

Internal Democracy and All Progressive Party (APC) Election Losses in the 2019 Governorship Elections

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Abstract

Since return of democracy in 1999, Party politics in Nigeria has been characterized by incessant and unabated occurrence of intra-party politics with candidate's recruitment process lacking in merit, fair-play, and credibility. It is against this backdrop that the study made a review of internal democracy and All Progressive Party (APC) election losses in 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey which sourced data through primary and secondary sources. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to help streamline the voting population in Rivers and Zamfara while Research Advisor Table was used to empirically validate sample size. Karl Marx dialectical materialism and internal democracy and policy formulation theories were used as theoretical framework of the study. The study findings showed that intra-party conflict as well as recruitment and selection process of All Progressive Congress contributed immensely to the losses of APC in Rivers and Zamfara. Incessant constitutional breaches and uncontrollable decamping of members of APC also contributed to the losses. The study recommended among others that party stalwarts need to urgently settle all conflicting issues through dialogue and the

need to amend the party constitution for more strict laws to guide primary elections and making sure that violators are heavily sanctioned by the party to serve as deterrence.

Keywords: Democracy, Political Party, Internal Democracy, All Progressive Congress

Introduction

The role of political parties in any democracy cannot be underestimated. They are the vehicles through which public officers seek recruitment into various public offices at different levels of government. Internal democracy in the other hand, is a crucial factor for a peaceful coexistence and full development of a party system. Whether in multi-party or two-party system, political party serves as bedrock of democracy and its role in shaping democratic experience cannot be overemphasized.

It is undeniable fact that political parties have remained important and indispensable tools in strengthening and consolidating democracy in most democratic institutions in the world today. Arising from the catalytic feature of political parties, they serve as an intermediate role in democratic societies by acting as a connecting cord between the government and the people, thereby ensuring all tenets of democracy are upheld in the country (Orji, 2013).

Political parties are makers of democracy such that no democratic or undemocratic settings can exist without them. Therefore, it is true that political parties pose as instrumental paddle of democratic foundations which employs diverse processes in ensuring that democratic structures are guarded and protected. Essentially, they are carved as institutions which sponsor a wide range of aspiring political office holders through a formal and constitutional process, setting them aside as the parties' official candidates (Janda, 2005).

While re-echoing the importance of internal democracy to political leadership in Nigeria, (Ikelegbe, 2013:4) opined that “Internal democracy is a crucial factor for the existence of internal cohesion in the Nigerian political parties. Absence of a well-structured, non-participation of the members, rules and processes, denial of party member rights, and a weak approach to handling grievances are as a result of the absence of internal democracy and poor leadership in the Nigerian political party system”.

Despite the various political and electoral reforms in Nigeria since 1999, political parties in Nigeria have been riddled with lots of irregularities from the formation to their structure. The absence of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties has created lots of political wrangling in the polity and evidently noticeable in the last 20 years. The incessant and unabated occurrence of intra-party politics in the Fourth Republic has remained an issue of grave concern and a threat to democratic consolidation and stability in Nigeria. The poor and low internal democracy in political parties in Nigeria is responsible for most of the internal political wrangling that have characterized the political space in the Fourth Republic with grave consequences to the present political stability and the future of the democratic experience in Nigeria.

Candidate’s selection among political parties in Nigeria lack merit, fair-play and credibility. As a result of wrong choice of candidates, the political space in Nigeria has been desecrated with people of questionable characters and dented personality. For instance, fugitive, ex-convict, corrupt individuals etc. emerged through fraudulent ways in virtually all the major parties in Nigeria to aspire and win elections. It is against this backdrop that this paper makes a critical review of internal democracy and election losses in 2019 governorship elections in Nigeria with emphasis on All Progressive Congress.

Focus of the Study

The study focuses on All Progress Congress, a political party and ruling party in Nigeria's multi-party system. It examines the reasons responsible for the party's change of fortune in Rivers and Zamfara states with 2019 Governorship Elections as a point of departure. The study investigates the nexus between intra-party crisis and election losses in All Progressive Congress using Rivers and Zamfara governorship election in 2019 as point of reference.

