



JOURNAL OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

<https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jgd>

How to cite this article:

Ogunwa, S. A. (2026). Party system, internal crisis, and governance in Nigeria. *Journal of Governance and Development*, 22(1), 40-56. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jgd2026.22.1.3>

PARTY SYSTEM, INTERNAL CRISIS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Received: 10/2/2025

Revised: 22/6/2025

Accepted: 6/10/2025

Published: 31/1/2026

ABSTRACT

Internal party conflict is a recurring phenomenon in multiparty democracies. This phenomenon is centered on the struggle for power and control, which all party governments and non-party governments coveted. This has led to party disorganization, fractionalization, and the movement of party members to other political parties, thereby leading to the proliferation of more political parties by some party founders and chieftains in order to realize their political ambitions, despite the enormous resources and sacrifices they made on the old party platforms. The paper argues that internal conflicts have affected party organizations cum members with several consequences on democracy and delivery of democratic governance because the party governments have concentrated their attention on the crises in their political parties, as opposed to the provision of public utilities such as infrastructure, healthcare system, security, goods, and social services. The effect of internal crises made the ruling political parties, nationally and state-wise, contribute largely to poor governance in the country. The paper concludes that the internal conflicts in party system in Nigeria can be eliminated if the party organizations adhere to extant laws and believe in the sanctity of democracy that a loser in an electoral contest can actually become a winner someday as well as to concentrate on the provision of democratic dividends for the people of Nigeria.

Keywords: Party system, internal crisis, party member, power struggle, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In modern states, political parties as an institution of governance have become so ubiquitous that their presence is acknowledged in many political systems, particularly in those with a democratic form of government (LaPalombara, 2007). Party organizations play important role in the process of democracy especially at the points of who would become the party flagbearers to fill the vacancies at all levels of government “today, the parties operate throughout and all through, partly because victory in parliamentary elections is otherwise impossible, but also because in the modern state there are many local elective offices to fill” (Kapur, 2008, p. 647).

In choosing the party’s candidate, the party organization relies heavily on the internal mechanism instituted to regulate the conduct of party primary elections as enshrined in the extant laws (Scarrow, 2005). This way, the outcome is usually accepted by all and sundry because of its transparency, participatory and inclusiveness. Contrary to this position, however, where party organization fails to adhere to the democratic process, internal party wranglings become the order of the day. This, in most cases, caused disagreements, court cases, and pathologies and by and large affects the ruling parties. The absence of internal cohesion within the party system often constrained the ruling party's ability to deliver the dividends of democracy (Ogunwa, 2022a; 2014).

Like other liberal democracies, Nigeria operates a multi-party democracy, but the indices of party pathologies, accentuated internal crises, are common phenomena (Adejumobi, 2010; Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Anifowose, 2004; Omoruyi, 2002). The core elements of democracy and by extension internal party democracy have been taken aback. This has resulted in enormous challenges among the political parties across Nigeria, constraining the party system, especially the ruling parties, to divert attention to solving internal crises rather than focusing on governance. The party congresses have turned into imposition of party candidates characterized by spoils system and clientelism as anointed candidates who are either competent, qualified or even prepared for the task of governance. The absence of internal party democracy with internal crisis hardly strengthens the party institution and institutionalization but further pathologies and proliferation of political parties.

In the past, the party system in Nigeria has witnessed internal party crises, causing disorganization within political parties due to personality factors. For instance, the Action Group, internal crisis was the face-off between the party leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the premier, Chief Samuel Akintola. The altercation led to the formation of a new political party, NNDP, and its alignment with the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) degenerated into an irreconcilable political conflict that engulfed the Western Region, and the declaration of a state of emergency by the NPC-led federal government in 1965 (Anifowose, 2006; Osaghae, 1998).

The party system of the Second Republic such as National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian People Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), were not spared in internal feud which caused the defections of Arthur Nzeribe from NPP to NPN, and Sunday Afolabi and Akin Omoboriowo who served as deputy governor under the platform of UPN in Oyo and Ondo states to NPN before the 1983 elections (Yaqub, 2002; Joseph, 1999; Mundt et al., 2008; Adele, 2006). MKO Abiola defected from the party owed much to his inability to realize his presidential ambition in the 1983 elections because he was not seen to “be in the good books of the party, one needed to be in the good books of these founders and leaders first. Thus the parties’ candidates for elections and the choice of who occupied what position in the party depended largely on the decision of the founder/ or leader” (Tyoden, 2002). The two-party system in

the aborted Third Republic, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC), was immersed in internal party conflict, coupled with political struggle for supremacy between various factions and personalities, as well as divisions within the SDP owing to one faction struggling for control of the party.

