



## Impact of Party Coalitions on Electoral Outcome: A Case Study of the 2015 General Elections

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**Abstract.** This study explores the impact of political party coalitions on electoral outcomes and governance in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the 2015 general elections. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, the research analyzes secondary sources including electoral data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and academic literature. The formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC) from the merger of four major opposition parties in 2013 is examined as a strategic response to the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) dominance from 1999 to 2015. Key figures such as Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Muhammadu Buhari were instrumental in this process. Findings reveal that the APC's unified opposition led to significant electoral victories, including Buhari's presidential win and major gains in the National Assembly and gubernatorial elections. However, challenges in maintaining policy continuity and effective governance within the coalition framework were noted. The study recommends developing mechanisms for policy continuity and inclusive governance practices to enhance political stability and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Political Party Coalitions, Electoral Outcomes, Governance, Nigeria, APC Merger

### 1. Introduction

The dynamics of party coalitions have long been a critical factor in shaping the political landscape of many democracies. The formation, stability, and impact of these coalitions can significantly influence electoral outcomes, not only determining the immediate results but also shaping the broader

trajectory of national politics (Lijphart, 2012). This study investigates the intricate interplay between party coalitions and electoral outcomes, using the 2015 general elections in Nigeria as a detailed case study to explore these dynamics comprehensively.

Party coalitions represent strategic alliances formed among political parties, often with divergent ideologies and agendas, with the intent of maximizing electoral success. These coalitions can secure a parliamentary majority or exert greater influence in the legislative process. They reflect a strategic adaptation to electoral systems, especially in contexts where single parties may struggle to achieve outright majorities (Golder, 2006). The impact of these coalitions is multifaceted, influencing voter perceptions, party strategies, and ultimately, the electoral results.

The 2015 general elections in Nigeria offer a poignant example of the transformative potential of party coalitions. The formation of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) coalition marked a significant shift in the Nigerian political landscape. The APC emerged as a formidable force by amalgamating four major opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) (Omilusi, 2016). This coalition was strategically orchestrated to challenge the longstanding dominance of the incumbent People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had held power since the end of military rule in 1999 (Ogundiya, 2015). The success of the APC in the 2015 elections, culminating in the victory of Muhammadu

Buhari as president, signaled a historic change. This event ended the PDP's 16-year rule and introduced a new era of governance in Nigeria (INEC, 2015). The formation and success of the APC coalition can be attributed to several factors, including the unification of opposition forces, effective voter mobilization, and strategic campaign messaging (Adejumobi, 2015). Additionally, the coalition capitalized on widespread public dissatisfaction with the PDP's governance, particularly issues related to corruption, economic management, and security challenges (Campbell, 2014, Cheeseman, 2015).

This study aims to dissect the factors that contributed to the APC's success and the broader implications for coalition politics in electoral outcomes. It seeks to answer several critical questions: How do coalitions form and function in practice? What are the strategic advantages and potential pitfalls of such alliances? How do coalitions influence voter behavior and election results? By addressing these questions, the research provides valuable insights into the mechanics of coalition politics (Musa, 2018). The significance of this research extends beyond the Nigerian context. The study has potentials to inform both academic discourse and practical policymaking. By providing empirical evidence on the long-term effects of coalition governments, the study can offer valuable insights for political strategists, policymakers, and scholars interested in the sustainability of coalition politics. It can also guide future research on coalition dynamics, encouraging a more holistic approach that considers both immediate and enduring impacts on democratic governance. The findings contribute to the global discourse on the role of coalitions in electoral systems, offering comparative insights that can be applied to other democratic contexts. The study highlights the potential of coalitions to transform political landscapes, challenge entrenched power structures, and redefine electoral strategies.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The influence of party coalitions on electoral outcomes is a well-explored topic in political science. Scholars have extensively examined how coalitions can lead to electoral success, political stability, and broader voter appeal by uniting fragmented opposition forces and achieving parliamentary majorities necessary for forming a government (Christensen, 2019; Golder, 2016). The prevailing academic focus has been on the immediate electoral advantages that coalitions can bring, with numerous studies emphasizing their role in facilitating broader voter appeal and achieving parliamentary majorities (Bäck, Debus, & Müller, 2016; Deschouwer, 2018).

