

# Party Defection and Good Governance in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The political landscape of every society is polarized based on prevailing groups and interests of the people or the political contenders. Sometimes government entangles itself in such contentions and the contenders capitalize on this to lay claim on power. Many governments have failed in their responsibilities toward the masses but have engaged in alignment and re-alignment of groups/forces in order to get hold on power. The paper therefore, looks at party defection and good governance in Nigeria. It is guided by one research question: can good governance be achieved through party defection? The paper adopts group theory as theoretical framework of analysis and argues that defection in Nigeria is driven by economic materialism and the need to remain close to the corridors of power. The group that controls the government at the center embarks on policies and appointments that will benefit the members of its group. While the displaced group re-align or join the moving train to avoid prosecution, get contracts, appointment and so on. In the struggle, the masses are not captured in the picture; their welfare and other functions of government are left undone. The paper concludes that seeking selfish rewards or the satisfaction of personal interest rather than to meet the needs of the masses and development of the polity forms the basis of rampant party defections among political gladiators in Nigeria. The paper therefore, recommends that the people should use their votes wisely and understand that these politicians enrich themselves through their activities. Again, constitutional provision for defection should be re-visited in order to nurture and sustain our nascent democracy.

**Key Words:** Defection, Governance, Group theory, Democracy and Economic Materialism

## Introduction

In about the last twelve years, Nigerian democracy has witnessed series of political defections with politicians decamping from one political party to the other particularly

from opposition parties to the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). This development which is generally referred to as party defection, cross- carpeting, party-switching, floor-crossing, party-hopping, canoe-jumping, decamping, party- jumping etc are employed to mean the same thing as defection.<sup>1</sup> This has become a permanent feature of the Nigerian democracy. Political party defection or party-switching occurs when any elected party representative within a legislative structure such as a parliament, embraces a different political or policy perspective that is incompatible with that of the party/parties he or she represents.<sup>2</sup> Basically, the decamped feels dissatisfied and discontent with his or her former party from where he or she decamps without the defection reflecting any ideological leaning. However, the persistent party defection is not new. In fact it is a common phenomenon in both the developed and the developing democracies.

Since the military disengaged from political power in May 1999, certain political gladiators have dominated the political scene of Nigeria and provided us with governance but to the dissatisfaction of other groups existing in the polity. The dissatisfaction was caused by the manner in which the government in power under the auspices of a political party discharged its responsibilities. This precipitated to politicians defecting to other parties or forming another party where their grievance could be accommodated or where they could offer good governance. The usual practice in the past has been for politicians to defect to other parties with promises of election tickets if they fail to secure party nominations during their own party's primaries or defect based on ethnic sentiment. The recent pattern of defections appeared to have heralded an irreconcilable stance of major political gladiators who have vowed to continue their hold on power to defect to other political parties. These gladiators give several reasons for their actions in order to buy over the sympathy of the masses that

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1 Malthora, 2005 cited in Mbah, P. "Party Defection and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria" *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no.2 (2011), Pg. 2.

2 Hoeane, T. "Floor-Crossing in South Africa: Entrenching or Undermining Democracy?" *South Africa Journal for Political Science & Public Administration*. Vol. 27, no.2 (2008), Pg. 70.

appear to be the sole determinant in a society that has not transcended parochial politicking. Defection by these politicians has focused on power, primitive accumulation of wealth and perpetuation of domination by a group in the polity. The displaced re-group and defect to avoid prosecution, to continue their economic relevance in the country and seek political appointment to fulfill their dreams.

The average Nigerian encounters numbing frustration, disillusionment and psycho moral dislocation owing to the failure of the political party that has formed the government at the center to deliver the expected democratic dividend and good governance as promised the citizens during election campaign. The issue of governance which is their statutory duties to the masses is least in their agenda. Corruption, crime, unemployment, economic recession, insecurity, poverty, insurgency, bad roads, epileptic power supply, high maternity and mortality rate, lack of development in the manufacturing sectors have swept over the polity of Nigeria. Yet, every four years politicians defect to another party to form government different strata of governance. The politicians struggle to identify with the group where their interest and aspiration would be attained. This paper is guided with this question; can good governance be achieved through party defection? The paper tries to answer the question by using group theory as theoretical framework of analysis.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Political Party**

Political party as a concept has been given different conceptualization by different scholars and school of thoughts. For the purpose of this discourse, political party is a voluntary association organized by persons bound by common interests or aims, which seek to acquire or retain power through the election of its candidates into public offices. In modern societies, political parties are distinct from other organizations. They rely on permanent structure and organization with defined offices

and roles, which enhance their mobilization of supporters. Also they manifest hierarchical order from the grassroots to the highest level of government. More strikingly, political parties seek to put their candidates into public offices through election in order to realize the conscious objectives, which bond their members.<sup>3</sup>

In modern societies, political parties have become essential to the development of political process. They have become veritable instruments or adjunct of democracy. In any democratic system, political parties are not only instruments for capturing political power but they are also vehicles for the aggregation of interests and ultimately the satisfaction of such interests through the control of government. Obviously, political parties are crucial to the sustenance of democracy and governance. Agbaje as cited in Osumah & Ikelegbe<sup>4</sup> noted that, the extent to which political parties aggregate freely, articulate, represent and organize determines the level of accountability in public life including access to and use of power as well as political performance.

Political parties perform a number of functions in any political system. Some will be mentioned here to buttress their expected contribution(s) to the achievement of a democratically stable polity. Political parties are principal instruments for contesting elections, the election being staged to select candidates as well as parties to exercise political power (authority).<sup>5</sup> Political parties, whether in power or acting as opposition are equally expected to serve as instruments of political education, interest aggregation, political socialization, and political recruitment. Parties are institutions that help to organize, move or affect agenda of government, etc.

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3 Osumah, O. & Ikelegbe, A. "The Peoples' Democratic Party and Governance in Nigeria 1999-2007" *Journal of Social Sciences* , 19 no.3 (2009), Pg. 186.

4 Osumah, O. & Ikelegbe, A. "The Peoples' Democratic Party and Governance in Nigeria 1999-2007", Pg. 187.

5 Yaqub, N. "Political Parties and the Transition Process" in Onuoha, B. & Fadakinite M.M (eds) *Transition Politics in Nigeria, 1970-1999* Lagos: Malthouse Publishers (2002), Pg. 125.

### **Ideology and Political Ideology**

Ideology represents a typically crucial element of political parties and their activities. It is a set of ideas about politics, all of which are related to one another and that modify and support each other. Though relatively enduring, it is yet a dynamic phenomenon, capable of being modified by new issues. It was in this light that Philips W. Shively as cited in Omotola<sup>6</sup> defines an ideology as “a continually developing, organized set of ideas about politics that helps us to make sense of the myriad of political questions that face us”. For Okwudiba Nnoli, ideology typifies “a systematized and interconnected set of ideas about the socio-economic and political organization of society as a whole”.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of ideology is historically, deeply rooted in political theory. As a concept, it was coined by the late eighteenth century French philosopher, Destutt de Tracy (1754 – 1836).<sup>8</sup> According to Nnoli, Destutt de Tracy used it to describe a new scientific discipline that systematically studies ideas, emotions and sensations – the science of ideas. Ideology provides a ready guide for appropriate action.<sup>9</sup> Philips W. Shively cited in Omotola<sup>10</sup> posits that ideology is useful to people, both for their own personal ease and satisfaction and for their public political activities. At the individual level, ideology helps to make sense reasonably easily and quickly of the varied political questions that come to one’s attention.

