

Can the New Opposition Coalition ADC Unseat Tinubu in 2027?

By Kabir Akintayo

After months of back-and-forth deliberations over whether to adopt an existing political platform or register a new one, the National Coalition of Political Opposition Movement has finally settled for the African Democratic Congress (ADC) to challenge President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2027 general elections. Initially, speculation swirled around the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as the coalition's preferred vehicle, especially after former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, joined its ranks. However, internal disputes quickly erupted, culminating in the purported removal of the party chairman by a faction of the party. Subsequently, the coalition floated the idea of launching a new party, the All Democratic Alliance (ADA), symbolized by a corn logo. But this plan hit a bureaucratic wall after the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said that it may take a long time to approve the registration of the proposed party. While ADA was unveiled with documentation indicating a formal request for registration, INEC disclosed that no fewer than four different entities had applied under the name "ADA." None, however, had fulfilled the necessary requirements for registration. On a lighter note, ADA also suffered a lot of backlash on social media with netizens mocking the acronym. ADA in Yoruba means cutlass. Pronounced differently, it also means cutlass in Hausa. In Igbo, ADA is the name given to the first daughter of every family. Social media users who are loyal to the ruling establishment therefore wondered the specific ADA the opposition coalition was talking about.

The coalition finally showcased its political strength recently at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja, where it officially unveiled former Senate President David Mark as the interim chairman of the ADC, alongside Rauf Aregbesola — former Minister and ex-Governor of Osun State — as interim national secretary. In a dramatic move, Ralph Nwosu, the long-serving National Chairman of the ADC, announced the dissolution of the party's National Working Committee (NWC), thereby ceding control of the party structure to the coalition. However, this takeover did not go unchallenged. Some ADC members, including the party's 2023 presidential candidate, Dumebi Kachikwu, rejected the move, arguing that Nwosu's tenure had expired on August

21, 2022. In a press statement, Kachikwu declared that the coalition was dealing with an illegitimate leadership and predicted that it would soon be in search of another party platform. Further dissent came from ADC members who described the imposition of party leaders as tyrannical and an undemocratic hijack of the party's structure.

Despite that, the coalition gathered an impressive lineup of political heavyweights at the unveiling, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, 2023 Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, Peter Obi, former Kaduna state governor, Nasir El-Rufai, and his Rivers counterpart, Rotimi Amaechi. Other prominent attendees included former APC

Chairman John Oyegun, former Sokoto State Governor Aminu Tambuwal, ex-Attorney General Abubakar Malami, Senator Dino Melaye, former Minister, Solomon Dalung, Dele Momodu, former Benue governor, Senators Gabriel Suswam, and Ireti Kingibe (LP), former Deputy Speaker, Emeka Ihedioha, and former Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar (retd.)

Meanwhile, the ruling APC is actively consolidating power. The party currently controls 23 states, with an influx of defections from both the PDP and LP. In contrast, the PDP

governs 10 states, while LP, NNPP and APGA each hold only one. At the federal level, six senators and 24 members of the House of Representatives have defected to the APC since the beginning of President Tinubu's administration. In a surprise twist, APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje recently resigned, citing health reasons. However, political analysts believe this was a strategic move to open the door for new power brokers ahead of 2027 — a tactical reshuffling to accommodate incoming political figures and neutralize the plan of the opposition.

While crises within the PDP and LP continue to linger, no elected official would want to run on a party platform embroiled in legal disputes. In the coming months, more state and federal lawmakers may be forced to choose between aligning with the revitalized ADC or joining the ruling APC.

Supporters of the coalition elements are saying what is happening now was exactly what happened in 2015 with the formation of the APC coalition that ousted President Goodluck Jonathan. But on a closer and deeper study, the



assertion may look like false equivalence. The 2015 merger was caused by a widely accepted “gentleman's agreement” that power would return to the North after Jonathan does one term. This was because his 2011 victory usurped the turn of the North which graciously conceded to him for a term. Jonathan's decision to seek re-election in 2015 — despite an earlier pledge to serve only one term — was perceived as a betrayal, prompting a unified northern backlash that led to his defeat. The Northern PDP governors rose against him because it was their turn to aspire to the Presidency.

