Toward Consolidating Democracy in Nigeria: Is All Progressive Congress A Credible Opposition Party?

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The leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) since the beginning of the Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, has been severally criticized for its failure to give focus to attempts to correct perceived structural deformities and to lay an institutional foundation for a just and equitable sharing of the political space by ethnic nationalities that comprised the federal polity. The country has, as a result of this, continuously and consistently degenerated to a level of being perceived as a 'failed or 'collapsed' state. Some scholars have even referred it to as a one-party state despite the avalanche of registered political parties in the state. It is therefore, against this backdrop that the paper examines the potency of the fused opposition party- 'The All Progressive Congress' (APC) that was formed essentially to challenge the ruling party- PDP. The paper questions the credibility of the APC in the context of having what it takes to consolidate democratic governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political Parties, Opposition Parties, Democracy, Governance

Introduction

A critical evaluation of parties since independence reveals that Nigerian parties are no more than legally sanctioned associations of individuals whose primary mission is the capture of state power for self-aggrandizement. They are associations of personalities that organize to get themselves and friends elected into state office for the sole purpose of engaging in primitive accumulation. The present corpus of political parties in the country lack an organic linkage with the mass of the Nigerian people and they are run largely in an undemocratic manner. Thus, for the new Nigerian democracy to have real meaning, parties that truly aggregate and articulate the interests of the citizens must emerge. (International IDEA, 2000:85).

Nigeria has come a long way. It is a nation born in hope and optimism given its vast reservoir of trained manpower, population and substantial revenue from both agricultural and mineral resources. Thus, the country was perceived at independence as an emergent model democracy destined to play vital roles for progress and development in Africa (Jega 2010). Unfortunately, the nation has lived in anxiety for most of its 53 year history as an independent and sovereign state. The reason for this disparaging and disgusting paradox lies in the inability of the country to produce a purposeful leadership that transcend our ethnic, regional and religious boundaries, and a ruling political party that is driven by the desire to promote social policies that will give meaning to human existence.

Prior to 1999, the military had ruled the country for decades which was largely characterized by arbitrary power, intimidation, subversion of the rule of
law and the abolition of virtually all institutions of popular participation. During this period, Nigerians had campaigned and protested for a return to democracy, believing that democracy would provide lasting solutions to the protracted military dictatorship. After a long arduous and laborious struggle by the combination of civilian forces, on May 29, 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo under the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was sworn in as Nigeria's first democratically elected president of the Fourth Republic. Though the great expectation was that the return of democracy in 1999 would herald much hope, the dream has remained a mere hallucination under the leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party.

The point is that Nigeria has continued to experience economic, political and social uncertainties as the ruling party has not shown any demonstrable evidence of addressing fundamental issues affecting the citizens. For instance, it is expected that PDP which has been steering the ship of the Nigerian state since 1999 should show unwavering commitment in addressing some of the national question which include: how to handle conflict flashpoints in a democratic manner, how to allocate resources more equitably, how to increase accountability and trust in government. As a matter of fact, Nigerians expect the PDP government to truly deliver on the "democracy dividend" which suggests, people's expectations that their lives will be better off under a democracy than they were before and that their immediate needs for basic infrastructure, reduction of poverty and security will be met (International IDEA, 2000: 1). It is appalling to note, that democracy which has been embraced by so many governments across the globe as a result of its multiple benefits particularly in the context of human resource development, is seriously abused and played down by the Nigeria's ruling party - PDP. The tragedy of this situation has led to the manifestation of collective cynicism by many Nigerians toward the concept of democracy: "Na democracy we go chop?" (Can democracy feed us, does it bake bread?). Cynicism, particularly when it becomes an all encompassing phenomenon in our society, drains us of the will to improve, diminishes our public spirit, saps our inventiveness and withers our souls.

As Shehu Shagari remarked in his presidential address to a joint session of the National Assembly on October 16, 1979: "It is pertinent to recall that our first efforts at democracy and self-government were abruptly arrested in the mid-60's largely as a result of the incongenial atmosphere engendered by the uncompromising stance adopted by the political parties of the First Republic. Thus, opportunities were lost for our people to interact and learn to accommodate different points of view for the betterment of the country...Since our ultimate objective is to provide for the welfare of all Nigerians, we must subjugate our political and other differences to the unrelenting pursuit of peace, unity and progress of our motherland" (cited in Ojiako, 1981).