In terms of its public utilities, it helps people to make persuasive arguments convincingly to enlist popular support for a given public policy. On the whole, therefore, ideology is an indispensable element of politics. It does not only serve as a major instrument of state power, playing major role in the

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6 Omotola, S.J. "Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1 no.3 (2009), Pg. 612-613.

7 Nnoli, O. *Introduction to Politics*. Revised Edition, (Enugu: PACREP 2003), Pg. 178.

8 Omotola, S.J. "Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 616.

9 Nnoli, O. *Introduction to Politics*, Pg. 177.

10 Omotola, S.J. "Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 617-618.

acquisition, use and consolidation of power, but also functions as political lifeline for the animation of politics, forcing individuals and groups alike to make political judgment, especially in the face of competing and conflicting divides, as between capitalism and socialism, during the Cold War.

On these notes, Nnoli<sup>11</sup> summarizes the functions of ideology as that of providing:

- A cognitive structure for looking at society generally, be serving as an explanatory and justificatory category for societal realities;
- A prescriptive formula - a guide to individual action and judgment as a basis for the legitimization of public policies when in conformity with popular belief;
- An instrument of conflict management and the integration of society by limiting the basic values and issues over which societal members agree and disagree;
- A means of self-identification for the satisfaction of specific personality needs, a means of self-evaluation and social solidarity;
- A dynamic force in both individual and collective commitment action for or against the ruling class or decision. That is, it provides a powerful basis for mobilization;
- Enhancement of the political appeals of a political party, by differentiating one party from another; and
- Negatively, may serve not only as a serious impediment to national integration and suppress the underprivileged, but also to disguise authoritarian rule. This is because; it tends to provide individuals with imaginary avenues of escape from the harsh realities of social life.

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11 Nnoli, O. *Introduction to Politics*, Pg. 183.

The issue of ideology has been so central to the activities of political parties across time and space that Anson D. Morse cited Omotola<sup>12</sup> had to argue that ideology, being the durable convictions held in common by party members in respect to the most desirable form, institutions, spirit and course of action of the state, determines the natural attitude of a party towards every public question. In an incisive piece on "political party convention", Richard Davies and Vincent J. Strickler cited in Omotola<sup>13</sup> similarly argue that "ideology functions as planks", that is, single issue statements within the platform, the exact ideological orientation of which is often used as a bargaining chip in seeking party unity. Here, the platform connotes a statement of the official party position on a variety of issues. Okwudiba Nnoli<sup>14</sup> also concludes that ideology is a very crucial aspect of politics, not only by serving as a cognitive structure for looking at society generally and providing a prescriptive formula, that is, a guide to individual action and judgment, but also as a powerful instrument of conflict management, self-identification, popular mobilization and legitimization.

Therefore, first and most important vehicle of a political party, under an ideal situation, should be its ideological stance. In reality, however, this is seldom the case. Perhaps, due to the shallowness of democratic roots especially in the developing countries like Nigeria, other forces of identity particularly ethnicity and religion would appear to have taken the place of ideology. The rising influence of money politics represents another crucial limiting dimension

### **Defection**

The term political party defection refers to the departure of a member from a political party to join another political party, typically because of discontent in the existing party. Depending on position of the person, it may be given a different name, such as party switching or crossing the floor. Political party

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12 Omotola, S.J."Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 614.

13 Omotola, S.J."Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 614.

14 Nnoli, O. *Introduction to Politics*, Pg.182.

defectors are usually regarded as political prostitutes especially when without political principle, morality; conscience and lack of political ideology to champion the cause of leadership for the well-being of the society and political development of the country depart to other political parties. Aleyomi<sup>15</sup> adduce reason(s) for cross carpeting or defection of politicians, saying the trend results from personality clash, power tussles, divergent views on the operations of a political party's philosophy, crisis or division within a given political party, disagreement on party's position on an issue, realisation of one's personal political ambition and party leaders reneging on agreed issues of the political party probably on power sharing formula.

From the above, party defection refers to one's abandonment of his/her previous position or association, offers to join an opposition or ruling group or party over the issue of political ideology, manifesto or program and party management. However, from 1999 to date many politicians at the local government, state and federal levels had consistently defected from one political party to the other. Some did so by abandoning the parties on whose platform they were elected, while others after losing elections found it the best option to cross carpet to another political party. Meanwhile, some past and serving Senators, Governors, House of Representatives members, State legislators, Council Chairmen and Councilors have abandoned their elected political party platform for another on the excuse of factional crisis or division within their political party.

### **Good Governance**

The word "governance" came from the Latin verb "*gubernare*" or more originally from the Greek word "*kubernaein*," which means "to steer." Basing on its etymology, governance refers to the manner of steering or governing, or of directing and controlling, a group of people or a state. Governance is

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<sup>15</sup> Aleyomi, M.B. "Election and Politics of Party Defection in Nigeria: A Clue from Kogi State" *Covenant Journal of Politics and International Affairs*. Vol. 1 no.1 (2013), Pg. 82-89.



essentially related to politics, in that politics is often defined as the art of governance. Specifically, governance is commonly defined as the exercise of power or authority by political leaders for the well-being of their country's citizens or subjects. It is the complex process whereby some sectors of the society wield power, and enact and promulgate public policies which directly affect human and institutional interactions, and economic and social development. The power exercised by the participating sectors of the society is always for the common good, as it is essential for demanding respect and cooperation from the citizens and the state. As such, a great deal about governance is the proper and effective utilization of resources. Governance is traditionally associated with government.

In literatures, they are often used interchangeably but, in the 1980s, political scientists broadened the meaning of governance as including, not just government actors, but also civil-society actors. Today, governance includes three sectors: the public sector (state actors and institutions), the private sector (households and companies), and the civil society (non-governmental organizations). These three sectors are said to work hand in hand in the process of governance. This new use of the term focuses on the role of "networks" in the achievement of the common good, whether these networks are intergovernmental, transnational, or international. In other words governance is broader than government in that other sectors are included in it.<sup>16</sup>

Governance is synonymous with good government. Good governance is understood through its eight inextricably related indicators or characteristics: Participation, Rule of Law, Effective and Efficient, Transparent, Responsive, Equitable and Inclusive, Consensus Oriented, and Accountability. For instance, without active participation among the various actors in governance, there would be a concomitant lack of

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16 Tamayao, M.J. "What is Governance?" *Law, Politics and Philosophy* (accessed online 17/7/2018).

responsiveness.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, if decision-making is not transparent, there would be no participation, accountability, and decisions would not be consensus oriented. These indicators should, however, be understood in the context of good “democratic” governance where the citizens are the pivotal of government and, the elected politicians/ or office holders serve the citizens not to enrich themselves through public office but for general benefit.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The study is predominantly based on information derived from primary and secondary sources. Hence, much of the data were assessed through the review of relevant texts, journals, magazines, newspapers, official publications, historical documents and the Internet, which served as tangible sources of insight into the origins of party defection and its impact on Nigeria citizens. As participant observer, these data were further buttressed with information gathered through personal experience and through interaction with some key players in the Nigerian political system and analyzed using content analysis.