Despite this extensive research on the influence of party coalitions on electoral outcomes, a significant gap persists in the literature regarding the long-term impacts of these coalitions on governance and policy implementation. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on the immediate electoral advantages and the political stability that coalitions can bring. These studies typically emphasize how coalitions can enhance electoral success by uniting fragmented opposition forces, facilitating broader voter appeal, and achieving parliamentary majorities necessary for forming a government.

However, there is a dearth of empirical analysis concerning the enduring effects of coalition governments on governance effectiveness and policy-making (Golder, 2016). This gap is particularly evident in the context of emerging democracies, such as Nigeria, where the formation and success of coalitions have marked critical junctures in political history. While the short-term benefits of coalition-building, such as electoral victories and initial political stability, are well-documented, the literature lacks comprehensive insights into how these coalitions impact the long-term governance landscape. The limited exploration of the long-term consequences of coalition governments raises several pertinent questions: How do coalition governments influence the effectiveness of governance and the continuity of policies over time? What are the implications of coalition dynamics for democratic consolidation and public service delivery in emerging democracies? Do coalitions contribute to sustained political stability and effective policy implementation, or do they create challenges that undermine long-term governance.

In the case of Nigeria, the success of the All Progressives Congress (APC) coalition in the 2015 general elections presents an opportunity to investigate these questions. The APC's victory ended the 16-year dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and ushered in a new era of governance under President Muhammadu Buhari. While the immediate electoral impact of the APC coalition is evident, there is a need to assess its long-term influence on governance and policy-making.

This study aims to address the identified gap by examining the long-term impacts of the APC coalition on Nigeria's governance and policy landscape. It will explore how the coalition has influenced democratic consolidation, policy continuity, and public service delivery since coming to power. By doing so, the research will contribute to a better understanding of coalition politics beyond the electoral context,

highlighting the broader implications for governance in emerging democracies.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Riker's Theory of Political Coalitions, also known as the "Rational Choice Theory of Coalitions". The theory was proposed by political scientist William H. Riker and posits that political actors form coalitions not out of ideological alignment or a shared commitment to public service, but rather as strategic alliances designed to maximize their power and influence (Riker, 1962).

### 2.1 Riker's Theory of Political Coalitions

Riker's theory, which is rooted in the principles of rational choice, suggests that political parties are rational actors seeking to optimize their chances of gaining and maintaining power. According to this perspective, coalitions are formed based on strategic calculations where parties assess potential partners to create the most advantageous power-sharing arrangements. The primary motivation behind these coalitions is the acquisition of sufficient political leverage to secure electoral victories and control government institutions (Riker, 1962; de Swaan, 1973).

Key assumptions of Riker's theory include:

1. **Power Maximization:** Political parties aim to maximize their influence by forming coalitions that can command a majority or significantly alter the balance of power.
2. **Minimal Winning Coalitions:** Parties strive to form the smallest possible coalition that can achieve a majority, minimizing the need to share power and resources with additional partners.
3. **Instrumental Rationality:** Coalition decisions are driven by pragmatic considerations rather than ideological congruence or policy goals (Riker, 1962; Laver & Schofield, 1998).

#### 2.1.1 Application to the 2015 Nigerian General Elections

The 2015 Nigerian general elections provide a compelling case for applying Riker's Theory of Political Coalitions. The formation of the All Progressives Congress (APC) coalition was a strategic move by opposition parties to unseat the incumbent People's Democratic Party (PDP). The APC was an amalgamation of four major opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples

Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).

The formation of the APC coalition can be analyzed through the lens of Riker's theory in the following ways:

The primary goal of the APC coalition was to consolidate opposition forces to create a formidable political entity capable of challenging the PDP's long-standing dominance. By combining their resources and voter bases, the coalition aimed to enhance their electoral competitiveness and secure political power. The coalition was carefully constructed to include just enough parties to achieve a majority without diluting power excessively. This approach ensured that the coalition could function cohesively while maximizing the influence of each constituent party.