Against this background, the paper argues that to stabilize democracy and the quality of democratic processes in Nigeria, it is imperative to evolve a credible opposition political parties that would institutionalize measures that will entrench and consolidate democratic principles and values. The paper also seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on strengthening the role of opposition parties in a democratic system, that is, to what extent and in which form opposition parties should take in order to make a robust contribution toward the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Conceptual Discourse: Democracy, Political Parties, Socio-Political Change
In every clime, power relations, political structures and social processes are bound to alter either in response to internal dynamics or external ones, or a combination of forces of centripetalism and centrifugalism. The condition or circumstance that elicits any of these forces gears toward change. As Scott pointed out,
'the truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers' (cited in Doug Reeler 2007). At a point in Nigerian political history, there was a change or transition from a military, dictatorial and undemocratic system of government to a civil, representative and democratic one. The question is, why did Nigeria opt for democratic system of government? The answer may be that Nigeria prefers a setting where the rule of law supplements the rule of the jungle, where the shared responsibility for freedom and justice is recognized and where the strong respects the rights of the weak (Rourke, 1996: 1-2). Democratic values encourage diversity, discourse, disagreement; it enables us to have an opinion, and gives us all the opportunity to instigate change through the ballot box. Democratic principles facilitate development. The goal of development is the improvement of human well-being and the quality of life. This includes, the eradication of poverty, the fulfillment of basic needs of all people, government applying active social and environmental policies, and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of democratic and widely participatory institutions (Jolly et al., 2005: 13).

Dahl (1989:221) holds that the basic requirements for democracy include: high level of civil liberties (freedom of expression), political pluralism (extensive competition by contestants, the freedom of association); and political participation that provides the choice for the electorate to select candidates in free and fair elections. To realize this, he opines that a minimum of eight political arrangements, practices or institutions have to be in place. These are, elected officials, free, fair and periodic elections, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, and institutions that ensure a horizontal division of powers to hold government accountable. The historical trend in the modern world has favoured democracy, a political system in which power is exercised by the people as a whole, though this has always been a subject of controversy.

However, as Higley and his colleagues observe, a nation’s politics is ‘tamed’ only when broad support for democratic procedures and institutions, as well as a shared acceptance of norms of accommodation and cooperation develops among political elites (Higley et al. 1996: 132-47). Buttressing this, Diamond (1999: 173) contends that the elites are relevant political actors in the democratic consolidation and unless elites accept in a regular and predictable manner the rules and limits of the constitutional system and the legitimacy of opposing actors who similarly commit themselves, democracy cannot work. Apparently, there cannot be healthy democracy in the modern world without viable and virile political parties and effective party systems. As Burnell (2004) points out, a healthy democratic system exists where the number of genuine parties is neither too small (a highly polarized system) nor too large (highly fragmented). It offers meaningful choices to the electorate.

Today, many international, multinational and bilateral organizations working in development do increasingly appreciate and recognize the import of political parties on the wider development agenda. These institutions are aware that in the pursuit and search for healthy democracies, political parties are potent forces. To be specific, political parties provide a link between government and people. They seek to educate, instruct and activate the electorate. This can be through the mass media and local organizations mainly to maintain contacts with the relatively politically inactive and lead them to the awareness and acceptance of various policies.

Similarly, parties present issues, set value goals for the society as well as offer some philosophical basis.
no matter how blurred and how divorced from the actual political behavior of the party that may be. The more coherent this philosophical base is, the more inclined people talk of ideological parties. The ideology may be critical for the party members to justify their commitment to the party. It also serves to differentiate the party from others and allows the party to attempt to organize public opinion in a given ideological direction (Ball, 1982: 79). Importantly, parties are the central actors in determining governmental policy outputs which is one of the key principles of the party government models. Thus, in a disciplined party systems, this function is performed by the transformation of political content from the parties manifesto and campaign promises.

Typically, not all political parties will be in the helm of affairs of the state at the same time. It is therefore, left for those parties in the minority or opposition to brace up and offer the public an alternative course to government. The opposition party is meant to present implementable political programmes or alternatives that can limit the ruling government and offer a change at the next election. This implies that democracy is not consolidated until people are aware of a choice between different parties. The choice is frequently manifested in party politics, not only on election days but whenever any piece of major legislation is discussed.

