

## Party Leadership, Intra-Party Crisis and Democratic Consolidation in Southwest Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study examined the tripod linkage between party leadership, intra-party crisis and democratic consolidation in the Southwest Nigeria between 2006 and 2017. It relied on secondary sources of data and content analysis. Using elite and realistic group conflict theories as theoretical frameworks, the study observed that intra-party crises in the Southwest region during the period were due to high-handedness of party leadership and political elites at various levels of party structure, as well as their inability to maintain stable and cohesive party relations coupled with the abysmal level of intra-party democracy and poor party discipline. The study concluded that for Nigeria's democracy to stand test of time and achieve the consolidation it actually deserves, intra-party crises often caused by inept and power-drunk party leaders must be considerably curbed. It recommended inter alia that there is urgent need to check the excessive use of power by party leaders/executives, develop effective intra-party crisis resolution mechanism, and ensure utmost compliance to party internal democracy, constitutions and guidelines by both party leaders and members.*

**Keywords:** Democratic consolidation, Intra-party crisis, Party leadership, Party politics, Southwest Nigeria.

### Introduction

Political parties, since 1920s when the elective principle was proclaimed in Nigeria, have been vulnerable to crises of different nature which had in turn undermined and still undermining their democratic functions. The defining characteristics of party politics in Nigeria, since the colonial period through independence and previous republics (first, second & aborted-third), have been intrigues, internal strife, backbiting, factionalism, schisms, and internal struggles, resulting in series of crisis, defections and counter-defection, as well as partly responsible for the collapse of these republics. The current republic (Fourth Republic) was ushered in with high hopes and expectations that Nigerian politicians have learnt from their past mistakes, but the reality has proved otherwise. Party politics, since 1999, has been bedevilled with crises in varying proportions and has exhibited more crises than cohesion, such that virtually all political parties in the country are perpetually enmeshed in internal crisis. This is the situation with major political parties in the current democratic dispensation, including the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the defunct All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), the defunct Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and even the current ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), as well as minor political parties at the national and state levels (Omitola, 2003; Olaniyan, 2009; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Olorungbemi, 2014; Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). The Southwest region's experience cannot be an exemption. Scholars have, however, advanced various factors responsible for strained relationship among members of same political party, such as prebendal politics, dearth of viable party ideology, lack of internal democracy, imposition of candidates, money politics, party indiscipline, and ethnicisation of party politics, among others, which have heightened intense struggle over the control of party power and access to resources by political actors (Omotola, 2009; Ojukwu & Olaiya, 2011; Momodu & Matudi, 2013). However, there is lack of scholarly attention in the area of visible roles of party leadership in intra-party crises capable of truncating Nigeria's fledgling democracy. Against this backdrop, the study examined the role party leadership played in intra-party crises in the Southwest region between 2006 and 2017, as well as the implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

### Conceptual Clarification

**Party Leadership:** There exist different perspectives on what and who constitute leadership. However, the concept of leadership has been discussed, defined, examined and re-examined by scholars in many fora and academic discourse, and in various ways depending on the perception and area of specialisation of the definer. Approaching the concept from two broad perspectives, Onoge (1995) referred to "leader" as individual who occupies the formal office, such as president, vice president, governors, and deputy governors, among others. Based on this view, political leadership could be

described as an essential oil that keeps the wheel of government working which makes the difference between success and failure in a country, gives direction to citizens who are the critical assets of nation, and expected to demonstrate responsiveness, responsibility and accountability (Omolayo, 2005; Olayiwola, 2012). In the second view, Onoge (1995) opined that leadership is based on the degree of influence which an individual exerts in his/her group such as political party. Thus, party leadership implies set of political elites elected or selected to manage the affairs of a particular political party in the country. Party leadership is seen as the most powerful office that influences party decision-making process, selection of candidates for elections, and plays critical roles in the recruitment of political leaders into political offices in a democratic state. Party leadership requires a combination of charisma and integrity as well as the ability to assess a situation and make a decision in the interest of a nation, region or party members. Party leaders must possess the ability to build and execute the vision, mission and objectives of the party. The selection of party leaders can be by a single individual who creates a political party as a vehicle for his/her own political views, party primaries at the ward, local government, state and federal level, and shadow elections (open or wide-open primaries) (Hopkin & Bradbury, 2006). The characteristic quality of such leadership determines the extent to which stable and cohesive relations within political parties are maintained.

**Intra-Party Crisis:** Crisis is ubiquitous in any society where there exist interactions between and among individuals or groups of individuals. Intra-party crisis depicts an unstable situation within the political party due to incompatibility of political goals, clash of interest and/or personality. Describing the trend in a disturbing manner, Eme & Anyadike (2011) maintained that intra-party crisis is a “situation of great shock, difficulty and distress-created in a political party due to the inability of the party concerned to resolve and reconcile effectively its internal differences or disputes” (p.43). It occurs when members “are entangled in the pursuit of divergent goals, most especially in the fielding of members for both elective and appointive positions” (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2015, p.115). In his essay, Maduekwe (2005) argued that intra-party crisis describes a situation where vaunting ambitions are not reconciled to constitutionally guaranteed protocol requirements for hierarchy where there is scant respect for the pecking order, especially in party leadership. Thus, ordinary party faithful feel the pressure the most because they are at the receiving end. Intra-party crisis also arises when members of the same political party try to influence the decision-making process of the party to their advantage (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). The reasons accounted for this situation have been documented in literature.

