyewusira & Nweke, 2012) and political cleavages
such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism and elitism (Okolocha, 1992: 167). The election that witnessed transition to the present Fourth Republic is faulty and a flawed election with irregularities and malpractices (Lucky, 2017). While Nigeria has made a giant effort in its return to democratic rule for sustaining a longest civilian rule in the history of the country so far, the history of the experiences of the democratic rule leave much to be desired as the transition process to full democratic rule was marred in political quagmires such as ethno-religious factor, absent of true federalism, poverty, corruption, election rigging, politics of godfatherism, security challenges and many other socioeconomic and political obstacles (Adeosun 2014, Oyediran & Nweke 2014 and Usman & Avidine 2016).

**Nigerian Political Parties**

Political parties are one of the necessary ingredients and requirements for a healthy democracy world over. Indeed, they are the machinery in which democracy and democratisation thrives successfully. Burke clarifies political parties as an assembly of men of common interest for the purpose of promoting their values across the society through power contest (Johari, 2012:423). Political parties are seen by classical scholars in the field (Lowell 1913, Schumpeter 1942, Michel 1965, Duverger 1966 and Sartori 1976) as a fraction of a whole society; a section of the state comprising of individuals sharing similar ideology and principles who seek for political power and control to advance their interest and ideology at national and international levels. The views of the above scholars above summarised it all because political parties cannot be far from the composition and purpose mentioned above in any type of democracy. Modern scholars (Appadorai 2004, Kapur 2009 and Johari 2011) too perceived political parties in a similar view with above in which they see parties as a group of ideologically oriented men who pursued power through a legitimate means of democratic principles of election in order to pursue their ideology legitimately and authoritatively in the society.

The views of the liberals differ from that of the Marxist on the nature of parties in the sense that liberalist sees parties as organised bodies for
public opinion aggregation and democratic pursuance of power while the Marxist views parties as instruments for securing of power and domination of the ruling class by the bourgeoisie which should be replaced with proletarian parties (Johari, 2011). Parties played vital roles in democratic including representation, opposition, recruitment and training of leaders, harmonising different interests, providing alternative choice framework and social services to the society (Norris 2005 and Speijcken 2011).

Nigerian political parties from the First Republic (1960-1966) to the present Fourth Republic (1999-date) have one common feature which made them regional in outlook, ethnic in orientation and religious in nature (Agbaje, 2008:195). Nigerian political parties started from a regional movement in the 1920s and later transformed into nationalists activities which made them a colonial heritage just like most African parties in the post-colonial era. The parties are devoid of ideology and principles of democratic governance and such has been the trend of Nigerian parties since independence in 1960 (Salih, 2003:57). The first parties that emanated in the First Republic: Action Group (AG) for Yoruba West, National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) mostly dominated by Igbo East and Northern People Congress (NPC) for Northern region represented ethnic and religious group than party ideology and this outlook set the foundation for continuous ethno-religious and regional parties in the Second Republic (1979-1983), Aborted Third Republic (1992) and the current Fourth Republic (1999-date) (Akinboyega & Anifowose, 2008:244).

It can be argued that the People Democratic Party (PDP) looked more national in orientation from 1999 to 2015 dominating five out of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria in the Northeast, Northwest, Northcentral, Southeast, Southsouth but the Southwest still maintain a regional and ethnic party of Alliance for Democracy (AD) which later transformed into Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) that joined the coalition which established APC in 2013. The All Nigerian People Party (ANPP) also was dominantly presence in Northern Nigeria and despite the overwhelming
domination of PDP it later turned out to be an opposition with strong presence only in the Southeast and Southsouth after its defeat in the 2015 General Election by APC.

**Intra-Party Conflict**

Intra-party conflict has been the major hallmark of Nigerian party politics in the Fourth Republic. The consequences of these conflicts factionalised some parties and led to decamping from one party to another in addition to anti-party activities. Intra-party conflicts have been caused by the absence of internal democracy and party ideology in which the elite look for power for their personal greed and not for the purpose of the promotion of party ideals and interest (Jude & Ika, 2013). Intra-party conflicts is caused in Nigerian democracy as a result of imposition of candidates, politics of godfatherism, absence of internal democracy, corruption, lack of ideology and selfishness. The conflicts can be managed through a mechanism of internal party democracy and promotion of party ideology and principles (Awofeso et al. 2017).

