

Intra-Party Conflicts and Primary Elections: The Cause of Multiplicity of Political Parties in Nigeria.

Linus C. Nnamani

Department of Political Science Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT)

Email: drlcnnamani@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Intra-party Politics and primary election within each political party have rules and guidelines (institutional frame work) that should be the guiding principles of the political party. If a political party maintains those internal mechanism through the use of internal procedures, such political; party would likely flourish, and remain stable for a long time. This study sought to know whether political parties especially the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Enugu State have been adhering to those institutional frame work in their intra-party politics and primary elections. It also discussed the consequences of absence of observance of democratically principles in the practice of intra-party politics and primary elections. The researcher interviewed and distributed questioners to delegates from the three Senatorial Districts of the State. The research shows that party rules, regulations and institutional frame work are only in theory as those intra-party politics are marred by issues like; godfatherism, incumbency factor, financial inducement, effects of powerful political elites ectra. The research therefore recommends that party members should be allowed to freely and unconditionally elect those who will contest in the general election

Keywords: Conflicts, Primary elections, Political parties and Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are the organized institutions with hierarchical structures which form the vital tools and connecting bridges between government and the governed. Further, political parties are representative of the citizens. In many democratic nations, there are many political parties with their ideologies, issues, plans and strategies to win elections and control the government. It is known that the political party that wins the majority votes and meets the constitutional requirements of that nation, forms the government and controls the apparatus. The party that did not win forms the opposition party that tries to ensure that the party in power is dedicated to the national and international activities of government.

The primary election forms the platform where party flag bearers to different political positions are recruited. As political parties have millions of members and supporters, it is usually herculean task to select or elect any party's candidates that would contest various political positions for each political party.

Further, it should be noted that the selection of viable and competent candidates is very important and it has to be done through primary election. This primary election is normally guided by the party's internal mechanisms ensuring that the party's internal democracy is upheld. Institutionalization of party's ideology and interest will allow for a proper method of channeling social demands and also help in ensuring that most of the party activities are in order. Therefore, any party's survival, effectiveness and buoyancy is largely anchored on its internal process of party primaries and candidates selection process.

Nevertheless, the institutionalized process of party primaries and candidates selection have been recurring issues that continued to elude applicability as political parties in Nigeria have been marred by various degrees of internal conflicts, squabbles and crises arising from primary elections in the political parties. [1] stated:

“the greatest internal conflicts that bedeviled many political parties in Nigeria include indiscriminate imposition of candidates for various political positions by powerful members of the political parties, substitution of candidates who won primary elections with those who did not win those primary elections”.

Such issues disrupt internal rules and regulations and lead to deflection of members of those political parties that

feel aggrieved into other political parties or factionalization within the party.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of primary election and maintenance of internal democracy has remained a vexed and tempting issue in most Nigeria political parties. It was expected that after decades of long colonial rule, military rule and epileptic democratic trials, the new democratic dispensation would create an avenue for maximization of democratic dividends and growth of development. However, it

appears that many Nigerians have not learnt how to comfort themselves during the process of candidates' selection and at the same time, maintain internal party mechanisms to obtain stable political parties. Therefore, maintaining internal political party stability has remained a herculean task in selecting candidates and practice of our democracy.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed both primary (use of questionnaire, interview and observations) and secondary sources of data collection (textbooks, magazines, newspapers, online materials, articles and journals).

primaries and candidates selection in Nigeria electoral process?

The study aims at addressing the following research questions.

- (b) What are the effects and implications of political party primaries and candidates selection in Nigeria political process?
- (c) How would political party primaries and candidates selection be handled to eliminate or reduce intra-party conflicts and fractionalization

- (a) What are the legal and institutional framework guiding political party

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was set to achieve the following objectives:

The Legal and Institutional framework guiding party primaries and candidate selection

The legal and institutional frameworks define the operational structure of every party and regulate membership behavior within the party. This institutional framework minimizes internal conflict within the party. The legal and institutional framework in Nigeria includes:

- Explaining the effects and implications of political party primaries and candidates selection as the bane of intra-party conflicts, fractionalization and disintegration.
- Proffering recommendations that would reduce conflicts that arise from political party primaries in Nigeria politics and enhance democratic sustainability and consolidation.