Given the primary focus of this study, this is to examine if party defection guarantee good governance since the inception of democratic system in Nigeria, Group theory propounded by Arthur F. Bentley in 1908 is adopted as theoretical framework of analysis. The theory focuses upon collectivities of individuals who interact in pursuance of common political goals. The theory came into limelight when David Truman in 1951 made an important study using group analysis. Truman defined a group as a collection of individuals which on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement

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17 Osumah, O. & Ikelegbe, A. “The Peoples’ Democratic Party and Governance in Nigeria 1999-2007”, Pg. 187.

of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitude.<sup>18</sup> What seems to proceed from the above definition is that a group is an aggregate of individuals who interact in varying degrees in pursuance of a common goal. Group theory focuses on the collectivity and not upon the individual in their attempt to uncover the “real” or ‘basic’ forces of political life.

Group theorists believe that propelling force which holds people together is interest as it is seen as what gives direction to this mass of activity. Hence a group can be perceived as “a mass of activity directed by interest”.<sup>19</sup> They identified three variables; ‘power’, ‘interest’, and ‘conflict’ as endemic factors in understanding and studying of politics. They argue that interest is the primary propelling force and that every action is based upon sharing of interest. Power configuration is seen as basically the configuration of competing interests organized into groups. In this connection, ideology, values, the state, the formal organization of political decision-making, and the content of decisions are determined by the dynamic interplay of interests and group forces.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Political Ideology and Party Defection in Nigeria**

Let us begin with parties of the First Republic, that is, the NPC, NCNC and AG. Ideologically, the NPC was an essentially conservative and elitist party, while the AG and NCNC appeared to be progressive and welfarist, predicated upon socialist ideology. Even at that, it may be difficult to delineate the very ideological orientation of these parties. They, however, share a common feature of ethno-regional ideology, seeking to capture and consolidate power in their respective spheres of influence/region. They were also driven by a commitment to the nationalist struggle, though in varying degrees, against colonialism. The ambiguity as regards their ideological disposition can further be gleaned from the pattern of alignment

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18 Obasi, I. *Politics and Global Dictionary*. (Aba: Eagle Publishers, 2005), Pg. 181.

19 Egonmwan, J.A. *Public Policy Analysis: Concepts and Applications*. (Benin City: Resyin Company, 2000), Pg. 61.

20 Obasi, I. *Politics and Global Dictionary*. (Aba: Eagle Publishers, 2005), Pg. 181.

between/among the parties. For example, the resolve of the NPC and NCNC, two ideologically incompatible parties, the former to the right and the latter to the left, to enter into the alliance that formed the government during the First Republic attests to this. Scholars have pointed out that the alliance was a "marriage of inconvenience", and would have been better between the AG and NCNC. Because the alliance was not informed by a commitment to a belief system and principles espoused by party ideology, it crumbled, sooner than expected, like a pack of cards.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of ideological orientations, parties of the Second Republic followed the steps of the First Republic. There were no fundamental differences in party politics and activities, as the country was "once again mired in a vituperative and vicious politics".<sup>22</sup> This was graphically captured by the unprecedented pace of intra and inter-party factionalization and conflicts. Political vagrancy permeates the political landscape, leaving in its wake major realignments and coalitions among the parties.<sup>23</sup> Notably, the formation of the so-called forum of the "progressive" governors consisting of PRP, GNPP, NPP and UPN was unable to survive long, as the ruling NPN used its federal might and patronage to attract decampers from other parties. Eventually, it succeeded in wooing the NPP of the East, in a manner reminiscent of the First Republic into an alliance, which like the earlier one, collapsed sooner than expected.

Logically, it may be argued that if the parties had been guided by a clear commitment to a particular belief system and principles, much of the crisis and contradictions that characterized party politics under the Second Republic could have been averted. But, since the parties were motivated largely by ethnic competition for power through their respective ethnic champions, nothing more could have been expected. The degeneration of party politics through political vagrancy, elite

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21 Olaniyi, J.O. *Introduction to Contemporary Political Analysis*, 2nd Impression (Lagos: Fapson Ltd, 1997), Pg. 87.

22 Yaqub, N. "Political Parties and the Transition Process", Pg. 125.

23 Osaghae, E.E *Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*. (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), Pg. 139.

factionalization and weak institutionalization led to the military coup of December 31, 1983 that brought the Second Republic into an abrupt end. Yet, the NPP and GNPP appeared to be liberal in ideology with a strong belief in mixed economy; the NPN conservative with emphasis on free market system and respect for traditional institutions. The PRP, a leftist and most radical party had a populist, anti-neocolonial agenda and advocates social revolution and income redistribution; and the UPN; the most disciplined, socialist/welfarist in orientation was based on the philosophy of free education and health care delivery.<sup>24</sup>

The aborted Third Republic witnessed a new experiment in party formation, when for the first time in the history of party politics in Nigeria; the government created and imposed two political parties on the system. Ordinarily, the existence of two political parties should represent two different ideological camps, as has been the case between the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain and Democrats and Republican parties in the USA. This was not the case with respect to the SDP and NRC in Nigeria. Although, while one was a little to the left and other a little to the right, nothing much differentiates the parties, at least not in ideological dispositions. However, Yaqub<sup>25</sup> argued with regards to party politics under the Third Republic that, the way incompatibility had been manifested in the two parties ... was not fundamentally due to serious ideological divisions but to assert, that even if we are to borrow Babangida's words, the "old lines of cleavages and primordial loyalties" once again simply asserted themselves.

If parties of previous republics were found wanting on ideological stance and commitment, those of the Fourth Republic are obviously worse. Omoruyi as cited in Omotola<sup>26</sup> noted that the manner of origin of the parties of Fourth Republic can be viewed as mere instruments of transition from military to civil rule. And for the future and with the prospect for more

24 Ujo,A.A. "Unfortunately Political Parties in Nigeria" Kaduna : KLAMIDSAS Books, (2000), Pg. 102.

25 Yaqub, N. "*Political Parties and the Transition Process*", Pg. 128.

26 Omotola, S.J."Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 624.

parties, "they raise more questions than answers to the lingering political problems for Nigeria". According to Omoruyi as cited in Omotola<sup>27</sup>, the PDP, for example, draws its founders from "all and sundry political persuasions: conservatives, radicals and progressives", most of whom supported the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and flirted with the military during the annulment and in the post-annulment period; including some serving as ministers or members of the ING or as member of the Abacha undemocratic constitutional conference or as leaders of some of the five political parties set up and managed by General Abacha's aides that finally endorsed him as the sole presidential candidate in April 1998. The APP did not differ in any respect as its founders also served as ministers or as aides in different parts of the country under Abacha. The AD that looks different was, however, affected by its inability to meet the federal character clause in the constitution and up till today remains essentially a Yoruba party.

It was perhaps the foregoing faulty origin and precarious foundations of these parties that have been largely responsible for their seeming ideological barrenness. Although, the PDP and APP (ANPP) were status quo parties, given their capitalist and conservative dispositions; and the AD progressive and radical in appearance, none of them seems to have clear policy positions as a basis of popular mobilization and legitimacy of their actions. Judging by their activities, it has been observed that "there's almost nothing to choose, between PDP and other parties in terms of ideological learning".<sup>28</sup> Simbine<sup>29</sup> has also observed that the manifestoes of the first three political parties were "essentially the same in content", as they were not crafted differently, and the strategies for achieving objectives did not differentiate parties from each other.