The intra-party conflicts have been a dominant occurrence in Nigerian politics since 1999 involving big parties such as AD, PDP, ANPP and APGA with internal conflicts affecting their performance and activities in election and beyond (Toyin 2014). The lack of apparatus for internal party democracy is the major causes of intra-party conflicts in Nigerian democracy including equal participation, inclusiveness and institutionalisation. As a result of lack of the above, some factors emerged such as lack of ideology, imposition of candidates, party funding, zoning formula in Nigerian context, party primaries and party executive arbitrariness. These are the main reasons for intra-party conflicts in Nigerian democracy leading to undemocratic practice (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011).

The PDP as the major ruling party set the foundation for intra-party conflicts as a result of the above factors identified by various scholars. The party became too strong and dominant in the country to the extent that it
violated democratic principles and internal democracy making many members aggrieved causing anti-party activities, decamping and other undemocratic practices. The party had harboured members with grudges and lamentations beyond control to the extent that it internally crumbled. The violation of an informal party agreement for zoning of presidential seat between the North and the South for 8 years each was violated by President Jonathan in 2011 which further polarised the party beyond repair (Aleyomi, 2013). By the end of 2013, PDP was speedily scattered towards its political doom as a result of intra-party conflicts. The nature of the conflicts is all encompassing involving the national executive and the legislature, intra-state internal crises between one faction and another and party executives. The party set a norm for intra-party conflicts in which the APC hurriedly stumbled across and continued from where the PDP stopped.

The All Progressive Congress (APC)

The All Progressive Congress (APC) was formed on 6 February 2013 in preparation for the 2015 General Election. The APC is an outcome of the merger of three biggest opposition political parties and a faction of the fourth one to establish a stronger opposition that will challenge the ruling PDP which has ruled for straight sixteen years. The parties that formed APC merger are: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The merger was a result of a prolong attempt to wrestle power from PDP because the opposition parties realised that they can never defeat PDP individually since each of the opposition has its stronghold. For instance, ACN dominated the Southwest, ANPP and CPC dominated the Northeast and Northwest while APGA dominated some Southeastern states. The first attempt was made in 2011 between the ACN and CPC which failed to materialise in the late hours due to clash of personal interests by the party stalwarts (Retrieved from https://ngvotes.com/history-of-all-progressives-congress-apc-nigeria/ 16 February, 2018).
The major challenge faced in the merger of APC was an attempt that was allegedly believed to have been staged by the ruling PDP to scuttle the registration of the party by sending other parties called African People’s Congress and All Patriotic Citizens with the same abbreviation ‘APC’ to deny the actual APC from being registered owing to its strength and threats to the ruling PDP. The electoral body; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) went ahead to register the APC after fulfilling all the criteria for registration of parties constitutionally. The major boost or strength that the newly established APC received was the emergence or decamping of strong PDP members called the newPDP which was a faction that emerged after disenchantment of some members of the PDP from the party’s convention in 2014. The party welcomed the newPDP members involving five state Governors of Adamawa, Kano, Kwara, Rivers, and Sokoto, ten serving Senators in the upper chamber, 22 serving Members Federal House of Representatives including the Speaker of the House and other top PDP founding fathers such as Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

The party’s major contribution was its ability to win the Presidential Election barely two years after its formation with 53.96 % of the total votes; the party won most of the seats in the upper chamber with 55.05 % and the lower chamber with 62.5 % and the Governorship seats was won by the party with 61.29 % (INEC, 2017).

