



## POLITICAL PARTY COALITIONS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN POLYGLOT SOCIETIES: THE ALL PROGRESSIVES CONGRESS (APC) IN PERSPECTIVE



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### ABSTRACT

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This paper situates the All Progressives Congress (APC), a coalition of opposition political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic within the purview of the ideals and goals of political unity and selfless service to the fatherland. These ideals are believed to be necessary but scarce ingredients for building enduring political bridges amongst existing ethno-cultural oriented political parties to galvanize socio-economic and political development amongst people of different ethnic nationalities and religious persuasions in polyglot societies such as Nigeria. Often, it becomes necessary to build such political bridges in polyglot societies so as to checkmate the onslaught of ethnic politics which, apart from its inability to build or sustain enduring peace, strangles overall development and has led to different levels of political unrest, including civil wars in several countries. However, the paper equally indicates it is not easy to build such workable, enduring political coalitions in polyglot societies as such efforts face several challenges. Digging into the political histories of Nigeria, the United States of America and Kenya through the use of secondary data, the paper identifies some of these challenges and how political coalitions impacted on the political development and material fortunes of these countries and their different peoples. On the strength of such evidences, the paper outlines the challenges in the way of APC in her effort to overcome ethnic politics, promote unity and advance socio-economic and political development in Nigeria.

**Contribution/ Originality:** The paper's primary contribution is in identifying the major obstacles towards maintaining internal unity and cohesion by ruling coalition parties in Africa's multi-ethnic states. Citing the experiences of Kenya's Rainbow Coalition and Nigeria's APC, the study elaborates on how to maintain intra-party unity in ruling coalitions to consolidate Africa's democracies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a polyglot society that is composed of various ethnic groups which were brought under a common administration by the force of colonialism at independence in 1960. Since then, Nigeria has had a chequered political history of long years of military rule by different regimes which, up till the commencement of the Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, were punctuated by intermittent and quite fitful interregnums of civil rule. Moreover, due to the dominance of ethnic configurations and permutations on the Nigerian military, its history was also characterized by

ethnically-motivated military coups, a thirty-month civil war and a military-orchestrated but short-lived Interim National Government (ING) that was intended to inherit the ruins of a mismanaged transition-to-civil-rule programme of the aborted Third Republic.

That experience included the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections, which were adjudged to be the freest in the electoral history of Nigeria, with the best prospect-to-date, of progressive (rather than reactionary) ethno-religious political relations which continues to remain relevant to the political future of the country. The election which was adjudged free and fair by local and international observers, was presumed to have been won by M.K.O. Abiola (of Yoruba origin) and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe (of Kanuri extraction) on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). It suffices to note that Nigerian politics and governance before 'June 12' was dictated almost exclusively by, and gravitated towards ethno-religious considerations and interests. Nigeria's Fourth Republic was built on the ruins and ashes of the aborted Third Republic and the June 12 struggle.

### 1.1. Ethnicity and Nigerian Politics

Right from the era of colonial rule, politics in the territory that later became Nigeria was organized primarily on ethnic basis. Because of the arbitrary creation of many African states by European colonial powers, different ethnic nationalities that should naturally form nation-states were lumped together in many African countries (Ekeh, 1975). For this reason, African politics often turns out to be a serious contest for state power amongst political parties that are usually organized along ethnic lines. In Nigeria's First Republic, the trend was not very different, as the struggle of educated Nigerians for independence through ethno-cultural groups was often supported by student groups, nationalist movements and cultural associations that were organized on ethnic basis.

Eventually, some of the cultural associations transformed into ethnic-based political parties. Action Group (AG), the Yoruba-based political party of the First Republic was an offshoot of "Egbe Omo Oduduwa", a pan-Yoruba cultural organization that was founded on March 2, 1945 by Yoruba students in London. It transformed into a political party in March, 1951. Also, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was formed as a cultural organization in 1949 but later metamorphosed into a political party. During the First Republic, for example, several political parties bore explicitly ethnic names. Malam Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) was founded in 1950 with the aim of representing northerners, as the name suggests. Other ethnic-based parties of that period included Igala Union (IU), Igbira Tribal Union (ITU), Kano People's Party (KPP), Lagos State United Front (LSUF), Niger Delta Congress (NDC), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Zamfara Commoners Party (ZCP) and Mabolaje Grand Alliance (MGA), among others.