27 Omotola, S.J. "Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology", Pg. 624.

28 Iyare, T. "An Overview of Political Parties in Nigeria", In Odion-Akhaine, S. (ed.) *Governance: Nigeria & the World* (Lagos: Center for Constitutionalism and Demilitarization (CENCOD) 2004), Pg. 92.

29 Simbine, A.T. "Political Vagrancy & Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria" In Onu, G. & Momoh, A. (Eds.) *Election & Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, Lagos: Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) (2005), Pg. 23.

Given the obvious poverty of ideology that characterizes the first three political parties of the Fourth Republic, - PDP, APP and AD, it should not be surprising that almost all the other parties that sprang up or broke away from them like AC, ANPP, LP, APGA, PRP and the ruling party APC which was alliance of five political parties in attempts to wrestle power from PDP did so because of ideological disagreements. Neither was it that they have articulated alternative views of governance for sustainable democracy and development as a viable basis of popular mobilization rather, they were products of adversarial elite behaviour taken to the points of irreconcilability. Little wonder, these parties also have no ideological stance on major national questions other than the transformation and manipulation of forces of identity particularly ethnicity and religion. The implication is that the so-called political parties are not in competition with one another. They are in factions; these factions are more in competition within themselves than with another party.

These factions have given room for defecting from one political party to the other which is not good for our democracy. Some of these defections were roundly condemned particularly, the defection from the smaller parties like AD, AC, to PDP. The defections from the PDP to smaller parties or of progressive from either PDP to the smaller parties, or from one party to the other were greeted with much approval and celebrations. It is usual amongst the nation's progressives and their supporters to denounce defection in the strongest terms possible as political prostitutes and opportunists who do not have the interest of the electorates at heart but their own selfish interests but the progressives themselves having been caught up in the recent wave of defections it no longer lies in their mouth to freely sermonize on the ills of defection. In the build up to the 2007 elections there was wholesale defection of progressive from the otherwise progressive AD to form a new party Action Congress (AC) with no ideological basis for the shift except positioning to capture power which is however, legitimate. Though, the progressive having carried on for long as if all defections were

evil, it did the reputation of the progressive constituency no good that they could engage in large scale defection on a scale even their opponents would have been embarrassed to manifest. Nigerian politician defect for a number of reasons;

- i) to have better access to power and the spoils of office
- ii) to escape political oppression and prosecution
- iii) as a result of a breakdown in the aims and objectives amongst the founding fathers of the party
- iv) as a tactical and strategic political retreat to re-launch a political agenda on another platform
- v) for ideological reasons, when the initial platform has derailed from the ideals which inspired like minds to join the party and bring to bear these lofty ideals in the service of the people

Defection in Nigerian political parties is in sharp contrast from what is obtainable in advanced democracies like USA or Britain. In the USA generation of families vote and belong to one party and it is seen as political apostasy for a member of a party to defect to the other party. Imagine a member of the Kennedy's family becoming a Republican or a member of the Bush family becoming a Democrat or even a member of Clinton family becoming a Republican that will cause political earthquake. The same attitude prevails in Britain; imagine a Labour party member of Parliament (MP) defecting to the Conservative party or vice versa. This consistent attitude of leaders is replicated amongst voters; it is commonplace for a man and his family to vote a particular party for years, voting for the opposing parties only in extreme case. Even whole cities and States follow like the same pattern. In the recent US Parliament race, it took an extra-ordinary candidate like Barrack Obama for many US states like Floride, Texas and California who vote mainly Republican to vote for a Democratic Obama.

All these ideological consistencies have no relevance to Nigeria; our political leaders change parties at will according to their present needs and fancy, some of our leaders under the



present dispensation have changed parties more than 3 times in less than 10 years. The former Governor of Bauchi State Alhaji Isa Yuguda, is classical illustration of this rolling stone tendency. A number of reasons have been adduced for this fair weather attitude to politics, the most reasonable being the lack of ideological base by most Nigeria parties, for the most parties there is no ideological different between Nigerian parties, even parties that make a big show of being radical and progressive when it comes to the nitty gritty show a lack of understanding of the basic tenets of democracy, absence of free primaries, imposition of candidates, lack of internal democracy and transparency. The saving grace for a handful of credible parties is the presence of a few visionary leaders who come to personify the parties and whose exemplary leadership above the general rot is extrapolated to give the impression that the whole party is progressive and forward looking whereas, the differences between the parties if any is more cosmetic than substantive, more like the difference between six and a half-dozen.

### **The Nature and Economic Materialism of Party Defection in Nigeria**

Anywhere in the world, calculation and interest are what make politics thick, and determine the strength and clout of whoever that joins the fray. There is no way the game is played without interest as central focus. Thus, it is unassailable facts that when one's interest is threatened in a political setting, opportunity abound to seek tenancy elsewhere. The inherent assumption here is that there are different groups in society pursuing different interests and competing to translate such interests into policy. A set of individuals who have a certain background, with certain interests and attitudes will use collective action to achieve common goals.<sup>30</sup> The point is that an individual cannot realize his/her objective on national issue except with group; example: political parties. Political parties are coalition of interests groups. Party could be a pragmatic party which

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30 Egonmwan, J.A. *Public Policy Analysis: Concepts and Applications*, Pg. 62-67.

involves ad hoc combination of certain interests created for short-term goal. The defections in such political parties by the politicians are to achieve their calculated interest. There are two ways the defections occur. First, there is great movement of politicians from different political parties into the ruling party towards the time of the general elections. The idea is to participate in party primaries of the ruling party. The second movement starts after the party primaries. At this point, those who lost in the party primaries move to their former parties or to new ones or even to form a new party under which they intend to contest the coming elections. This has been the experience of Nigeria political history since the return of democracy in 1999.

Most of the defections by the political leaders are to align with a political group where their immediate goal could be achieved. A political party can be based on particularistic consideration like the political parties of first republic in Nigeria (political party based on common ethnic identity, religious beliefs etc.). Defection in the First Republic (1963-1966), was done on personality clash and ethnic basis. As the leader of the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC), Azikiwe was to be the Premier of Western Nigeria following the elections of 1951 with Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba man, and the leader of Action Group, the leader of the opposition in the Regional House of Assembly. The NCNC won 42 seats out of 80, but within 24 hours, 20 of them had defected to AG (Mbah 2011:3)<sup>31</sup>.

The intention of defection was to consolidate ethnic dominance over the other ethnic groups. All the political calculation centered on where is he from. This defection drama robbed Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the chance to lead the government business of the Western Nigeria. This was the most celebrated defection episode in Nigeria. This dangerous precedent set the pace for the development of Nigerian politics built around ethnic and regional rivalry as well as crisis and instability that followed later. The issue of good governance was absent and what rather

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31 Mbah, P. "Party Defection and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria", Pg. 13.

pre-occupied the minds of the politicians was where he is from (interest). These conditions gave birth to an increase in the number of ethnic based political party defection in the country up until today.