A Framework of Analysis

There is no precise or sacrosanct theory that can clearly explain or situate itself within the context of analysing intra-party conflict. Most of the theories of democracy explain its principles and applicability as well as its variation. Furthermore, the theories did not exactly explain the nature and level of internal democracy talk less of intra-party conflict. Thus, this work decided to adopt a framework of analysis that can best explain the context of this work from a deductive perspective.
The work adopted a framework of “Internal Democracy and Policy Formulation” postulated by Gauja (2009) and expanded it within the context of this work for better analysis and practical application. Gauja (2009) examined and studied the application of internal party democracy in eight political parties in Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom. The parties are the Australian Labour Party, the Australian Democrats, the Australian Greens, New Zealand Labour, the Green Party of New Zealand, the Green Party of England and Wales, the Liberal Democrats and New Labour. In this perspective, this study added with the All Progressive Congress of Nigeria (APC) to make the case study nine.

Gauja (2009) observed that, for a better promotion of internal party democracy, three relevance imperatives are necessary: party history, ideology and electoral party competition. He argued that parties in general comparison value internal party democracy as a means to generate policies, a reward for members’ campaigning efforts and a source of legality for the party preparation. He further argued that, internal party democracy has little value in attracting votes and only limited value in attracting members to a party. The continued promotion of internal party democracy depends on parties’ historical origin and ideology and not the principles of democracy. Gauja (2009) further stresses that there are four main elements of democratic participation in policy making within parties and decision making and they include: direct; representative; delegate and consultative. It is argued that party’s disposition towards internal democracy and participatory decision making is strongly affected by its ideology. A party with an ideology of collective decision making and principles of democratic participation can promote internal democracy and a party with an ideology of closeness and less democratic principles can be less practical in internal party democracy. Indeed, parties practice what they preach (Gauja 2009).

In his study, Gauja (2009) observed that socialist democratic parties in Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom were established on the basis of party policy to be determined by the membership and approved collectively. The Green Parties has the grassroots democratic emphasis on
participation and member participation, power sharing and consensus decision making. The liberal parties in Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom have internal party democracy enshrined in their constitution. It is concluded here that the parties and their caucus members do not prefer or give preference to internal democracy as it has no benefit that will accrue on them from the process. If they do so, they do it only because they have no choice or alternative and, where the parties feel they will escape logically without observing internal democracy they can do so. In other words, internal party democracy is undertaking by all parties studied on compulsion not because they want it willingly but, because they want to secure victory and maintain internal unity and coordination.

In the case of the additional party added as part of expansion of this framework of analysis, a progressive party was added which is APC in Nigeria and the case study in this work. Although, the basis of including this party in this comparison can hardly be justified because of many antecedents such as the establishment, history, environment, stability and level of democracy, still it can be proved relevant in making the analysis because internal democracy is applicable and obtainable in all democratic political parties at least, in principle if not in practice. After all, the APC displayed internal democracy in its inception from the merger to the formation and party primaries at all levels during the election. This made the party to be considered as part of this case study. The longer or shorter period of establishment was waived here to enable for an acceptable comparison. The above assumptions or explanations are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. A typology of formal membership participation in policy development in internal party democracy of some selected cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Organizational Feature</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Australian Democrats; Green Parties</td>
<td>Individuals have the ability to contribute directly</td>
<td>Participation in working groups; policy ballots;</td>
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</table>
In applying this framework of analysis within the context of this study, it should be noted that, the APC emerged as an aggrieved opposition party in 2013 just as observed by Gauja (2009) of the emergence of liberal parties in UK and Australia which is a good comparison. It should also be noted that, an average party irrespective of its longer period of existence or membership or interest is not likely open to internal party democracy unless and until when it is necessary to do so. Despite the fact, the APC started with a good footing in terms of internal democracy most especially in the area of party primaries and nomination of candidates at all levels, soonerest the party drifted into a chaos of intra-party conflict and
undemocratic practices between the executive and legislature at national level and also between the warring factions at state level in many states. This phenomenon proved the assumption that parties can only apply internal party democracy when it is necessary since when they have the opportunity they can avoid. This is what APC did and it led to conflict.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source is the conduct of in-depth interview with some selected informants/participants from some agencies and categories that are directly related to political parties and their activities. In this regard, informants are selected from four categories which are: category A including four (4) politicians from different ranks of elective offices, category B is four (2) party stakeholders from the two major political parties in the country the APC and PDP, category C is the (2) senior officials of the electoral body the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and category D is two (2) experts/academicians who specialised in the area of study from two major universities in Nigeria. This makes a total of 10 informants/participants from the four categories as suggested by Bogden & Biklen (2007) Creswell (2014) on the average number of interviewers for qualitative research case study. The secondary data consists of textbooks, journals, internet sources and data from newspapers.

