

THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND INTRA-PARTY CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: A CROSS SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF APC, APGA AND PDP

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Abstract

One of the common features of the Nigerian electoral democracy in the fourth republic (1999 - 2019) is intra and inter-party conflicts. Interestingly, conflict being inevitable in organized societies, is a necessary condition for politics. Politics thus creates and reconciles conflicts whereby every person, group and sections of the political system is guided by tacit, distinct and convoluted interests. These interests are rooted in political power consolidation, use, exercise and application towards who gets 'what, when and how' by individuals and groups within political parties who share varied interests outside what the parties hold supreme. It is therefore difficult to define these interests where the party is made up of hard-to-knit personalities and groups guided by in definitive courses. Political parties of the fourth republic are registrants of INEC that were not formed on the basis of clear-cut ideologies. Hence, political parties are mere labels to be used and discarded at will by politicians as instruments of electoral competition. People join political parties to actualize their interests which range from getting elected into public position to accessing vantage positions from where power and influence are wielded and to their advantage thereby describing the dialectics of value allocation and distribution of public goods. Any threat to these interests trigger conflict and eventual decamping or re-decamping to and from other political parties. This paper explores the trend, causes and dynamics of party competitions that give rise to conflicts within political parties while examining how such conflicts influenced political party performances in the 2019 general elections. Based mainly on secondary sources of data, analyses of the paper are rooted in postulations of the conflict theory as according to Marx, Weber and Coser. The paper surmised that membership and candidate recruitment combine with unbridled struggle for the control of party structures generate unending intra-party conflicts that negatively influence party performances in the fourth republic Nigerian elections. It specifically observed that the defeat of President GEJ in the 2015 presidential election was a function of the dissociation in the PDP and stated that high level of conflicting interests within the APC impacted on the party's performance especially in the National Assembly and gubernatorial elections in the 2019 general elections. It thus enjoined the leadership of Nigerian parties to conduct the affairs of their parties according to the provisions of the party constitutions.

Keywords: Electoral democracy, Intraparty conflicts, Interparty conflicts, Internal party democracy, Nigerian political parties, Party primaries and Party supremacy.

Introduction

Democracy is a process at the heart of which is the political party which is the platform and vehicle for any politician aspiring to come to power through electoral means (Mahmood, 2017). The Nigerian political history has been marred with internal party politics, conflict of interest, division via ethnic and religious lines, coalition of political parties for dominance of power and the intervention of military dictatorships that has contributed immensely to structuring the system of governance by disregard for rule of law to be replaced with implementation of "Decrees" and constitutional amendments as a tool that has been manipulated with loopholes in its provisions (Abdullahi, 2018; Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2019). The dawn of the fourth republic has since 1999 occasioned the reign and dominance of several personae but two major political parties at the national government. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) ruled for 16 years from 1999 to 2015 and peacefully handed power over to the All Progressives Congress (APC), the current ruling party at the national level of government. A retinue of other political parties that emerged after transitions in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections due to strategic manoeuvres and alliances consist of 91 registered political parties today. Invariably, power has been alternated from a ruling and dominant political party to an opposition successfully but internal dialectics cum power politics of political parties have remained unstable and convoluted. Many of the political parties have undergone partial mergers through alliances and coalition into more formidable oppositions to counteract ruling/dominant parties. The APC according to Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2017, pp. 88-104) was formed "as a result of an alliance and merger of Nigeria's three biggest 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) ... to wrestle political power and influence with the PDP in 2015".

Subsequently in the 2019 general elections, the PDP as the major opposition in turn served as a rallying point for about 40 political parties to form an alliance and coalition under the aegis of Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP) designed to defeat President Buhari, oust APC and produce overwhelming majority in the federal and state legislatures to form the required majority for the restructuring of the country (Ogunwale, 2018). Hence, dominant parties are formed from efforts of provoked, disillusioned and disgruntled members of ruling and opposition parties' coalition, alliance and merger aimed at ousting the party in power at national and state levels. Personal, sectional and group interests seem to hold higher premiums than party positions and interests. Political parties therefore are vehicles for accessing member's parochial values and objectives. Many members and groups/movements of political parties are continually in pursuit of their personal/group values and interests that arbitrarily pitch them against the general interests of their parties hence the keen observation of opposition across and within parties (Okoli & Ali, 2014). Thus, literature is replete with issues of internal party wrangling and conflict arising from disobedience to party rules and procedures in membership, candidate recruitment and determination of personae of party hierarchy.

Party supremacy is obviously strangled and turned a mechanism conflicting with politicians that control state affairs with its National Working Committee (NWC) since independence of Nigeria in 1960. Members of the federal executive council collide with their

state governors, Senators and Members of the Federal House of Representatives jam with state executive council members and those at their constituencies and local governments over who determines and shapes politics and administration in those states, federal/state constituencies, local government and even wards especially in the same parties. The nomination and appointment of state representatives in the Federal Executive Council usually bugs the governors who seek to determine and approve of such nominations and appointments. These scenario thus occasions situation of hot pursuit within and across political parties. Party big wigs, financiers and stakeholders including officials are engrossed in who gets what, how, where and when in this instance. The political parties are therefore factionalized and fractionalized in groups and movements that canvass divergent views and interests. Such political interests either converged in consensual rapprochements or clashed and diverged in conflicting contestations for tickets. Such interplays of interests, understandably, could not but produce intensely cooperative or fundamentally divergent positions and ripostes as was particularly witnessed in the primary elections of the ruling APC government (Ojefo, 2018). Intra-party conflict is however not peculiar to any party in Nigeria: all parties are enmeshed in this challenging monster that has forced Nigeria's democracy to be floundering and stagnating for over two decades after emergence.