In this dispensation, internal conflict has bedeviled the party system. The party primaries were nothing but a failure of party politics in the country. The political parties, especially their leaders, have not been transparent or democratic in organizing party primaries because delegates are plainly asked to vote for certain candidates (Ologbenla & Nwomeh, 2007). Candidate's selection is based on cordial "relationship consanguinity or family tier with incumbent governors, the president, chairmen or with a significant member of the party establishment" (Ologbenla & Nwomeh, 2007). For them, party primaries were nothing but a failure. Political parties, especially the PDP, faced an internal crisis up to the 2015 general elections. During the 2013 Special Convention of party, PDP, some dissident PDP members vented their anger, while some governors who were aggrieved by some actions of party leaders stormed out of the venue and announced themselves as the 'New' PDP. They alleged that the party has been hijacked. The outcome saw that many PDP members especially the seven governors, some Senators, majority of House of Representatives, party chieftains and stalwarts moved enmass to the opposition parties, which led to irreconcilable interests and electoral defeat in 2015 presidential election. The internal crisis in the party has continued and reflected in the loss of 2019 and 2023 presidential elections.

This study is an attempt to investigate and interrogate the relationship between the party internal crisis and governance in the country. The study is also interested in knowing if internal crisis within and among political parties, affect the dispositions of elected representatives in delivery of goods and services. Meanwhile, the remaining sections of the paper include party system and internal crisis, theoretical framework, internal crisis and governance in Nigeria and the conclusion.

PARTY SYSTEM

Weber (1968) understands party system as associations with membership that rests on formally free recruitment. And the end to which its activity is devoted to secure political power within an organization for its leaders and to attain ideal or material advantages for its members, consisting the realization of certain objective policies or the attainment of personal advantages or both. From this premise, a political party is a formal organization with a purpose to place and maintain in public office persons who will man the machinery of government. It is an organized group of individual citizens who come and act together as an organized entity with distinctive objectives on national questions that seek to take the control of the government. In this sense, they are instruments for the articulation and aggregation of national issues. As a network organically organized to win power via election must continue in the organization, manifest and permanent organization; continuity in communication and maintain relations with local, state and national units, self –conscious determination of leaders at all the strata to capture and hold decision-making power alone or in coalition with others not only to influence the exercise of power but as well seeks follower to vote during the election or in some manner striving for popular support (LaPalombara & Weiner, 1966).

The importance of organization ensures continuity and prolongs the life of the party as well as its members and leaders. The continuity of political parties to be institutionalized must be devoid of the personality or personalities of its founding fathers. Put differently, party organizations are taken to mean

the internal structure of political parties including the compositions and powers of party decision-making bodies, the centralization or decentralization of authority as well as the functions of local branches (Sartori, 1976). A well institutionalized and coordinated party organization is the *sine qua non* and gives life to a political party. Essentially, political parties are organizations which pursue primarily a predetermined goal. The “objective” goals are the programme for government, while “personal” goals are to obtain individual benefits through political offices or collective advantage with a promise to ameliorate public life-style. As an organization, the party pursues “desirable objectives for the corporate body as a whole”. A political party is structurally organized “acting together as political units and seeks to gain control of the government” on specific national objectives (Akinbade, 2008, p. 192). In this way, party organization is a patronage system or what Weber (1968) described as a “patronage of politics” by which party leaders appointed trusted individuals into the positions of authorities. Secondly, it is at the mercy of leaders to appoint individuals in the party to represent the party's interest during the election as well as in government as well as the distribution of offices to perceived friends, relatives, and loyalists’ influences political cleavage or division between the party leaders and members.

Party scholars argue that party organizations as essential to ensure their longevity as well as the instrument of political participation within and between other groups. Roucek et al. (1950) opine that a political party is held together, primarily by its organization, and “a well-knit organization” (Kapur, 2008, p. 639). Party organization is a complex and bureaucratic. In other words, a political party as an organization lays the hierarchical principles of the party and provides the vehicle for administering rewards and punishments for measuring prestige, and for the very simple yet powerful function of giving each member in the party a place that he can call his own as well as a position to fill and work. According to Neumann (1965, p. 71), participation is an essential characteristic of every political party and an organization of a society’s active political agents. They are concerned with the control of government power through popular support with other groups that hold divergent views. They are a great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official government institutions as well as relates them to political action within the larger political community. In this way, political parties are not monolithic structures but collective entities in which competition, divided opinions, and dissent create internal pressures. In turn, these pressures often trigger internal scrambles (Boucek, 2009).

INTERNAL CRISIS

Blondel (1969) views political parties as participating in the procedure for the solution of conflicts. Conflicts, however, may occur within a political party or any group in society. Our concern here is conflict within party organizations since political parties are instruments for the struggle for power in the state. Duverger (1954) argues that power struggle is the characteristic of political parties since politics itself “entails a conflict of claims, of values, of interest, and goals” (Ake, 1973 quoted in Odukoya, 2013, p. 129). The assemblage of different individuals who emerged from socioeconomic and political settings into political parties indicates that their views would conflict with one another. Odukoya (2013, p. 129) captures this succinctly thus “since politics is synonymous with conflict, then, political parties are evidently and inherently conflictual and prone to a crisis in the struggle and dialectic for power both within and without.” The quest for power takes the form of struggle within and between political parties. Following his observation of power struggle in the party system, Duverge (1954, p. 96) defines a political party as “not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed through the country (branches, caucuses, local association, etc.) and linked by coordinating institutions.” This position gains the support of Aldrich (1995, p. 19), parties are “coalitions of elites to capture and use political office. ... an institutionalized coalition, one that has

adopted rules, norms, and procedures”. Succinctly put, a political party as an institution is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election. By *team*, we mean a coalition whose members agree on all their goals instead of on just part of them (Downs, 1957, p. 25).