The data obtained from the field are grouped into themes and analysed using thematic analytical interpretations including tables and models where necessary. It was supplemented with the existing scholastic views in the field of study and the interpretations using the theoretical framework or framework of analysis to arrive at research findings and conclusion.

**DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**

In this section, issues of intra-party conflict would be practically presented and analysed thematic interpretations as proposed in the methodology.
This will lead to research findings and contribution to knowledge since the area of study is not adequately explored by scholars. While there are numerous writings on intra-party conflicts and internal democracy in Nigeria, there is no research work that examine the nature of the conflict in the newly established ruling APC and that is what made the work unique and a new discovery in knowledge.

DISCUSSIONS

The seeds of APC’s crisis were sown right from its amalgamation in 2013. The parties that formed the merger were fragmented and emerged with frustrated members especially the newPDP. The major aim of the APC was to capture power from PDP without carefully setting proper machineries for internal democracy such as party ideology, principles and mechanism for collective decision making. It is not surprising considering the postulations of Gauja (2009) in the framework of analysis that parties’ historical, conditional and nature of establishment are the major factors that determine its level of internal party democracy. The following crises that emerged will clearly revealed the above assertion. The crises are divided into three: National Assembly internal crises; executive versus the legislature and state internal crises.

1. National Assembly Internal Crisis: From the inception, the National Assembly has the majority APC members in both the Senate and the House of Representatives as it also has the majority Governors’ seat and a government at the centre. The formation of the leadership of the National Assembly set the foundation for intra-party conflicts that rocked the APC from the start. The national party executive and the executive wing settled for Senator Lawan Ahmad from Yobe State to lead the Senate as the President while Senator Femi Gbajabimiala from Lagos State to be the Speaker House of Representatives. The executive, however while having its preference for the National Assembly leadership maintained a non-interference status in order to ensure that the mistakes of former ruling PDP in terms of lack of internal party democracy was avoided. Some
members of the National Assembly utilized the opportunity and turned against the preference of the party and the executive arm of government. They decided on Bukola Saraki from Kwara State to be the Senate President and Honourable Yakubu Dogara from Bauchi State to be the Speaker of the House. Many members that are loyal to the party and the executive were aggrieved and that factionalised the National Assembly into pro-Saraki and Dogara group and anti-Saraki and Dogara group being from the same party (Nwajiuba 2015 in Vanguard Newspaper online).

2. The second crises that emanated among the lawmakers in the APC was the Code of Conduct Tribunal trial of the Senate President Bukola Saraki in which he was allegedly found guilty of false declaration of his asset when he was the Governor of Kwara State. He was taken to the CCT for trial and the Senate was polarised into two, the pro-Saraki vowed to frustrate the trial at all cost while the anti-Saraki decided that he must be impeached and face the full wrath of the law. The pro-Saraki accused the executive arm of government and the party executive of plotting the trial to oust Saraki from the Senate President Seat. It caused lots of divisions and crises in the Senate till date which is becoming wider between the two conflicting groups (Ogundipe 2016 in Premium Times online).