Nevertheless, political parties of the fourth republic are registrants of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that lack clear cut ideologies and manifestoes. It is difficult to differentiate between the 91 registered political parties in the real sense of their packages for the people of Nigeria. Hence, the change mantra promised by the APC has remained indefinite and ambiguous after five years of their control of government. Build-up to the 2019 general elections introduced massive permutations, defections (and counter-defections), inter and most interestingly intra-party accusations (and counter-accusations), mudslinging and untoward hyperbole amongst political gladiators which dominated national and regional discourses (Egbo, 2018). If not the haunting eyes of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) that marauded persistent opposition party members, it will require special craft for party watchers to tell who is a member of APC from those of PDP or other parties. Relatively nothing changed in the structure and hierarchy of political parties and the conduct of their affairs. Conduct of elective congresses of the emergent APC tended to be worse than those of the PDP. Members were dribbled and deprived opportunities in dastardly manners devoid of due process without redress.

Hence, political parties are mere labels used and discarded at will by politicians as instruments of electoral competition. People join political parties to actualize their interest which ranges from getting elected into public positions to accessing vantage positions from where power and influence are wielded to their advantage thereby describing the dialectics of value allocation and distribution of public goods. Any threat to these interests triggers conflict and eventual decamping or re-decamping to and from other political parties. This paper therefore seeks to explore the trend, causes and dynamics of party competitions that give rise to conflicts within political parties while examining how such conflicts influenced political party performances in the 2019 general elections. In that order, the paper is structured in four parts of the introduction that lays bare the real issues necessitating the study followed by contextual redefinition of key concepts as a way of prying critically into literature to effectively ensure that the paper would serve some relevant purposes and is anchored on meaningful

framework of analysis. The third part discusses the implications of persistent conflict within political parties in relation to their performances in the 2019 general elections while the rear distinctly suggests workable options in concluding remarks.

Review of Conceptual Literature and Theoretical Exposition

This segment of the study shall feature a conceptual redefinition of primary terminologies employed in the study and present a critical review of their practicability and usage in the fourth republic Nigerian electoral democracy. It is structured in two: Conceptual Review and Theoretical Exposition. First, we shall lay bare the meaning of the following concepts for ease of focused comprehension in the study: political party, intra party conflict, internal democracy, party performance and electoral success.

Political Party: The concept of political party has no generally accepted definition. No wonder, Lawson (1976, p. 2) observed that "no definition of party is ever entirely satisfactory". However, scholars have described and defined its features and functions according to their orientations and stages of their political development. A political party according to Downs (1957)" is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus [of a state] by gaining office in a duly contested election". To Coleman and Rosberg (1964), political parties are "associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and/or maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition or in electoral competition with other similar associations over the personnel and policy of the government of an actual or prospective sovereign state". Who controls and governs the state and its apparatuses in Nigeria places unfathomable question on the meaning and relevance of political parties in our context? Political parties therefore constitute one of the primary avenues through which citizens can exercise authority and participate in political life (National Democratic Institute, n.d). The National Democratic Institute (NDI) further posited that citizens exercise some of their basic rights as part and parcel of democracy when they join political parties, donate money or time, help to shape party policies, or stand for office under a party ticket. It thus observes that political parties aggregate and represent the interests of their constituents while seeking to form and control the government (Schattschneider, 1942, p.35). It is this divergence in interests which metamorphose in clashes amongst party members in developing democracies where access to the state implies access to greater comfort, privileged position and unbridled control of government thereby turning public functionaries into repository of political powers and guardians of the state. It thus occasions perchance for unrestricted access to government and state by everybody and for themselves in a zero-sum political atmosphere.

Political parties are always in competition for political power without which they cannot organize their society (Hofmeister & Grabow, 2011). Thence, internal discussions and conflicts within, as well as between, political parties accompany this contestation to galvanize ideas and exercise power in their states. To that extent, Klaukka, Van der Staak and Valladares (2017, pp. 98-122) argue that "political parties stay relevant as long as they mediate different interests and offer coherent visions, which they can advocate in elections and legislatures, and pursue them as a basis for compromise with other parties". Do Nigerian parties especially those of the fourth republic mediate and harmonize divergent interests? It is thus an assemblage of men with similar views on how best to run a state but lack of homogeneity in their approach coupled with the series of activities that take place within the party predispose members to articulate

divergent interests which sometimes breed intra party conflict leading to factionalization within such a party (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). Invariably, political parties that fail to address the issues that citizens consider to be most important risk becoming irrelevant and disappearing from the political map if they are not control of the government. The controversial question closely following this position by Klaukka, Van der Staak and Valladares is 'who are the citizens in the context of developing countries where democracy is yet to take root? As a developing country where democracy is still a concept that is yet to be domesticated and made a culture, partymen decide both party action and citizens' action in Nigeria. Who are partymen? They are those members whose interests are reigning supreme at any period in the political party. They hold the party structure and have access to the President or Governor as the case maybe. The party chairman or even national working committee members may not be members of political parties enough in some instances in Nigeria. Hence, the dialectics of party membership, candidate recruitment and intra-party conflict.