**Democratic Consolidation:** Representative democracy essentially promotes agreeable relationship between and among members of political parties. Democracy is a system of government usually involving freedom of the individual in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens, justice in the relation between the people and the government, as well as participation of the people in choosing their representatives into governmental offices (Nnoli, 2003). Yagboyaju (2013) pointed out that democracy did not only allow and encourage mass participation of the electorate in the selection of their representatives, but also that democracy is nourished by transparency and accountability in governance as well as thrives better on strong democratic institutions. Adherence to the guidelines, rules and ideals of these democratic institutions promotes consolidation of democracy. The term “democratic consolidation” is used to denote the existence of democratic rule, government, ideals and principles. It can be used to describe the process of ensuring that the ‘new democracy’ or ‘emerging democracy’ is secured beyond the short term and making it immune against the threat of regression. In other words, it is the process by which a new democracy matures, in a way that it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism (Schedler, 1998). A consolidated democracy is one in which none of the major political actors, parties, or organised interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to the democratic process to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim to veto the actions of democratically elected decision makers (Linz, 1990, p.158). Consolidation of democracy requires the expansion of citizen's access to governance, development of democratic culture, broadening of political parties for leadership recruitment and training, functioning of active civil society groups, independence of the judiciary, respect for individual rights, and strengthening of the electoral system (Valenzuela, 1990; Schedler, 1998). Unarguably, the existence of vibrant political parties is a *sine-qua-non* for democratic consolidation in any democratic regime worldwide. Parties are fundamental political institution in the actualisation of democratic ethos and principles. In Crotty’s

(1993) view, “ democratic government is unlikely and may not be possible in the absence of competitive political parties” (p.665). Randall & Svasand (2001) identified the functions political parties perform in contributing to democratic consolidation include representation, conflict resolution, making government accountable, institutionalising democracy, and regime legitimacy. Parties equally contribute to regime and political stability or instability.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study is anchored on elite theory and realistic group conflict theory (RGCT). Elite theory traceable to Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), and Robert Michels (1876-1936), has been adopted in extant literature to justify the influence of minority power on the majority in any nation, society or organisation, which invariably lead to conflict and eventually bring about crisis. The central tenets of elite theory is that political power is concentrated in the hands of a minority group which, according to Mosca (1939) cited in Ham & Hill (1985), “ performs all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that power brings...” (p.29). The elite theorists believe that the minority groups who are political class/elite often try to out-organise and outwit large majorities in the society. In other words, a particular set of people directs the affairs of the society and their children possibly take over from them and it continues in that circle (Azeez & Adenuga, 2015). The scholars further held that elites alternate in power either peacefully or in violent competition, which usually bring about factions, chaos, clashes and crises and sometimes violence between these elite and non-elite within political parties. In line with these positions, the character of the Nigerian political elite is like power should forever be concentrated in their hands alone and when such power is being competed or questioned by another person (elite or non-elite), crisis erupts. By implication, Nigerian political parties had exhibited practices where party leaders/patrons often settle for selection of candidates rather than election, imposition rather than qualification, personal interest rather than national interest, based on their common background and objectives (Weber, 1948; Diamond, 2002; Ani Kifordu, 2011). Thus, political/party leaders run the affairs of political parties mostly on their personal aggrandizement without recourse to the wishes and aspirations of other party members. Little wonder the intra-party opposition by members who feel that the only way to change the status quo is to resist the actions of such leaders thereby overheating the polity. Apparently, the inability of party leaders and/or executives (elite) to manage the disagreement or diverse interests within parties usually results in intra-party crisis.

The realistic group conflict theory is another theory relevant to this discourse. The RGCT was officially named by Donald Campbell (1965), but has been articulated by others since the middle of the 20th century, and reviewed by scholars such as Jackson (1993), Sidanius & Pratto (1999), Brief, Umphress, Dietz, Butz, Burrows & Schoelten (2005), and Baumeister & Vohs (2007). The theory offers an explanation for the feelings of prejudice and discrimination towards the out-group that accompany the inter-group hostility. Inter-group hostility arises as a result of conflicting goals and competition over limited resources, money, military protection, social status or political power (Jackson, 1993). As observed by LeVine & Campbell (1972), the group members are often driven by their desire to possess and maintain control over valued resources. Therefore, the disadvantaged group will compete to gain resources and status, whereas the advantaged group will act against any threat against their hegemonic domination. The realistic conflict theory is used to explain conflict, negative prejudices, and discrimination that occur between groups of people who are in competition for same goals and resources (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The theory further argues that the competition is aggravated when feelings of resentment set in as a result of “ zero-sums game” syndrome (Jackson, 1993; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). The relevance of this theory to the current study lies on the premise that in every political organisation, such as political party, there is bound to be clash of interests due to competition for same goal. As a group within political party acquire the desired political power, party structure and resources, other groups equally strives to obtain same or related benefits, and since the winning group often seeks to assume winner-takes-all pattern, the struggle and competition towards achieving the same goals and objectives then becomes tensed, acrimonious and bitter, hence crisis is inevitable. It is therefore necessary that the stakeholders put in place punitive measures to curtail unnecessary internal crises within political parties in order to prevent democratic retrogression or collapse.

**Leadership (Political Elite), Party Politics and Intra-Party Crisis in Nigeria**

Party politics in Nigeria since the colonial period have always revolve around set of political elites who form political party, leave one political party to form another or move from one party to join another, as a result of disagreements or squabbles within their old party. No wonder, these parties are particularly possessed by similar character, troubles, constitutions or closely-related documents in intents, purposes and contents. It is widely acknowledged that the history of party politics in Nigeria is synonymous with crises, (Omitola, 2003), which have undermined the ability of political parties as the instrument and platform for national integration, peace-building and democratic consolidation. This section, however, tries to establish the nexus between party leadership and the struggle for party resources, machinery and control that often results in intra-party crisis. The first political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which was formed in 1923 ceased to exist in 1938 due to the inability of party leaders to successfully manage their differences. The party was wrecked by “personal jealousies and quarrels over the spoils of office” (Webster cited in Nnadozie, 2005, p.114). Ibrahim & Abubakar (2015) submitted that “lack of openness and the autocratic approach of the party caused serious political rift and the eventual formation of the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) in 1934 which later metamorphosised to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936” (p.117). The NYM (1934-1951) was also riddled with intra-party feud mainly as a result of “ethnic chauvinism, personality clash and ideological differences” as experienced in 1941 tagged “Ikoli-Akinsanya crisis” which led to its demise. Nigeria’s political parties in the 1950s, such as the National Council of Nigerians and Cameroons (NCNC), the Action Group (AG) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), and other minor ones, such as the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and the United National Independence Party (UNIP), were all enmeshed in all sorts of intra-party crises. These regional-based parties faced intra-party crisis of varying degrees based on leadership factor that polarised and factionalised them, leading to some aggrieved members taking solace in other parties (Dudley, 1973).