3. The third dimension of the crises is the whistle blowing incidence in which a member from the ruling APC in the Federal House of Representatives Abdulmumini Jibrin from Kano State revealed that there was budget padding in the House in the 2016 budget presented by the executive. The member was suspended as a result of such revelation and all efforts by the executive and party officials to restore him and resolve the conflict failed. He stayed suspended until March 2018 when he was called back. The Senate also witnessed such incidence in which Senator Ali Ndume from Borno State was suspended in March 2017 for six-month as a result of his call for the investigation of the issue of certificate forgery by one of the Senators Dino Melaye (SaharaReporters online 2017). All these crises involved APC members while the opposition PDP was busy watching.
4. From the part of the informants in all the categories interviewed for this work, they revealed unanimously that intra-party conflict is a common feature of Nigerian party politics and it should be expected sooner than later. According to one of them: “The way APC was hurriedly merged and designed to capture power with a slogan of change while it has been occupied dominantly by the same PDP members that decamped lately, it should be expected that crises are inevitable because the party lacks the mechanism to contain conflictual interests that will emerge from the union”. Also, the assumptions of Gauja (2009) that the historical antecedents of the formation of a party, the culture, the environment and ideology determine the level of internal party democracy of that party. APC as a party that emerged from many conflicting diverse interest in different geo-political zones and with majority members from the PDP who were used to intra-party conflicts must be ready for that. The party is too young to have experience of conflict management and it lacks ideology and principles in the real sense of it, no mechanism was put in place to contain intra-party conflicts before contesting for power.

5. Executive-Legislative Crises: just as in the case of the above incidences, there were internal conflicts between the executive and the legislature. The first incidence was the brasing disobedience of the APC party members in the National Assembly by electing the leadership of the two chambers as against the desire of the executive and the party. While it is good for the lawmakers to be independent in terms of their affairs, it is also good for the party to institute discipline and for the executive to lobby for position in the Houses. Thus, immediately after the leadership tussle in the National Assembly, the Saraki-led Senate and its loyalist perceive a threat and with hunting that they allegedly believed to have emanated from the executive which started with CCT Tribunal of the Senate President. Thus, the Senators that are loyal to Saraki leadership vowed to deal with the executive in their own ways (Nwajiuba 2015 in Vanguard Newspaper online).

6. One of the ways that the legislature responded was the rejection of the Acting Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Mr. Magu
Chairman as a substantive chairman twice in 2017 in April and in June of 2017. The Presidency resisted and insisted that it will never replace Magu with any other person and the National Assembly decided that they will never confirm Magu. The Acting Chairman remains acting till date (2018) unconfirmed by the Senate. In response to this crisis, the APC Chairman Mr. John Oyegun declared that: “our party has an internal mechanism for resolving whatever conflict that arise between the executive and the legislature we are prepared for that” (Tukur in Premium Times Newspaper online 2017). However, the conflict was never resolved till date despite all the assurances by the party chairman.

7. The legislature also deliberately delayed the 2017 budget until June before it was passed and as at the time of writing this work in March 2018, the 2018 budget was not passed by the lawmakers. The delay was a severe injury to the performance of the party in power which came with so many promises of changes and economic transformation. In November 2016, the Senate rejected ambassadorial nominees of the President on the ground that many of them are not career diplomats. This clearly disclosed that the internal crises in APC is taking a new dimension where the party with the Presidency and majority seats at all level is denying itself the opportunity of fast-tracking appointments and passing of budget to speedy developmental projects and performances of the government.

8. Again, this has been expected, for instance, one of the informants interviewed in this work narrated that: “There is no reason why intraparty conflicts in APC will not occur considering the way they welcomed all and sundry from all parties including the so-called condemned corrupt politicians by the APC. Most of the decampees are from PDP and they are used to dirty politics of do or die without any principle or ideology. These people are very strong in APC now and one cannot expect them to be controlled by the party machinery or the Presidency. The case of Saraki and others is a good example”. In addition, the framework of analysis in this work by Gauja (2009) observed that parties that emerged through a liberal and carefully designed ideology can allow form internal
democracy while parties that by their nature emerged through a historical event that did not favour internal democracy could not resist democratic principle in party activities. He also observed that parties in their natural tendency could not allow freely for internal democracy unless circumstances forced them to do so.