There is homogeneity in these definitions. “Coalition” or “team” suggests a similar meaning, but as Odukoya (2013) observes, homogeneity within political parties even in a single party is not desirable, party members promote socio-economic and political interests. According to him, the complexity of modern states is pluralized along with the events, dictates, and demands of technological advancements including modernization and urbanization. The contestation within and between parties is shielded around power. Pursuing and getting political power leads to conflict. Ake (1973) says conflict is incidentally resolved in the interplay of opposing forces that is between political parties. “But not in the sense that consensus is created, but rather that some points of view, some interests – or if you will – some political actors prevail, while others ‘lose out’” (quoted in Odukoya, 2013, p. 130).

The question of inter-play as suggested by Ake (1973) means between one another in the same political party, but the politics of inter-play is more common among political parties. It is the area of who owns what and at what time a member of a political party gets his benefit of being a member that creates disagreement and crisis with another member vis-à-vis party organization. Conflict, Weber (1971) argues, is any political action-oriented deliberately to carry out an actor’s own will against the resistance of the other party or parties which is part of everyday normal ongoing for the institutionalized process that is natural of social reality. The conflict has to do with the struggle over status, power, and scarce resources which all the groups in the conflict not only attain the desired value but aim to dislodge even eliminate the opposing parties.

Concretely, the object of conflict is the quest for power within and between members of political parties since the premium on political power creates altercation within party organizations, particularly when the leaders in the parties failed to adhere to internal party democracy for selections into public and party offices. According to Scarrow (2005), internal party democracy is the way for including party members in intra-party deliberations and decisions making. Internal party democracy not only promotes democratic principles but political parties are the “makers” of democratic governance (Omotola, 2009, p. 612). They are the engine room of democracy that guarantees the working institutions of the governments. Internal party democracy leads to the selection of capable, appealing leaders and candidates and electoral success including good policy formulation and implementation. Additionally, it promotes political legitimacy and acceptance of those individuals who are selected without rancor by party members. It shows transparency and democratic elements in parties; stability of the democratic governance as well as in the ruling parties further lead to a deepening of a democratic society.

Boulding (1963) opines that intra-party conflict originates because of a competition which the party members are aware of. This competition is the incompatibility of potential future positions that each party member wishes to occupy; a position that is incompatible with the wishes of others. Conflict is an internally built mechanism of parties. A crisis occurs when the distribution of party largesse is only being enjoyed by certain individuals in a political party. According to Simba (2011), the internal conflict in political parties occurs when the distribution of power and decision-making is not dispersed as widely as possible, only a few individuals decide for the majority of members, and the absence of broader participation in the election or selection of candidates for parliamentary positions and other elective positions in the country. In other words, intra-party conflict often plays out when political parties or organisations base their candidates' selection on favoritism; that is, promoting one’s kith and kin,

unequal sharing of resources or commonwealth, lack of regular meetings to discuss both party and national issues, and centralized authority; that is, a situation in which the party activities are centered around one particular person (Shale & Matlosa, 2008; Momodu & Ika, 2013).

In other democratic societies, internal party democracy has become an avenue for democratically elected representatives to protect and project that a political party is not only democratic but reliable to conduct its internal affairs without altercation. For instance, Benvenisti (2002) opines that the internal party democracy in Israel is a product of an agreement between the two major parties that supported open party primaries as the method to choose candidates on their lists for election to the parliament (the Knesset) arrived at by the Israel constitutional and political order. The change provided different modalities pre-selection of party candidates can have, not only on the outcome of the elections and the relative power relations among parties but more importantly on the structure and the functioning of the political system. The United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, there is no imposition of external regulations on the party system due to strong liberal tradition (Gauja, 2006). In New Zealand, according to him, the constitution has provided legislation for democratic pre-selections of party candidates but has remained only in the books without implementation by the country's political parties. Bille (2001) observes that in Western Europe, parties have rearticulated an acceptable procedure for candidates' selection. The reforms brought inclusive nomination procedures arriving at more transparency, participation, and accessibility of intra-party decisions and less competitive leadership contest (Kenig, 2008). From these positions, internal party democracy requires party institutionalization for stability. However, it has been very difficult to attain this in developing democracies particularly in Nigeria because there is little skepticism that it will change or improve. In the area of democracy, however, there are still challenges since party system is expected to play a fundamental role even though it is not necessarily synonymous with internal party democracy but may be a threat to democracy (Saskia & Grahn, 2023). Notwithstanding, party institutionalization can make a difference especially in terms of providing effective opposition and government accountability (Randall, 2006).