Political parties of the independence and post-independence periods equally operated on strained intra-party politics. In the First Republic (1963-1966), specifically, the AG experienced colossal crises as a result of struggle for the control of party leadership and structures thereby leading to a clash between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Samuel Akintola, the party leader and deputy, respectively, captioned “1962 AG Crisis”. This led to serious crises in the then Western Region, declaration of state of emergency and also defection of the former to United Progressives Party (UPP) (the party he personally formed in 1963), and later the NNDP. Strained party relation at the national level surfaced in the 1965 Western Regional Election which eventually brought about “Wild Wild West” and subsequent military intervention on January 15, 1966. Political parties in the Nigeria’s Second Republic (1979-1983) were no doubt recreation of the First Republic’s political parties except the Great Nigeria People’s Party (GNPP). Hence, these parties were characterised by intra-party crises of different nature as a result of the struggle to control party resources by party leaders. For instance, crises within the Nigerian People’s Party (NPP) led to defection of Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri (NPP leader) to form GNPP. In fact, almost all political parties during this period experienced one crisis or the other as well as inter-party crisis and by extension exchange of party men. The resultant effects were rioting, looting, arson and crises and later military intervention in December 1983 (Tyoden, 2002).

Evidences abounding that the two political parties – Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) – of the aborted-Third Republic (1991-1993) were also characterised by monumental intra-party crises. The SDP was affected by struggle for control of the party by certain political groups and powerful politicians. For instance, the activities of the People’s Solidarity Forum (PSF) and People’s Front (PF) almost slipped the party apart. The NRC also became divided into factions with different groups, such as Republican Action Committee (RAC), NRC Consultative Forum, and Republican Solidarity ably led by party leaders in their quest to control party structures at the national and states of the Federation (Tyoden, 2002). One would have expected that party activities in the current Fourth Republic (1999-2016) would be more cordial, but the reverse is the case. As rightly contended by Aniche (2015), Nigerian political parties generally in the present democratic experience have been hampered by crises of different nature which have undermined and are still undermining their political leadership recruitment function among others. Since 1999, major political parties such as PDP,

Alliance for Democracy (AD), APGA, ANPP, Labour Party (LP), CPC and APC have recorded series of intra-party feuds promoted by party leadership. For instance, within the AD, there were serious crises between the party leadership such as Bola Ige-Olu Falae and later Mojisola Akinfenwa-Bisi Akande at the national level, while at the state level there were rift between governors and their deputies such as Bola Tinubu-Kofoworola Akerele (Lagos State), and Bisi Akande-Iyiola Omisore (Osun state), among others. The ANPP (1999-2013) also suffered unresolved crises since its formation as a result of disagreements between the factional leaders who were in control of the party.

The PDP between 1998 and 2016 was embroiled in unending crises. That the PDP since its formation often overheat the polity with their internal strife is like stating the obvious. The party has been associated and ridden by internal wrangling, squabble, divisions, schisms and crises of party leadership at both the national and state level. With particular references to the crisis in Anambra, Kwara, Yobe, River, Enugu, Ogun, Delta, Ondo, Ekiti and Oyo states, are all induced by the attitude of national party leadership to influence the machinery, activities and decisions of the party at state level. It thus needs to be emphasised that the defection of some PDP governors among other top party men, including parliamentarians to APC in 2013, was as a result of the inability of party leadership at different level to manage different self-afflicted antagonisms, disagreements and factions. Party leadership crisis has been the prominent feature of PDP since inception. PDP between May 1999 and 2015 has changed its national chairman more than ten times. The party has once been led by Solomon Lar (1998-1999), Barnabas Gemade (1999-2001), Audu Ogbe (2001-2005), Ahmadu Ali (2005-2008), Vincent Ogbulafor (2008-2010), Okwesilieze Nwodo (2010), Haliru Muhammed Bello (2010), Kawu Baraje (2011-2012), Bamanga Mahmud Tukur (2012-2014), and then Adamu Mu'azu (2014-2015). The party equally experienced serious infighting over party national chairman's position between the Sheriff and Makarfi's factions. Eze (2016) stressed that PDP was enmeshed in an endless leadership tussle as a result of unabated supremacy battle between the two factions led by Senators Ali Modu Sheriff and Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi which severely dealt a fatal blow on the once acclaimed biggest ruling party in Africa. This led to various conflicting court judgments for and or against the two personalities. It is not yet *uhuru* for the party until its house is put in order since "a house divided by it cannot stand".

The APC, which had a smooth berth in 2013 when major opposition parties (such as ACN, ANPP, CPC and a faction of APGA) agreed to dissolve and form the party, had also reportedly been battling with multiple disagreements which initially led to defection of party foundation members, such as Ibrahim Shekarau, Attahiru Bafarawa, Tom Ikimi and Ali Modu Sheriff, among others, to the PDP; imbroglio over the Senate President and Speaker House of Representatives seats of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly; sack of Deputy National Publicity Secretary, Timi Frank; and suspension of Honourable Abdulmumin Jibrin, over his allegation on budget padding of 2016 Appropriation Bill. Also, the party at the state level is not spared as cases of infighting abounds in many states of the federation, such include Kogi, Kaduna, Anambra, Bayelsa, Zamfara, Imo, Lagos, Kano, Ogun, Ondo and Osun states.