The coalition partners prioritized strategic gains over ideological compatibility. Despite having diverse political ideologies and policy preferences, the coalition members united under a common objective: to dislodge the PDP and gain control of the federal government.

#### 2.1.2 Implications for Governance and Policy Implementation

Riker's theory also helps explain some of the challenges that coalition governments face in terms of governance and policy implementation. Since coalitions are primarily formed for electoral success rather than ideological coherence, they often struggle with internal conflicts and policy disagreements once in power. These challenges can undermine governance effectiveness, policy continuity, and public service delivery, as coalition partners may have divergent priorities and approaches to addressing national issues. In the Nigerian context, the APC coalition has faced similar challenges. The need to balance the interests of diverse coalition partners has sometimes led to policy gridlock and inconsistent governance. These dynamics highlight the limitations of coalitions formed primarily for power maximization, as opposed to those built on shared policy goals and a genuine commitment to public service.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, relying extensively on secondary sources to analyze the impact of party coalitions on electoral outcomes and subsequent governance. The primary data sources include electoral data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

of Nigeria, which provides comprehensive details on election results from the 2015 general elections. Secondary sources such as academic journals, books, news articles, and previous research studies offer contextual insights and support the analysis of the political environment and coalition dynamics. The data collected is analyzed using content analysis. This method allows for a thorough examination of how coalition strategies were communicated, the consistency and coherence of policy promises, and the overall narrative constructed by the coalition parties. This provides understanding of the strategic formation of coalitions, their immediate electoral advantages, and the long-term implications for governance and policy implementation in Nigeria.

#### **4. Empirical Studies on Party Coalitions and Electoral Outcomes**

##### **4.1 Party Coalitions and Electoral Outcomes in Nigeria**

The dynamics of party coalitions in Nigeria have been critical in shaping electoral outcomes, particularly in the 2015 general elections. According to Adejumbi (2015), party coalitions in Nigeria emerged as a strategic response to the fragmented nature of the political landscape. The alliance between the All Progressives Congress (APC) and other smaller parties was pivotal in their electoral victory. Adejumbi argues that this coalition was not just a merger of parties but a convergence of diverse political interests and ideologies united by the common goal of unseating the incumbent government. This coalition significantly altered the electoral landscape, leading to increased voter turnout and a more competitive political environment. The success of the APC coalition underscores the importance of strategic alliances in overcoming political fragmentation and achieving electoral success in Nigeria.

In another study, Omilusi (2016) highlights the role of party coalitions in consolidating democratic practices in Nigeria. Omilusi's research indicates that the formation of coalitions often leads to more inclusive governance structures as parties negotiate power-sharing arrangements that reflect a broader spectrum of societal interests. The 2015 elections, according to Omilusi, were a testament to how coalitions can enhance democratic stability by reducing the likelihood of post-election violence and fostering a culture of political compromise. This is particularly important in a diverse country like Nigeria, where ethnic and regional divisions have historically influenced electoral outcomes. The coalition strategy,

therefore, not only impacts the immediate electoral results but also contributes to the long-term stability of the political system.

##### **4.2 Party Coalitions and Electoral Outcomes in Africa**

Beyond Nigeria, party coalitions have played significant roles in shaping electoral outcomes across Africa. Cheeseman and Larmer (2015) provide a comprehensive analysis of coalition politics in Africa, focusing on countries like Kenya and Zambia. Their study reveals that coalitions are often formed in response to the need for broader political support in highly competitive and polarized electoral environments. In Kenya, for instance, the formation of the National Super Alliance (NASA) in the 2017 elections was a strategic move to consolidate opposition forces against the ruling Jubilee Party. Cheeseman and Larmer argue that such coalitions can enhance the legitimacy of electoral processes by ensuring that elections are not just contests between dominant parties but involve a wider representation of political interests. This inclusivity can mitigate electoral violence and promote political stability.