Ideological differences are the root cause of fractionalization among the party members, as well as influences of intra-party combination, clique, or regrouping whose members share a sense of the common identity, common purpose and "organize to act collectively as a distinct bloc within the party ... to achieve their goals" (Muhammad, 2008, p. 43). Accordingly, factionalism could be informed by factors such as leadership tussle, approach, or strategy as well as specific interests of group or groups. There is an interplay between a party and an internal democracy. The connection reflects in the party's adherence not only to democratic goals but being able to submit to internal democratic structures. The internal democracy in political parties is meant to develop a more democratic process, transparent and predictable enough to determine the outcome in candidates and leadership selection, policy making, membership relations, gender, minorities, youth as well as party funding (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). There are two instrumentalities for internal democracy in political parties are the organization of free, fair, and regular elections of candidates to represent the party organization and the public in governance. Lastly, political equality and open participation for all members internally as well as the members representing diverse groups and opinions. For Salih (2006), to ensure democracy in political parties will involve a participative process of policy debates, consultation through meetings, and other platforms, and decentralization of decision making to the rank and file of party hierarchy. Although, all members may not have direct participation, however, indirectly, the members of the party may contribute through their representatives who speak on their behalf. This is a method of decentralization of the decision-making process. If democracy is about inclusion, then, a political party is about the inclusion of all the party members. If not, however, there may be little participation since one begets the other. Inclusiveness stresses how wide the circle of party decision-makers is. Party inclusiveness means that

all party members, or even all-party supporters be allowed to make contribution on important issues, such as the choice of the party leader or the selection of candidates. Party inclusiveness is a matter of process and formal rule that offers more opportunities for open deliberation before the final decision. On the other hand, party institutionalization is the degree to which internal decisions and procedures are formalized and the extent to which a party has coordinated its structures as well as its target constituency. Therefore, a political party with a high degree of intra-party democracy is highly institutionalized because the rules that define who is eligible to participate and what constitutes victory in internal contests are articulated (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is situated on the group theory. Scholars have agreed that a group formation is largely centered on the individuals' interests constituting members of the group (Bentley, 1961; Truman, 1961). "Interest" for instance, Bentley (1961, p. 221) says "there is no group without interest. An interest is the equivalent of the group. ... The group and the interest are not separate". Put this way, there is relationship between a group and interest. Interest cannot be separated from a group because interest exists when there is interaction between certain individuals to achieve certain ends because the polity itself housed several groups of interests and one or more shared attitudes and makes certain claims upon other groups or organizations in the society.

In this study, a political party organization is the focus point. A political party is a collection of individuals united for common purpose. The purpose for which is to control government through stated objectives (Mahajan, 2017; Agbaje, 2015; Gauba, 2011; Kapur, 2008; Shively, 2008; Sartori, 1976; MacIver, 1964; Ranny & Kendall, 1956; Duverger, 1954). The purpose of joining a political party as an individual is to achieve political goal, which a person cannot achieve unless through collaboration with others or a political fold. Bentley (1961, p. 22) rightly states the importance that "when the group is adequately stated, everything is stated and not only in one man..." The oneness of party organization, Truman (1961) observes is the possession of some basic characteristics with identification of "categoric" and "uniformities of behaviour produced through them". This suggests that outside of the group that is, a political party man do not have ideas to ventilate or to achieve a political end. However, political misunderstanding or conflict among the members is largely reconciled by party organization and sometimes leads to rewards or sanctions in the interest of the party organization and members.

INTERNAL CRISIS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Scholars are unanimous that internal conflicts are a common feature of the Nigerian party system (Adekeye & Ambali, 2017; Onyishi, 2015; Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2015; Anifowose, 2004; Omoruyi, 2002). The conflict in the political parties especially in the present dispensation is related to several factors: lack of internal party democracy, impunity by the leadership of the parties, the imposition of the candidate, politics of godfatherism as well as lack of ideology to guide the conduct of members, incumbent factors, among others. These factors have caused and aided the defections of party chieftains, leaders, and founders, elected and appointed individuals to have dropped their political parties to another to realize their political ambitions, not without, however, political and governance implications in the country.