9. State APC Internal Crises: the ruling APC presently is busy fighting itself in ten states of the Federation which is unhealthy for the sustenance of the party and its survival as well as its performance. The national secretariat of the APC recently announced in 2017 that it set up a committee to settle the conflicting parties in the various states that are facing the crises according to Bolaji Abdullahi the APC spokesman. The states affected include Gombe. The party since its inception in 2015 during the primary election in Gombe fell in a serious crisis in which the party broke into two factions one led by Barrister Magaji Doho and another by Karu Ishaya. The crisis was backed up by two Senators Usman Bayero Nafada and Muhammad Danjuma Goje and both of them joined APC from PDP. The crisis in Bauchi State is between the Governor on one hand and most of the Federal lawmakers and the Minister of Education Malam Adamu Adamu. The lawmakers and the Minister accused the Governor of misutilisation of bailout funds and failure to settle workers’ salaries for many months making them suffer beyond imagination (Owete in Premium Times online 2017).

10. In Borno, the Governor Kashim Shettima is in collision with Senator Abu Kyari who is believed to have been nursing Governorship ambition. With a rift that is threatening to divide the party. In Ondo State, where the Governorship election took place in November 2016, the election divided then with many party members unhappy with the emergence of Governor Rotimi Akeredolu as the party flag bearer. The crisis spread to national level which made the APC national leader Bola Ahmed Tinubu to call for the resignation of the party national chairman Mr. John Oyegun being seen as unable to settle the party crises. Crisis broke again in Ondo when the state party chairman was removed Mr. Isaac Kekemeke was removed for
allegedly for being directed to financially empower the APC national leader Bolo Ahmed Tinubu (Owete in Premium Times online 2017).

11. In Ogun State, the APC crisis emerged as a result of political ambition; the Senator that is currently representing Lagos West Senatorial District, Olamilekan Adeola is currently in misunderstanding with the Governor Abiola Ajimobi over the Governorship seat. Mr. Adeola is nursing Governorship ambition in Ogun while the outgoing Abiola Ajimobi who is now rounding his second term in office is against him. The Kogi State APC is in a serious crisis as a result of a conflict between Governor Yahaya Adoza Bello and top party members and politicians in the state especially Senator Dino Melaye. They accused the Governor of favouring PDP members in appointment than the APC party members. They also accused the Governor of suffering the people of Kogi by failing to pay their salaries just like that of Bauchi State (Owete in Premium Times online 2017).

12. In Plateau State, the APC crisis is a recurring one and spread. The nomination of Barrister Solomon Dalung as Minister of Youth and Sports created a division between the Governor Barrister Simon Bako Lalong and the Minister. There was also a petition by some party members calling for dismissal of a former Minister of Information and Communication Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande from the party. The crisis also occurred in many local governments owing to clash of politicians’ interest of 2019 ambition. In Niger State, there is a crisis between the Governor Sani Bello and some Federal lawmakers especially Senator David Umaru and Senator Aliyu Abdullahi. The Senators were unhappy with the way the Governor single handedly fielded candidates for local council elections without consulting them. The most notorious of the crises is in Kaduna State specifically between the Governor Malam Nasir Ahmed El Rufa’I and the Senator representing Kaduna Central Senator Shehu Sani and also the Governorship aspirant in 2019 Sulaiman Hunkuyi (Owete in Premium Times online 2017). The crisis reached its peak when in February 2018 the Kaduna State Governor demolished the house of Sulaiman Hunkuyi his rival in Governorship contest in 2019.
13. Another crisis which is more devastating is that of Kano State between the State Governor Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje and Senator Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso who was the Governor’s predecessor and a Presidential contestant under APC in 2015 and still nursing his ambition in 2019. The crisis was believed to have erupted when Governor Ganduje revealed that Senator Kwankwaso was meddling in his affairs and was trying to hijack the machinery of governance in the state (Owete in Premium Times online 2017).

14. Again, the Gauja (2009) interpretation of internal democracy is based on the historical background of the party and its ideology as well as emergence and also the notion that parties in their plain nature do not like internal democracy and cannot afford to give it freely until when forced to do so because the state governors do not find it easy, the lawmakers and the executive all to practice internal democracy as comfortable, they denied it. These are the causes of conflicts in the party. This is theoretically proven. Furthermore, the informants interviewed in the research in all the categories revealed that intra-party crises emerged barely three years of the APC’s rule as a result of the way in which it was formed just as observed above by Gauja (2009). They also revealed that the emergence of powerful national politicians with uncompromising ambitions must lead to such crises as well the nature of Nigerian internal democracy which is virtually absent within the context of the country’s democracy in addition to poverty of ideology and principles during the formation of the party which made settlement of crises very difficult. They believed that the crises will affect the party’s performance in office and in the 2019 General Election unless if miraculous moves are made.