Although some political groups at that time had multi-ethnic, pan-Nigerian outlooks, several of them were disbanded due to leadership crises with ethnic undertones. An example of this was the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) that was founded in 1936 but disbanded in 1941 due to ethnically-induced leadership and nomination for legislative council elections crises (International-IDEA, 2000). Eventually, Nigeria's first general election of 1951-52 was contested by three main political parties namely the Action Group (AG), Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which had strong bases in the Western, Northern and Eastern regions, respectively. Each of these respective geo-political divisions was dominated by the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo ethnic groups.

At the beginning of the Second Republic (1979-83), five political parties were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to contest the general elections\*. They were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the National

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\*Between 1979 and 1983, there existed seven political parties in all, although only five were dominant. They were Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP); National Party of Nigeria (NPN); Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP); Peoples Redemption Party (PRP); and Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Movement of the People Party (MPP) existed but was not popular. Also, Nigeria Advance Party (NAP) was registered only in May, 1982, mid-way into President Shagari's first term in office. The party

could not go far because the Second Republic was terminated abruptly through a *coup-de-tat* on December 31, 1983 while the duo of General Muhammadu Buhari and Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon assumed power as the new helmsmen. That was the beginning of a series of military regimes that eventually lasted about fifteen (15) years, including the gruelling June 12, 1993 Presidential Elections which results were annulled by the military junta. Nigeria only returned to civil rule on May 29, 1999.

Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and the People's Redemption Party (PRP). A sixth political party, the Nigeria Advance Party (NAP) was registered in May, 1982 while a seventh, Movement of the People Party (MPP) existed but was not popular (Wikipedia). At least three of them had strong bases in their regions, meaning they relied to a large extent on ethnic support for electoral victory.

It is germane to note that in the First and Second republics, the ethnic colouration of the main political parties often spelled doom for electoral campaigns and election results. First, political campaigns often led to violence as parties believed to have their bases in other regions or geo-linguistic areas were not allowed to campaign and gain follower-ship in other regions. This was the case in May, 1959 when a riot broke out in Kano city during the political campaign of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group in northern Nigeria. Many people were killed while others sustained injuries.

Second, most election results in Nigeria's political history have been disputed, with allegations of irregularities being leveled by political parties against each other. For example, the results of Nigeria's presidential elections in 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 were all decided by the Supreme Court following election petitions in which parties that lost alleged election rigging or irregularities. Following announcement of the results of the August 11, 1979 presidential election, three political parties namely Chief Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN); Dr. Azikiwe's Nigeria People's Party (NPP) and Alhaji Waziri's Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) rejected the election results which gave victory to Alhaji Shehu Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN). They pursued the case up to the Supreme Court where Shagari's election was upheld on September 26, 1979. After the swearing-in of the new government, Dr. Azikiwe's Nigerian People's Party (NPP) agreed to work with Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in a manner resembling an alliance rather than a coalition. Although the idea of an official declaration of an alliance was mooted after a meeting between President Shagari and Dr. Azikiwe in February 1980, the proposed alliance never saw the light of day although a notice was later given concerning it in June of that year (International-IDEA, 2000).

## 1.2. Meaning and Importance of Coalition Politics

Political party coalitions often come about in situations where there are several small parties that are not able to win elections on their own, or are individually unable to secure sufficient votes in order to form government in parliamentary systems. They go into coalitions because, although political parties perform several functions in democracies, winning elections to form government in order to be able to make and direct public policy implementation constitutes their core aim. In such situations, forming coalitions with other parties is seen as an attractive means of reaching this important goal.