In South Africa, Booysen (2018) examines the impact of coalitions on municipal elections, particularly in the wake of declining dominance by the African National Congress (ANC). Booysen's research indicates that coalitions have become a necessary strategy for opposition parties to challenge the ANC's hegemony. The study highlights the 2016 municipal elections where coalitions between the Democratic Alliance (DA) and other smaller parties led to significant electoral gains in key municipalities, including Johannesburg and Tshwane. Booysen argues that these coalitions not only altered the electoral map but also introduced new governance dynamics, as coalition partners had to navigate complex power-sharing arrangements. This has implications for policy implementation and governance, as coalition governments often require consensus-building and compromise.

##### **4.3 Party Coalitions and Electoral Outcomes in Europe and America**

In Europe, the role of party coalitions is well-documented, particularly in countries with proportional representation electoral systems. Gallagher, Laver, and Mair (2011) provide an in-depth analysis of coalition politics in parliamentary democracies, highlighting the importance of coalitions in forming stable governments. In Germany, for instance, coalitions have been a fundamental aspect of

the political system since World War II. The study notes that the formation of the Grand Coalition between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in several electoral cycles has been crucial in providing stable governance despite the fragmentation of the party system. Gallagher et al. argue that coalitions can enhance policy continuity and stability, which are essential for effective governance.

In the United States, although the two-party system dominates, coalitions within parties play a crucial role in electoral outcomes. Abramowitz and Saunders (2008) discuss how intra-party coalitions, such as the alignment of progressive and moderate factions within the Democratic Party, influence electoral strategies and outcomes. Their study highlights the 2008 presidential election, where the coalition of diverse groups within the Democratic Party, including minority voters, young people, and progressive activists, was instrumental in Barack Obama's victory. This coalition-building process is critical in a highly polarized political environment, as it enables parties to mobilize a broad base of support and enhance their electoral prospects.

#### 4.4 Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on party coalitions and electoral outcomes, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the long-term impacts of coalitions on governance and policy implementation. While many studies focus on the immediate electoral advantages and political stability brought about by coalitions, there is limited empirical analysis on how these coalitions influence governance effectiveness and policy-making over time. Future research could address this gap by exploring the long-term consequences of coalition governments on democratic consolidation, policy continuity, and public service delivery, particularly in emerging democracies like Nigeria.

#### 4.5 The Dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) from 1999-2015

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the dominant political force in Nigeria from the onset of the Fourth Republic in 1999 until 2015. During this period, the PDP maintained a significant hold on the political landscape through successive electoral victories and control over key political offices. Analysis of PDP's Dominance in Nigeria's Election (1999-2015)

**1999 Elections:** The 1999 general elections marked Nigeria's return to civilian rule after years of military dictatorship. The PDP, under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo, emerged victorious in the presidential election, securing 62.78% of the vote against the All People's Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD) coalition candidate, Olu Falae, who garnered 37.22% (Ibrahim, 2003). In the legislative elections, the PDP secured a majority in both chambers of the National Assembly. They won 206 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 59 out of 109 seats in the Senate (Omotola, 2010). Additionally, the PDP won gubernatorial elections in 21 out of 36 states, establishing a robust foundation for its dominance.

**2003 Elections:** The 2003 general elections further cemented the PDP's dominance. President Olusegun Obasanjo was re-elected with 61.94% of the vote, defeating Muhammadu Buhari of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), who received 32.19% (Lewis, 2003). The PDP's hold on the National Assembly was strengthened, winning 223 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 76 out of 109 seats in the Senate (Suberu, 2007). The party also increased its control at the state level, winning gubernatorial elections in 28 states.

**2007 Elections:** The 2007 general elections, which were widely criticized for irregularities and electoral malpractice, saw the PDP maintain its dominance. Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, the PDP candidate, won the presidential election with 69.82% of the vote, while Muhammadu Buhari of the ANPP secured 18.66% (Smith, 2011). In the legislative elections, the PDP won 263 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 87 out of 109 seats in the Senate (Ibrahim, 2007). The party continued to dominate the gubernatorial elections, winning in 27 states.

