

# The Defeat of PDP in 2015 General Elections: Causes and Implications for Party Politics in Nigeria

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## INTRODUCTION

Democracy is an ideal of governance that has been embraced by many societies and countries but the irony is that while “liberal democracy may be more functional for a society that has already achieved a high degree of social equality and consensus concerning certain basic values; but for societies that are highly polarized along lines of social, nationality/ethnicity or religion, democracy can be a formula for statement and stagnation”. And to the extent that “universalism and formality that characterizes law in liberal democracies does provide a level playing field on which people can form coalitions and ultimately make compromises” the ideal nonetheless, could pose some problems in the way the political calculus of majority rule evolves, especially for a multi-ethnic societies such as Nigeria [1].

In Nigeria, the last sixteen years starting from 1999 to 2015, the former ruling people’s Democratic Party had ruled and dominated the Nigeria political space like a colossus. It also controlled over two-thirds of the thirty six states of the federation, that the leadership of the party once boasted that the party could rule the country for over sixty years. But the whole nation and the then ruling party were stunned when the 2015 general elections results were released when it lost to the former opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC)

Before we discuss the causes of the failure of the ruling party, it may be pertinent to explain certain political processes which determine the political barometer and calculus of politics especially in developing countries with a multi-ethnic background. In Nigeria, a multi-ethnic society, like all other societies that share similar political background, outright majority is highly problematic. Like Kalu [1] stated in his discourse, majority rule has a way of making democracy undemocratic. The implication of the above is that the ethnic group or geographical zone with the larger majority would always be in a position to win in majority popular election if they do not allow their votes to be split between two or more competing parties. Accordingly, they could practically rule the country and impose their arbitrary will on it forever. The ethnic group that has the majority will be able to dominate the government especially the legislature on an almost permanent basis (National Assembly in Nigeria since independence). The minority will be forced on a regular base to compromise or build coalitions in which their own interest would become secondary. (e.g.s the South-West, East, South). This is where we are today in Nigeria. It will be recalled that ahead of 2015 general elections, there was this general apprehension, which many believed could mark the end of Nigeria. Some Nigerians planned to run out of the country while some predicted a civil war. Others believed that there would be political mayhem and other social vices of grave concern.

### THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

Research reveals that what actually led to the failure of PDP in the last election could be explained theoretically. Frustration-Aggression theory can be effectively used to explain what transpired during the last general election in Nigeria. The theory makes us believe that when a set of people are deprived and frustrated, they are bound to become aggressive and agitate for their right. They can employ any means within their disposal to achieve their objective. Such means could be voting out a ruling party use of violence or civil disobedience. The above theory appears apt in explaining what happened in Nigeria during the last election. The people who felt 'frustrated' and 'deprived', rebelled against the ruling party, PDP and thus led to the defeat of it the proponents of this theory include [2] among others. Elite theory can also be a useful postulation here in explicating the possible reasons for the failure of PDP. The main thrust of elite theory is that what becomes public policy is the elite interest. In other words, some powerful elites in Nigeria in collaboration with some foreign imperial elites had a different interest and therefore did not want the past government again. They did everything including manipulation of the people/masses, use of insurgency etc to scuttle the ambition of Mr. President. Elite theory is associated with Mosca Pareto, Mitchels etc. this brings us to the next section of the paper.

### REASONS FOR THE DEFEAT OF PDP IN THE LAST GENERAL ELECTIONS

Several factors could be attributed to the defeat of Peoples Democratic Party in the last general Election in April 2015. These factors or causes varied from one analyst to the other based on the person's background and political perception of the scenario that played out in the period under review. Some of the causes include:

**Poor Governance:** Professor Emeritus of State University, New York US, "Jonathan and his party lost the election because they were careless about public good". He said, "it is obvious that many people were worried about the absence of care or our common good". He went further to state that everyone was getting tired of the administration. To substantiate this position, after sixteen years of ruling this country there was inadequate essential social infrastructure, many people were getting agitated and worried about the welfare of the citizenry. The gap between the rulers and ruled was widening on daily basis. A lot of unfulfilled promises, high level of unemployment, kidnapping, armed robbery and other social vices, this resulted in disillusion and parochial political interest and Motivation.

**Corruption:** there was wide spread reckless financial transaction in the country without any corresponding reaction from the anti-graft agencies such as EFCC, and the government. According to Transparency international, the corruption perception index is a yearly assessment of public corruption in countries all over the world. Here the CPI scores relate to perception of the degree of corruption as seen by business people, risk analyst and the general public. See table below.