In consolidated democracies, coalitions are often formed between and amongst political parties with similar or close ideological positions, either for the purpose of contesting elections, to form comfortable ruling majorities in post-election power arrangements in parliamentary democracies, or to pursue other common agenda. Similarly, coalition-building is popular in multi-ethnic societies with numerous small political groupings that are organized around specific interests, such as ethnicity or socio-economic classes. Such coalitions are particularly workable if the ideologies of the political groups are uniform or sufficiently close to each other to allow a united front after each political group shifts ground or makes compromises on some issues. However, as history demonstrates in emergent democracies in the developing world (such as Nigeria and Kenya that are studied in this paper), the quest to wrestle power from incumbent parties could be sufficient for political parties with different ideological orientations to form

formidable ‘coalitions’ to take power and divide the spoils of political office. Governments run by such coalitions almost always end in fiasco as party chieftains and their caucuses fight for positions and the spoils of office.

The history of coalition politics involving the Rainbow Coalition in Kenya is interesting and instructive. Up till December 27, 2002, the Kenyan African National Union (KANU) had been in power, defeating smaller parties to win the presidency. Before the 2002 elections, however, two smaller parties, the Liberal Democratic Party and the National Alliance Party of Kenya formed the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) on which platform they fought the 2002 presidential elections. Results showed that NARC obtained 62% while KANU got 31% of valid votes cast at the election (Institute for Education in Democracy, 2002; Afolabi, 2013). Mwai Kibaki, an erstwhile regular loser of presidential elections and NARC’s candidate became president courtesy of good homework and compromises that produced the winning Rainbow Coalition on which platform he rode to the presidency.

### 1.3. History of Political Party Coalitions in Nigerian Politics

In Nigerian politics, there have been several coalitions between and amongst political parties, either for the purpose of winning elections, to form a comfortable ruling partnership in the post-election period or to pursue other common agenda. An example of the latter was the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) of the aborted Third Republic that was formed from splinter groups or ashes of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) in order to pursue the actualization of the June 12 mandate.

#### 1.3.1. The First Republic: December, 1960–January 14, 1966

The first recorded party coalition in the history of Nigerian politics was the NCNC–NPC coalition that contested the December, 1960 general elections against the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). The results of that election saw the NCNC–NPC coalition winning 228 seats, compared to Action Group’s 75 and NEPU’S 08 seats, respectively (International–IDEA, 2000). It was on that basis that Alhaji Tafawa Balewa and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became Nigeria’s first Prime Minister and President, respectively, while Chief Awolowo of the Action Group became the Leader of the Opposition in the federal legislature.

After Nigeria attained republican status in October 1963, the stage was set for serious political contest and coalition-building seemed to be the preferred strategy by many political groupings. This was hardly surprising, given the successful political alliance between Balewa’s NPC and Azikiwe’s NCNC that saw them take the reins of power from the colonialists at independence in 1960. Thus, on June 3, 1964, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) was formed as a coalition of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples’ Forum (NPF). Also, by August 20 of the same year, the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), Movement for Democratic Front (MDF) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) had come together to form the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA).

The two parties that resulted from these coalitions were major stakeholders in the December 12, 1964 post-independence parliamentary election. The results of that election led Alhaji Balewa, the Prime Minister to form a broad-based government, in which federal ministers were chosen from several parties on January 7, 1965. However, the reverberations and animosities generated by these and other events led to the first military *coup-de-tat* that brought Major General J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi to power on January 15, 1966, thus putting an end to the First Republic.

#### 1.3.2. The Second Republic: October 1, 1979–December 30, 1983

Perhaps due to its brevity (October 1979 to December 1983, i.e. thirty-nine months), fears of political domination in mergers or coalitions, lack of readiness to make compromises or a determination by political parties to win elections at all costs, the Second Republic did not witness any political party coalition although there existed

seven political parties, out to which five contested the 1979 presidential election<sup>4</sup>. The only attempt at an alliance of political parties during that period was the agreement between Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and Alhaji Shehu Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in February, 1980, to strengthen relations and tighten accord to work together. Thus, on July 6, 1981, the NPP gave a six-month notice of its intention to enter into alliance with the ruling NPN (International-IDEA, 2000). Although it was set to mirror the NPC-NCNC alliance of the First Republic, it never saw the light of day due to several reasons. First was the frenzy that attended preparations for the August 6, 1983 presidential elections; the threats of violence preceding it, the actual violence that accompanied and followed it; and eventually, the Major General Buhari/Brigadier Idiagbon-led *coup-de-tat* that ended that administration on December 31, 1983.