### **Factors inducing Internal Crisis in Nigeria's Political Parties**

Various reasons have been identified in extant literature as inducing factors for intra-party crises within political parties in Nigeria. Intra-party crisis in Nigerian parties has been attributed to factors, such as weak structure of political parties, selfish interests of the party stalwarts, poor selection of candidates, clash of socio-economic interests, personality difference, ideological incompatibility, poor observance of internal democracy, ethnic politics, Hobbessian character of politics, zero-sum game, winner-takes-all syndrome, centralised authority and influence of money politics, have all been identified as the bane of intra-party crisis in Nigeria (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994; Ntalaja, 2000; Shale & Matlosa, 2008; Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011; Aleyomi, 2013; Momodu & Matudi, 2013; Okoli & Ali, 2014; Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). In all of these, the common and recurring factors that breed others are poor party institutionalisation, dearth of party internal democracy, lack of feasible party ideology and high-handedness of party executives.

Party institutionalisation, the process by which party competition is regular and organised, having stable root, while citizens and major political actors accept that parties and elections are means for determining who governs through the dimensions of adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence

(Huntington, 1968; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995) is recognised as an important factor for democratic stability, sustainability and consolidation. Ogundiya (2011a) contended that Nigeria represents an “inchoate (uninstitutionalised/ fragmented) party system,” where “party organisation are generally weak, electoral volatility is high, party roots in society are weak and individual personalities dominate parties, and campaigns and citizens do not have strong party attachment” (Kuenzi & Lambright, 2001, p.441). Political parties in Nigeria are being occupied and controlled by people, who Ogundiya (2011a), referred to as populist demagogic leaders, opportunistic money-bags and unrepentant godfathers, and citizens who cast their votes on the basis of parties, which explains competitions within parties characterised by irregularities and violent squabbles. Current political parties are conglomeration of self-seeking elites whose main interest is to gain access to state resources for personal aggrandisement, with reckless disregard for electoral laws, party statutes and intra-party democracy, hence corruption, imposition of candidates, oppression and intimidation of party members leading to crises and unstable polity become the order of the day (Ogundiya, 2011a).

The general expectation is that when a country embraces democracy, its political parties would be democratic both externally and internally in their organisation, practices and behaviours (Mbah, 2011), but the contrary is the case in Nigeria. Since 1999, when the country re-affirmed its decision to join other comity of democratic nations, its political parties have been faced with the problem of non-democratic practices. In view of this, Omeje (2010) was provoked to have submitted that intra-party democracy has consistently eluded Nigeria’s democracy because political parties at all levels have always been hijacked by powerful individuals who impose loyalists or sycophants as candidates for election. The crises pervading major political parties since 1999 – PDP, APGA, SDP, LP and APC – resulted from imposition of candidates on party members for elections by political godfathers or party patrons. As a result, it would be difficult for parties to produce consensus candidates accepted by other party members hence the end result are factions, clashes, crises and defections. No wonder, post-election electoral cases are enormous in various tribunals opposing pre-election activities of many political parties mainly in the process of producing candidates of their choice while denying other candidates who are equally qualified for the same position the opportunity to enjoy their political rights. Scholars believe that the flagrant abuse of internal democracy was responsible for the dismal outing of the PDP in the 2015 general election, while the APC flagrantly went against party internal democracy and rewarded the defected members and their supporters from the PDP, the automatic ticket, to contest or re-contest against wishes of other loyal members. In many states, members of the PDP were barred from contesting in elections to appease some people (Idris & Sule, 2015).

Political parties in Nigeria since independence till date are suffering from distinctive ideological propensity. It is observed that all the major registered political parties could only be identified by their acronyms and not by ideology, as well as run like clientelistic ventures, devoid of political ideologies which make them to be mere platforms for actualising personal interests of the few (Ogundiya, 2011a; Aleyomi, 2014; Olanrewaju, 2015). Lack of party ideology could be attributed to predisposing internal squabbles, wrangling, factions and crises within Nigerian parties (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). In these parties, there exists insufficient manifestoes, poor constitutions, lack of sense of direction, unprincipled defections and more importantly, party disintegration. Poverty of ideology coupled with its attendant crisis and contradictions have been of dramatic effect not only on these parties, but also on the entire project of national rebirth and integration, sustainable democracy and development (Olanrewaju, 2015). There is no doubting the fact that undemocratic and unprincipled leadership at the party level is a consequence of poor intra-party democracy and ideology in the country’s political parties thus bringing about internal coercion rather than cohesion. Crises at the party level are often attributed to autocratic tendencies of party leaders/executives. Since there is no checks and balances, party executives often abuse the offices they occupy to achieve their personal agenda. Idris & Sule (2015) succinctly capture the above circumstance after scrutinising party activities during the 2015 General Elections, that leaders of parties exert their own influence in deciding who eventually picks the party’s flags in any contest. Such undue pressure and influence from the parties’ leaders on aspirants, who meet the requirements laid down for a particular position, lead to internal wrangling and disagreement, especially when a level playing field is lost in the process that produces the candidates.