Amazingly, opposition political party appears to be problematic in African states particularly, when the African elite began to assume leadership responsibility after the era of colonial administration. African leaders are more interested and comfortable in adopting one-party system than promoting a multi-party and opposition party. They put up several arguments to justify the approach. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah adopted one-party system on the ground that the multi-party system was socially divisive. Similarly, Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire was averse to multi-party system on the ground that no opposition actually existed. Julius Nyerere also opted for a single-party system because he considered it the most appropriate way to build a democracy in Tanzania. Indeed, their common understanding was that since consensus, not competition, was the key to African politics, it therefore, followed, that a one-party model was the best method of bringing about consensus politics and consolidating democracy in the modern state( Thomson, 2000:102-103). Though the wave of democratic political change seems to have led to the identification of democracy in terms of multi-party politics in Africa, it has increasingly engendered the polarization of particularistic groupings, as parties crystallize, mostly on the basis of ethnic and regional interests rather than common ideology or political principles( Dreyton,1995; Osamba,2001:37).

Nwosu and Ofoegbu (1986: 187) assert that, in liberal democratic politics, the essence of election is to enable citizens or the electorate to compare two or more political parties in the context of their past records of public offices and public affairs at various levels of government and public service; their ideas, policies, programmes and projects; the confidence, trust and credibility which they excite in the citizens; the leadership which they officer to the people; and the assessment, by citizens, of the capabilities of competing leadership groups in fulfilling promises and commitments.

The essence of an opposition party in a democratic environment is to act as a catalyst. Its coherence and vigour is perceived as being central to the entire political and democratic process. It is, indeed, the ‘atera pars’ of government and power. As Dahl(1966) and Agbu(1998) argued, developing an understanding of the modern democratic process requires the examination of the opposition because the concept and practice of opposition has a wide range of usages and meanings. Opposition parties are not meant to heat up the polity or embark on campaign of calumny and acrimony, rather they are meant to provide an alternative for the electorate by means of logical, systematic and convincing ideas. They are expected
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to engage the ruling party in robust debate on issues that border on national interest. The absence of viable opposition denies the ruling party alternative policies. It offers the ruling government opportunities to operate without constructive criticism. According to Isakpa, if ruling politicians are failing the people, it is the responsibility of the opposition party to step in, in a credible, robust, clear and coherent manner, to provide alternative policy options on how to deal with the challenges that confront the state (cited in Lamidi and Bello, 2008).

In similar vein, Simbine argues that opposition parties are seen as partisan political institutions that are intentionally designed to temper the ruling party’s excesses while still pursuing both legislative and presidential offices. They are to embark on consistent and constructive criticisms of governmental policies (especially those ones that lack human force), to scrutinize carefully the manner in which these policies are administered and to keep the possibility of alternative legislative policies and administrative practices constantly in view of the electorate (cited in Lamidi and Bello, 2008).

Unfortunately, since the 14 years of the PDP in government, Nigeria has not been privileged to have vibrant opposition parties that are rooted in democratic ethos and internal democracy. PDP lacks internal democracy. As Nwodo (2010:49), the former national chairman of PDP bluntly asserted, ‘the part has handed over to godfathers who, with ‘reckless abandon’, impose candidates with questionable characters and no leadership qualities on the citizens. Such people elected under the platform of the party have consistently brought public odium on the party to the chagrin of party members and the nation at large’. In line with this view, Olisa Metuh, the PDP national publicity secretary submitted that internal democracy must succeed for PDP to grow. In his words, “I get scared sometimes when I think of the fact that if we don’t manage our party very well, someday we might be in no position” (Metuh, 2010:13). Even though most of the extant parties claim to have been founded on distinct and spelt out ideologies, none of them has been able to display or demonstrate this virtue in the manner they run the affairs of their parties. Ideology in this context expresses a manner or content of thinking characteristic of an individual or groups. It is the integrated assertions, theories, and aims that constitute a sociological programme.

To the extent that parties are conduits for democratic governance they cannot be well coordinated and organized in the absence of party structure. No party ideology can also function effectively if the party structure is not properly harnessed. Ideological framework of the party is an important factor in how the party relates to the rest of the political system and therefore have a significant bearing on the structure of the political party. Ball (1982: 84) argues that the structures of political parties relate very closely to the functions and the methods parties employ to realize their aim of capturing or retaining political power. Thus, parties that wish to broaden their electoral support and operate at a parliamentary level will need a different structure from their opponents.