Intra-Party Conflict

Intra-party conflict has been the major hallmark of Nigerian party politics in the Fourth Republic. The consequences of these conflicts factionalized some parties and led to decamping from one party to another in addition to anti-party activities. Intra-party conflicts have been caused by the absence of internal democracy and party ideology in which the elite look for power for their personal greed and not for the purpose of the promotion of party ideals and interest (Momodu & Mutadi 2013). Intra-party conflicts are caused in Nigerian democracy as a result of imposition of candidates, politics of godfatherism, absence of internal democracy, corruption, lack of ideology and selfishness. The conflicts can be managed through a mechanism of internal party democracy and promotion of party ideology and principles (Awofeso et al. 2017).

The intra-party conflicts have been a dominant occurrence in Nigerian politics since 1999 involving big parties such as AD, PDP, ANPP and APGA with internal conflicts affecting their performance and activities in election and beyond (Toyden, 2002). The lack of apparatus for internal party democracy is the major causes of intra-party conflicts in Nigerian democracy including equal participation, inclusiveness, and institutionalization. As a result of lack of the above, some factors emerged such as lack of ideology, imposition of candidates, party funding, zoning formula in Nigerian context, party primaries and party executive arbitrariness. These are the main reasons for intra-party conflicts

in Nigerian democracy leading to undemocratic practice (Olaifa, 2011).

The PDP as the major ruling party set the foundation for intra-party conflicts as a result of the above factors identified by various scholars. The party became too strong and dominant in the country to the extent that it violated democratic principles and internal democracy making many members aggrieved causing anti-party activities, decamping and other undemocratic practices. The party had harbored members with grudges and lamentations beyond control to the extent that it internally crumbled. The violation of an informal party agreement for zoning of presidential seat between the North and the South for 8 years each was violated by President Jonathan in 2011 which further polarized the party beyond repair (Aleyomi, 2013). By the end of 2013, PDP was speedily scattered towards its political doom as a result of intra-party conflicts. The nature of the conflicts is all encompassing involving the national executive and the legislature, intra-state internal crises between one faction and another and party executives. The party set a norm for intra-party conflicts in which the APC hurriedly stumbled across and continued from where the PDP stopped.

Genesis of All-Progressive Congress (APC)

The section discusses the process of APC formation, its challenges, achievements as well as mechanism puts in place to resolve internal conflict.

Party formation: The All-Progressive Congress (APC) was formed on 6 February 2013 in preparation for the 2015 General Election. The APC is an outcome of the merger of three biggest opposition political parties and a faction of the fourth one to establish a stronger opposition that will challenge the ruling PDP which has ruled for straight sixteen years. The parties that formed APC merger are: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance

(APGA) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). The merger was a result of a prolonged attempt to wrestle power from PDP because the opposition parties realized that they can never defeat PDP individually since each of the opposition has its stronghold. For instance, ACN dominated the Southwest, ANPP and CPC dominated the Northeast and Northwest while APGA dominated some Southeastern states. The first attempt was made in 2011 between the ACN and CPC which failed to materialize in the late hours due to clash of personal interests by the party stalwarts.

Challenge in registering APC: The major challenge faced in the merger of APC was an attempt that was allegedly believed to have been staged by the ruling PDP to scuttle the registration of the party by sending other parties called African People's Congress and All Patriotic Citizens with the same abbreviation 'APC' to deny the actual APC from being registered owing to its strength and threats to the ruling PDP. The electoral body: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) went ahead to register the APC after fulfilling all the criteria for registration of parties constitutionally. The major boost or strength that the newly established APC received was the emergence or decamping of strong PDP members called the new PDP which was a faction that emerged after disenchantment of some members of the PDP from the party's convention in 2014. The party welcomed the new PDP members involving five state Governors of Adamawa, Kano, Kwara, Rivers, and Sokoto, ten serving Senators in the upper chamber, 22 serving Members Federal House of Representatives including the Speaker of the House and other top PDP founding fathers such as Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

Major achievements: The party's major contribution was its ability to win the Presidential Election barely two years after its formation with 53.96 % of the total votes; the party won most of the seats in the upper chamber with 55.05 % and the lower chamber

with 62.5 % and the Governorship seats was won by the party with 61.29 % (INEC, 2017).