### 1.3.3. The Aborted Third Republic: December 31, 1983-May 29, 1999

The aborted Third Republic had at least two epochs of political party and coalition formation. These were the pre and post June 12 epochs, which reflected the political mood of a country that was railroaded by different military regimes into embarking on a democratization programme that was doomed to fail *ab initio* (the political parties of the post June 12 era of the aborted Third Republic will be discussed later). Although only two (the NRC and the SDP) of the many political associations of the pre June 12 period were officially allowed and recognized, the party politics of that era was significant at least for throwing up the June 12 issue, from which the country is yet to recover.

The All Peoples Congress (APC) Coalition of 2013 is believed to be an acceptable means of finding answers to some of the issues and questions raised by the June 12 1993 phenomenon, which has become a major focal point of political discussions in Nigeria for two decades (1993-2013).

Another significant thing about party politics in the aborted Third Republic is that to date, it remains the longest political epoch in Nigeria's history – a long sixteen year period – so far longer than even the Fourth Republic which commenced on May 29, 1999 (about fourteen years ago). In effect, the abortion of that republic also aborted many political, economic and social dreams of the majority of Nigerians, leaving more problems than solutions for Nigeria and her citizens.

Because the democratization programme of the Third Republic was organized by an unwilling and insincere military junta, every political activity of citizens was regimented, including party formation and inter-party relations. In the words of an observer:

it was a militaristic and highly anti-democratic political environment in which human rights and political liberty counted for little. Most active civil associations, trade unions, and professional groups in the civil society, which should have played crucial roles in the party formation process, were suppressed (Adejumobi, 1997).

Due to the above and the strict political party registration procedures that were stipulated by the General Babangida regime when the ban on politics was eventually lifted on May 3, 1989, and in spite of the banning of public office holders of the First and Second Republics from contesting elective public offices and from belonging to political parties, Agbaje (1990) notes that at least 49 political associations indicated interest. Of these, the National Electoral Commission shortlisted only thirteen (Newswatch, 1989; Adejumobi, 1997).

Rather than implement the above recommendation, the government went ahead on October 9, 1989, to impose on the polity, two entirely new political parties of centrist liberal capitalist ideology. They were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which, ideologically, was "a little to the left" of the centre and National Republican Convention (NRC), which was "a little to the right" of the centre (Adejumobi, 1997). Government justified its action on the need to introduce "something revolutionary" to establish "a mass two party system" (Olagunju and Oyovbaire, 1991) to reduce effects of ethnic and religious differences on politics; bridge the political gap between urban and rural areas; and to prevent or make it difficult for ethnic political lords and 'moneybags' to highjack and

privatize politics (Olagunju, 1992). As Adejumobi (1997) pointed out, the two parties were also meant to provide a platform for the emergence of a new leadership and give equal rights to Nigerians, in which case there were to be only 'joiners' with no 'founders'.

Due to the way in which the parties were imposed on Nigerians; the fact that many were barred by decree from participating in politics or belonging to the parties; and the way in which government sought, through the parties, to force people into political groups that varied from their ideological beliefs, the system prevented many political interests from finding expression.

However, it was on the platform of those two political parties that the June 12, 1993 presidential election was contested, which was believed to have been won by Chief M.K.O Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The annulment of the results of that election sparked countrywide protests, with pro-democracy groups, professional and student bodies, trade unions and civil rights groups taking part to demand the restoration and actualization of the mandate. Then, on August 26, 1993, General Babangida vacated power abruptly by 'stepping aside' and installing an Interim National Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, a businessman from Chief M.K.O. Abiola's home state of Ogun. On November 17, 1993, General Sanni Abacha, the Minister of Defence, shoved Shonekan aside and took over political power.

#### 1.3.4. Political Party Coalition-Building in the Post June 12 Period

General Abacha sought to consolidate his hold on power by dealing ruthlessly with those he perceived could resist him, and that included political groupings with the capacity either to transform into popular parties or to play the role of progressive parties able to pursue the actualization of the mandate.