What is Intra-Party Conflict? The observation by Boulding (1963, p. 5) which sees conflict "as a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other" is quite defining in the context of this study. Subsumed in the maxim which sees conflict as inevitable in every organized society, the wrangling and intractable squabbles within and across political parties in Nigeria becomes understandable. In that regard, intra-party conflict explains the situation that arises as a result of irreconcilable interests and drives of members of a political party to access, use and or consolidate vantage public positions and their lucre to themselves. This kind of situation arises mainly from party nominations/primary elections (candidate recruitment) but not limited to it. Party chieftains and financiers who are in pursuit of influence on government see the political party as possible platforms for beating the inter party competition and throw-in wealth for party programmes to later recoup their investments which result in hard decisions for emergent governments in the selection and appointment of cabinet and other officers. It also plays out in the selection of members for elective positions both within and outside the party (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). In a related perspective, Awofeso, Obah-Akpowoghaha and Ogunmilade (2017, pp. 96-102) described situations that result in conflict within political parties to involve "selection of candidates, leadership contests, regular membership conventions, and internal rules to discipline party members and hold leaders accountable within a political party". Intra-party conflict is thus a feature of party politics that defines lack of adherence to party rules and regulations in situations that undermine what some scholars refer to as internal democracy. It further goes to demonstrate sheer absence of party supremacy amongst political parties in Nigeria.

Parties lack the ability to discipline and enforce their rules and regulations on members for several reasons. It is this absence of party supremacy that pave way for politicians to use and dump political parties with reckless abandonment in Nigeria. Today somebody flies the flag of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) for instance and secures a public position that he would not have won without the party structures but leaves APGA the following day for another political party that appears to portend better opportunities for him alleging conflict within the former party (APGA) and consolidates on the position that was in the first instance APGA's in another party. Intra-party conflicts generate defection, counter-defections,

decamping, carpet crossing and many other forms of withdrawal of membership from a political party. Accordingly, Ibrahim and Abubakar (2015, pp.113-132) observe that "the dimension, multitude and impact of intra party conflict in Nigeria continue to be a worrisome phenomenon to the development of democracy". Instances of where politicians won public positions and defected to other political parties with the mandate abound. Again, it is the trend for former party candidates to drop their parties for seemingly more formidable parties in search of the same positions if they did not win. Thus, the observation that political parties in Nigeria are mere labels used and discarded at will by politicians as instruments of electoral competition. An aspirant loses primary/nomination in APGA today, dumps the party tomorrow alleging irregularities and joins another party tomorrow (maybe a new or less established party, or even goes sponsoring one of the registered but unpopular parties) to context for the same position. There is sheer lack of party ideology and manifesto. Action plans (of politicians, if any) determine party programmes in APC, PDP, APGA, etc. Nigerian political parties are not driven by party manifesto but candidate work plans. Everybody's plot is to access power and or influence for personal reasons. There is no party man but there are variegated interests of individuals and groups which oftentimes clash and cause confusions within political parties in Nigeria.

What then is the meaning of Internal Party Democracy? Political parties are veritable institutions for ensuring representative democracy in modern political systems (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). No wonder, Scarrow (2005) observes that parties are "crucial actors in representative democracies". Invariably, a democratic state needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good. That again points to the ability of a political party to wield and knit its members and programmes around their aims and objectives without pushing members out of the fold. Internal party democracy is therefore a wide concept that deals with a variety of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision making. It has a possible tendency of linking ordinary citizens to government, benefiting the parties that adopt it, and more generally contributing to the stability and legitimacy of the democracies in which these parties compete for power (Scarrow, 2005). Internal democracy in political parties engender cohesion and responsibility on the part of members thereby creating shared electoral fate and strength in shared party label. This implies that parties' decision-making structures, processes, conventions/congresses and nominations/primary elections provide opportunities for members to influence the choices that parties offer to voters on free and fair grounds without having to come or relate directly or indirectly with some persons or groups that enjoy undue advantage over other members.

Internal party democracy therefore describes the level of inclusiveness or otherwise of political parties' members and structures in the affairs of the party especially as it concerns membership and candidate recruitment in primary elections. Yes, the selection and nomination of candidates to fly party flags has remained a knotty issue in Nigerian party administration. Internal party democracy further describes the critical activities of deciding who controls and uses which structure and strands of the party in elective conventions and access to opportunities and positions in government. Those constitute the bases for the conflicts in contemporary Nigerian parties where small groups or persons have always reigned supreme

over other members of the party and maintained publicly undefined interests that continually guided parties.

Theoretical Expositions

This study is anchored on conflict theory but shall espouse enabling and surrounding precepts and theoretical perspectives that may be related to the analysis. Conflict theory originated in the work of Karl Marx especially the ones focusing on the economic, social and political implications of the rise of capitalism in Europe. Marx focused on the causes and consequences of class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and theorized that this system, premised on the existence of a powerful minority class (the bourgeoisie) and an oppressed majority class (the proletariat), created class conflict because the interests of the two were at odds, and resources were unjustly distributed among them. Conflict theory is thus a sociological theory developed by Karl Marx which purports that due to society's never-ending competition for finite resources it will always be in a state of conflict (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d). Conflict theory examines any social phenomenon through the lens that there is a natural human instinct towards conflict as an unavoidable aspect of human nature that helps explain why things are. In that regard, Crossman (2019) posits that Conflict theory states that "tensions and conflicts arise when resources, status, and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that these conflicts become the engine for social change". In that instance, he maintained that power is understood as control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and the institutions that make up society, and one's social status relative to others. According to Crossman, this social relation to power is a function of such indices as class, gender, religion, nationality, etc as part of contemporary social structures, and how they affect our lives.

Improving on the postulations of Marx, Max Weber saw that conflict didn't overwhelmingly involve the economy, but that the state and economy together set up conditions for conflict. Weber thus brought in the notion of legitimation as a critical issue in the idea of conflict while noting that class is more complex than Marx initially supposed, and that there are other factors that contribute to social inequality, most notably status and party (or power). After Weber, a number of efforts have combined different elements from one or both of these theorists to understand conflict. Prominent among them is Lewis Coser (1956, p.8), whose work is interesting for two reasons. First, he presents "a number of basic propositions which have been distilled from theories of social conflict, in particular from the theories of Georg Simmel". The second reason is that he is the first to consider the functional consequences of conflict which presupposes that "groups require disharmony as well as harmony, dissociation as well as association; and conflicts within them are by no means altogether disruptive factors". Thus, he submits that conflicts are far from being necessarily dysfunctional while maintaining that a certain degree of conflict is an essential element in group formation and the persistence of group life (Coser, 1956, p. 31).