Mechanism for conflict resolution: the party has what can be described as internal party resolution mechanism. Before or after election, aggrieved members of the party are contacted and consulted by special committee which include high ranking member with experience to pacify the aggrieved party members who would have felt aggrieved in the primary election or general election. The party incessantly constitute committee to reunite aggrieved members and reposition the party for future elections.

Disciplinary action: Apart from reuniting the aggrieved members, the party also has constitutional provision that deals with erring members who flouted the party constitution or caught in anti-party activities. In such case, indicted members are suspended based on committee recommendations and party lay down rules and regulations.

Literature Gap

Evidence from research reports has revealed that most Nigerians believe that internal party democracy does not only affect the reliability of elections but also the quality of leadership, governance, and general welfare of the populace. Much work has been carried out in political parties and internal democracy, but emphasis was laid on party ideology, violence, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Omotola (2009) work placed emphasis on the interconnectedness of the relations between political party and governance. He asserted that the connection is complex. Because the political parties form the government, which is an institution of the state, they are interdependent on each other.

Lamidi and Bello, (2012) work concluded that the activities of political parties from 1999 failed to engage on issues of governance; they rather spent quality time on internal crises due to factions and

tribal loyalty. Therefore, party reformation is a prerequisite for a proper democratic process.

Aleyomi (2013) findings were that politicians in Nigeria take political parties and politics very seriously, and this is due to their personal interests. According to the study, those who decamped often anchored their lack of political integrity on lack of internal democracy and political patronage, and this behaviour is as old as the nations' independence and sovereignty.

The Akubo et al, (2014) study found out that Nigerian political parties' challenges are as a result of a lack of institutionalization and personalization. According to them, the absence of internal democracy in the party is due to the heavy influence of the political godfather on their candidates: incessant party violence. They concluded that political parties in Nigeria are weak and vulnerable without a future, so there is an urgent need for internal democracy for party effectiveness and efficiency.

Idike (2014) work demonstrated that political parties are organs of interest articulation for the purpose of attaining power and the implementation of interest. The political party is a global phenomenon and a germane issue to developing countries like Nigeria.

Badejo and Oba-Akpowoghaha (2015) work identified the proliferation of political parties and decamping of members as major cause of lack of internal democracy and the selfish interests of its members.

There is literature deficit documenting internal democracy in All Progressive Congress and how the ugly trend has affected the fortune of the party in the 2019 general gubernatorial elections. No work to best of our knowledge has been able to link the reverse fortune of APC in Rivers and Zamfara state to internal wrangling in the party. In other word, this work is unique because it adequately and empirically addresses the relationship between All Progressive Congress internal democracy and election defeats in

Rivers and Zamfara states thus creating a gap which this study intends to bridge.

Theoretic Framework

The paper adopts Competitive Model of Democracy as its theoretical framework. According to Joseph Heath (2016: 15) who describes the competitive model of democracy as one which considers the competition for political leadership to be the central feature of democratic institutions. The democratic theory can be traced to the work of Joseph Schumpeter, which considers the competition for political leadership to be the central feature of democratic institutions. Both the aggregative and the deliberative views tend to focus on what the state does with its power, rather than who gets to exercise it. Democratic institutions, according to these views, are designed to ensure that the *content* of legislation somehow reflects the general will.

The competitive model shifts the emphasis away from the content of legislation towards those who enact it. The complexity of human affairs is such that, throughout all of human history, groups have needed leaders to make decisions. Things do not change fundamentally with the transition to democracy. The core function of democratic institutions is simply to impose some constraints on who gets to run things (Heath, 2016).