Ball further identifies certain factors that determine party structure. These include: the role of the leadership and the method of selecting it; the degree of organizational centralization; the power of the leadership in relation to the rank and file; the extent of disciplinary powers; participation in decision making and policy initiation; the control of the party bureaucracy. It is the party structure that largely determine the party’s level of organization and modus operandi. It has to be democratic itself as well as have the machinery for recruiting members. The implication is that people do not just jump into a party and the following day they are ripe to contest in election. Party structure entails following certain processes and procedures to attain to any position in the party.
The Formation of All Progressive Congress

The All Progressive Congress (APC) was given birth to, in February, 2013. The party emerged from the alliance of four biggest opposition parties in Nigeria – the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). The party, after crossing so many hurdles, was duly registered as a political party by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Wednesday, 31 July, 2013. The registration ultimately marked the natural end and the withdrawal of the individual certificates of the applicant parties – ACN, CPC, ANPP and APGA, and the issuance of a single one (certificate) to the APC.

Interestingly, the registration of APC was a watershed since it was the first time since independence that political parties set aside their individual differences, selfish ambitions and agreed to merge in order to champion a common cause of national significance. According to Tom Ikimi, Chairman of the merger committee of the ACN:

At no time in our national life has radical change become more urgent. And to meet the challenge, we the following political parties, namely, ACN, ANPP, CPC and APGA have resolved to merge forthwith and become All Progressive Congress and offer to our beleaguered people a recipe for peace and prosperity. We resolve to form a political party committed to the principles of internal democracy, focused on serious issues of concern to our people, determined to bring corruption and insecurity to an end; determined to grow our economy and create jobs in their millions through education, housing, agriculture, industrial growth and stop the increasing mood of despair, and hopelessness among our people. The resolution of these issues, the restoration of hope, and the enthronement of true democratic values for peace, justice are those concerns which propel us. We believe that by these measures only shall we restore our dignity and position of pre-eminence in the comity of nations. This is our pledge (Akinlotan 2013).

Buttressing Ikimi’s view, Lai Mohammed, the interim publicity secretary of APC, noted thus:

Nigerians have an alternative to a ruling party that has taken the people for “a bad ride in the past 14 years”. The emergence of APC on the nation’s political landscape was a victory for Nigeria and democracy and that had to propel the country to the league of top democratic nations with two major political parties. The journey has been long and tortuous. All sorts of obstacles were thrown into our path by anti-democratic forces, but we were painstaking, determined and unrelenting in our quest for a formidable platform that will allow our country, Nigeria to achieve her full potential and form the league of respectable nations (The News, 2013: 49).

In the history of political parties in Nigeria, there have been several failed attempts by disparate parties to merge into two major parties. For instance, in the First Republic, two broad-based political alliances Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) merged to fight for election, but this later collapsed after the election was won.
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Salihu Mohammed Lukman, in his popular book, “2015: Manifesto of Nigerian opposition politics” traced the origin of the APC. According to him, the APC took roots in the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM). The Advance for Democracy (AD) was precursor of the CAN which was founded by a group of South-Western PDM members. The PDM was the same platform that gave birth to PDP and the then All Peoples Party (APP) which subsequently metamorphosed to ANPP from which the CPC broke off in 2010. Logically, it implies that the APC is the re-incarnation and reconstruction of the old alliances: old wine in the old bottle but re-labelled bottles. He further argues that the presence of APC today is a reflection of what happened in 1999 when the AD the precursor of CAN and the APP came together in a loose alliance to produce a joint presidential ticket for the 1999 Presidential election that gave birth to Olusegun Obasanjo. The difference this time is that the merger that produce the APC is a permanent one, not a temporary alliance (cited in, Ogunlesi, 2013).

However, whenever an organization or an association is formed, the tendency is to know who the founder(s) is/are. For instance, it is believed that the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) was founded by the Late Shehu Yar-Adua, and that the PDP was the brain child of the 34 eminent politicians that petitioned against the self-succession project of Sani Abacha. This group, popularly known as ‘G.34’ was headed by Dr. Alex Ekwueme, the vice-president of Nigeria in the second republic. As Ibrahim Babangida once noted: the prevailing attitude appeared to be that every Nigerian wanted to be a “founder” and no one wished to be a “joiner”. Everyone wanted to be a leader of a party, or a close associate of the leader. Every founder tend to corner the political association to himself and his small circle of friends and associates and proceeds to prescribe closed shop ‘admission rules’ that are guaranteed to subordinate joiner, a gangster clique strategy most of our people our averse to. In a true political association, there are no founders, all are joiners. Political parties should not be political foundations belonging to anyone (Babangida, 1989).