However, since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in 1999, the catalogue of defections over the years is a long one, from one party to another, from smaller party to a bigger and stronger one and a losing party to a ruling one. The electoral empire (Independent National Electoral Commission; INEC) in Nigeria registered just three political parties prior to 1999 election; PDP, AD and APP but presently the number of political parties has increased to sixty-six (66). This explains the emphasis on private interest as no politician wants to remain in a losing party. It also explains one fact that political parties in Nigeria lack ideological base. Party defection cut across all electable political offices in Nigeria. Politicians defect based on personal interest, and quest for power; not for wellbeing of the masses; or for good governance or party ideology. For instance, some governors in Nigeria have explored the political economy of marriage to defect to another party; former Bauchi State Governor Alhaji Isa Yuguda and Usman Dakingari of Kebbi State, who married the daughters of President Umaru Yar'Adua while in power. Governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Mahmud Shink, was also elected into office on the platform of ANPP, he defected to PDP midway into his tenure; married the daughter of Former Military President Ibrahim Babangida a stalwart in PDP. Three years into the present political dispensation, the signs were abundant that there would be massive defections of politicians from one party to another. Disagreements and office ticket racketeering created deep gulfs and upheavals in the political parties (NBF News, 2011) cited in Omilusi (2015:58)<sup>32</sup>.

Most of the politicians involved in the act are mostly legislators, governors, and party members who failed to get election tickets. Many senators and members of the House of

32 Omilusi, M. "The Nuances and Nuisance of Party Defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Research* 3 no 4 (2015): 58.

Representatives defected between 1999 and 2007; the move was to the ruling party PDP. In 2010, six senators from the ANPP, Accord Party and the Action Congress of Nigeria defected to the PDP. They were Sati Gogwin (AC, Plateau State); Patrick Osakwe (AP, Delta State); Patricia Akwasike, (ANPP, Nasarawa State); and Sa'di dauo (ANPP, Zamfara State).

The attitudes of Nigerian politicians toward party defection depict the quest for capital accumulation and recognition through politics. The thought of providing the citizenry with good governance thereby improving the lives of Nigerians as well as the electorates are not their primary concern. Their main aim is continued stay within the corridor of power to perpetuate personal aggrandizement. This we can see in the character and actions of Mr Femi Pedro who was the Deputy Governor in Lagos State- elected on the platform of the AC in 2003. Pedro could not secure his party ticket for the 2007 gubernatorial election. On December 13 2006, Pedro dumped the AC to declare his ambition in the Labour Party. He cited gross manipulation in the selection process that did not favour him. Declaring for the party, he stated that his action was the latest in his quest for an enduring and robust platform to serve humanity and actualize his dreams as a change agent in the society. He also added that politics is too important to be left to those who abhor service. He contested the governorship election on the platform of the Labour Party in 2007 and lost. After the election in 2007, Pedro defected to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Yet, while decamping to the LP as an incumbent AC Deputy Governor, he had said that the PDP (and other parties) "lack freshness and are filled with over-used politicians".<sup>33</sup>

In Imo State, Rochas Okorochoa's unending defections present some of the nuances and nuisances in the country's party politics. As a member of the People's Democratic Party in 1999, he wanted to become the PDP governorship candidate but failed. In 2003, he defected to the All Nigeria People's Party, ANPP where he contested for the presidential election but was

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33 Omilusi, M. "The Nuances and Nuisance of Party Defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic", Pg. 59.

unsuccessful. Between 2003 and 2004, Rochas Okorocha was back in the PDP and was appointed as special assistant to President Obasanjo. In 2005, he formed and funded Action Alliance, AA, in order to have a platform to contest for the 2007 presidential election. That ambition was also unsuccessful. He defected back to the PDP in 2007 where he indicated interest in the party's national chairmanship position. In 2010, he joined the All Progressive Grand Alliance, APGA on which platform he contested the 2011 gubernatorial election and won. Also, from APGA he moved to APC in order to benefit from the central government being controlled by the ruling party (APC). He contested on the platform of APC in 2015 and won the governorship position in Imo State. The motive of his action was identifying with the group in control, where contracts are awarded and resources allocated. Evidently, at the moment the direction of defection shows that it is one-sided, and is essentially into the APC, the ruling party. Only little percentage seems to be defecting from APC to other parties or form a new political party.

However, there is nothing wrong in people defecting to other parties if defectors do not find the programmes of their party in consonance with their ideals. It becomes dubious when politicians begin to mortgage their consciences as well as seek to pursue their private and selfish interest in the name of defection. This may have stemmed from the mere fact that politicians are poor and desperate to hold public office as a means of accumulating wealth. In advanced democracies, defection is done on principle, rather than on selfish and personal interest.

In the process of participation and competition of groups in which every other interest tends to be subordinate to *raison d'état*, power is so highly fragmented that it becomes so amorphous, shifting and tentative that few can be said to have more power than others over any period of time. "Things get done by compromise"; to get along, "one goes along".<sup>34</sup> Politicians are forced to accommodate the conflicting interests while trying to maintain a rough balance. Power is roughly

shared among the competing groups. In other words, there is a countervailing power of supposedly co-equal units with harmony of interests in which the broadest possible representation of private interest vis-à-vis the state is provided for. As Thomas Dye cited in Egonmwan puts it, "Countervailing centers of power function to check the influence of any single group and to protect the individual from exploitation".<sup>35</sup>

The victory of one group over the other is determined by the political resources of the group i.e. the strategy adopted, the amount of money expended, skill and competence at maneuvering and other factors like internal cohesion, access to decision makers and organizational strength. The political calculation in the country by 2013 to wrestle power from PDP led government explained the above statement with the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC) through the merging of four political parties- Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) in the build up to the 2015 general elections.

Moreover, with the mantle of political power turning to the APC after the 2015 general elections, politicians continued to defect to the party in a bid to further their political career. The defectors felt that their interests were being threatened; power has eluded them and their relevance were not being felt in the party. The defectors are not thinking of tackling the issues of poverty, accountability of government, constitutionalism, promoting good governance, insecurity, health sector, the falling standard of education, unemployment of the youth, power supply and others but are preoccupied with avoiding government prosecution and primitive accumulation of wealth.

However, four years in office, the APC led government has shattered the dreams and aspirations of defectors in Nigeria.

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34 Egonmwan, J.A. *Public Policy Analysis: Concepts and Applications*, Pg. 62.

35 Egonmwan, J.A. *Public Policy Analysis: Concepts and Applications*, Pg. 62.

There has been a massive defection from the ruling party to opposition party; PDP in build up to 2019 general election. According to the Punch Newspaper of 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2018,<sup>36</sup>

The All Progressives Congress (APC) was rocked in the latest wave of defections by some of its prominent members. The party lost its National Publicity Secretary Bolaji Abdullahi, Governor Aminu Tambuwal, 18 Sokoto State House of Assembly members and Kano State Deputy Governor Hafiz Abubakar. Also, 23 of the 24 members of the Kwara State House of Assembly crossed over to the PDP. Also, Kwara State Governor Abdulfatah Ahmed, Ambassador to South Africa Ahmed Musa Ibeto and Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom.