Thus, although several political parties operated the political landscape during Abacha's draconian rule between November 17, 1993 and June 8, 1998, only few such as the Campaign for Democracy (CD), National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) were widely known, and for different reasons. NADECO was an amalgam of different political associations which grew out of the ruins of Campaign for Democracy (CD) which had mobilized support and protest for the actualization of the June 12 mandate. CD had been hit by disagreements over strategies for the actualization of the June 12 mandate. After Abiola declared himself president on June 11, 1994, he sought to continue the struggle for actualization of the mandate (hitherto championed by CD) through the instrumentality of NADECO.

On the other hand, UNCP was the party that adopted General Abacha as its presidential candidate on April 6, before four other parties followed suit between April 16 and 19, 1998 (International-IDEA, 2000) in an ugly demonstration of coalition-building against the June 12 mandate.

The other political parties of that dispensation were the Committee for National Concensus (CNC); Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN); Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM); National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN); and Justice Party (JP). For various reasons, they could not form effective coalitions that would transcend narrow interests, defend and promote the broader cause of democracy and development in a sustainable manner.

#### 1.3.5. The Fourth Republic [May 29, 1999 – Present]

In Nigeria's political history thus far, the Fourth Republic, which began on May 29, 1999 has the highest number of political parties. From the state imposed two-parties (i.e. SDP and NRC) of the pre-June 12 and the several parties of the post annulment era, the number of political parties in the country rose to sixty-three (63) in the Fourth Republic. As the Oxford Business Group (OBG) (2011) informs, nineteen (19) of them presented candidates in the 2011 general elections while "21 parties, led by the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), joined in a co-operative agreement to support incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, and the platform of his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)".

This was not a coalition but a political alliance between each of the parties and the ruling PDP, prior to election, to work together to win the presidential election, in exchange for various benefits.

Since the PDP won presidential elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007, a number of the political parties apparently felt that, given their inability to win elections on their own, the best thing for them was to support the winning party in order to benefit from the largesse of political appointments, contract awards and other perquisites of political office. It was this political horse-trading that assisted PDP to win the 2011 general elections, though with a lower percentage of votes than it got in earlier elections.

This trend may continue into the 2015 General Elections, although the results would be unpredictable due to the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC), a strong amalgam of opposition progressive parties with massive sympathy among the electorate that adopted former Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim and a Christian Professor of Law, Yemi Osinbajo as its presidential and vice-presidential candidates, respectively. The Buhari/Osinbajo Muslim/Christian ticket is an improvement on the Muslim/Muslim ticket of M.K.O.Abiola/Kingibe of the June 12, 1993 general elections. It is also able to allay fears and douse tensions of the possibility of the declaration of an Islamic state in the country.

#### 1.4. Background to the All Progressives Congress (APC) Coalition

The All Progressives Congress (APC) coalition is a response to the yearnings of Nigerians for qualitative political change which can deliver to them the kind of life they desire, cherish and will have reasons to value. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) has been in power since the Fourth Republic began on May 29, 1999, winning presidential elections in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011.

Apart from winning the presidential elections, the party has always held majority seats in the National Assembly up till date. Before the 2011 elections, for instance, the PDP held 260 out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives, and 85 out of the 109 seats in Senate. Also, its candidates won governorship elections in twenty-seven states of the federation up till the 2007 general elections (OBG, 2011).

However, it may be contentions to claim that Nigeria has been running a democratic form of government since the commencement of the Fourth Republic.

This is because the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 presidential elections were all hotly disputed and eventually decided by the Supreme Court rather than the voting public. This was also the case with many gubernatorial elections. And the *modus operandi* of the various governments did not show much evidence that Nigerians have fully imbibed the culture of democracy, a situation that has affected the legitimacy of every government since the commencement of the Fourth Republic in 1999. To that extent, one can safely infer that Nigeria has been having civil rather than democratic rule.

In spite of its dominant majority at the federal and state levels of government, however, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) was not able to justify its hold onto power convincingly for almost one-and-a-half decade. This is not contestable if the condition of critical infrastructure, quality-of-life of citizens, inability to stamp out corruption, rising levels of unemployment and insecurity exemplified by ethnic and religious clashes, the rising brutality profile of the Boko Haram sect, etc., are taken into consideration. This 'failure of government' which, for Abba-Dabo (2012) symbolizes the ruling party's "unfair, ludicrous and farcical leadership" is what provided the background for the desire of Nigerians for a change.