Today, the most influential and authoritative position in Nigerian politics is that of party chairmen due to their overbearing influence on party and government decisions. They solely and dictatorially control party structures from national to the state level without due recourse to internal democracy, party guidelines or electoral laws. The undemocratic attitudes were demonstrated by the PDP leadership between 2011 and 2014 when the then National Chairman, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur was alleged running the party as his private enterprise in a bid to take over party structures ahead of 2015 (*Vanguard*, September 6, 2013). It is argued that crises within PDP towards 2015 elections were precipitated by increasing repression, restriction of freedom of association, arbitrary suspension of members, unlawful dissolutions of party executives at the state level and other violation of democratic principles by the Bamanga Tukur-led party leadership (Okohue, 2013), which led to the defection/cross-carpeting of five state governors, party stalwarts and serving parliamentarians as well as their supporters to the APC in November 2013 (*BBC News*, November 26, 2013). Political leaders' undue interference at the executive and legislative arms in internal affairs of the parties at both the national and state levels also contributed to high-handedness of party leadership, with implications for party stability and democratic consolidation.

### **Party Leadership and Intra-Party Crises in Southwest Nigeria: An Appraisal**

Party crisis of both intra and inter remains the common feature of Nigerian politics, the Southwest zone is not an exemption. Southwest region consists of six states, including Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. Virtually, all political parties in this region had experienced intra-party crisis, faction and division. One of the major political parties, PDP, has been grappling with crises of different nature for over a decade. PDP was factionalised across states in the region. Most of these crises that erupted in 2006 as a result of the botched Third-term Agenda of the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo, almost tore the party apart. During the period, the PDP was divided along two powerful blocs – those in support of the plan (third term) and those against. Hence, state governors or leaders against the tenure elongation had then president to contend with. Many of them faced persecution while governors of some states, such as Ekiti, Anambra and Oyo, among others, were threatened and subsequently faced impeachment saga. This further led to controversy over the choice of presidential candidate nominated by Obasanjo for the 2007 Presidential Election. However, the climax of current crises which started in 2010 towards the 2011 Presidential Election came to fore in Southwest region in 2012 when court nullified the Zonal Congress embarked upon by the chieftains from six states – Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun – held in Osogbo, Osun State capital, due to exclusion of Kashamu group, and ordered that a new congress be held. The resultant effect was the dissolution of the Southwest Zonal Executives by Tukur-led National Executive Committee (NEC) without the consent of the zonal PDP leaders (*The Nation*, May 21, 2014). For almost two years, the region had no zonal leaders until October 11, 2014, when a new congress was held.

The appointment and imposition of Senator Buruji Kashamu as the Chairman, Zonal Contact and Mobilisation Committee in 2014 by the then PDP National Chairman, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, which was not pleased with majority of the party stalwarts and leaders in these states brought about another dimension to PDP crises in Southwest region. Analysts believe that this position was to spite the former President Olusegun Obasanjo and reduce his political influence in the zone (Salaudeen, 2016), thus leading to series of intra-party crises. The discontent with party activities during this period and loss of control over party affairs and decisions, led to withdrawal of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo from party politics. This is encapsulated in the letter written to Bamanga Tukur dated January 7, 2014, where Obasanjo claimed that,

*Buruji Kashamu has been so extolled in PDP in South-West geo-political zone which I personally find unsavoury. Politics played by any national political party must have morality, decency, discipline, principles and leadership examples as cardinal practices of the party.... Since I stick in my practice of party politics to the hallowed and cherished principles enunciated above, I take this opportunity to let you know that while I continue to remain a card-carrying member of PDP, I cannot and I will not subscribe to a wanted habitual criminal being installed as my zonal leader in the party; a criminal for whom extradition has been requested by the US government. In the meantime, I will consider withdrawing my activity with PDP at local, state, zonal and national levels until the anomalous and shameful situation is corrected (Adebowale, 2014, pp.6-7).*

Since then, efforts to resolve crises rocking the party at both the national and regional levels have not been successful given the division within ranks and file of the party leadership. Even the Integration Committee set up and headed by the then Senate President, Senator David Mark to bring warring factions together could not help the matter. The crisis rocking the Lagos PDP, since 2006, over power sharing formula among the three major factions, including Senator Musiliu Obanikoro' s Solidarity Group, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe' s Mandate Group and Olabode George' s Establishment Group in the party still lingers on and effort to resolving the crisis and reconciling the contending groups had since proved abortive, (Balogun, 2008). In the build-up to 2015 Governorship Election in Lagos State, there was bitter struggle accompanied by personality clash and egoistic crisis between Senator Musiliu Obanikoro and Chief Bode George over governorship ambition of the former. It should be pointed out that Obanikoro (the then Minister of State for Defence) resigned his appointment as Minister to contest the governorship election, instead Jimi Agbaje was elected as the party flag bearer for the election. Akinkuotu (2014) reported that the political atmosphere became tensed as the two contending candidates (Obanikoro and Agbaje) fired indirect shots at each other. Explaining the above scenario on the basis of inactive and corrupt party leaders, Mr. Femi Carrena, the Southwest PDP Organising Secretary remarked thus,

*They are elders who, rather than preach peace among party loyalists and spread unity, love and justice to all members and stakeholders, now chose to divide the party by inciting the electorate against an aspirant who equally has the moral and constitutional right to contest the governorship seat of Lagos... (Akinkuotu, 2014, p.714).*

He lamented further that,

*It is uncharitable and un-African for elders in the party to undemocratically foist a new and unpopular aspirant in the party on the members, and then blackmail a particular candidate. I strongly believe these elders are afraid of their shadows, at the detriment of other qualified members. If you claimed your candidate is the most favoured by party members and Lagosians, the only sincere thing you can do, especially as elders, is to create an enabling environment and a level playing field to set the stage for a free and fair primary and let the best candidate win (Akinkuotu, 2014, p.714).*