Consequently, Coser argues that conflict is different for humans than for other animals while maintaining that conflicts amongst human beings can be goal related. There is generally something that we are trying to achieve through conflict, and there are different possible ways of reaching our goal. The existence of the possibility of different paths opens up opportunities for negotiation and different types and levels of conflict. Because Coser sees conflict as a

normal and functional part of human life, he can talk about its variation in ways that others missed, such as the level of violence and functional consequences. It is thus observed that in general, conflict theory undertakes a scientific explanation of the contours of conflict in society. It seeks to understand "how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings". The central concerns of conflict theory are the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power. What these resources are might be different for each theorist, but conflict theorists usually work with Weber's three systems of stratification: class, status, and power.

Conflict theorists generally see power as the central feature of society, rather than thinking of society as held together by collective agreement concerning a cohesive set of cultural standards, as functionalists do. Where power is located and who uses it (and who doesn't) are thus fundamental to conflict theory. In this way of thinking about things, power isn't necessarily bad: it is a primary factor that guides society and social relations. In that context, the behaviour, character and pattern of relations between political parties and their members become understandable. There are individual members, strands/groups of members and sections of the political party memberships with varied interests subsumed in those of the political party. Sometimes, it is observed that the interests of groups in political parties become overarching and superimposing to the extent that it turns out party interests regardless of how it touches and influences or even endangers some other members or groups in the same party. The analysis here is purely guided by the position of Coser (1956) which overtly recognizes complex interplay of factors, interests and contentions which generate conflicts for strands and the entire system. Party members in Nigeria are guided by their personal and group interests which conflict with those of other members and contradict even those of the political party. These members and groups are thus engaged in relative power struggle over conflicting interests. Of interest is the fact that the party does not aggregate interests effectively in Nigeria. Parties are mere umbrella for strangers whose concerns are those of access to political power, vantage positions, opportunities for themselves and their groups and not necessarily for the political party. This engenders low articulation that creates room for zero-sum situation for members who battle each other for positions and value allocation. Political interests either converged in consensual rapprochements or clashed and diverged in conflicting contests for tickets (Ojeifo, 2018).

Political Parties of the Fourth Republic and Internal Party Democracy

Political parties are tools and important ingredients in participatory democracy (Akinade, 2018). They must be for electoral democracy to thrive in contemporary societies. All democracies, great or emerging, encourage the formation of political parties as a mechanism for providing level playground for citizens to partake in elections. In this regard, Nigeria is no exception. Before independence in 1960, Nigeria had experienced forms of party politics and representative governance. With the advent of Hugh Clifford's constitution of 1922 which introduced elective principle, the first political party; Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed on June 24, 1923 by Herbert Macaulay. Subsequently, other political parties emerged and laid the foundation for party politics and elections into public positions. Furthermore, Akinade (2018) aptly observed that upon independence, Nigeria continued in party politics with three major political parties that fielded candidates for various elective positions. He clearly pointed out that leaders of these parties enjoyed cult followership from

their ethnic regions and this development indeed paved way for their popularity and gave them a hold on their various regions. Subsequently, the First Republic, amidst some obvious flaws, gave Nigerians the free will to choose their representatives at all levels of government. Similar fates befell political parties in the Second and botched Third Republics.

What is more, the demise of Gen. Sani Abacha on June 8, 1998 paved way for Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar to open the political space when he freed political prisoners and supervise a complete transition programme and return Nigeria to civilian rule in 1999. At this, three political parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) registered and contested the 1999 general elections conducted by the INEC. In the 1999 Presidential elections Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP defeated Chief Samuel Olujemisi Falae of the AD/APP alliance and was sworn-in on May 29, 1999 as the civilian president of the federal republic of Nigeria. The dynamics of the general election witnessed clear domination of polls by the PDP which won and controlled 21 states comprising of all states in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones as well as 10 Northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and Taraba (especially in the North West and Central) but the AD carved out the entire South-West states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo, where it reigned supreme. The APP controlled 9 northern states of Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, and Yobe in North East, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Jigawa in the North West and Kwara and Kogi in the North Central geopolitical zones. In total, the PDP had majority control of states across the country.

By the next general elections in 2003, seventeen (17) more political parties joined the contest in what Omotola (2010, pp. 535-553) referred to as critical step towards democratic consolidation. In the end, PDP did not only retain its national rulership with a win of the presidency by the incumbent Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, it improved on its political dominance by adding 6 more states to its fold: Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun from South-West and Kogi and Kwara from North-Central thereby controlling 27 out of the 36 states of Nigeria. The APP which metamorphosed into the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) won only 8 states of Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara while the AD reign in the South-West was drastically brought down to only Lagos. The elections demonstrated some levels of shift and adjustments in power configurations across party lines and geopolitical configuration of the country. First, it brought down opposition parties' strength to 9 states and reduced the prowess of the AD in the South-West to only Lagos. It also shows that the opposition was whittled down in the North-Central. Many members of the APP and AD without recourse to ideologies and party programmes defected to the PDP in pursuit of their personal interests of gaining access to power and or public office. The PDP thus became more domineering as further indicated by party affiliation of members of the National Assembly. At this stage, the cards and table had started shifting and turning within political parties. Some members of the AD and APP had starting jumping the gun and defecting to the ruling party. As the democratic experiment was growing, more vents of participation were emerging and greater interests were developing. The 17 new political parties were mainly groups who for various reasons could not achieve their interests in the major parties. They did not only whittle down the strength of the opposition but created ample rooms for growing of divergent interests and conflicts. The PDP controlled federal government through its policies and programmes tended to stifle opposition and lured some members of other parties into its fold. None of the new

parties won any gubernatorial elections. A few of them secured some seats in the National Assembly polls: All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP) got 2 House of Representatives seats each while National Democratic Party (NDP) and People's Redemption Party (PRP) secured only 1 seat each.