**2011 Elections:** The 2011 general elections were relatively more credible compared to previous elections and further solidified the PDP's dominance. Goodluck Jonathan, the PDP candidate, won the presidential election with 58.89% of the vote against Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who received 31.98% (Owen & Usman, 2015). In the National Assembly elections, the PDP secured 202 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 71 out of 109 seats in the Senate (Ojo, 2014). The PDP's gubernatorial wins remained substantial, with victories in 23 states.

**4.6 Data on Election Results (1999 - 2015)**

**Table 1: Presidential Election Results**

| Year | Party            | Percentage of Votes |
|------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1999 | PDP              | 62.7%               |
|      | APP/AD Coalition | 37.22%              |
| 2003 | PDP              | 61.94%              |
|      | ANPP             | 32.19%              |
| 2007 | PDP              | 69.82%              |
|      | ANPP             | 18.66%              |
| 2011 | PDP              | 58.89               |
|      | CPC              | 31.98%              |

**Table 2: National Assembly Results**

| Year | House of Representatives Seats | Senate Seats |
|------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 1999 | PDP - 206                      | PDP- 59      |
|      | OTHERS - 154                   | OTHERS – 50  |
| 2003 | PDP -223                       | PDP- 76      |
|      | OTHERS - 137                   | OTHERS - 33  |
| 2007 | PDP- 263                       | PDP – 87     |
|      | OTHERS - 97                    | OTHERS – 22  |
| 2011 | PDP - 202                      | PDP – 71     |
|      | OTHERS - 158                   | OTHERS – 38  |

**Table 3: Gubernatorial Results**

| Year | PDP States | Others |
|------|------------|--------|
| 1999 | 21         | 15     |
| 2003 | 28         | 8      |
| 2007 | 27         | 9      |
| 2011 | 23         | 13     |

From 1999 to 2015, the PDP's dominance in Nigeria's political arena was unprecedented. The party's consistent electoral victories at the presidential, legislative, and gubernatorial levels underscored its control over the country's political processes. This dominance was facilitated by strategic alliances, broad national appeal, and the ability to leverage incumbency advantages. However, it also faced criticisms related to electoral malpractices and internal party conflicts, which eventually contributed to its decline in 2015. Despite its decline, the leaders of the opposition were convinced that the only way to defeat the PDP in 2015 was through a merger.

**5. The Political Party Merger of 2015 in Nigeria**

**5.1 Background and Rationale for the Merger**

The political party merger of 2015 in Nigeria was a significant development in the country's political landscape, driven by the need to create a formidable opposition capable of challenging the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP had

been in power since the return to civilian rule in 1999, and by 2015, there was widespread dissatisfaction with its governance, characterized by issues such as corruption, insecurity, and economic mismanagement. According to Campbell (2014), the impetus for the merger was rooted in the recognition among opposition leaders that fragmented efforts would continue to yield suboptimal results against the entrenched PDP machinery. Therefore, the coalition was conceived as a strategic response to unify the opposition and present a united front. Formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC)

The All Progressive Congress (APC) was officially formed in February 2013, following the merger of four major opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). This merger marked the first successful amalgamation of opposition parties since Nigeria's return to democracy. Adejumbi (2015) highlights that the merger process was complex, involving extensive negotiations and compromises among party leaders.

The APC's formation was driven by the common goal of dislodging the PDP, necessitating the subsuming of individual party identities and interests into a larger collective identity.

## 5.2 Negotiations and Compromises

The negotiations leading to the merger were marked by significant compromises and strategic alignments. According to Omilusi (2016), one of the critical aspects of the merger talks was the agreement on power-sharing arrangements and the selection of a consensus candidate for the presidential election. The leaders of the merging parties had to reconcile differing political ideologies, regional interests, and personal ambitions to forge a unified entity. For instance, the ACN, predominantly rooted in the Southwest, had to align its liberal economic policies with the more populist and conservative stances of the CPC, which had a strong base in the North. Similarly, the ANPP, with its historical roots in the northern states, had to integrate its structures and support base into the new party framework.