The attendant effect of these wrangling was the loss of election by Lagos PDP governorship candidate, Jimi Agbaje, in the April 2015 election, followed by the sack of PDP State Chairman, Mr. Tunji Shelle by 34 members of the State Working Committee (Akinrefon, 2015). Shelle was reportedly sacked by the committee for allegations among which include mismanagement of election campaign funds, manipulation of party primaries and unilaterally rendered the PDP structure inactive which ultimately led to the defeat of the PDP at the 2015 polls (Akinrefon, 2015). The PDP in the state is yet to heal from the wound of this crisis. The intra-party crisis experienced in PDP Oyo State dates back to 2005/2006 when things fell apart between loyalists of late Lamidi Adedibu and Senator Rashidi Ladoja (the then State governor) as a result of overbearing influence of Adedibu on Ladoja' s government. This brought about two factions in the party. The factionalisation of the party led to Ladoja' s illegal and controversial removal from office by 18 lawmakers loyal to Adedibu and Alao-Akala on January 12, 2006 with Alao-Akala (then deputy governor) becoming the governor and ruled for 11 months (Abimboye, 2010). Ladoja, during this period, found it difficult to accept Alao-Akala as party leader by virtue of his position as sitting governor (*Nigerian Tribune*, February 21, 2012). Ladoja later returned to the office but was denied the opportunity to renew his mandate, while his deputy, Alao-Akala, was allowed to contest and won in the 2007 Governorship Election. Since then, the party in the state has known no peace. Efforts made at reconciling warring factions in Oyo PDP proved abortive, with Ladoja eventually defected to join Accord Party (AP). The 2011 and 2015 general elections in Oyo State were conducted amidst a divided house in the PDP yet to be reconciled. The crisis also led to the exit of Alao Akala and Seyi Makinde to LP and SDP, respectively under the platforms they contested for the April 2015 Governorship Election. It also led to suspension of Oloye Jumoke Akinjide (former Minister of State for FCT), Chief Saka Balogun and three others, over alleged anti-party activities before and during the 2015 elections. Other allegation levelled against these party chieftains was that resources meant for PDP was diverted to support Accord Party candidate, Senator Rashidi Ladoja, in the April 2015 Governorship Election (Agboola, 2015). In a contrary opinion, it was reported that the internal crisis bedeviling the Oyo PDP was tainted with ethnic colouration (Falade, 2012). Since strong feeling of ethnic segregation has always been part of Oyo politics, this claim may be given consideration, but

the fact remain that the crisis was precipitated by the struggle for control of the party among party leaders in the state.

The PDP in Ogun State had equally been in unending crisis prior to the 2011 General Elections. It came into the vanguard in 2012 with the emergence and activities of two major factions led by Dipo Odujinrin and Adebayo Dayo, respectively, locked in a battle of supremacy with Bayo-led Executive Council claiming it was the duly and legally recognised executive committee and proclaimed other faction illegal (Baiyewu, 2012). To reconcile these conflicting interests, the State Harmonised Executive Committee led by Bashorun Dayo Soremi was constituted to bring back warring factions to one-fold, but there was no end in sight to the crisis. However, the crisis was blamed on the lackluster attitude of both the national and state party leaders. This was corroborated in the statement of the leader of one of the factions, Adebayo Dayo, that "clearly some of the leaders are the problems of the party. Although we recognise and regard them all, some of them are not sincere. But we wish to appeal to them that it is high time they put the interest of the party and its teeming followers in mind, bury their pride and work together in a lawful and democratic manner" (Baiyewu, 2012, p.2). Furthermore, the infighting between the Mandate Group led by Senator Buruji Kashamu and Jubril Martins-Kuye (JMK) factions preparatory to the 2015 General Elections cannot be forgotten in a hurry. There was struggle over Governorship and Ogun East Senatorial tickets. The Governorship slot was later ceded to Otunba Gbenga Daniel upon his return from LP for his godson, Chief Nasir Gboyeka Isiaka, while other was reserved for Senator Buruji Kashamu. The crisis on who is the party leader in the state still rages on. By 2016, the crisis rocking the PDP in Ogun State had worsened when the party was factionalised along two powerful party financiers, Otunba Gbenga Daniel and Senator Buruji Kashamu. The duo factions sanctioned one another for gross misconduct. Awoyinfa (2016) reported the suspension of Otunba Gbenga Daniel and other three members from PDP by Kashamu's faction. Prior to this period, it was reported that the faction loyal to Otunba Gbenga Daniel had suspended Senator Buruji Kashamu and six others on allegations of financial misappropriation, diversion of funds and anti-party activities (Ejike, 2016). The gross abuse of party politics by party patrons is tantamount to endangering political stability in the state.

The problem within the PDP in Ondo State started in the build up to 2007 election between then governor, Olusegun Agagu and State Chairman, Alli Olanusi. The governor sought for second term which was not pleased with other State Executives. The crisis was quickly attended to by then president, Olusegun Obasanjo and resolved (Adeyemo, 2006). Hence, the party lost the 2007 Governorship Election at the Election Tribunal to Olusegun Mimiko, a LP candidate. As of 2016, intra-party crisis in Ondo State PDP was precipitated on the return of Governor Olusegun Mimiko from the LP to the PDP in October 2014. The handing over of the party structure to Mimiko by the party national leadership, dissolution of party state executive and the setting up of a caretaker committee by National Working Committee (NWC) aggravated the bitter situation and led to acrimonious politics and subsequent mass defection of party chieftains and leaders to APC (*Independent*, October 27, 2014; *The Street Journal*, October 27, 2014). The Ondo PDP crisis got complicated in the build-up to the 2016 Ondo Gubernatorial Election, when Mimiko endorsed a candidate, Eyitayo Jegede from his Senatorial District and anointed him as his successor, which did not go down well with many party chieftains at both the state and national levels. It is argued that the imposition of candidature of Jegede led to resignation of Mr. Sola Ebisemi, the then State Commissioner for Environment and Mineral Resources (*Sahara Reporters*, July 19, 2016). Further investigation by *Sahara Reporters* reveal that party members were divided into zoning factions as regard this decision. The name of Eyitayo Jegede was later substituted for Jimoh Ibrahim, by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which resulted to another hullabaloo in Ondo politics with legal battles. Oladesu (2016) stated that PDP Ondo chapter, which was a strong platform and prided itself as the party to beat in any critical election period appeared falling apart without a unified purpose, consensus and common agenda. He argues further that the party in the state was suffering from a self-afflicted wound with ruptured confidence by the stack realities of the time. The troubled chapter was polarised by acrimony, strife and rancour. The protracted crisis has ravaged and destabilised the party in the state (Oladesu, 2016).