The 2015 incident was therefore not baseless. Incumbent governors, senators, and other elected officials defected en masse to form a powerful merger. Governors from the ACN, ANPP, CPC, and APGA backed the union. Buhari, a Northern political heavyweight, commanded mass support, especially from the North. The defection of the New PDP bloc — including five governors, Atiku Abubakar, and Bukola Saraki — strengthened the merger. This time around, governors and other bigwigs are not leaving the APC to join the coalition, they are leaving the opposition to join the ruling party. Following President Muhammadu Buhari's two-term administration, power shifted to the South, with Bola Tinubu emerging as APC's candidate, overcoming internal opposition that had favoured Senate President Ahmad Lawan. Key northern figures, including El-Rufai, supported the rotation of power to the South to preserve national balance.

Now that the South holds the presidency, political tradition dictates it should complete an eight-year term. Therefore, if the coalition seeks to unseat Tinubu, it must carefully consider the necessity of power rotation. Should the coalition field a Northern candidate in 2027, the South may rally behind Tinubu to preserve its turn? Conversely, if a Southerner emerges, the North may distrust any assurance to relinquish power after four years, preferring to wait until 2031 for a proper return to power. This supports the theory that the coalition is a strategic vehicle for Northern politicians eyeing the presidency in 2031.

Another significant hurdle for the ADC-led coalition is the perception that its key members are career politicians with long-standing political baggage. The survival of the new coalition depends largely on its ability to present a credible, unifying candidate — a difficult task given the conflicting ambitions within its ranks. Atiku is believed to be using the platform to pursue his long-held presidential aspiration. Obi and Amaechi have indicated they would serve only one term if elected, while El-Rufai is reportedly positioning himself for a presidential run in 2031.

Ultimately, whoever emerges as the coalition's flagbearer will have to navigate the delicate regional balance, internal rivalries, and voter expectations — all of which could either strengthen or fracture the alliance. To win a presidential election in Nigeria, a party needs resources, structure, strategy and an acceptable candidate from the right region. The opposition has lost two rich states, Akwa Ibom and Delta, to the APC while two other rich states, Rivers and Bayelsa, are rumored to be moving to the ruling party.

Without any governor or serious political office holder, the coalition will struggle with getting nationwide structure. They are however clever enough to be keeping their winning strategy close to their chest. As for the issue of an acceptable candidate from the right part of the country, this is a tricky one due to the seeming desperation of a man like Atiku who has contested almost every time INEC has advertised presidential nomination forms. This will be a problem because 2027 is still supposed to be the turn of the South, according to the unwritten rule.

The South felt offended when PDP presented Atiku in 2023, that was why he performed woefully in that part of the country. Tinubu who is unpopular in the south-south and southeast defeated him in the two zones. This will repeat itself in 2027 with any northern candidate. The South will also not buy any promise of one term Presidency from a northern candidate while the North won't also take the risk of having a President from its region who in four years will be blackmailed with the promise, real or fake, of doing one term. The North will rather wait to start a fresh tenure of 8 years.

To a lot of political observers, presenting a southern candidate against Tinubu is the only viable option that can keep the country together but if that candidate is not Dr. Goodluck Jonathan who is guaranteed can't spend more than one term, the North may be skeptical and when the chips are down, its leaders will meet at Arewa House in Kaduna and weigh the options and ask themselves this question: “What is the point of voting out Tinubu and trusting another southerner to spend one term?” The coalition leaders have their jobs cut out for them. They must prepare for internal wrangling and clash of ambitions. Defeating Bola Tinubu goes beyond all the paparazzi that comes with their coming together. They must find a suitable candidate that will be accepted by reasonable parts of North and South, a candidate that ticks all the boxes explained above.

It is however not yet uhuru for the ruling party. There have been economic gains on paper but it must work hard to replicate them on the daily lives of people in terms of purchasing power, cost of basic items, employment opportunities, infrastructure etc. This will go a long way to reduce the mass discontent seen across the country. Security is a big problem. It was already bad before the advent of the present administration. While a lot of terrorists and bandits have been eliminated in recent months, but people are still being slaughtered in their homes. This has to stop.

Politically, President Tinubu is a formidable opponent and a hard nut to crack any day any time. He won the 2023 elections against all odds. Since assuming office, he has consolidated power and covered his weak grounds in southeast, south-south and even southwest. The coalition leaders will have to work extra hard to undo the structure he has put in place for victory in 2027. It is not impossible to defeat President Tinubu in 2027. But the probability or otherwise remains to be seen