## 5.3 Challenges and Internal Dynamics

The merger was not without its challenges. One significant issue was the management of internal party dynamics and the integration of various party structures. As noted by Adebawo and Obadare (2014), the APC had to address the concerns of local party officials and supporters who were wary of losing their influence and positions in the new arrangement. There were also fears of potential conflicts arising from the distribution of party offices and the selection of candidates for various political positions. The APC leadership worked to mitigate these issues through extensive consultations and the establishment of committees to oversee the integration process. This approach helped to manage internal dissent and ensure a relatively smooth transition into a unified party structure.

## 5.4 The Role of Key Figures

The success of the merger was significantly influenced by key political figures who played pivotal roles in brokering the alliance. Notable among them were Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ACN, Muhammadu Buhari of the CPC, and other influential leaders from the ANPP and APGA. According to Onapajo (2014), Tinubu's political acumen and strategic vision were instrumental in negotiating the merger and persuading other party leaders to join forces. Buhari's personal

popularity and political capital, especially in the northern regions, provided the APC with a strong electoral appeal. The involvement of these key figures not only lent credibility to the merger but also galvanized support from their respective constituencies, enhancing the APC's prospects as a unified opposition party.

## 5.5 Strategic Alliances and Electoral Preparations

Beyond the formal merger, the APC also sought to build broader coalitions with civil society organizations, youth groups, and other stakeholders dissatisfied with the PDP's rule. Ogunniyi (2015) discusses how the APC leveraged widespread discontent to mobilize support across different sectors of society. This strategic outreach was aimed at creating a broad-based movement that transcended traditional party lines and appealed to a wider electorate. The APC's preparations for the 2015 elections involved meticulous planning, including the formulation of a comprehensive manifesto that addressed key national issues such as security, corruption, and economic development. This strategic focus on critical national concerns helped to consolidate the party's support base and enhance its electoral viability.

## 5.6 Impact of the 2015 Merger on the Electoral Outcome of the General Elections

The merger that led to the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC) had a profound impact on the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. This historic alliance transformed the political landscape, challenging the long-standing dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The APC's success in the 2015 elections was a direct result of the strategic merger and coalition-building efforts, which enabled it to secure significant victories across presidential, legislative, and gubernatorial contests.

## 5.7 The 2015 General Election Results

The most notable outcome of the 2015 elections was the presidential victory of the APC candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari won the presidential election with 53.96% of the vote, defeating the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, who garnered 44.96% of the vote (INEC, 2015). This was a historic win as it marked the first time in Nigeria's history that an incumbent president was defeated in a democratic election. The total number of votes for Buhari was 15,424,921, while Jonathan received 12,853,162 votes. The 2015 presidential election results indicated a significant shift in voter

preference and political dynamics, driven largely by the formation of the APC and its broad-based appeal (INEC, 2015).

The APC also made substantial gains in the legislative elections, securing a majority in both chambers of the National Assembly. In the House of Representatives, the APC won 225 seats out of 360, while the PDP won 125 seats. In the Senate, the APC won 60 seats out of 109, while the PDP won 49 seats. The 2015 legislative election results showcased the APC's effective mobilization and strategic advantage post-merger, disrupting the PDP's long-held majority (INEC, 2015).

Furthermore, the APC also achieved remarkable success in the gubernatorial elections, securing control over a significant number of states. According to official results, the APC won gubernatorial elections in 20 states, while the PDP won in 13 states. The gubernatorial election results of 2015 underscored the APC's enhanced political strength and its ability to consolidate power at the state level, further weakening the PDP's influence (INEC, 2015).

### 5.8 Analysis and Impact

The 2015 merger significantly altered the political equilibrium in Nigeria. The unification of major opposition parties into the APC created a formidable political force capable of effectively challenging the PDP's dominance. The APC's victory in the presidential election was particularly impactful, symbolizing a shift towards a more competitive and pluralistic political system.