The crisis within PDP in Ekiti State started in 2006 when some party chieftains at the national level connived with members of the State House of Assembly to impeach then Governor, Ayodele Fayose, on the order of some powerful forces as a result of politics of acrimony and intrigues masterminded by the PDP chieftains who felt they lost out in Ekiti State (*Sahara Reporters*, October 16, 2006). He (Ayo Fayose) was subsequently removed from office. The crisis in Ekiti State PDP as of 2016 arose as a result of unilateral party politics and decisions being practiced and taken by then incumbent Governor Ayodele Fayose, thus making notable party men to keep a distance from the party, while some others and their supporters defected to APC (Salaudeen, 2014). The incessant crisis that plagued the Southwest PDP berthed at Osun State chapter of the party in 2008, when the erstwhile House of Representatives member, Hon. John Fashogbon, representing Ife Federal Constituency was locked in a political battle involving two camps – Ooni Palace camp and Omisore camp (*Osun Defender*, October 1, 2008). Abimboye (2010) claimed that the crisis in Osun PDP was against who succeed Olagunsoye Oyinlola in 2011 governorship election, with the governor in support of Iyiola Omisore. The festering crisis polarised the party into different factions. Towards the 2015 General Elections, the imposition of Senator Iyiola Omisore by the PDP national leadership as governorship flag bearer at the April 2015 Governorship Election stirred serious crisis within the party in the state (Salaudeen, 2016).

Analysts believe that the crisis being experienced at the PDP national leadership may have contributed to series of crises recorded at state level of the party. In their report, Abubakar & Idris (2016) observed that Senator Ali Modu Sheriff accused Southwest zone of fuelling PDP crisis. The scholars then argue that personalities, such as Ayodele Fayose, Olusegun Mimiko and Senator Buruji Kashamu, fighting for the soul of the party in the zone, negatively impacted on national leadership. Thus, the party remains in tatter and appears to be rudderless as there is no consensus on decisions taken in the party. The APC since 2013 in the Southwest zone was equally embroiled in intra-party crisis, especially in states, such as Ogun, Ondo and Osun, among others. There was noticeable crack on party leadership in the region which later became worrisome trend for party members and keen watchers. Shortly after the emergence of APC, Ogun State APC was polarised into two factions, as a result of rift between the former governor and APC leader, Chief Olusegun Osoba and incumbent governor, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, basically on the disagreement on distribution of elective offices after the 2011 General Elections. The Osoba camp also accused the incumbent governor of politics of marginalisation and seclusion as well as trying to hijack party machineries into its fold. Efforts to reconcile the two opposing groups proved abortive, hence the defection of Osoba and his supporters to Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 2014 (*National Mirror*, November 2, 2014). Peace was later brokered between the two personalities by APC national leadership, hence Osoba and his supporters returned to APC in 2016 (Odunsi, 2016).

It was also glaring that all was not well within Osun APC in the build-up to the April 2015 Governorship Election. The crisis which sprang up during the primary election in the state was later resolved by party's stakeholders. This was made known by the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Najeemdeen Folasayo Salam in his statement: "We are putting our house in order ahead of the elections so that we can record total victory again. All internal crises within Osun APC have been resolved and we are all on the same page now" (Oyegbade, 2015). The crisis in APC Ondo State erupted amidst controversies that trailed September 3 2016 primary election of APC in the state. It all started when Tinubu's anointed candidate, Segun Abraham believed to have won the primary election was substituted by Rotimi Akeredolu's name (Oyegun's anointed candidate). It was equally alleged that the election was full of fraud lacking credibility, transparency and fairness (*The Nation*, September 24, 2016), thus rejected by other aspirants, party leaders and members in the state and in diaspora. This is captured by Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the APC national leader, when he noted that,

*A conspiracy to steal the Ondo primary had been uncovered. Fortunately, the grand deception afoot had been unable to cover its tracks fast enough. Truth began to cry for justice...Contravening the NWC decision and in violation of all rules of fundamental decency, Oyegun decided to safeguard the fraud done in Ondo by perpetrating a greater fraud. Oyegun arrogated to himself the right to submit the name of Rotimi Akeredolu to INEC as the candidate of the party (Premium Times, September 26, 2016).*

The above remark further buttresses prior argument to justify that party crisis is oftentimes induced by unethical activities of party leaders. Another crisis loomed in the troubled APC in Ondo State was when some notable leaders of the party kicked against the choice of Agboola Ajayi as the running mate of the

party' s candidate, Rotimi Akeredolu. The dramatic effect of this incongruity within the party led to defection of Olusola Oke, one of the frontline aspirants in the primary election, and his supporters to AD, the platform he used to contest for the governorship election (Johnson, 2016). The speculations as to the rift between Tinubu and the APC National Chairman, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun; some ministers, including Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) (then Minister of Works, Power and Housing) and Kayode Fayemi (then Minister of Solid Minerals Development), and former governors, among other party stalwarts, in the Southwest zone, severally denied by the party, became glaringly to Nigerians during this political drama and subsequent Ondo gubernatorial election campaign, where Senator Bola Tinubu, his ardent followers and loyalists were wittingly absent (see *Punch Editorial*, November 22, 2016). Equally, the meeting held on January 14, 2017, in Ibadan showed that there were internal squabbles within the party in the region (*The Sun Editorial*, January 14, 2017). It therefore could be deduced from the foregoing that crises in the highlighted parties during the period under consideration resulted from struggle over who control party structure, finance and machinery at the state level, high-handedness of party leadership at both the national and state level, and most especially the interplay between party leadership, party structure and political offices. This is as a result of the fact that politics in Nigeria has become an end in itself. The chaos and crises rocking the PDP, as reported by Salaudeen (2016), was fuelled by stiff competition for control of the party structure, absence of strong crisis resolution mechanism, party indiscipline, the defeat of PDP at the federal level, voracious party leadership and most importantly non-adherence to party internal democracy. This situation no doubt is inimical to democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