- The 1999 constitution (as amended).
- The constitution of the political party.
- The Electoral Acts
- The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) statutory rules.

- Other informal rules and understanding.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides guidelines

Sections 221 to 229 of the constitution provide the

prohibition of political activities by certain associations, restriction on formation of political parties, constitution and rules of political parties, aims, objectives and finances of political parties, as well as the relationship between political parties and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Measuring of Intra Party Politics

Intra party politics is a very broad term which describes a wide range of issues and methods including the activities and participation of members in party deliberations and decision making. It is democracy within the party and the extent to which a party subscribes to and abides by the basic and universal democratic tenets. Some indices are very essential in determining the health of any intra party politics. According to [1], there are three indicators for judging a democratic political party. These include; equal participation, inclusiveness in decision making and party institutionalization.

Intra-party politics has two indicators, namely; the conduct of free, fair and credible regular internal elections on democratic bases and equal participation of all members in decision making affecting their party. These indices are very essential for creating an open and deliberative Intra-Party Politics in any modern democracy.

[2] in their studies of Latin American countries examine the ingredients of internal democracy or party system institutionalization.

According to them, ingredients of democracy are:

- When the rules governing party competition are commonly observed, widely understood and confidently anticipated;
- When Parties have strongly rooted in society, affecting political preferences, attracting stable electoral support and demonstrating continuity in ideological terms;
- When Political elites recognize the legitimacy of electoral competition as the route to office;

for the formation, operation and activities of political parties in the country.

- When Party organization exists independently of powerful leaders, with well resourced nationwide organizations and well established internal procedures for recruitment to party offices.

These are four indices to be used in measuring the democratic health of any candidate selection procedure. The purest party primary is where party members' votes, decide the composition and rank the candidates using certain criteria. Every card carrying member is eligible to contest and stand as a party's candidate. Decentralisation based on territorial mechanisms is also very essential in order to ensure regional and local representation must be determined exclusively by votes and not an appointment that is ratified by a unanimous or majority vote; and second, the voting results must be done and presented officially to justify and legitimize the candidacy. When candidate is selected without fulfilling these conditions, we refer to this as an appointment system.

A cursory look at these criteria will reveal that party systems in Nigeria and most African countries are both a negation and violation of these fundamental precepts. In Nigeria, rules governing competitions are skewed in favour of incumbents; they lack clear cut ideological positions and rely on patronage from influential members. In Nigeria rather than deepen party systems, or consolidate democracy, what has been enriched is the idea that the only way to protect one's own interest is to acquire and hold on to a monopoly of power, to the exclusion of others

[3] posits that, Political parties in African countries are poorly institutionalized, with weak policy capacity and shifting

bases on issues. They often rely on narrow personal, regional or ethnic ties, rather than reflecting society as a whole. Corroborating the above therefore, [4], maintained that, Nigerian Political Parties are yet to be transformed for two reasons: Firstly; They are not organized according to any distinct ideology, principles or programmes. Secondly, they are neither coherent nor focused. They have not been able to offer the electorate real choice.

[5] is of the view that, political competitions in unstable societies often gravitate around sectional issues exclusive identities or geographic base. This point was further buttressed by [4] when he posits that, parties and elections can exacerbate differences and perceived identities, either as a result of a sense of communal insecurity or manipulation by elites who gain from the mobilization of uninformed and polarization. In these circumstances, political elites often try to outbid each other on exclusive personal grounds.

Findings on Intra-Party Conflicts

The applicability of legal and institutional framework in Peoples’ Democratic Party in Enugu State like in many political parties in Nigeria has been marred by various degrees of internal conflicts, crisis and squabbles. Therefore, the internal structure of the parties has been infiltrated by battles, competitions, hatred and oppression due to imposition of party candidates, substitution of candidates who won the primary elections with those who failed the same primary elections and the party leadership.