Political parties as institutions are touted to be the avenue for political representation in governance. Besides this, they are supposed to serve as the agent of national integration, building men and women for national emancipation. In Nigeria, legal institutions are created to eliminate unforeseen phenomenon as a result of unhealthy and rancorous development within political parties. Institutions are created from both formal and informal sources to guide the conduct and behavior of members including the leadership. The first includes those consciously created statuses, laws, regulations from formal organizational structures, while others are conventions, norms of behavior, and self-imposed order of conduct. Political parties are in themselves institutions since they encapsulate rules of behavior, while the role they play in the political process of any society is quintessentially institutional roles (Onyishi, 2015). The legal institution defines the operational structure, influence, regulation, and change behaviors and outcomes (Norris, 2004). The internal crises in the political parties largely owe to the manipulation of political structure to achieve personal gains by political leaders. In such situations, conflicts and misunderstandings have led to disorganizations, incapacity even debilitating outcomes. Political parties are regulated by the institutions created by the government and party actors to put an end to perennial internal crises within political parties in the country including the 1999 Federal Constitution, the Constitutions of political parties, the Electoral Acts, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) including the statutory rules or laws, and the informal rules of political parties.

The Military Government led by General Abdulsalami Abubakar promulgated Decree 17 Section 4(1) of 1998 that demanded the INEC to register political associations in line with the guidelines set by the Commission before registration as political parties. These provisions were later incorporated into the 1999 Federal Constitution. Part III, Sections 222 to 229. These sections are devoted entirely to the political parties as the institutions recognized to govern the country. Section 221 of the Constitution specifically recognized and stated that apart from a political party, no association is legible to rule in Nigeria. The other sections of the Constitution emphasized the formation of political parties, the constitutions of the parties; the programme, aims, and objectives of parties, the finances of the parties; the role and functions of the INEC; and the role and functions of the National Assembly. Only Sections 227 and 229 stressed no recognition of the quasi-military organization and seek the meaning of association to mean the “political parties” operating in the country. Section 223 (a-b) provided for the principal officers and members of the executive committee of the governing body must be elected democratically and periodically not exceeding four years intervals; and lastly, that the executive committee or governing body must reflect the federal character, and across the federation not being less than two-thirds of the state including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These provisions make the political parties “big and capable of controlling a significant region at least” than the previous political parties who were hitherto regionally based (Liebowitz & Ibrahim, 2013).

The constitutions of the political parties registered by the INEC also contained rules and regulations that guided their internal operations. The constitution/ or statutory laws establish the structures and organs as well as their functions; procedures for the establishment of the ad-hoc committee, disciplinary and inquiry committees; procedure for amendment of the constitutions; the methods of appointment, selection, nomination, and/ or election of the principal officers of parties including the nomination of their members for public offices must reflect internal democracy. Other details in the constitutions are the sources of the party funding, financing, and management of funds; provision for party conventions, or congress for the election of principal officers of the party across the federation as well as candidate’s selection to contest elections against other political parties at all levels of government in the country.

In addition to the constitutions of these parties, there is the role of the INEC. The 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Acts empowered INEC to monitor, control the activities of political parties (Ikechukwu, 2015). For INEC to carry out these responsibilities, the Electoral Act hitherto enacted in 2003, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2022 were passed into law by the NASS and signed by the president before the conduct of the general elections. These instruments (Electoral Acts) are to guide the INEC in the control of party's congresses or conventions, finances, party primaries, and registrations, among others. It is therefore compulsory if not mandatory for the electoral body to always be present at the conventions or congresses organized by political parties and ensure that the parties tenaciously follow and adhere strictly to their procedures as articulated in the extant laws. In most cases, however, INEC has been side-lined to monitor the activities of the political parties and compliance to what is documented in the extant laws "under a barrage of court injunctions" (Liebowitz & Ibrahim, 2013). According to Kura (2011), monitoring the activities of these parties often at loggerheads with the electoral body over noncompliance to constitutional provisions on the party financing, candidate selection, internal and external auditing of accounts, and undemocratic conduct of congresses or conventions. The country's political parties lacked basic liberal and internal mechanisms that could sustain a vibrant and fast-growing democratic culture. The leaders of these parties chose to run them as though they were closed shops, with no respect for their parties' constitutions on the election of party leadership and selection of candidates for the elections and exhibited disdain for rules and regulations that governed the process of nomination.

Despite the institutional mechanisms put in place to checkmate misunderstandings and wrangling in the Nigerian party system, the crises have remained. It created an altercation between the party organs and the followers with devastating effect on governance (Ogunwa, 2012). From the three political parties to several of them in the Fourth Republic, they have been at lodger-heads with themselves in place of articulating and aggregating governance. This has caused disintegration, sacking, and dismemberment of members from their political parties and electoral misfortunes.