In the case of the APC, the characters that nursed and initiated the ‘merger project’ are the political juggernauts from the erstwhile major political parties. They include, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Muhammadu Buhari, Ogbonnaya Onu, Ibrahim Shekarau, Bisi Akande, Audu Ogbe, Tony Momoh, George Akume, Audu Abubakar, Aminu Bello-Masari, Rochas Okorocha. Others include some political jobbers who left their parties particularly the PDP in search of political relevance.

Beyond this, it is imperative to critically analyse the party structure cum ideological orientation of the APC. In line with the INEC registration requirements, all registered political parties in Nigeria should have a minimum of 24 officials. There must also be the Executive Committee in not less than two-thirds of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This suggests that each of the registered political parties must have a National Chairman, deputy National Chairman, six National Vice-Chairmen (one from each geopolitical zone), National Secretary, National Publicity Secretary, Board of Trustees, National Executive Committee, National Working Committees, State Congress and some others. In constituting the temporary leadership management of the party which is meant to last only for six months, the positions were evenly distributed among the parties that merged. Each of them has 9 representatives while the remaining 8 slot were given to APGA.

The guiding philosophy of the APC connotes, belief in and the fear of God, upholding the rule of law, preserving national unity, pursuit of just and egalitarian society, building of strong institutions, commitment to social justice and economic progress, promoting representative, functional participatory democracy. Indeed, APC projects social democratic ideology which
expresses a government that employs democratic process but has several characteristics that resemble those of a socialist society. Social democrats typically are committed to promoting the common good. They play active role in regulating certain political and economic conditions and emphasise the need for the protection of minority groups and the entrenchment of social policies that will benefit the masses. This, in another way, is ‘progressive politics’ which the party tends to project.

Progressive politics suggests the principles and practices of those advocating progress, change or reform particularly in political matters; the political orientation of those who favour progress towards better conditions in government and society. The party equally tends to critically address what it calls 8 point manifesto, and these are: tackling problems of corruption; food security; poor power supply; transport network, education, devolution of power, economic growth and health care.

The Challenges of All Progressive Congress
Without doubt, the emergence of the APC is a welcomed development as many Nigerians are increasingly becoming disillusioned, and disappointed at the manner in which the PDP administration runs the affairs of the state. When the PDP came on board in 1999, it promised to transform the Nigerian political landscape by introducing a wide spectrum of reforms and programmes. Its manifesto include, to build a qualitative, better society based on principles of democracy, to promote human rights and social justice under the rule of law, to restructure the society in the spirit of true federalism, to promote political tolerance, geopolitical balancing and power sharing in line with the principle of federal character.

The successive leadership of the PDP have been living in denial of the monumental problems confronting the state. For instance, during the Obasanjo administration (1999-2007), a plethora reforms and policies were initiated, and some institutions particularly ones meant to mitigate the growing rate of corruption in the country (EFCC and ICPC) were established. But the same administration muzzled and rendered them impotent and thereby extolling corruption.

The prevailing human rights abuse, political assassination, kidnapping and abduction arguably took roots in Obasanjo government and reached its crescendo in Goodluck Jonathan administration. On January 1, 2012, the Jonathan government announced the removal of subsidy on petroleum products at the chagrin of Nigerians. It argued that the removal would lead to increase in government revenues which would in turn raise the pool of funds available to the various tiers of government to fund crucial infrastructure programme that would impact positively on the lives of the common people. Till date, the citizens are yet to reap the fruits of the removal of the subsidy. Thus, today, Nigerian state appears to have gone back to the Hobbesian state of nature where life was seen to be nasty, brutish and short, and where man, using Rousseau’s expression, was free and everywhere in chains. The spate of violence, kidnappings, bomb attacks, and the general spread of societal conflicts of whatever origin is a source of concern to the average Nigerian.