#### Strategic Advantages of the Merger

The merger provided several strategic advantages to the APC:

1. **Unified Opposition:** By consolidating various opposition parties, the APC was able to pool resources, unify their voter base, and present a cohesive platform to the electorate (Suberu, 2015).
2. **Broader Appeal:** The merger allowed the APC to broaden its appeal across different regions and demographics, overcoming the regional and ethnic divisions that had previously fragmented the opposition (Omotola, 2015).
3. **Enhanced Credibility:** The inclusion of prominent political figures from various parties lent credibility and legitimacy to the APC, boosting its electoral prospects (Campbell, 2014).

### 5.9 Long-term Implications

The success of the APC in the 2015 elections had several long-term implications:

**Political Competition:** The emergence of the APC as a powerful opposition marked a new era of political competition, contributing to the deepening of Nigeria's democratic processes (Lewis & Kew, 2015).

**Accountability:** The alternation of power between parties underscored the principle of accountability in governance, encouraging better performance from political leaders (Cheeseman, 2015).

**Electoral Reforms:** The 2015 elections highlighted the need for continued electoral reforms to ensure free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2015).

### 6. Long-term Consequences of the APC Government on Democratic Consolidation, Policy Continuity, and Public Service Delivery

The formation of the APC and its victory in the 2015 elections marked a significant moment for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. For the first time since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, an incumbent president was defeated, showcasing the maturing of Nigeria's democratic processes. The peaceful transition of power set a precedent for democratic alternation, which is crucial for the health and stability of any democracy (Suberu, 2015).

However, the long-term consolidation of democracy depends on the APC's ability to uphold democratic principles while in power. During its tenure, the APC government faced accusations of undermining democratic institutions and processes. Reports of selective anti-corruption campaigns targeting opposition figures, while sparing allies, raised concerns about the impartiality of the judiciary and anti-corruption bodies (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Additionally, allegations of electoral malpractice in subsequent elections, such as those held in 2019, posed further challenges to democratic consolidation (INEC, 2019). For a coalition government, maintaining a unified stance on democratic principles can be challenging, particularly when diverse political interests must be balanced.

One of the critical challenges for coalition governments is maintaining policy continuity, given the need to reconcile different agendas and interests among coalition partners. The APC government, upon assuming power, promised significant reforms in areas such as anti-corruption, economic diversification, and security. While some progress was made, the APC's

internal divisions often led to policy inconsistencies and reversals.

For instance, the APC's economic policy aimed to diversify Nigeria's oil-dependent economy. However, internal disagreements and bureaucratic inefficiencies hindered the implementation of coherent economic policies. While initiatives such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) were launched to stimulate growth, the inconsistency in policy application and the fluctuating commitment of coalition partners undermined these efforts (Kale, 2019). The lack of a unified vision within the coalition often resulted in fragmented policy execution, which is a common issue in coalition governments (Musa, 2018).

Public service delivery under the APC government faced significant challenges, reflecting the broader difficulties of coalition governance. While the APC made ambitious promises to improve public infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other services, the results were mixed. Healthcare delivery, for example, saw some improvements with the launch of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund aimed at expanding access to healthcare. However, systemic issues such as funding shortfalls, corruption, and administrative bottlenecks limited the program's effectiveness (WHO, 2018). Similarly, efforts to improve education through initiatives like the School Feeding Program had a positive impact but were often hampered by logistical challenges and inconsistent funding (UNICEF, 2019).

In terms of infrastructure, the APC government made strides with projects like the Lagos-Ibadan railway and various road construction projects. Nonetheless, the pace of progress was slowed by bureaucratic delays and the complexities of coordinating projects across different coalition interests (Adeniyi, 2016). The coalition's need to balance diverse political and regional demands often led to compromises that diluted the effectiveness of public service delivery initiatives.