This indiscriminate disruption and disrespect of internal rules and regulations result to deflection of members of one political party to other parties, fractionalization of the party or formation of another party by the aggrieved members. [3] in his study using PDP as a case study stated in respect of equal participation of all members of PDP in gubernatorial primaries of the party from 1999 to 2015 in Kaduna State that:

“Sixty five percent of the respondents confirmed that most of the PDP members did not participate in gubernatorial candidates primary elections in Nigeria”

The above is in Conformity with other findings in this research as shown in the table below

Likert 4 point scale was used to reassess the information obtained from the respondents.

The effects of non-observance of intra-party politics and guidelines for primary elections is shown on the table.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Statement	VGE (4)	GE (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	EFX	X	Decision
Non observance to:							
(a) Intra-party politics	160 (640)	30 (90)	8 (16)	2 (2)	748	3.74	Great Extent
(b) Primary elections	155 (620)	35 (105)	7 (14)	3 (3)	742	3.71	Great Extent
(c) Godfatherism	146 (584)	32 (96)	17 (34)	5 (5)	719	3.60	Great Extent
(d) Financial Inducement	150 (600)	30 (90)	15 (30)	5 (5)	725	3.63	Great Extent

Source: Compiled from field survey 2018

$$\text{Grand mean} = \frac{14.675}{4} = 3.67$$

- Where VGE = Very Great Extent
- GE = Great Extent
- LE = Low Extent
- VLE = Very Low Extent

The information from the above table confirms the responses and findings from

the respondents. The results confirm that non-adherence to guidelines and

institutional frame work regarding intra-party politics and primary elections adversely affects political party activities

to a great extent, thereby resulting in deflection of members and proliferation of political parties in the country

DISCUSSION

In Nigeria, the 2011 Electoral Act, section 85 provides under: Notice of Convention, Congress, etc that:

(i) Every registered political party shall give the Commission at least 21 days notice of any convention, congress, conference or meeting convened for the purpose of electing members of its executive committees, other governing bodies or nominating candidates for any of the elective offices specified under this Act.

(2) The Commission may with or without prior notice to the political party monitor and attend any convention, congress, conference or meeting which is convened by a political party for the purpose of: -

(a) electing members of its executive committees or other governing bodies;

(b)- nominating candidates for an election at any level;

(c) approving a merger with any other registered political party.

(3) The election of members of the executive committee or other governing body of a political party, including the election to fill a vacant position in any of the aforesaid bodies, shall be conducted in a democratic manner and allowing for all members of the party or duly elected delegates to vote in support of a candidate of their choice.

The same 2011 Electoral Act, section 87, under Nomination of candidate by parties states that:

1. A political party seeking to nominate candidates for elections under this Act shall hold primaries for aspirants to all elective positions.
2. The procedure for the nomination of candidates by political parties for the various elective positions shall be by direct or indirect primaries.
3. A political party that adopts the direct primaries procedure shall ensure that all aspirants are given equal opportunity of being voted for by members of the party.

4. A political party that adopts the system of indirect primaries for the choice of its candidate shall adopt the procedure outlined below:

(a) In the case of nominations to the position of Presidential candidate, a political party shall,

(i) Hold special conventions in each of the 36 States of the Federation and FCT, where delegates shall vote for each of the aspirants at designated centres in each State Capital on specified dates.

(ii) A National Convention shall be held for the ratification of the candidate with the highest number of votes.

(iii) The aspirant with the highest number of votes at the end of voting in the 36 States of the Federation and FCT, shall be declared the winner of the Presidential primaries of the political party and the aspirant's name shall be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission as the candidate of the party after ratification by the national convention.

(b) In the case of nominations to the position of Governorship candidate, a political party shall, where they intend to sponsor candidates:

(i) Hold special congress in each of the local government areas of the States with delegates voting for each of the aspirants at the congress to be held in designated centres on specified dates.