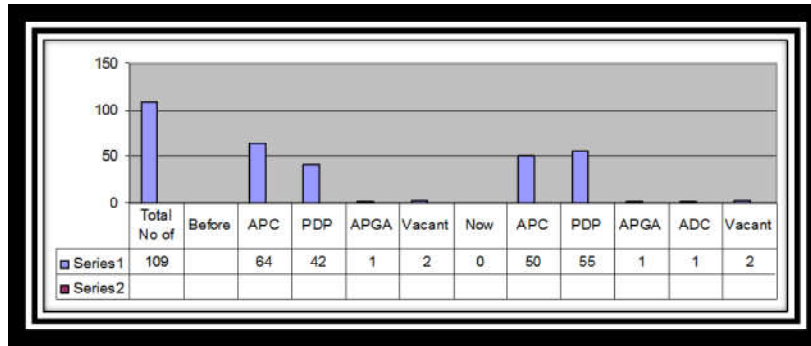
**Table 1:** List of Senators of Nigeria who defected in 2018; in build to 2019 General Election

Name of Senators	State	Initial Party	Party Defected
Senator Isa Misau	Bauchi	APC	PDP
-Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso	Kano	APC	PDP
-Senator Abdulazeez Murtala Nyako	Adamawa	APC	PDP
-Senator Barnabas Gemade	Benue	APC	PDP
- Senator Dino Melaye	Kogi	APC	PDP
-Senator Monsurat Sunmonu	Oyo	APC	PDP
-Senator Suleiman Hunkuyi	Kaduna	APC	PDP
-Senator Shaaba Lafiaji	Kwara	APC	PDP
Senator Usman Nafada	Gombe	APC	PDP
- Suleiman Nazif	Bauchi	APC	PDP
- Senator Abdullahi Danbaba Ibrahim	Sokoto	APC	PDP
- Senator Ubale Shittu	Jigawa	APC	PDP
- Senator Soji Akanbi	Oyo	APC	PDP
- Senator Rafiu Ibrahim	Kwara	APC	PDP
-Senator Saraki	Kwara	APC	PDP

Source: Compiled by Author (2019)

<sup>36</sup> The Punch Newspaper (2018), July 25th

**Table 2:** Chart showing APC with the Majority Number in Senate before 2018 Primaries but, has lost its leadership to PDP in build up for 2019 General Election.



**Source:** Compiled by Author (2019)

**Table 3:** List of Members of Federal House of Representatives of Nigeria who defected in 2018; in build to 2019 General Election

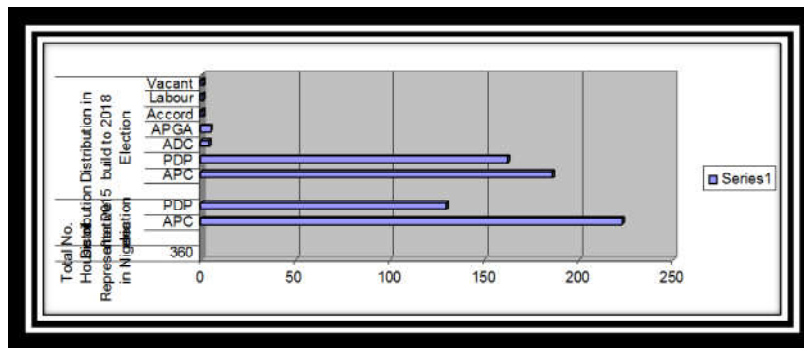
S/N	Name of Representative Members	State	Initial Party	Party Defected
1	Garba Umar	Kano	APC	PDP
2	Olayonu Tope	Kwara	APC	PDP
3	Ahmed Garba	Kano	APC	PDP
4	Kabiru Marafa	Sokoto	APC	PDP
5	Zakari Mohammed	Kwara	APC	PDP
6	Abubakar Amuda-Kanike	Kwara	APC	PDP
7	Ali Madaki	Kano	APC	PDP
8	Hassan Saleh	Benue	APC	PDP
9	Ahman Pategi	Kwara	APC	PDP
10	Mark Terseer-Gbillah	Benue	APC	PDP
11	Shehu Usman	Kano	APC	PDP
12	Aminu Shagari	Sokoto	APC	PDP
13	Nuhu Danburam	Kano	APC	PDP
14	Abdulrazak Atunwa	Kwara	APC	PDP
15	Salisu Zakari	Bauchi	APC	PDP
16	Hassan Omale	Kogi	APC	PDP
17	Rufai Chanchangi	Kaduna	APC	PDP
18	Abdulsamad Dasuki	Sokoto	APC	PDP
19	Sani Zoro	Jigawa	APC	PDP
20	Benjamin Okolo	Kogi	APC	PDP
21	Funke Adedoyi	Kwara	APC	PDP
22	Bode Ayorinde	Ondo	APC	PDP
23	Bashiru Salihu	Sokoto	APC	PDP
24	Barry Mpigi	Rivers	APC	PDP
25	Nasiru Sule	Kano	APC	PDP



26	Segun Ogunwuyi	Oyo	APC	PDP
27	Lawal Rabi	Kaduna	APC	PDP
28	Sani Rano	Kano	APC	PDP
29	Dickson Tarkighir	Benue	APC	PDP
30	Musa Adotsamiya	Kano	APC	PDP
31	Emmanuel Samuel Udende	Benue	APC	PDP
32	Emmanuel Orker-Jev	Benue	APC	PDP
33	Razak Atunwa		APC	PDP
34	Taiwo Michael	Oyo	APC	ADC
35	Sunday Adepoju	Oyo	APC	ADC
36	Olugbemi Samson	Oyo	APC	ADC
37	Olasupo Abiodun	Oyo	APC	ADC

**Source:** Compiled by Author (2019) from Nigeria diaries; The Punch, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2018

**Table 4:** The chart below display the latest movement from APC to PDP against 2019 General Election in Nigeria:-



**Source:** Compiled by Author 2019

In the House, the APC escaped losing its majority leadership status when 37 members dumped the ruling party. Thirty-two of the lawmakers defected to the PDP, while four members from Oyo State defected to the African Democratic Congress. Investigations by The Punch Newspaper<sup>37</sup> indicated that there was tension in the APC’s camp, prior to the defection, as its members feared that they would immediately lose majority control of the House. The PDP camp even celebrated ahead of

<sup>37</sup> The Punch Newspaper, 24th July 2018

the defection, taunting the Majority Leader, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila, that he should be ready to hand over his office to the House Minority Leader, Mr Leo Ogor. Defectors are defecting based on personal interest and acquisitions for power; not for the masses or Nigerian citizens.

### **Governance and Party Defection in Nigeria**

Good governance flourish in an environment where political elites possess the required leadership skills anchored on the tenets of democracy. It is essential that they represent a broader constituency beyond their immediate surroundings in articulating their respective policies, which derive from a sound knowledge of the rudiments of interest aggregation<sup>38</sup>. Good governance is the making and implementation of policies that would impact positively on the citizens of the country. According to World Bank Report<sup>39</sup>, good governance is exercise of political power in the management of a nation's affairs. This implies that governance encompasses the state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity and the relationship between the governing apparatus and the governed that is, the people in terms of their standard of living.

The UNDP report according to Omokri<sup>40</sup> shows that governance is exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institution through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal, rights, meet their obligations and mediate their difference. Good governance is different from politics and party affiliation. After election, government is formed and the elected office holders are expected to provide the citizenry with good governance by fulfilling their campaign promises.

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38 Natufe, I.O. "Governance and Politics in Nigeria: A Lecture delivered on Nov. 21st at the Staff and Graduate Seminar, Department of Political Science & Public Administration; University of Benin (2006).