The APC government's approach to security and anti-corruption also provides insights into the long-term consequences of coalition governance. While the APC prioritized combating Boko Haram and other insurgent groups, the persistence of these security challenges indicated underlying issues within the coalition's approach to governance. Internal disagreements and lack of cohesive strategy among coalition partners often hampered decisive action (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The anti-corruption drive, a cornerstone of Buhari's campaign, achieved some notable successes, such as the recovery of stolen assets and the prosecution of high-profile individuals. However, perceptions of selective justice and the use of anti-corruption measures as political tools against opponents raised questions about the integrity of the efforts. This selective application not only undermined the credibility of the anti-corruption campaign but also pointed to the difficulties in maintaining a unified stance on governance issues within a coalition (Transparency International, 2018).

In sum, the APC government's tenure post-2015 offers a complex picture of the long-term impacts of coalition governments on democratic consolidation, policy continuity, and public service delivery. While the coalition succeeded in breaking the PDP's long-standing dominance and set a precedent for democratic transitions, it faced significant challenges in maintaining policy coherence and improving public service delivery. The internal dynamics of coalition governance, marked by diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, often led to inconsistencies and inefficiencies that hindered the realization of its ambitious reform agenda.

## 7. Summary

From 1999 to 2015, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) maintained a dominant position in Nigeria's political arena. The party consistently won presidential elections, controlled the majority of seats in the National Assembly, and held a significant number of gubernatorial positions. This dominance was facilitated by strategic alliances, national appeal, and incumbency advantages, but was also criticized for electoral malpractices and internal conflicts, contributing to its decline. In the face of growing dissatisfaction with the PDP, the need for a formidable opposition led to the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2013. This merger combined four major opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). The merger aimed to unify the opposition and present a strong challenge to the PDP.

The formation of the APC involved extensive negotiations, compromises, and strategic alignments, addressing power-sharing arrangements and candidate selections. Key political figures such as Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Muhammadu Buhari played crucial roles in brokering the alliance and galvanizing support. The APC's strategic outreach to civil society organizations,

youth groups, and other stakeholders, along with a comprehensive manifesto addressing critical national issues, helped build a broad-based movement. The 2015 general elections marked a significant shift in Nigeria's political landscape, with Muhammadu Buhari winning the presidency and the APC securing majorities in both legislative chambers and numerous gubernatorial seats.

The merger and subsequent APC victory in 2015 signified a move towards a more competitive and pluralistic political system. However, the APC government faced challenges in maintaining policy continuity and improving public service delivery due to internal divisions and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Issues such as selective anti-corruption campaigns and allegations of electoral malpractice also raised concerns about the impartiality of governance and democratic consolidation.

## 8. Conclusion

The PDP's long-standing dominance from 1999 to 2015 was effectively challenged by the strategic formation of the APC, which unified opposition parties and leveraged widespread dissatisfaction with the incumbent government. The APC's victory in the 2015 elections marked a historic turning point, demonstrating the potential for democratic alternation and competitive politics in Nigeria.

However, the success of the APC merger highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of coalition governance. While it facilitated the first democratic defeat of an incumbent president in Nigeria, the APC struggled with internal cohesion and policy implementation, impacting public service delivery and democratic principles.

The 2015 merger and its outcomes underscore the importance of unified opposition in a dominant-party system and the complexities involved in maintaining effective governance within a coalition framework. The APC's experience illustrates the potential for democratic progress and the need for ongoing reforms to strengthen Nigeria's democratic institutions and processes.

## 9. Recommendations

To enhance the long-term effectiveness of party coalitions and coalition governments in Nigeria, it is recommended that political parties develop and implement robust mechanisms that ensure policy continuity beyond electoral cycles. This includes establishing bipartisan committees and long-term strategic plans that transcend individual

administrations, thereby mitigating the risks of policy inconsistency and promoting sustainable development.

Political parties should prioritize inclusive governance practices that foster greater political stability and democratic consolidation. This involves creating frameworks for transparent decision-making processes and equitable power-sharing among coalition partners. Encouraging active participation from all coalition members can help address governance challenges and ensure that the coalition's policy implementation aligns with the broader public interest, ultimately contributing to more effective and stable governance.

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