(ii) The aspirant with the highest number of votes at the end of voting shall be declared the winner of the primaries of the party and aspirant's name shall be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission as the candidate

- of the party, for the particular State.
- (c) In the case of nominations to the position of a Senatorial candidate, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly a political party shall, where they intend to sponsor candidate:
- (i) Hold special congresses in the Senatorial District, Federal Constituency and the State assembly constituency respectively, with delegates voting for each of the aspirants in designated centres on specified dates.
- (ii) The aspirant with the highest number of votes at the end of voting shall be declared the winner of the primaries of the party and the aspirant's name shall be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission as the candidate of the party.
- (d) In the case of the position of a Chairmanship candidate of an Area council a political party shall, where they intend to sponsor candidates:
- (i) Hold special congresses in the Area Councils, with delegates voting for each of the aspirants at designated centers on a specified date.
- (ii) The aspirant with the highest number of votes at the end of voting shall be declared the winner of the primaries of the party and the aspirant's name shall be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission as the candidate of the party.
5. In the case of a councillorship candidate, the procedure for the nomination of the candidate shall be by direct primaries in the ward and the name of the candidate with the highest number of votes shall be submitted to the Independent National electoral commission as the candidate of the party.
6. Where there is only one aspirant in a political party for any of the elective positions mentioned in sub section (4) (a), (b), (c) and (d), the party shall convene a special convention or congress at a designated centre on a specified date for the confirmation of such aspirant and the name of the aspirant shall be forwarded to the Independent National Electoral commission as the candidate of the party
7. Where a political party fails to comply with the provisions of this Act in the conduct of its primaries, its candidate for election shall not be included in the election for the particular position in issue.
8. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Act or rules of a political party, an aspirant who complains that any of the provisions of this Act and the guidelines of a political party has not been complied within the selection or nomination of a candidate of a political party for election, may apply to the Federal High Court or the High Court of a State, for redress.
- However, in spite of all these provisions, political parties mostly do not conform to legal codes of internal democracy, whether at the level of electoral regulations or at that of their own internal party rules. The existence of party caucuses, the monetization of the party nomination process and ill defined screening process for candidates ensure that party members do not ultimately, in some cases, nominate their preferred candidates'.
- In Nigeria, the parties have claimed exclusive rights over their internal processes through court action. Many political parties grossly manipulated the primaries, and in many cases the results of the primaries were not respected. Several candidates who did not win the primaries were eventually selected by the leaders of the party, claiming a spurious logic of party supremacy in the selection of party candidates to compete for general elections. One such reported incident took place in Imo State, where the candidate who polled the highest number of votes at the party primaries of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the

governorship candidacy of the party in the state, Senator Ararume, was dropped for the candidate who came 14th at the primaries, Charles Ugwu. There is a

general trend for the party congresses and primaries in Nigeria to be characterized by a lack of internal democratic conduct.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To remedy the afore-mentioned problem and also to address the similar discrepancies witnessed in the 2007 elections, the late President Yar'adua constituted a panel under the leadership of retired Chief Justice of the federation, Justice Lawal Uwais to review the Nigerian electoral system and proffer solution to the problem. On August 2007 The Electoral Reform Committee released its report. In the report, additional provisions were made to compliment the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act of 2006. The report maintains that, any political association wishing to be registered as a political party must meet some criteria and regulations that would be made from time to time by the INEC.

The report further stated that, political parties must have identifiable ideologies and ideals, and should be encouraged to establish think tanks at all level to generate ideas. To avoid Godfartherism, parochial tendencies, the report encouraged policy-based politics as against personality-based politics. The

report encourages parties to distinguish themselves from each other based on substantive issues of concern to voters rather than the personality of their leaders. In an effort to avoid intra-party conflicts, the report suggested that, there should be no dual leadership of political parties and primary elections should be open, monitored and their rules enforced by the electoral bodies.

In respect of funding, the report argued that, transparency and accountability, shall publicly be disclosed to INEC stating all sources of funding. Even the additional issues in 2011 Electoral Act have not significantly reduced the avoidance of those party rules and regulations. That is the main reason why Nigeria has over ninety (90) political parties. INEC should device means of reducing the number of political parties in Nigeria. Many of those political parties do not have presidential candidate and cannot win even one governorship position. Such political parties should be de-registered.

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