39 World Bank Report (1989).

40 Omokri, R. "Why Nigeria Under Buhari is the World Headquarters for Extreme Poverty" The Vanguard, August 24th, 2018.

Good governance entails good leadership, respect for the rule of law and the processes, the accountability of the political leadership to the electorate as well as transparency in the operation of government. It advocates the fulfillments of social contract made with the people. Specifically, good governance involves enthronement of a democratic government, which guarantees equal participation of all citizens in governance, promotion and protection of the fundamental human rights of the citizens as well as provision of basic amenities; such as, portable water, electricity, qualitative education, healthcare delivery, good road among others. Good governance is empirically evident in any society where there are existences of Participation of citizens in government, Rule of Law, Effective and Efficient government, Transparent, Responsive government, Equitable and Inclusive government, Consensus Oriented and Accountability of government officials.<sup>41</sup>

Defection by the politicians does not mean participation in government, enshrinement of rule of law in the society, making the government responsive to the need of masses or making them accountable and can never be consensus oriented. Lending credence on this, one would see that, politicians in Nigeria defect from one party to another not to provide the needed necessities of government to the masses but to amass wealth and enrich themselves through governance. Government emerged in human society to perform certain functions to ensure peaceful co-existence between the rulers and ruled. These elected government officials were elected by the electorates to represent and attend to their needs but they capitalized on the mandate to form alliance and re-alliance based on their personal interest. Thus, defection from opposition parties to the ruling party explains the emphasis on the primacy of political power in Nigeria. This is because the possession of state power leads directly to economic power, and who holds positions in the power structure determines the location and distribution of

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41 Tamayao, M.J. "What is Governance?" *Law, Politics and Philosophy*, 2014.

economic resources and political rewards. Exclusion from this position is unfortunately very costly.

Dudley<sup>42</sup> correctly explains that, the shortest cut to affluence and influence is through politics. Politics means money and money means politics. To quote him,

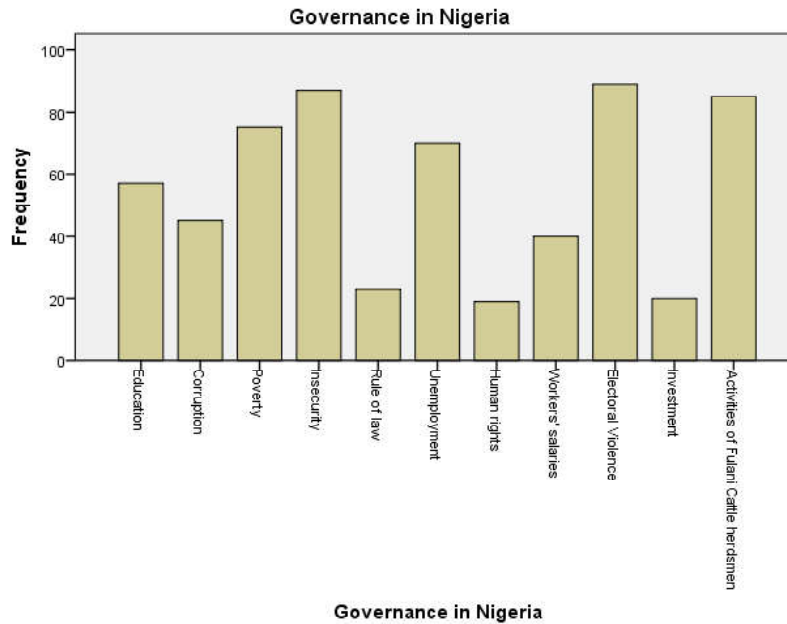
To get politics, there is always a price .... To be a member of the Government Party means open avenue to Government patronage, contract deals and the like. But once, having known the profitability of having power, the party (and the individual members) naturally uses the same governmental machinery to stay in power. The leadership becomes a self-recruiting oligarchy- and no self-recruiting oligarchy has been known to tolerate opposition to it.

Masses are starved of basic necessities of life by those that have the statutory responsibility of discharging it and whom they surrender their liberty for exchange of protection of lives and security. The question we should ask our political gladiators is; has their defection bettered the lives of Nigerians? Taking a good look on the state of Nigerian masses, one will begin to wonder where we are going from here. The political office holders keep prostituting from one party to another in search of greener pasture; where the interest and welfare of the masses suddenly became inconsequential in their activities.

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42 Dudley, B.J. *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: University Press 1973).

The charts below display the extent and nature of governance being provided in Nigeria by party in power amidst the defection by political office holders 2015 till dates.



**Source:** Author (2018)

From the chart above, one would see that the elected political office holders or representatives have failed in providing adequate governance to Nigeria but, have concentrated in decamping from one party to other for their own selfish reasons. The level of Education is dwindling in Nigeria; it has dropped to 57%. The children of elites and political gladiators travel outside the country for their schooling while; the masses are denied quality education. One of the reasons is that, politicians are busy seeking their personal and material motives against discharging their primary duties as elected representatives of the masses. In funding of education, only seven per cent was allocated to the education sector in 2017 against the stipulated

15% to 26% proposed by the UNESCO Report cited in Omokri.<sup>43</sup> According to UNICEF Report (2018) according to Omokori<sup>44</sup>, about 10.5 million school aged Nigerian children are out of school, making the country one of the highest in the world. No wonder, the academic bodies of Colleges of Education and Universities in Nigeria are currently on strike, pressing their demands over deplorable state of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. For instance, students in Colleges of Education since September 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 has been at home due to academic strike embarked upon while; ASUU declared their on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

The party, in which most of the elected representatives in Nigeria decamped in 2015, has failed millions of Nigerians in providing adequate governance to stemming youths of Nigerian. Poverty is on the increase, from the chart it is rated 75%; showing that most Nigerians are living below the poverty line of one dollar per day. According to the World Economic Forum and the World Poverty Clock; Nigeria is rated as “the World Headquarter for extreme poverty after overtaking India as the nation with the highest number of extremely poor people and made her worst performance on Transparency International Index”.<sup>45</sup> This party in which political gladiators defected in 2015, under it administration, Nigeria had her first economic recession in 25 years. The Naira became the fourth worst performing currency in the World.

According to Dele Sobowale; quoting World Bank Report (2018)<sup>46</sup>; stated that ‘the rate of unemployment increased in 2017 and poverty is estimated to have increased slightly’. According to data published by the National Bureau of Statistics, in December of (2017) cited in Sobowale (2018)<sup>47</sup>, 7.9 million Nigerians had lost their jobs in the 21 months APC led government. Unemployment has been estimated to be 70%;

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43 The Vanguard, August 24th 2018.

44 The Vanguard, August 24th 2018.

45 The Vanguard, August 24th 2018.

46 Sobowale , D. “Deepening Poverty and Increasing Unemployment Mark Buhari’s Third Year in Office, The Vanguard 21st May (2018).

47 The Vanguard, August 24th 2018,

indicating that most of Nigerian youths are unemployed. It has been argued that, most of the jobs provided do not translate to guaranteed jobs. For instance, N-Power is a job provided that spanned for a period of 2 years in which most of them are back into the labour markets. Under the PDP led administration, Nigeria was a magnet for investment and was the number one destination for foreign direct investment in Africa as rated by the Geneva-based United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) stated Dele Sobowale.<sup>48</sup> Today, Nigeria is not even included in the top 10 in Africa, the rate of Investment by the Foreign Counterpart has drop to 20% in recent time in Nigeria based on certain factors such as insecurity, corruption and others.