It is against this backdrop that the emergence of a supposedly ‘credible’ opposition party is perceived to be a child of circumstance and timely too. Thomas Kuhn in his famous work, ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolutions’ holds that people are unlikely to jettison an unworkable paradigm despite many indications that the paradigm is not functioning properly until a better one can be presented( Kuhn, 1962) Comparatively, there are little or no discrepancies between the party structures and political ideologies of both the APC and PDP. The both parties claim to progressives, and social democrats. The same applies to their manifesto and guiding philosophy or principle. In other words, their ideological orientations tilt toward the left wing which indicates radical and revolutionary change, reform and promotion of policies that show promise. From all
indications, the PDP has failed not because it could not evolve programmes and generate policies that transform the society, but largely due to the fact that it could not translate its wonderful formulations, principles, policies into experimental consequences. It also failed to adopt a pragmatic approach in realizing those set goals.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the APC was hurriedly cobbled together by its leadership in an attempt to ensure that the party was duly registered preparatory to the next election in 2015. Hence, the party should anticipate and appreciate the initial struggles and confusions that usually set in at the beginning. For instance, while the party functions as a unified organization, it should also be in a position to tolerate certain levels of intra-party dissidence and encourage freedom of opinion. These dynamics and social realities of human life are meant to stabilize the party, give it a hard inner core, and prepare it to face serious challenges that are sure to come by. Lukman (n.d) holds that a crucial challenge before an opposition party such as the APC is the need to properly restructure internal party organization with the aim of developing service framework around which citizens’ mobilization can take place.

Restructuring internal organization would require among other things clear definition and delineation of responsibilities. Notwithstanding its societal roots, an opposition party like the APC, should be relatively independence of individuals within and societal groups outside the party. This implies separating political leadership from the administrative. It also requires outlining responsibilities of all party functionaries in line with modern organizational standards. That is, there is need to professionalize the party’s modus operandi in order to meet the expectations of Nigerian. It is instructive to note at this juncture that one of the factors that militated against the progress of the PDP is the abysmal lack of internal democracy or party organization. Democracy is all about inclusiveness. If there is no provision for people’s inclusion in the party, there may be little participation. The present in-fight raging in the PDP was born out of poverty of internal democracy. The attendant effects include, war of attrition, party balkanization and politics of acrimony (Ojukwu and Olaifa, 2011). Stuart Mills asserts that, the worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of individual’s composing it, a state which dwarfs its men in order that they may be more docile in its hands, even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great things can be accomplished (cited in Ayoade 1997: 17).

Since the PDP has been faulted for generating policies that lack human face, and for reinforcing and exacerbating ethno-structural imbalance, the leadership of the opposition party is expected to work toward expanding the frontiers of the party membership to ensure that Nigerians of all shades and persuasions gain access to the party. At the same time, the party should define its vision and mission in a way that will appeal and attract various ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigerian state. But it is not to say, that, the party should not be conscious of the ‘party prostitutes’ whose major objective is to belong to a party that will give them enough rooms to feather their nest, gain political power and amass wealth at the expense of the electorate. As Simbine (2005) and Aina (2002) remarked: in the face of ideological emptiness, most of the parties seek for cheap publicity and come up with the ambitions to satisfy those not accommodated in the older ones. Due to unclear cut ideology, politicians behave like political bats changing party affiliations. It is perhaps, in the light of this, that, the National Publicity Secretary of PDP asserted thus:

*The Opposition is very insignificant in Nigerian politics. We do not have any fears because they cannot influence or change anything. How can we be discussing the opposition? These are mushroom*
parties. They are parties that only fight to exist, to satisfy the yearnings of certain individuals. They feast on religious politics. When a party that is filled with fanatics, that believes in religion as a tool for governance comes together with a party that serves the interest of one man, can Nigerians go with them? (Metuh, 2013).

Again, a critical assessment of the composition of the APC reveals that some of its key actors and players were former chieftains of the PDP but were driven out of the party for some political reasons. For example, the likes of Audu Ogbeh who was once the National Chairman of the PDP, and Tom Ikimi who was one of the forces behind the nomination of Olusegun Obasanjo over Alex Ekwueme in 1998 primaries at Jos convention, are today members of the APC not by design or inclination but by default. The question, therefore, is if they did not perform when they were members of the PDP, how are we sure they will perform as members of the APC? In fact, in the process of attempting to evolve a credible and formidable opposition party in Nigeria, there is need to critically address some of these questions: who are the main players in the APC? Who and what do they represent? What is their programme and how do they attempt to mobilize support? What are the tactics and strategies for opposing the ruling party and how useful are these? What is their capacity for pushing for a paradigmatic shift in political terrain? Do they have any international linkages, and if so, how do these fit into their local campaigns?