As argued above, Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, the Electoral Acts and the Constitutions of political parties articulated in their various chapters and sections' regulations on how parties should select their candidates democratically. International IDEA's (2005) studies revealed that in Nigeria when these provisions are adhered to, the godfathers who have dominated and controlled these parties do circumvent and determine the outcome in their favor. The outcome of the selection process lacks internal democracy and general acceptability by the majority of party members and created conflict, fractionalization, decampment, and violence. The intra-party conflict has assumed a destructive dimension in the country's party system (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2015). Muhammad (2008) avers that conflict is usually between members of a political party because the factional groups dissipated energy and employed undemocratic or non-democratic means to hijack the party structures across the country for personal aggrandizement. Party conflict has become a normal feature within political parties as "parties are not run on the principles of openness, equity, internal democracy, and universal standards rather on the informal social relationship" (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2015, p. 115). The inherent party conflicts lead to the expulsion of some members and carpet-crossing into other political parties where politicians believe they would be accommodated to realize their ambitions. Ologbenla and Nwomeh (2007) opine that Atiku's decampment after being chieftain of the PDP to the Action Congress (AC) after being sidelined by the party (PDP) to contest for the presidential election in 2007. They observe that he was adopted by nine other political parties: Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), the Liberty Democratic Party of Nigeria (LDPN), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), the Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP), the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP), Better Nigerian Peoples Party (BNPP), United Democratic Party (UDP), and National Masses Movement of Nigeria (NNMN) without the

support and approval of their members. Adducing the reason, party leaders at all levels of government have established political “dynasties, sons, son-in-law, nephews, cousins and loyal aids for political offices” (Ologbenla & Nwomeh 2007, p. 79). For them, party primaries were nothing but a failure of party politics in the country, while the PDP officials were not transparent or democratic in organizing the PDP primaries because delegates were asked to vote for a certain candidate(s) nominated by the party hierarchy.

Momoh (2013) says that the godfathers are responsible for in-fighting and struggle for power and perks of office as well as one causative factor in understanding political Nomadism. Political nomadism refers to defection from one political party to another or some time formation of a new party after any member renounces his/her party membership because the formal parties have been turned into grazing grounds on one hand, and the rate of defections is so high and deliberate as well as explicable on the other. Party defections were caused by a lack of internal democracy in the party, godfatherism, highhandedness, usurpation of power, and abuse of political authority. According to Okereka (2015), the party system suffers equalitarian platform and subvert the will of the ordinary party members and delegates in party primaries. He concluded that the present party system is characterized by suspensions and expulsions of party members because of lack of ideology, politics of ethnicity, godfatherism, internal party democracy, cross carpeting particularly before elections and deep divisions and factions manifested in violent clashes. These factors find common denominator and agreement among scholars that intra-party conflict is the bane of Nigerian political parties (Adekeye & Ambali, 2017; Oyadiran & Olorunghemi, 2016; Onyishi, 2015; Momodu & Ika, 2013; Odukoya, 2013; Olaniyan, 2009; Okoosi-Simbine, 2005; Omoruyi, 2002).

In particular, the internal crisis affected the PDP as a party as well as its government. Some notable members of the party constituted themselves into internal opposition. Okoli and Ali (2014) observe that intra-party opposition has the queer character of party politics. Intra party political opposition is when some individuals in a ruling party constitute themselves into a splinter movement that stands opposed to the activities of the parent party. Arguing, the emergence of splinter group is largely caused by personal differences, clash of socio-economic interests, ideological incompatibility, do-or-die politics, organizational weakness, and operational defects. Indeed, party indiscipline, monetization of politics breeds cabalism and godfatherism. The structure of such opposition operated along with mainstream parties and establishment of parallel party structures as well as leadership, partisan alignments and realignments among the party faithful (Ogunwa, 2014). Onyishi (2015), Ibrahim and Abubakar (2015), Adekeye and Ambali (2017) studies revealed that all political parties in the country including AD, APC, PDP, APGA, LB, AP among others were characterized by the internal conflicts that resulted to change of party leadership, impeachment, defections and expulsion. Internal disagreement and fractionalization have factions claimed to be in charge of the party. Although, party politics is about competition among political parties, in the case of the PDP competition led to fractionalization and disintegration (Ogunwa, 2022B). All these affected the delivery of democratic dividends.

As a developing country, democratic principles have not been properly entrenched in our system. When political parties are centered on personal interest especially in PDP for example, we are bound to have a crisis in the party, when people are desperate; they will do anything possible to wrestle power from you. Particularly at the peak of PDP, everyone knows when one can get the nomination of the party and you are as good as being elected to the office you are aspiring for. So, people are so desperate to become elected, so they will do all manner of mischief, to make sure they realize their aspirations (Interview with Dr. Aliyu Idi Hong, 2024)¹.

Generally, time changes everything, switching political parties has to do with a personal ambition to pursue a particular position in a party, but in the case of the Nigerian political parties, there was no tolerance and cooperation because with time, among the few oligarchies in the party system, some of them became impatient, and at that point that disagreement set in which in turn leads to party switching. In other democracies switching of parties is a common phenomenon in South Africa, Japan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nepal, Russia, the Philippines, France, Italy, and Brazil (Desposato, 2006) but in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, party switching is officially prohibited (Janda, 1970). This attitude by politicians indicated that parties do not matter. According to Randall (2007), the prohibition is to encourage party discipline, but enforcement is another issue to prevent the problem of cross-carpeting among party members in African countries. This has led to an attempt, to legalize or otherwise, restrain this unpopular party practice. Gavan (2001) reported that in Senegal, as the election is nearer and competitive, the opposition leaders regularly showed themselves willing to be included in the government. Similarly, in Brazil, Desposato (2006) says about one-third of legislators in the Chamber of Deputies switch parties every four-year term. The implication of the inclusion of opposition in government makes the opposition abandon their political parties because of the absence of party discipline.