Routinely, by 2007, the stage was set for another general election. This time around, five more parties joined the race making 25 political parties to contest the presidential elections. The PDP's candidate Umaru Musa Yar'Adua polled 24,638,063 votes representing 69.60% to defeat his closest rival Muhammadu Buhari of the ANPP who polled 6,605,299 representing 18.66%. The PDP again won and dominated the national elections. At the states, the PDP still held sway with a domineering win and control of 27 states leaving the oppositions - APP to 4, ANPP to 3, AC to 1 and APGA to 1 state respectively. At this stage, squabbles and discontent in political party affairs have started rising and falling. The increment in number of political parties was a demonstration of significant measure of dissatisfaction and conflict within party members, leadership and structures arising from improperly conducted primaries, conventions and poor adherence to party rules. In 2011, the stage was once again set for the fourth general elections in the fourth republic when INEC registered sixty-three (63) political parties but only 20 contested the presidential elections. In the presidential elections, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) of the PDP polled 22,495,187 votes representing 58.89% to defeat Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) who polled 12,214,853 votes making 31.98%. The PDP maintained its dominance with win of 23 state gubernatorial elections but could not maintain its overwhelming dominance in the National Assembly. Squabbles and unresolved clash of interests had pushed some members and big-wigs even to their brink. In fact, a detailed analysis of the presidential poll results indicate that the CPC candidate won in 11 northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara against party line. The elections also saw the return of South-West cling to their ethnic configuration with the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) sweeping gubernatorial polls in almost all the states of the geopolitical zone. Ondo state went into the hands of the Labour Party (LP) just the way Anambra and Imo states of the South-East geopolitical zone slipped out of the hands of the PDP into the bosom of APGA. ANPP continued to hold sway in North-East with their continued rule of Borno and Yobe states and minute addition this time of Zamfara state. Party politics began once again to degenerate to ethnic and regional affiliation and relationships. These realignment and subtle alliances are traceable to rumples given the seeming popular disenchantment with the ruling PDP (Omotola, 2010) wherein nominations and allocation of values was not always based on party constitution.

More so, with several intrigues into the build-up for the fifth quadrennial elections, the dialectics of internal party democracy saw a merger of four (4) opposition political parties into the All Progressives Congress (APC) as a major reorganization in Nigeria's political class (Madunagu, 2018). The 2015 general elections held on 28 and 29 March saw fourteen (14) political parties fielding candidates for the office of the president. The merger, alignment and coalition into the APC spelt a novel occurrence in the political annals of African democratization. It saw the incumbent president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the PDP crash polling 12,853,162 votes representing 44.96% thereby losing the election to Muhammadu Buhari of the APC who polled 15,424,921 representing 53.96%. At the state level, the APC

equally won and controlled 20 states of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe and Bauchi in the North-East; Kaduna, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Zamfara, Jigawa and Kebbi in the North-West; Kwara, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau in the North-Central; Lagos, Oyo and Ogun in the South-West coupled with a lone Imo state in the South-East out of the 29 contested gubernatorial elections. The APC also had a simple majority lead in the National Assembly with 60 senators against PDP's 49. The APC won and controlled sixteen (16) states of the North except Taraba, Plateau, Nasarawa and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. It also won in five (5) states of the South-West (Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo). For the first time ever, there was power alternation in the Nigerian democratic experiment. The PDP led government handed power over to APC led federal government on May 29, 2015 and turned into the major opposition party. The merger, combined with the implosion of the PDP and the absorption of those who found themselves out of the then ruling party and other factors, gave the APC the muscle to truly challenge the lumbering behemoth in the 2015 general election. The power alternation was a major watershed considering the expressed grudges and shift in loyalty of a group of interests in the PDP which called itself the new PDP that merged forces with the APC to defeat the PDP in the 2015 general elections. The emergent APC government thus was a conglomeration of variegated interests and house of strange bed fellows whose interests are conflicting at regular intervals and situations.

The fourth republic has witnessed the longest series of regular elections since Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960 (Abidoeye, 2019). As usual, the run-up to the 2019 general elections generated palpable fear in many Nigerians considering the security situation in the country coupled with overt observance of continued existence of the issues and factors that necessitated the defeat of the PDP by the emergent APC led government. The expected change in party leadership and administration was not visibly realized and many Nigerians were constrained to realign and join forces with myriad of oppositions. In fact, build up to the 2019 elections was a period of many letters from notable Nigerians against the APC led federal government; Mallam El-Rufai started it but former president Olusegun Obasanjo capitalized on the observed lapses in the government to drum support for what he eventually referred to as the third force and coalition against the Buhari led government. In the same perspective was the outcry by Mrs Aisha Buhari on the activities of cabal within the Buhari administration. It was a vicious war of attrition in defection and counter defection which pushed many analysts to review and predict the repeat of 2015 election results.