As a result, the electoral fortunes of the ruling PDP declined in the 2011 general elections, even though it managed to retain political power at the federal level. For example, from a dominant position of over 75% of seats in the federal legislature in the 2007-2011 period, PDP won just over 50% of the seats in the legislature in the April, 2011 elections (OBG, 2011). Also, the party lost the gubernatorial elections in four states to opposition parties, including the most populous Kano State. Although PDP retained the presidency with about 59% (that is 22 million)

of the total votes cast in the 2011 elections, a number of major political aspirants in the PDP lost their constituencies to other political parties (OBG, 2011).

Unfortunately, the president has not been justifying the trust reposed in him. The rancour, extreme factionalism and in-fighting by various factions in the PDP, the party he leads is a sign that the president cannot even manage his political party well, not to talk of the country.

The Boko Haram insurgency gets worse by the day: it kills and maims at will; seizes whole towns, hoists its flag in them and puts garrisons in them while the Army is unable to tame them. It abducts mothers in tens and schoolgirls in their hundreds from their hostels, the peak of which was the abduction of over two hundred schoolgirls from their hostel in Chibok in April, 2014. All the government did was to make feeble attempts at rescuing them and after failing, to console their parents and offer them money! Unemployment is on the increase and the scenario looks bleak.

The Nigerian Governors' Forum, the umbrella body of state governors, has been factionalized as PDP governors have divided the body into two, each with its own leadership. And the presidency uses the forum to witch-hunt governors with contrary opinions and to deploy state security apparatus against such. This has been the case with Rivers state governor, Rotimi Amaechi. As the legendary W.B. Yeats (cited in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*) suggests, often when the falcon can no longer hear the falconer, things fall apart and the centre cannot hold, and mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

This 'failure of government' caused the various opposition parties to strive to improve on their electoral performance, particularly in the 2011 general elections. In that election, two out of the three main political parties in the APC Coalition, the All Nigeria People's Congress (ANPP) and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) improved on their electoral performance. For example, while the ACN won only 32 out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 6 out of the 109 seats in Senate in the 2007 elections, it won 52 House of Representatives and 14 Senate seats in the 2011 elections.

In 2007, the party won 4 gubernatorial seats but got 6 in the 2011 elections. ANPP, APGA and CPC also improved on their performances in the 2007 elections. While APGA gained an additional state, CPC won its first gubernatorial seat. Comparatively, the ruling PDP lost four states to the opposition and its control of the National Assembly dropped from over 75% in 2007 to just over 50% in 2011 (OBG, 2011).

Even though the opposition parties felt like working together for the 2011 elections, individual party problems and personal ambitions of the leaders prevented this. An observer expressed it this way:

In the 2011 general elections, CPC and ACN worked very hard to conclude arrangements to put heads together and see to the fall of PDP, but towards the end of the talks, things fell apart. That period, the talk was more of political alliance, not merger. The alliance failed, the leaders remained apart and their supporters were significantly disappointed. The aftermath of the 2011 elections made the opposition parties to sit back and rethink the future of democracy in the country as a whole and the relevance of their political parties. That forced them to realize their miscalculations during that period (Anwar, 2013).

Since then, leaders of the ACN, ANPP, CPC and APGA have strengthened their co-operation and resolve to work together. After many distractions, some of which came from hitherto unknown groups that claimed ownership of the APC acronym, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) finally registered the All Progressives Congress (APC) as a separate political party after withdrawing the certificates of the coalescing parties on July 31, 2013 (Clottey, 2013; News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), 2013).



### 1.5. Challenges before the All Progressives Congress (APC)

There are several challenges facing the All Progressives Congress (APC) in meeting the high expectations of Nigerians that the new party will liberate them from the negative effects of long years of misrule and deliver unto them, the promises and blessings of unity in diversity which should accrue to the country and her citizens, given her population, human and natural endowments.