Nigeria, since independence has missed out on one necessary action it needed to undertake. This action is forging a strong and unified nation out of the diverse ethnic groups. The negative impact of this development has been the failure to apply a nationalist orientation to policy, with sectionalist or personal interest usually taking priority. The APC can put things right considering the political potency of Muhammadu Buhari who commands a lot of respect in the North, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who is the most influential politician in the southwest and who led the erstwhile CAN that held sway in 5 out of the 6 states in the southwest, cum Chris Ngige and Rochas Okorocha covering the southeast particular Anambra and Imo states that are considered to be the hotbeds of political (wheel and deal) activities. Essentially, the party is expected to play down ethnic and religious bigotry in Nigerian politics given its wide coverage.

The All Progressive Congress (APC) claims to associate itself with the progressives, and social democrats. These two concepts to a large extent dovetail into welfarism. In other words, an astute progressive should also be seen as a welfarist. Welfarism in this context, is a social system where the state assumes primary responsibility for the individual and social welfare of its citizens. It is the complex of policies, attitudes and beliefs which stimulate the state to provide its citizens with minimum standards in education, housing, health, pensions, where individual means are inadequate (Azikiwe 1980: 76).

The whole issue of welfarism revolves around social policy and social security which is critical in any government. Social policy is concerned with the analysis of societies’ response to social need. It is focused on those aspects of the economy, society and policy that are necessary to human existence and the means by which they can be provided (Dean, 2006). The prevailing precarious state of the country indicates that the PDP government has no such policy and lacks the political will to bring it about. Hence, the opposition party is expected to develop a passionate interest in and enthusiasm for such a policy, which will be a good test of the party’s credibility and popularity.

Importantly, students of political economy have argued that there is no incentive for productive governance in Nigeria as all minerals (oil, gas, solid
minerals) have become the exclusive properties of the federal government. Thus, states become the basis of sharing the common pot (Soludo, 2012). The result is that the free money from the centre particularly ones derived from oil has undermined the incentive for states to expand the frontiers of their tax basis through wealth creation. As Momah posited, we need to restructure the country because the present state structure is not helping us. Of all the states, only Lagos is viable and self-sustaining, so the remaining 35 states are not self-sustaining and for how long should the central government continue to spoon-feed the states (cited in Ezigbo, 2013). How does the opposition party wish to create and sustain prosperity under the current multiplicity of unviable states?

Conclusion
The paper has attempted to cast a critical look at the Nigerian democracy particularly since the Fourth Republic in relation to the PDP government. It pointed out that the ruling political party has done little or nothing to consolidate Nigerian democracy and hence the need for opposition party like the APC to re-design and re-define the political map. The major objective of the APC is to restructure and reconstruct the Nigerian body politic. The understanding is that, a society can only prosper under conditions of good leadership as well as a good system that supports competition and wealth creation. The dysfunctional Nigerian system put together by the PDP and its perverse incentives that makes it almost impossible to make sustainable progress have received a lot of criticisms by both the national and international community.

Given that Nigerians have lost faith in the PDP government because of lack of vision in the management of nation’s political, economic, and social affairs, the critical questions are, whether the APC can be more nationalistic, more honest and less corrupt than the present ruling party, can it engender or evolve a policy framework that would help to minimize inequalities and provide the basic human needs of the majority of Nigerians, and restructure the economy in order to put the country on a more secure footing.

To move forward, the country needs a credible and formidable opposition party that will be able to inject a competitive system as well as review the content and meaning of its current political contour and configuration. The emergence of the All Progressive Congress is timely as the party will be made to fashion out ways of consolidating the nation’s nascent democracy. The challenge before the APC is to put its acts together particularly in the areas of internal organization, party programmes (providing unambiguous policy and value positions, and at the same time avoid extreme ideological positions), autonomy and coherence. The internal decisions should be transparent and based on the votes of official party bodies. The lack of these ingredients was what balkanized the ruling political party – PDP and subjected to public ridicule and cynicism.
References


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