Consequently, the elections were competitive with a large number of candidates for all seats, although competition was primarily between the APC and PDP. In all, ninety-one (91) political parties were registered for the elections, but only 73 officially fielded presidential candidates. In the absence of any legal provision for independent candidates, the ability of citizens to run for office is determined by party primary procedures. Obiageli Ezekwesili, candidate of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), pulled out of the race while Social Democratic Party (SDP) was enmeshed in perennial struggle over nomination that deprived it chances of clear candidacy in the election. According to Center for Democracy and Development (2019), the 2019 general election with 73 presidential candidates, 1,008 gubernatorial candidates, 1,904 senatorial candidates, 4,680 House of Representatives candidates and 14,643 candidates for the states houses of assembly records over 23,000 candidates contesting for various public positions, is by far the largest in Nigeria's political

history. The election almost brought about a repeat of history in party coalition, alliance and merger. PDP moved to serve Buhari a dose of his own medicine with the coming together of about 40 parties in a loose coalition designed to champion Abubakar Atiku for president. Remarkably, Madunagu (2018) observing the trend of emergence and formation of major political parties in the fourth republic pointed out that the APP of the first period (1999-2003) was the party that transformed into ANPP of the succeeding periods. The AD of the first period gave birth to AC which then transformed to ACN of the succeeding periods. The CPC of the third and fourth periods grew out of ANPP. Finally, the APC of the fifth and sixth periods was a merger of ACN, CPC, ANPP and fractions of PDP and APGA. To that end, it is obvious that political party mutations in the fourth republic have essentially been about quantitative movements of association and dissociation, combination and separation arising from conflicting interests of hitherto party members. Thus, there is no qualitative changes in the development of political parties in Nigeria perhaps due largely to lack of clear-cut ideologies and the overdeveloped nature of the Nigerian state which rests in the hands of the ruling class as an instrument of domination and platform for primitive accumulation. All situations and events simmered unto electoral success for the APC as declared by INEC whereby Muhammadu Buhari of the APC polled 15,191,847 votes representing 55.60% to defeat his closest rival Abubakar Atiku of the PDP who polled 11,262,978 votes that represent 41.22% of the votes cast.

Analyses of the results show that the ruling APC won 4 states of Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa and Niger in the North-Central, 4 states of Bauchi, Borno, Gombe and Yobe in the North-East, 7 states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara in the North-West, and 5 states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Osun in the South-West making a total of 20 states spread across 4 geopolitical zones. APC did not win any state in the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones. The PDP on the other hand, won all the 5 and 6 states of South-East and South-South respectively together with 2 states of Benue, Plateau (and the FCT) in the North-Central, 2 states of Adamawa (Atiku's home state) and Taraba (a North Eastern state that has never slipped out from PDP since the inception of the republic) and, the duo of Ondo and Oyo states in the South-West. Party affiliation in the Senate also shows a simple majority lead of the APC with 65 against 42 of the PDP and 1 seat for the YPP. The situation in the National Assembly does not portray a widely domineering APC rulership of the national government especially considered in relation to their control of state governments. Out of the 29 contested gubernatorial seats, the APC won only 15 against 14 governors of the PDP. Consequently, the APC currently controls 20 states while PDP manages 15 and APGA has 1.

Intra-Party Conflict and Performance of Political Parties in the 2019 General Elections

Elections in Nigeria, particularly since 1999 when the military relinquished political power, regardless of how well organized, have remained the major way of achieving legitimate rule (Akhaine, 2019). Studies of Nigerian elections have underlined the country's adoption of the western model of liberal democracy. The extent to which these elections have been participatory especially within political parties has continued to constitute a source of concern to many. Nigerian political parties are obviously weak institutions that are not capable of driving their agenda. Perhaps for lack of clear cut ideology, manifesto and internal democracy, the parties are institutions in the hands of those privileged to have it at any point in time. Most

members are card carrying members of other political parties because their allegiance is tied to their interest which in most cases conflict with those of the party. As the major platform and conveyor of elections, parties do not have authority over members because members fester and take values from the party and do not contribute anything. The Nigerian state spoon feed and enliven parties to the detriment of the political system. Owing largely to this obvious lack of supremacy and control, any group or class of persons who have the privilege of controlling the party's structures at any point in time takes advantage of it. Hence, the personality, character and orientation of party leadership defining its relationships with members and disposition to use of state power.

Party supremacy may not be very apt in the context of presidential system of government when compared with the situation in parliamentary democracies. Yes, the President and Governor who are chief executives in their ranks are leaders of their parties at the national and state levels of presidential democracies respectively. All political appointees including the party leadership are individually responsible to the president and or governor as appropriate but the intriguing situation is the fact that these chief executive officers climbed the ladder through the contributions of *godfathers* and power brokers who financed and saw them through their electioneering campaigns. These scenarios create room for convoluted interplay of forces in decision making. It generates concerns across structures, contours and plains in a manner that leaves the party in an intricate interest ridden situation in relation to who gets what and when. These intricacies in resources, value allocation and boot sharing thus become dialectical. The situation obtains with all the political parties in Nigeria: APC, PDP, APGA, etc. The PDP in its 16 years of rulership of the Nigerian state demonstrated flagrant abuse of internal mechanisms of resolving disputes and conflicting interests through manipulated nominations / primary elections, short-changing of party candidates, tele-guided elective party conventions / congresses. Virtually all states of the federation where PDP controlled witnessed abuse of internal party democracy. In some instances, PDP contested some electoral positions without clearly identified candidates. The situation is rife in ruling parties because they attract all manners of politicians.

Parties in control at the national as well as state levels exhibit the same pattern in conventions and nominations. APGA as a regional or state prominent party in Anambra state witnessed poor performance in the 2019 national assembly elections due largely to the process of selection adopted in their primaries. The whims and caprices of the governor and those around him appear to be hoisted on members. Starting from the elective congresses to the main primaries, boys said to be loyal to the governor and his wife (especially those close to Hon. Chinedu Obidigwe and Aguleri natives) appear to have been used to conduct the party primaries. Popularity of aspirants was not a matter for deciding who flies the flag of the party for the elections. Such considerations as commitment to retiring the money spent for securing 21/21 victory for the governor in the 2017 gubernatorial elections in Anambra state and, ability to settle groups around the governor appear to form the priorities for winning candidacy for elective positions in the party. There was little or no consideration for loyalty and commitment to party ideologies and aspirant's popularity.