15. Boat Jumping: one of the negative consequences of the intra-party conflict in in APC is the mass exodus of the party members to an opposition PDP after the conflict reached its peak in the mid-2018. In the present issue, about ten (10) senators, twenty-two (22) members house of representatives and other top party dignitaries decamped from APC to PDP from June 2018 to August 2018. This scenario weakened the party and compelled it to embark on the politics of witch-hunting and re-alignment.
FINDINGS

The study discovered that, the APC intra-party conflict has devastating effects on the party, on Nigerian democracy and democratisation and most especially on APC’s manifesto and campaign promises. It is possible that, unless and until these crises at national and state levels are resolved and also between the executive and legislature, it will consume the party and what happened to PDP will exactly happened to the party or worst since the PDP survived for good sixteen years before losing power and is still existing challenging the ruling APC for power contest in 2019. It seems for now the party members are getting out of control of the party and that will seriously affect its nomination and primaries in the coming 2019 General Election. Already, the ruling party is performing below expectation according to their campaign promises due to dragging in terms of speedy passing of budget and appointments by the National Assembly. There might be tendency for anti-party activities in many states which will made APC to lose its many Governorship seats in 2019 if the crises in the states are not properly taken care of on time.

In addition, the crises in APC seemed spillover effects of the PDP crises because majority of those that decamped to APC and are still decamping are former PDP members. They brought in their conflicting interests and power mongering into APC and made the party an avenue for crises as they were used to do in their former PDP. However, what made the APC intra-party conflict different from the past ones in the PDP and more interesting is the fact that it was the first time that a ruling party have its members in the National Assembly as its opposition making of opposing its policies and programmes vibrant in the National Assembly. In the previous PDP intra-party conflict, the National Assembly remains a mere pawn in the hands of the Presidency with less resistance. The greatest implication perhaps, of the internal crises of APC is the anticipated effects on democracy. Even with the difficulty of military coup in the 21st century, if the crises continue unabated, there may be a possibility of the military striking even if it is a short while as stated by the Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu just recently (Premium Times online March 2018). This
will cause a setback to democracy and democratisation in Nigeria and Africa at large.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The paper concludes that intra-party conflicts exist soundly as manifested in all levels of government under the current APC-led government and it is threatening to rift the party apart just the way it did to PDP making the party to lose the 2015 General Election. Even though, the opposition parties are weak for now, there are possibilities that the crises in APC will strengthen them since the APC was once weak before but it was strengthened by the internal crises of the PDP to secure power. The paper also concludes that, unless and until the crises are contained properly before the 2019 General Election, the party will perform poorly in the election and will collapse in the near future and this will jeopardise the nascent Nigerian democratisation and Africa at large. The crises will continue to occur even if other parties defeated the APC in future which means party conflicts might necessarily be the bane of democratisation in Nigeria. The paper observed that such crises are existing as a result of the absence of ideology, principles, mechanisms of internal democracy and collective decision as well as the historical background of the emergence of APC as a party. As a result of this conclusion, the paper recommends the following:

1. The party must go back to the drawing board and establish some rules governing intra-party relationship and members conduct ahead of 2019 General Election;
2. The party should discipline or sanction those who are disobeying party principles;
3. Those who are creating confusion in the party should be suspended from contesting any political office against 2019 in order to ameliorate the crises;
4. The party needs to call for a genuine national convention to draw an ideology and principles of operation that all members must signed and agree on;
5. The committee set up for reconciliation should endeavour to identify the root causes of the crises and their nature and make a feasible recommendation for implementation in order address the issue and
6. Collective decision and transparent party activities should be promoted effectively.

REFERENCE