The ideal democratic system, according to this view, is one that generates strong, capable leadership, but which does not allow such leadership to become entrenched. In the context of internal democracy and political party competitiveness, the competitive model of democracy aptly captures the argument of the paper. In Africa Nigeria inclusive, the attention is focused on strong individuals and not strong institutions thus making the process of political recruitment a rivalry contestation among political actors. Political party like All Progressive Congress considers the competition for political leadership as the central feature of democratic institutions. Even though the APC got off to a good

start in terms of internal democracy, particularly when it came to party primaries and the nomination of candidates at all levels, the party quickly descended into chaos due to internal strife and undemocratic actions taken by some party members who are desperate to control the party structure in their various states. The internal rivalry culminated to APC party losses in Rivers and Zamfara where the supreme court ruled that the party did not have valid governorship candidates. In other words, the focus is always on personal ulterior motive of the political leaders rather than collective objective of the political party and the role of nation building.

Choice of Party System in Nigeria

The nature of party system is largely influenced by the composition of a society and that of its history. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingua and diverse society with more than 250 ethnic groups and over 500 spoken languages. The heterogenous status as well as her large population informed her embrace of multi-party system which enable regional types of political party in her First Republic Experience. Ever since Nigeria independence till date, multiparty system became a way of life to accommodate dissenting views.

Although, the multiparty system came with its attendant consequences such as regional based party, the issue of majority-minority agitations for political inclusion, high-cost implication in running political parties, printing electoral materials and the issue of rotational precedency at the discretion of political party to ensure that no region of the country is marginalized are all part of the negatives.

With the multiparty system in operation in Nigeria, political culture of the people cannot be described as being active. Citizens showed a lot of apolitical behaviour and apathy during elections because they did not experience dividends of democracy and the belief that the process is fraudulent increased their lukewarm attitude on the political process.

Data and Methods

Research Design

In this study used descriptive survey research design to generate the questionnaire and data used to answer the fundamental questions posed earlier. The research design therefore forms a plan for the execution of this research.

Sources of Data

This research used both primary and secondary sources of data. **Primary Data:** The study relied on quantitative data sourced through the administration of questionnaires. The questionnaire is open-ended. The primary source is seen as reliable because the data because it helped to source direct information from the participants or key witnesses. The possibility of distortion or exaggeration is however, not unlikely. **Secondary Data:** As expected, the secondary source of data collection was applied. Thus, the secondary sources were through the use of both published and unpublished materials such as books, official publications, reports, internet materials, journals, monographs, seminar papers, magazines, as well as daily newspapers and internet materials that are relevant to the topic being studied.

Research Population

This refers to the total number of people living in the study area. Since the scope of the research is 2019 and because of the research topic, data was sourced from by correspondence questionnaire (through email) from Zamfara state and River's state. Independent National Electoral Commission data base 2019 estimated the voting population of Rivers put at 3,215,273 and Zamfara at 1,717,128 (INEC, 2020). The voting population of both states is 4,932,401 formed the population of the study.

Sample Size

Although, the area of study is River's state (Port Harcourt) and Zamfara (Gusau) only these two locations are selected for easy and

realistic analysis. The total population of the two selected locations is 4,932,401.