The decampment of high-ranking members from their political parties to another, particularly for PDP influenced the outcome of the 2015 general elections. A PDP Chieftain, Honourable Diket Plang describes defection as a negative variable for the party and its government. The result of all these conflicts led to breakdowns of political order and instability across the country. By extension, governmental attention and scarce resources are usually diverted away from what the ruling parties promised the people. The intention is to bring about the socio-economic development where justice, fairness, equity, and the rule of law will prevail. The movement nonetheless became more of a liability than an asset to the common man and the system at large (Omotola, 2010). For instance, the PDP was affected by politics of war not of peace, of acrimony and hatred and mudslinging not of love and brotherhood, of anarchy and discord, not of orderliness and accord, of divisions and disunity and not of cooperation, consensus, and unity, not of integrity and patriotism; it is the politics of rascality, not maturity, of blackmail and near gangsterism, not of constructive and honest contribution.

The problem of internal party democracy characterized the political parties in the country with debilitating consequences. For instance, the former president, Obasanjo (2014, p. 43) says of the PDP that it lacked “internal democracy and not being in tune with the aspirations of Nigeria... the failure of leadership at party level and the national level”. This brought the party to its knees at the crucial moment, “We sought to solve the image of our party, because the image of our dear party, the largest political party in Africa, has been grossly eroded due to strife, the imposition of candidates, godfatherism, money bag politics, injustice and lack of understanding of our party manifesto as well as the ruling party, if we get it right, Nigeria will get it right” (Nwodo quoted in Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011, p. 29). A chieftain of All Progressives Congress has observed the development in the party, thus:

This is the most indiscipline party. They do things with impunity among themselves between themselves and without themselves. There is no coercion, which is what led to a breakaway. As a party, there is no internal democracy within the party. The party usually uses consensus. Elections are not truly held. The party says there would be an election before the election date the party has arranged for one particular person who will be ratified. Then, if the party is going to conduct a ratification exercise not that you deliberately throw up some dummies as candidates when you have a very strong candidate. Meanwhile, the other stronger

candidates have shown interest. Either by coercion, intimidation or by arrangement those candidates now withdraw their candidature. Then in other to present the semblance you now present somebody in a dark horse, somebody who is seriously unknown to now stand against the popular one. Several people have gone to court, several breakaways, several of them jumping ships, several of them gave counter directives (Interview with Chief M.A. Olagbayi, 2024)².

Besides the ideological disposition in the party system, political violence has been the order of the day creating anxiety and uncertainty in the body polity. Political violence follows the electoral process, and discourages those qualified and credible individuals from participating in political party activities to further democracy and good governance. Intra-party conflict-affected governance when candidates are imposed on the people for elective offices. This indeed is contrary to the principle of fairness, rule of law, and other democratic tenets. This does not only impinge on good governance but also leads to protests and demonstrations by supporters of those whose names have been substituted for other people at the same party. This in most cases caused factions, disorder among members of the party and questions the legitimacy of those elected to discharge the specific functions of interest articulation and aggregation as a necessary input for the political process and democratic consolidation (Kruks-Wisner, 2021).

Internal conflicts have led to a series of assassinations and elimination of perceived political enemies and rivalries between the contestants seeking to bear the flag of their political parties and undermining democratic governance (Lachapelle & Hellmeier, 2024; Papada & Lindberg 2022; Saskia & Grahn, 2023). Olasunkanmi (2015) opines that the “politics of eliminations” is a mechanism used by politicians to eliminate their political opponents in politics. The government of PDP is not too distant from this style of politics. According to Anifowose (2006), the politics of elimination has to do with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/ or damage or destroy an individual. The objective of this act is to ensure destruction and render political opponents permanently incapable because of the eliminator. The politics of elimination is not limited to PDP as a political party but it cuts across the political parties in Nigeria (Ogunwa, 2012). Politicians engaged unemployed youths for political thuggery and perpetuate election rigging, arson, and other electoral atrocities including the elimination of political opponent either within the PDP or opposition parties. For instance, several political party founders, chieftains, leaders, elected among others were killed. All these killings were politically motivated because of the struggle to take political power within and among political parties. They have found it extremely difficult to emphasize the politics of issues and good governance (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2022). No wonder Fukuyama (2015) asks that why democracy is not performing to the expectation of the people. Rather, they base their campaigns on ethnicity, religion as well as politics of influence through money politics (Papada & Lindberg, 2022). According to a chieftain of All Progressives Grand Alliance, Dr. Justice Ngwama:

Money yes, a lot of them but the monetization of Nigeria's political process began with the PDP. It was like if you can't get him then buy him and the buying of the vote as recently disgracefully displayed in the Ekiti election started in the PDP in 1999. Now everybody is becoming conscious of the fact that the political process is indeed already on the way to destruction. The ideological drive has been relegated to the background, people and party members no longer take cognizance of ideology. It is more of money politics (Interview with Dr. Justice Ngwama, 2024)³.