In the 2019 general elections, cases of intra-party conflicts abound especially in the APC at the national level and some of the regional or state parties like APGA. Hence, party primaries overtly restricted citizens from running as candidates, lacked integrity measures, and were

often controversial resulting in extensive legal challenges majority of which were not settled before the general elections. Reporting the exorbitant fees charged for expression of interest and nomination by political parties, the European Union Election Observation Mission report observed as follows "to run in a primary of the two main parties involves prohibitive financial costs of up to NGN 45 million (around EUR 110,000)". Describing the nominations further, EU EOM (2019) noted that "procedural problems included an overall lack of transparency, winners being subsequently changed by party leaderships, and parties not having objective criteria for screening candidates". The trend appeared as if ruling political parties formed umbrella for greater majority of politicians. With the successful alternation of political powers in 2015 from PDP to APC, membership of the latter skyrocketed and spread across states and geopolitical zones. Perhaps due to critical value of power of incumbency, most politicians even in the south eastern geopolitical zone where the PDP had held sway overtime defected to the APC for want of positions. Yes, many of them were dissatisfied with unequal treatment in the PDP and could not find better platform in APGA which, in Anambra State - where it is controlling, turned an instrument in the hands of some persons. The clusters could not hold as spoils of power for the APC was not effectively managed to benefit all interest groups and individuals in the new configuration.

Crises in the APC started with the selection and determination of the 8th National Assembly leadership. Owing to complex interplay of unwieldy forces, influence and powers from powerful individuals, groups and sections of the country and the party, there was unmitigated hot pursuit which pushed groups like the new PDP into assuming what gave rise to a new turn in the power equation at the Senate with Dr. Bukola Saraki as the President against the interest of the new ruling APC supposed leadership and the presidency. Clearly the elephant was defeated and killed but the pumpkin felt it was not getting its fair share. A segment of the APC was calculated to be deciding who gets what and how thereby compelling the runaway PDP members in the APC to continue with pursuit of their interest. Again, after a long delay in conducting elective party conventions and congresses, some forces in the APC demonstrated that the party does not have adequate regards for rule of law and constitutionalism with the illegal and unconstitutional extension of the tenure of National Working Committee of the APC on February 27 for 12 months was very inciting. This led to a lot of controversies with the Governor of Zamfara State, Abdulaziz Yari, and the Lagos APC distancing themselves from the position of the NEC. Similarly, an aggrieved member from Imo State, Mr. Okere Nnamdi, dragged the APC to the Federal High Court in Abuja asking it to sack the Chief John Odigie Oyegun led National Working Committee of the party (Ojo, 2018).

What is more, the conduct of party primaries in preparation for the 2019 general elections generated severe intra-party crises than what was recorded in the previous elections (Akhaine, 2019). The situation was rife in the APC perhaps as the ruling political party with greatest membership cum loyalty and control across the federation. The failure of some governors to install preferred candidates as their party flag-bearers resulting from interferences from the party national leadership spur for another is worthy of mention. In Imo, Rivers, Adamawa, Zamfara, Kaduna and Ogun States, the primary elections created fielding crises. Some persons subverted the processes and imposed preferred candidates. Selection of state and national assembly candidates raised maximum dusts that gave rise to massive defection of APC law

makers at the national assembly in addition to the creation of formations by some outgoing governors who were bent on realizing their own ambitions and that of their preferred candidates against party interests. In Lagos, the incumbent governor - Akinwunmi Ambode was technically stripped of party nomination for the 2019 elections. In Delta State, intra-party divisions within the ruling party saw the national chairman partnering a faction thereby creating ample room for greater division in the state chapter of the party. In Rivers and Zamfara, both INEC's sanctions and Supreme Court ruling robbed the ruling party of participation in the elections. Unfortunately, Ojeifo (2018) observed that the disagreements over results of party primaries are much more pronounced in the APC in the 2019 general elections. Disputed outcomes of primaries resulted in extensive litigation and intra-party conflict during the campaign. Most prominently, APC primaries in Rivers and Zamfara were nullified. Other contentious examples included two different APC governorship results announced in Imo, alleged parallel primaries organized by two rival PDP factions in Ogun, and two people claiming to be the presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party (EU EOM, 2019). Accepted that there is much deeper malaise that ramifies the administration of political parties in Nigeria, the extent at which intra-party conflicts manifests has continued to interrogate the leadership prowess of political parties in Nigeria. Adoption of *labour tactics* by Comrade Adams Oshiomole led national leadership of the APC may not have boosted nominations, rebuilding and reunification of the party for the 2019 general elections. Labour relations is obviously different from party management. Comrade Adams Oshiomole applied the wrong antidote in party affairs and got several members and players including forces frayed and set against one another. The APC recorded unprecedented number of defections and decampments to the build-up for the 2019 general elections. The leadership of the national assembly was moved to opposition PDP including over 40 members of the House of Representatives and Senators. With his tactics, Comrade Oshiomole explicates the intricate dynamics involved in distilling, accommodating and validating political interests and candidatures of those that have passed through the mills of primary elections, which success is not essentially only about the outcomes but also about the processes and their integrity. Oshiomole under the guise of NWC, exerts himself to moderate the interface between politics and economy in the ratification of the choices that are thrown up through the conduct of the primary while taking advantage of the President Buhari delay approach to issues to cause more challenges for the party.