4,932,401=confidence population size

95.00%= Degree of Accuracy

0.035=Margin of Error

Sample size=384

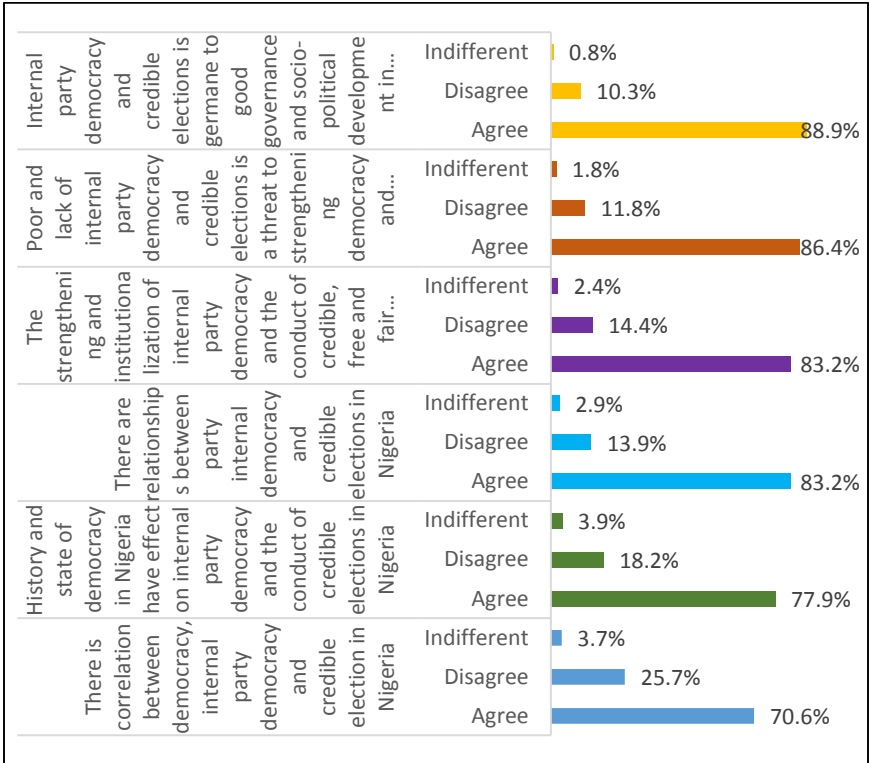
Research Advisor Sample Size (2006).

Hence, the sample size is 384. To collect data for this study, a set of 384 (three hundred and eighty-four) questionnaire were used to gather information from respondents. The targeted respondents are politicians, party members, legal practitioners, lecturers and postgraduate students of political science, sociology and history, scholars, journalists, among others. The stratified random sample was used to elicit information from respondents and copies of the questionnaire made to be completed and returned for analysis after thoroughly going through them. Hand to hand approach and email questionnaire was adopted to ensure the highest degree or percentage of return of the completed questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

This research work used purposive sampling. This is to target specific people who the researcher believes have the information and required data such as politicians, party members, electoral candidates, lecturers and postgraduate students of political science, sociology and history, legal practitioners, and journalists, among others. These are the set of people with knowledge about democracy, electoral issues, political party, and internal democracy in political parties in Nigeria.

Internal Party Democracy and Credible Elections in Nigeria

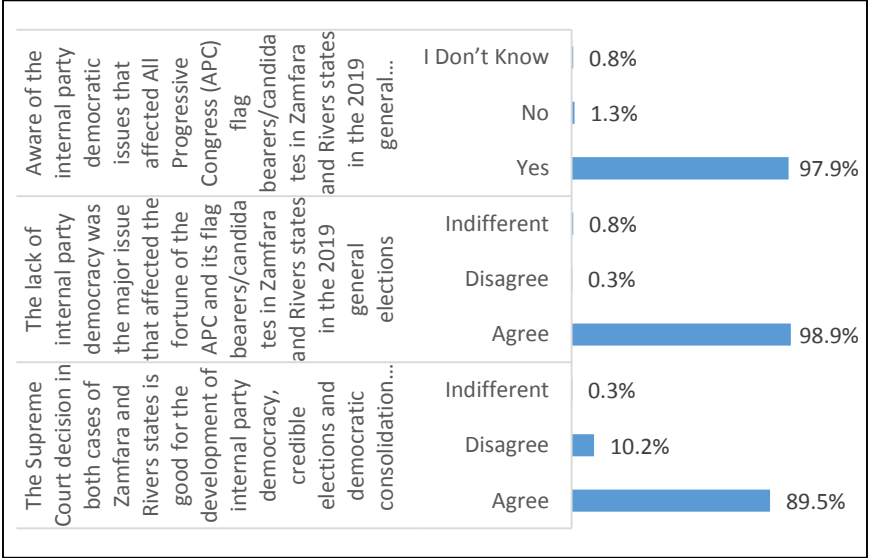


Respondents Opinions on Internal Party Democracy and Credible Elections in Nigeria