Governance in Nigeria can be referred to anything except democratic: it lacks all the irreducible principles and tenets of democracy such as fair and credible election, rule of law, separation of powers, independence of the judiciary and checks and balances between the arms of government. The present administration since inception has flawlessly violated court injunction. Rule of Law is rated 23% in Nigeria, whereby the custodian of law openly violate it to the detriment of the masses. The government in power has reduced human rights to nothing and trampled on rights of citizenry. The governorship election conducted in Osun and Ekiti states in 2018 respectively was widely deepened in electoral violence rated 89%. The electoral irregularities such as vote buying, intimidation by party stalwart, use of apparatus of state to muzzle the masses and incessant arrest of opposition members were in play throughout the election. Even when the International observers openly confirmed the extent of human rights abuses; which could be seen as 19%, yet the party in power ignored such allegation.

Furthermore, payment of workers' salaries, pension and gratuities has become a difficult thing for some states in Nigeria. Some states in Nigeria owe their workers' four to five month's salaries; such as Kogi, Ondo, Osun, Imo, Ekiti, Benue, Bayelsa.

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48 The Vanguard, 21st May, 2018.

For instance, in Osun State the government has been paying workers from level 8 and above half salary since July 2015. Pensioners are no exception; they are the worse hit in Nigeria civil service. According to survey carried out by State Salary Survey as at May 15, 2017 Benue, Abia, Bayelsa, Ekiti, Imo and Kogi State are owing their pensioners ranging from 12 months, 19 months, 13 months, 11 months, 24 months and 17 months respectively.<sup>49</sup>

Nigeria political space is dominated by corrupt, greedy and desperate political gladiators who will stop at nothing just to acquire political power. Corruption has been institutionalized by the ruling elites in Nigeria. The same ruling elites are behind the scene manipulating government agencies charged with the responsibility of investigating criminal offences such as EFCC and ICPC in Nigeria. No wonder why they move like pest to party in control of power when they feel threatened by the government arrow of arrest and detention. Abati's analysis succinctly encapsulates the failure of governance in Nigeria. In early 2003, PDP controlled the government; President Obasanjo questioned where the roads that his government had spent over 300 billion naira were being constructed. His confidant, Chief Anthony Anenih was the Minister responsible for that portfolio. Neither Obasanjo nor Anenih answered the question, but the public knew in whose pockets the money was diverted to.<sup>50</sup>

In rendering his assessment on the quality of state governors in the Fourth Republic, the Secretary General of the Arewa Consultative Forum, Col. Hamid Ibrahim Ali (rtd) declared that, ninety percent of them are corrupt, absolutely corrupt. While Nigeria boasts a legion of millionaires and billionaires, there are no corresponding industrial plants to justify the rise of our wealth. It is interesting to note that while oil has intensified the rate of corruption in Nigeria, the polity has become less democratic and ridden with poverty. Corruption pervades all

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49 Thisday: August 31, 2018.

50 Natufe, I.O. "Governance and Politics in Nigeria: A Lecture delivered on Nov. 21st at the Staff and Graduate Seminar, Department of Political Science & Public Administration; University of Benin (2006).



levels of government. The population is more impoverished now than it was 58 years ago. Corruption has become part of Nigeria political system. There is no elected political office holder who is immune of corruption, except if the touch light has not come his/her way. For instance, using the state of Nigerian roads as a demonstration of the failure of governance in Nigeria, Reuben Abati lamented thus:

The state of Nigerian roads is the state of Nigeria and a reflection of the level of governance in the country. Every sphere of national life is like the roads: pot-hole ridden, abandoned to the vagaries of nature, crying out loudly, for vision and difference....The roads are bad; the hospitals are ill-equipped, the school system is in disarray, access to health remains a problem, human life in both the cities and the rural areas, is on the edge of despair...<sup>51</sup>

Since 1999, contracts have been awarded by governments at all levels for the repair, rehabilitation and construction of roads. Individuals in the government through defection have tactically enriched themselves and their generation at the expense of the governed.

There have been incessant killings ravaging the nation through the rampaging activities of Fulani cattle herdsmen in states like, Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, Enugu, Jos, Adamawa, etc. According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, these Fulani militants are the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record killing of about 1,229 people in 2014. Human right violation in the world over has become an ignominious act which attracts the condemnation and attention of international organizations like UN, the Commonwealth, AU, Governmental Organization and others. Nigeria government as a sovereign state has not fared any better in the protection of fundamental human rights of her citizens instead, it has been a situation of wanton abuses and incessant killings by ethnic

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51 Abati, R. "Nigeria's Deplorable Roads" The Guardian Lagos, Friday, October 13th , (2006).

militias. Government has failed in ensuring and protecting lives and properties of citizens as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. The question that should guide the minds of Nigerians is this, in all these defections where lies the provisions of welfare and good governance for the citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The glorious days of politicians who carry politics based on principles of societal welfare or welfarism no longer exist in the present democratic dispensation of Nigeria. What exists is a group of politicians so mindful of their private interests not the common good of Nigerians. The driving force is how to capture state power for private gains. In search of this, politicians move from one party to another in order to make their relevance felt in the society and to be among the political movers. This trend of defection shows that Nigerian politicians have no democratic values and our political system is awash with professional politicians who are devoid of modern political ideology and principles.

Furthermore, defection from one party to other has not guaranteed good governance in all ramifications. This is so as welfare of the citizens and the development of the polity through good governance are least in the minds of elected representatives. Good governance entails making government participatory between the rulers and the ruled, ensuring that rule of law exists in the polity, making government effective and efficient in all ramifications and also, making the government officials to be accountable to the people and security of lives and properties of citizens. Good governance signifies a broader spectrum of things, such as protection of human rights, equitable distribution of wealth, enhancement of individual capabilities and creation of an enabling environment to foster participation and growth of human potentials which are guaranteed by the government in power, elected to serve the people not defecting from one party to another in search of personal and private interest.

The question that should guide the minds of Nigerians is this, in all these defections where lies the provisions of social amenities, quality education, corruption, rule of law, fundamental human rights, transparency and accountability of leaders, security of lives and properties for the citizens? Has their defection improve or create job opportunities for the masses? Thus, defection does not guarantee good governance rather; it undermines and truncates the process of achieving good governance in any society. Governance is far supreme to party politics; because party that won election controls the central government. Hence, should discharge the responsibility of governance to her citizens not chasing shadow and looking for a means of amassing wealth and hiding from prosecution.

### **Recommendations**

- 1) Members of the National Assembly should amend the 1999 Constitution which allowed unchecked defection especially section 68 sub section1 (a) of the 1999 Constitution to make resignation from office to be a prerequisite for defecting to another party.
- 2) There is great need for political parties to have ideologies, programme, policies which will serve as a compass to their members and discourage them from defecting to another party.
- 3) The populace should pursue a new wave of political consciousness that unites them to build a political union that is built on the values of accountability, transparency and responsiveness to people's needs, by casting their vote wisely and electing credible candidate.
- 4) Government should amend the section of 1999 Nigerian constitution which allowed the federal government to sponsor political parties. Political parties as a body of like minds/organizations can generate money for themselves without depending on the government, examples; annual dues, sale of forms, party registration, donations from party members etc.

- 5) There should be a legislation over party defection; whereby defectors are mandated to relinquish political office they are occupying before defecting to another political power. This makes it difficult for state governors, senate president, speaker or any other elected representative to defect to another party.

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