#### **Intra-party Crisis and Threat to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria vis-à-vis Southwest Region**

As argued elsewhere in this study, intra-party crisis often overheats the polity which invariably hinders sustainable democracy and national development. For instance, crises in PDP between 2010 and 2015 overheated the polity that it almost truncated Nigeria' s democracy. The time and resources being wasted on the management and resolution of party crises could have been utilised and channeled towards implementing other relevant developmental initiatives and programmes thus bringing about dividends of democracy and good governance to the people. One of the prerequisites of electoral politics is effective political participation. Intra-party crises leading to political apathy deter qualified and active citizens from participating in political activities and other processes that would enhance the achievement of democratic consolidation. As such, membership of these political parties deteriorates while popular involvement declines on daily basis. For instance, looking at voters turn-out in 2011 and 2015 general elections, one will see a conspicuous difference in numbers and percentages of eligible voters and voter' s turnout despite increased voters' registration and population. Intra-party crisis leads to hysterical defection. The defections of five (5) PDP governors, including Rabiun Kwankwaso (Kano State), Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers State), Murtala Nyako (Adamawa State), Abdulfattah Ahmed (Kwara State) and Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto State) to APC on November 26, 2013, was hinged on festering crisis within the PDP. Thus, actions and decisions of politicians to switch parties always have a spill-over consequence on the timely consolidation of democracy. One important and incontrovertible fact is that, the overriding motive for defection by Nigerian politicians of contemporary era is to protect their self-aggrandised interests, thereby encouraging political instability that may in turn corrode the basis of democracy (Ogundiya, 2011b).

Mbah (2011) rightly argued that party defection has negative impact on consolidation of democracy, especially where legislators, governors, deputy governors, and other party members, defect to the ruling party. It is argued that this trend breeds weak new parties, as well as makes caricature of Nigeria' s democracy by undermining the validity of contrary views, and the principle of alternative democratic choice. For instance, many of the political parties that sprang up from PDP amidst crises were deregistered as a result of amorphous party guidelines, indistinguishable rules and unstructured activities (INEC, 2014). Political parties cannot achieve their democratic goals and objectives if politicians continually choose to pursue their own individual agenda which often lead to wrangling and poor party politics. The situation which undermines the ability of party leaders to maintain coherent policy platforms has resultant effect on party' s reputation with voters who may withdraw their support from a fractious and divided party (Miskin, 2002) which invariably affect the finance of the party. Intra-party crisis limits the capability of political party in discharging its primary roles of interest articulation

and aggregation, leadership recruitment, mobilisation, socialisation and to provide necessary input for political process, stability and democratic consolidation. Frequent crises, discords, and flagrant breach of party rules within parties often cause political and party instability. The intra-party feuds in Oyo State between Adedibu and Ladoja, Ogun State between Daniel and Obasanjo, and Anambra State between Ngige and Obi, among others, are cases in point. This kind of situations has tensed political competition and hindered socio-economic and political development to flourish. If such situation continues, democratic consolidation in Nigeria might be a mirage.

### Conclusions

The study has extensively examined the linkage between party leadership, intra-party crisis and the challenge of democratic consolidation in Nigeria focusing on party activities in the Southwest region from 2006 to 2017. It is established that political party as essential platform for political participation, representation, national unity and integration, as well as interest aggregation and articulation in the democratic governance, have engendered in practice crises of different nature which is capable of threatening the process of actualising democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Political parties at the national and state levels, including the Southwestern states, had exhibited intense intra-party crises since the return to democratic rule in 1999. The study concludes that strained intra-party relations experienced within the PDP and APC in the Southwest region during this period, occurred mainly due to poor, autocratic, self-centered and rapacious party leadership. Most of intra-party crises recorded rooted from poor handling of issues by party executives. A poorly managed party disagreement and factionalisation resulted in crisis among members of same political party. The situation could also be blamed on lack of viable party ideology, poor party institutionalisation, and imposition of candidates, as a result of non-adherence to party internal democracy, party indiscipline and ethnicisation of party politics. Therefore, for Nigeria's democracy to stand test of time and actualise the consolidation it deserves, intra-party crises often caused by by inept, weak and corrupt party leaders, must be considerably curbed. Therefore, surmounting the challenges posed by intra-party crises in Nigeria vis-à-vis Southwest region requires the need to question the deficient internal democracy in the Fourth Republican political parties. Thus, effective institutionalisation of parties and its viability through feasible party ideology and internal democracy is essentially required. Praxis of these germane ingredients no doubt requires urgent attention in order to save party politics from total crumbling. In addition, ineffective intra-party crisis management mechanism needs to be urgently looked into. More importantly, public scrutiny and assessment of party constitutions, manifestoes and party guidelines; developing effective intra-party conflict resolution mechanism, decision-making process and discipline; selection of candidates for elective positions devoid of prejudice, class or ethnic chauvinism and influence; financial transparency and accountability in the area of party funding; and curbing of excessive abuse of powers by party leaders, needs to be encouraged. This way, stability, sustainability and consolidation process of democracy in the country would be enhanced.

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