As a result of the internal crisis in the party system especially among the ruling parties, they have shifted attention to crises in their political parties at expense of the providing and engaging the Nigerian people with good governance. For instance, the infrastructural and social services which cover health, education, energy, agriculture, water, transportation, and road have remained underdeveloped. The saying that healthy people are a healthy nation is not the same in the country's health sector. The sector has suffered in the area of funding from the primary to the tertiary levels. The mortality and infant mortality deteriorated across the federation. With billions of naira spent on the sector, yet, the country's hospitals and health facilities have become mere consulting rooms, and the death rate continued unabated just as diseases have ravaged the hapless Nigerians. With the population of Nigeria put at 1.1 percent of the world's population; Nigeria loses 1.2 million out of the 6.02 million babies born yearly. Nigeria, India, the Democratic Republic of Congo, China, and Pakistan lead the world in infant mortality rates. Nigeria is rated as the 158th position out of 177 nations surveyed in terms of human development indicators; life expectancy in Nigeria is 48.8 years, one of the lowest in Africa and the world (Joab-Peterside, 2013). The poor state of the health sector made the country one of the worst health indices in the world. The President of the Malaria Society of Nigeria (MSN), Babajide Puddicombe opines that the poor health indices the country turned to be the hub and highest cases and deaths in the world with about 100 million malaria cases and about 300,000 deaths reported annually. Energy or power in local parlance is one of the problems facing businesses and homes on the land. The absence of energy crippled the manufacturing sector and other sectors of the nation's economy. Like the energy sector, the Nigerian roads are characterized by potholes that became gullies and got broadened by erosion. The roads are death traps and dark shades for armed bandits in the country. The nation's roads are dilapidated and the effects of bad roads have retarded goods, services, and people's movements to access their businesses. The importance of motorable roads for national growth and development cannot be underestimated.

The problem of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, sectarian tension, corruption, and bad governance continued unabated. The immediate past President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari had said that his government (APC government) inherited rotten infrastructure from the PDP government with the humongous resources at the disposal of Nigeria within the period, it is sad that infrastructure went to rot completely. The resources meant for the termination of rampaging Boko Haram amounted to \$400 billion between 2010 and 2014 remained unaccounted for. The Vice-President, Yemi Osinbajo has accused the previous administrations in the country of none investment in infrastructural development. For instance, about \$199.8 billion was accrued to the government of IBB and Abacha regimes between 1999 and 1998, while \$401.1 billion was accrued to the governments of Obasanjo and Yar'Adua, 1999-2009, and \$381.9 billion to the administration of Jonathan, 2010-2014 (Oji, 2024). These revenues were from the sales of crude oil proceeds supposed to be used to provide basic amenities such as roads, health care services, energy, among others for Nigerians.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated that internal party conflicts pervaded the Nigerian party system which by and large has undermined the direction and delivery of governance at all levels of government in the country. Beginning in 1999, three political parties actually birth the fourth Republic. Over time, the number has increased astronomically. Yet, these numbers have not put an end to challenges confronting the party system and governance in the country.

At every election, new parties were formed to assuage problem of governance but often, the more political parties, the higher the crisis on the polity and institutions of governance, even the political parties themselves. For this reason, political parties have struggled to fulfill their main responsibilities. The reasons are understandable. They are not institutionalized to execute the task of governance. The party system needs to be aligned with the meaning and functionality in the country. In doing this, like other assemblages, political parties as instruments of democracy must be tailored towards the constitution and constitutionalism. However, the struggle for power by party organizations as well as party members within and among the parties is the core element of party politics, politics requires tolerance, give and take, and is devoid of a do or die, since there is always a place where each member can fill at any point in time. Electoral politics in Nigeria show that when a member of political party lose to another party member in a competitive election, that does not put an end to the ambition of the person because a loser today becomes a winner tomorrow. Conversely, a political party that loses to another party today is likely to be unseated by that very party in the next election. Electoral success is not permanent in party democracies particularly in a multiparty democracy.

All party members must work together to achieve the purpose for which the organization is established. Party institutionalization becomes important here. Institutionalizing party members must center on the ideology that they (party and members) have covenanted. Through ideological positions on national issues, likely crises and misunderstandings being experienced will be mechanically resolved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency. The information presented in this paper is supported by several oral interviews conducted in 2024 to provide contextual and experiential insights. These interviews include discussions with Dr. Aliyu Idi Hong in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; Chief M.A. Olagbaya in Abeokuta, Ogun State; and Dr. Justice Ngwama in Ikeja, Lagos State. The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest related to this study.

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