First, is the challenge of overcoming the personal ambitions of the leaders of each of the coalescing parties to be nominated as APC's presidential candidate. This relates to Muhammadu Buhari of the CPC, Bola Tinubu of the ACN and Ibrahim Shekarau of the ANPP. Each of them must be aware of the strength of PDP, their common electoral opponent; its experience with electioneering in modern Nigerian politics and its power of incumbency. So, they must be ready to eat the humble pie to make room for a candidate who will not only be able to defeat the ruling party at the elections, but work to restore the confidence of Nigerians in a broad-based national government and its ability to improve their lives significantly.

Second, the leadership of the APC needs to overcome the temptation to relapse to ethnic politics especially after elections, notwithstanding whether it wins or loses the 2015 general elections. They should jettison ethnic politics, embrace and project an image of a united Nigeria.

This is a publicly acknowledged major weakness of the coalition. Therefore, party leaders and their followers must not seek a presidential candidate from a particular part of Nigeria, but a detribalized Nigerian who, while recognizing the virtues and strengths embedded in the various ethno-linguistic groups that make up Nigeria, will also know that the present battle to save Nigeria from imminent collapse cannot be fought from an ethnic but from a united, multi-national platform. The party must learn from the failures of such coalitions in Nigerian history.

A third major challenge to the APC in actualizing its mandate is lack of internal democracy in each of the political parties that came together to form it, as it is in most Nigerian political parties. Patron-clientelism, godfatherism (Olaoye, 2005) and money politics (Olaoye, 2007) are some of the Achilles' heels of Nigerian politics. Judging by the *modus operandi* of Nigerian political parties in general, although there may be slight variations between one party and another in terms of intensity, rarely can the coalescing parties claim to have internal democracy.

Thus, leaders of APC must see their assignment as an emergency one and allow democracy to prevail in the *modus operandi* of APC. Anything short of this will be disastrous for the party, its members, Nigerians at large and the Nigerian State.

Also, leaders of the APC must learn to forget their old animosities, relate with open heart and forget the distrust of the remote and recent past amongst Nigeria's ethnic nationalities and amongst themselves. Then, they will be able to provide exemplary leadership that will equip Nigerian youths to channel their energies positively towards realizing the Nigerian dream of greatness, which June 12 promised. This is important, because:

There is a chilling reality that the Nigerian people, especially the youths, do not fully appreciate the enormity of Abiola's sacrifice and the centrality of that sacrifice to the current democratic dispensation (Babarinsa, 2013).

Finally, given their antecedents and the proclivity of African militaries to intervene in politics at the slightest excuse, ruling political coalitions in Africa must maintain party discipline and internal unity at all costs, deliver more than the dividends of democracy to the electorates and professionalize the armed forces, keeping them busy with legitimate military duties in peace time. This will help reduce military intervention in African politics to the barest minimum.

It is important for APC's leaders to learn from the misfortunes of the Kenyan National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) just three years after its electoral victory in 2002. Mwai Kibaki, the Kenyan President from the Rainbow Coalition sacked members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), one of the parties that formed the Rainbow Coalition, and the coalition was dismembered, leading to its loss to Raila Odinga, who co-opted the sacked

members of the coalition into his party to contest against Kibaki in 2007. The election led to large scale violence, killing and arson. Eventually, a Government of National Unity, brokered by the United Nations Organization through the instrumentality of its secretariat, manned by Kofi Annan at the time, was the outcome. Kibaki had to share powers with Odinga as Prime Minister. Finally, Odinga lost power to Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2013 elections. Rather than be their messiah, the Rainbow Coalition only succeeded in drawing Kenyans back.

## 2. CONCLUSION

APC coalition is a political machine with the capacity to begin a revolution in pursuit of Nigeria's dream of de-tribalized politics. APC's leaders should learn from the Kenyan experience, knowing that this coalition is one of the great hopes of Nigerians for the present and the distant future. Failure of the coalition may delay the realization of the Nigerian dream and expectations of a workable political coalition that will transcend ethnic divisions, ethnic and regional politics that Nigeria requires to move beyond the limitations of ethnic politicking that has remained an obstruction to the pursuit of the ideals of an egalitarian society where ethnicity, religion, class and other distractions to national glory will become less significant than before in service to the fatherland. This was part of the ideals of the June 12 struggles. The world is watching, hoping that Nigerians will get it right this time and seize the opportunity to put the country and her citizens on the right pedestal of democratic practice.

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