Year	Rank	No of Countries Survey	CPI Score
1999	98	99	1.6
2000	90	90	1.2
2001	90	91	1.0
2002	101	102	1.6
2003	132	133	1.4
2004	144	145	1.6
2005	152	158	1.9
2006	142	163	2.2
2007	147	179	2.2
2008	121	180	2.7
2009	130	180	2.5
2010	134	183	2.4
2011	143	183	2.4
2012	139	176	2.7
2013	144	177	2.5
2014	136	175	2.7

Source: Transparency International Report 2015

The above table explains the level of corruption in Nigeria from 1999 to 2014. Nigeria recorded the highest CPI in 2008, and 2014 as seen in the above. Nigerians were fed up with corruption as it was everywhere in high places.

**Poor Conduct of Primary Elections by the Ruling Party.** Primary elections in the then ruling party were characterized by ‘cash and carry’. Most nominations especially at the national level went to the highest bidder. This resulted in political confusion, disarticulation of the expectations of the people based on acclaimed democratic principle which are supposed to be determined by the people. Most of the heavy weights who lost in the primaries either left the party or worked against its success in the election. Impunity, lack of internal democracy, injustice and arbitrariness held sway. This nearly destroyed the party before the election proper. Hijack most of the key decisions of the ruling political party by few selfish individuals who claim to be financiers of the party led to the untimely ‘death’ of the party in the last election. Their interests were above national interest.

**Apparent weakness of the President:** Every great institution is the lengthened shadow of a single man. His character determines the character of the organization. Many believed that Mr. President was weak in tackling the issue of corruption and was not quick in taking and implementing decisions already taken. His apparent failure to ‘discipline his wife’ politically” affected him negatively. The weakness of the former President also led to the poor handling of the insurgency in the North East. The issue of kidnapping of over 200 girls from Chibok Community and killing of over 20,000 people was a big test the government failed. This practically pitched the whole north against the government. The apparent loss of momentum in rescuing the girls was a big minus for the former president. This also beclouded the people’s perception of all the social amenities which he had provided. These factors played a very vital role in his exist in power

**The failure of former president to honor an agreement with the North:** This factor also played a critical role in the ‘fall’ of the former President. It was apparently proved that he reached a compromise that he would do one tenure but he reneged on the agreement.

Recall the former President Obasanjo, reminded him severally on the need to honor the agreement, but he was dissuaded by his aides who believed that they would benefit from his continued Presidency. The north was agitating because they felt short changed after the tragic death of the former president Yar-dua. They felt that they should have the opportunity to rule the country after Obasanjos eight year rule.

**Defection of G.7 Governors and a United Opposition:** Loss of control of some of its key states in the north to APC due to its inability to reconcile and reach compromise with its members such as in Kano, Jigawa, Kwara, Rivers, Borno, Niger, Kastina etc also contributed greatly. This people formed a new PDP that went into alliance with the opposition, All Progress Congress and won overwhelmingly. The United Opposition where the new PDP members teamed up with ANPP, CPC, and ACN to fight the ruling party to a standstill led the ruling party to lose most of its strong bases and eventual loss in the election.

**Inadequate Presidential Campaign Machinery:** The process of electioneering campaign was characterized by castigation and name callings. It was not issue based and ended up in provoking a lot of highly placed people including former military presidents and some informed citizens. The hijack of the presidential campaign also by some people who were not core members of the national working committee of PDP also affected the result of the election. Members of the NWC of the party were dumped and selected people took over the process without minding their utterances which compromised their fortunes of the party. Again, formation of a parallel organization known as Transition Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN) was a negation party principle as they usurped the role of the structure of the party at all levels. Internal struggle squabbles were everywhere and weakened the prosperity of the party.

In the words of [2], “in seeking to secure another term in office, you have allowed some people to amass enemies for your behalf. They did not know how to persuade people with reason and dialogue as demanded by democracy. Every critic must be stricken down and criminalized by the attack dogs. They dissipate energy on irrelevant things while the roof is on fire. This is what has led to the implosion and configuration in your party PDP.