The Figure presents the respondents opinions on internal party democracy and credible elections in Nigeria. The figure reveals that most of the respondents agreed that: there is correlation or relationship between internal party democracy and APC loses in Rivers and Zamfara (71% or 83%); history and state of democracy in Nigeria have effect on internal party democracy and the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria (78%); institutionalization of internal party democracy and the conduct of credible, free and fair elections has been problematic since the emergence of political parties and elections in Nigeria (83%); poor and lack of internal party democracy and credible elections is threat to strengthening democracy and democratic stability in Nigeria (86%); and internal

party democracy and credible elections is germane to good governance and socio-political development in Nigeria (89%).

Internal Party Democracy and Credible Election in Zamfara and Rivers States



The internal Party Democracy and Credible Election Issues in Zamfara and Rivers States During 2019 General Election

Majority of the respondents were aware (98%) of the Zamfara and Rivers states APC crises and agreed (98%) that the lack of internal party democracy was the major issue that affected the fortune of the APC and its flag bearers in Zamfara and Rivers states during the last general election. Also, most (90%) of the stakeholders agreed that the Supreme Court decision in both cases of Zamfara and Rivers states is good for the development of internal party democracy, credible and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings showed that intra-party violence in All Progressive Congress contributed greatly to the party losses in Rivers and Zamfara governorship election in 2019 as the intra-

party degenerated and snowballed to intractable conflict before and during the election. The various stakeholders could not resolve the differences that led to decrease in the fortune of the party in Rivers and Zamfara.

The study established that the selection process in All Progressive Congress was not organized according to party rule of fairness, justice, and equity as selection of wrong unpopular candidates adversely affected the chance of All Progressive Congress in Rivers and Zamfara governorship election in 2019.

The study showed that there was strong nexus between internal party democracy and All Progressive Congress Party losses in Zamfara and Rivers states 2019 governorship elections. The internal party wrangling on who controls the party structures in both Rivers and Zamfara and the attendant fallout of major party stalwarts greatly influenced the direction of the election and APC losses. The supreme court judgement on both states were predictable outcomes as the deep-rooted crises and tensions could not be doused.

In line with findings of the study the following recommendations are proposed:

There is need for party stalwarts to settle all conflicting issues through dialogue. On no account must dialogue cease between warring members of political parties like APC. The leadership of the party needs to inaugurate Special committee that will reconcile aggrieved members in order to avoid election losses in future. The type of role being played by Governor Boni Yayi of Gombe in reconciliation of aggrieved members in APC is a welcome development which will help to heal the wounds in places like Rivers and Zamfara.

There is urgent need for APC and other parties to always be transparent in their primary elections. There is need to discourage imposition of candidates by godfathers to override the popular demands of the people. Fairness, justice and equity for all concern in primary elections must be given a level playing ground to

express themselves rather than being singlehandedly hand-picked by godfather.

There is an urgent need for better and comprehensive monitoring of political parties and their activities especially issues relating to internal party democracy like primaries, conventions, decisions, and agreements by the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC). This will ensure transparency and accountability of political parties' activities.

There is need for constant, periodic, and regular education and enlightenment of party members, politicians, voters, and the general populace on global best practices of democratic norms and culture; dangers of aiding and abetting godfatherism; vote buying; thuggery and other forms of electoral violence and malpractices. Emergence of wrong candidates through compromised primary elections or the absence of candidates to represent a party in competitive elections always have deleterious impact on governance. The product of a fraudulent rigged primary election will not have interest of the masses at heart while absence of a credible representation might create leadership lacuna. In other words, all stakeholders like INEC and political parties, Civil Liberty Organizations Nongovernmental Organization, democratic and legislative institute need to come together to brainstorm on how internal democracy can be reviewed and remodified in our party system so that the cause of democracy can be advanced in Nigeria.

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