**The Ruling Party Toyed With the State Governors.** It is a truism that in all political calculation, Governors control the party structure and determine to a large extent the followership. This they do effectively in collaboration with local government chief executives but this was played down by the NWC of the party and it boomeranged in many states. Problems in the Governors Forum which the party and Mr. President could not handle with care also contributed to the fall of the party.

**Ministers and Aids without Political Values:** The President paraded some Ministers and Aids without any political base and values. Some of the aids saw their position for political rehabilitation and compensation of their fathers and husbands. Most of them could not boast of winning election in their wards as they are mainly Abuja and Television Politicians who hardly visit their communities.

**The Use of Card Reader:** Past elections were characterized by serious irregularities and suspicious of rigging especially in 2007 and 2011 general elections. According to [3] (BBC News correspondent) “in the 2015 general election, the Electoral commission took more steps to prevent rigging including new biometric voters card”. This affected the result of the elections against the incumbent administration that appeared unprepared for the new system. It made it difficult for the usual rigging ‘methods’

**Impunity:** Erroneously, people believe in party supremacy. But party supremacy cannot be stronger than the principles of social justice which espouse that to every man his own due. According to [4], PDP was behaving like Titanic. The builder of Titanic made us believe that not even God can sink it. PDP never believed that Buhari could raise a finger against it. We know better today. Buhari looks like a cult hero no matter what you say about him, it would not change anything for his supporters. This could be true or false.

Most of the party conventions of PDP failed because they refused to realize that conventions are used for self appraisal and talent hunt. The party recycled old people either as party Chairman or BOT Chairmen and refused to bring in young and dynamic people who have penchant for evolution in the polity. This led to political instability and constant change of party chairmen. The party created tiny elite tyrants who enveloped and killed it.

**The Economy:** Nigeria by all intents and prepossession, is an endowed society. Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil producer and its largest economy. But in contrast, majority of the citizens failed to feel the benefits with nearly half the population living in abject poverty. Millions of school leavers are without jobs. Many businesses are cooling down due to no electricity. High rising crimes, drug addiction, prostitution, bribery, misuse of finances, nonpayment of salaries, pension and gratuity. These made the idea of 'change' being espoused by the opposition to make meaning especially on the masses who have been desiring the change after 16 years of unfulfilled promise.

**The Position of International Community:** It did appear from the attitude of the foreign nations towards the last administration that they were fed up with the policies of the government of Nigeria. Their reluctance to help in the fight against insurgency and their criticisms against the last administration in the areas of corruption and level of poverty in the country are indicators.

Others factors that influenced included the use of money, the partisan media, rigging, voting by under aged and double voting and use of security agencies against a perceived political enemy, all played roles. The umpire, INEC, is not to be wholly exonerated from the problems of election in Nigeria. E.g. how did Borno State, the theatre of the insurgency get 80% of its PVC before other states like Lagos and Enugu peaceful states.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is proper here to appreciate the fact that many factors played varied roles in the fortunes of the last in Nigeria. We congratulate the APC that won the election we charge the party to go beyond its initial objective of unseating the PDP. It should overhaul our social values with emphasis on productivity, sense of public good and efficient service delivery as its main focus. The people's Democratic party should equally be engaged in constructive criticism of the party in government. For PDP to reposition itself, it should go for deep self reflection and do full analyses of what really happened. It should also conduct a very credible national convention at all levels and elect true politicians who have credibility. Party leadership and management require intelligent people who have means of livelihood and not parasites and those who are looking for what to eat. The present NWC should be disbanded with dispatch as they contributed largely to the failure of the party. They should by now start searching for a credible, intelligent and dynamic personality to field against Mr. President in 2019 of northern extraction if they want to make any appreciable impact.

Another implication of People Democratic Party failure is that any political party in power can be defeated with ease when they lose touch with people and lack focus. There is also

need for government in power to perform well so that the citizens can become patriotic and happy. The president of a country should be principled and have firm control of the machinery of governance.

According to [4], management of political organizations in a modern world is the issue of mind power and mind power is driven by the content of the minds and not by the content of the pocket. PDP lacked these ideas as those who were there were not the caliber of managers the party needed. They were mainly 'economic choristers' and 'political buccaneers'.

The All Progressive Congress, the ruling party, must avoid the above mistakes if they want to succeed in rebuilding the nation. There is also need for all Nigerian citizens to support the ruling party to enable them achieve its stated objectives which include; fighting corruption, rooting out insurgence in Nigeria, providing electricity, and reduction in unemployment among others. Thanks for your attention.

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