Thence, the ratification for use of both direct and indirect primary election modes in seventeen and nineteen states respectively for the same set of nomination processes turned out a critical obstacle to APC performance in the 2019 general elections. This decision quickened and aggravated trouble in the party across state chapters. Many resorted to self-help and partook in parallel congresses where they adopted the mode of primary election that appealed to their fancy as was the case in Rivers, tried in Lagos, etc. The national chairman has the final authority over who flies party flags, hence NWC supported electoral panels that it mandated to conduct and/or monitor the primary elections in the states and created maximum crises in states. In about five states (Kaduna state, Nasir el-Rufai; Imo state, Rochas Okorochoa; Ogun state, Ibikunle Amosun; Ondo state, Rotimi Akeredolu; and, Zamafara state, Abdulaziz Yari) where the political interests of the governors clashed with the interests of the party national leadership, the NWC inserted its powerful wedge to arrest the avoidable drifts to the odious

(Ojeifo, 2018). Another sterling feature of party primary in the APC was issues around automatic tickets for loyal senators who did not defect to the opposition parties against the interests of some state governors who contended that the senators were loyal to Abuja and not partners to their state governments. The APC was enmeshed in crises because Oshiomhole insisted on supposed "supremacy of the party". At another level, some national officers of the party have running battles with their state governors as manifested in the ouster of Governor Obaseki by the Oshiomhole group where the former was denied participation in party primaries in the 2020 gubernatorial elections in Edo state.

Implications of Intra-Party Crises for Party Performance in the 2019 General Elections

The Nigeria's 2019 general elections according to EU EOM final report (2019) were marked by severe operational and transparency shortcomings, electoral security problems, and low turnout. Conflicts between individuals and groups have unimaginable implications in socio-economic and political relationships. Man is a social animal that is always guided by his interests. Realization and consolidation of such interests do not only bring about actualization but occasions vantage positions and access to political power in the context of this study. Intra-party conflicts are thus capable of undermining party successes in elections. The APC, SDP at the national level and APGA in Anambra state like many other parties in Nigeria went into the elections with lingering crises. The parties were enmeshed in factional leadership battles after contentious parallel governorship and legislative primaries for party tickets across many states of the federation, with aggrieved aspirants and stakeholders engaging themselves in brutal and potentially damaging battles to get the upper hand (Oloyede, 2018). Many party stakeholders and aspirants launched brutal fight against alleged imposition of candidates, automatic tickets as well as lack of justice and internal party democracy in the conduct of their party primaries.

From state-based parties to national, APGA in Anambra state felt a debilitating blow of candidate imposition and injustice to members at the national assembly elections. In fact, if not the result of the presidential elections that saw the inability of the PDP to secure the presidency, APGA would have collapsed in Anambra state. Against known precedents, the party won only 4 out of the 11 federal constituencies and none of the 3 senatorial seats in the state. The situation occasioned massive disbursement of funds to electoral wards and local governments on March 9 in a bid by the governor to ensure stability in the state assembly. Thence, APGA won 26 out of 30 seats in the state assembly at the mercy of funds disbursed to candidates by the state. The immediate repercussion of imposition of candidates and irregularities in APGA primary elections in Anambra state was the drummed-up impeachment of the state assembly speaker, Rt. Hon. Rita Mmaduagwu by a team of legislators who were denied return tickets to the house led by Hon. Ikem Uzoezie (Obeta, 2018). The situation spelt danger in clear terms for the governor who resorted to vote buying to win majority seats in the assembly at the March 9 elections in the state. It is indeed, a death blow on APGA, as it prepares for 2021 in the state gubernatorial elections. As interests are being articulated, APGA is geometrically losing hold of the state especially with the lopsided election of speaker for the 7th Assembly who is from the same senatorial zone with the governor. What is more, the imposition of candidates and long contest of primaries has rather a more devastating implication for the party in the South-East geopolitical zone. After the 2017 gubernatorial elections, Governor Obiano and the

National Chairman of the party nursed vaunting ambitions of capturing the entire zone in the 2019 elections to no avail. The level of conflict in APGA thus have damning consequences for the party.

On the other hand, the PDP as opposition party with control of several states especially in the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones, witnessed a relatively better situation. Perhaps for the fact that it does not have control over the national government. The public apology of their national chairman, Uche Secondus, maybe having some impacts on their conducts. Anyway, having lost hold of state apparatuses of force and resources, the party seem to be drumming up confidence from the populace as an underdog. It was only in Ogun state where there were parallel primaries for governorship flag that there was maximum conflict. The PDP was rather coagulating and integrating forces with disgruntled APC decampees; forming all possible alliances and coalition aimed at wrestling powers with the APC at the national level. Most APC federal lawmakers who were denied return ticket found placements under the PDP umbrella. The PDP was visibly dribbled by the incumbency advantage deployed by the APC in the 2019 general elections. The drama and dynamics of collation of presidential election results was a pointer to the gimmicks of the APC. The declaration of inconclusive elections for gubernatorial and assembly elections in some states was read to follow the thin line of areas supposedly won by the opposition PDP. Thus, the PDP was more inflicted with incumbency advantage than intra-party conflicts.

The situation with APC is not very different. From crisis of confidence in the National Working Committee, overt poor performance of the federal government in the areas of security, employment creation and massive poverty, personality clashes, wounds created by the emergence of the leadership of the National Assembly, alleged lack of internal democracy, leadership crisis in some states, frosty relationship between the executive and legislature and demolition of properties of splinter groups, among others, the chances of the ruling APC in the 2019 general elections was visibly shaking. The party's success in the elections was purely a grand plan and orchestration of the Fulani hegemony masked in authoritarian populism that adapts and employs all tactics to circumvent elections in order to secure victory for their continued rule and dominance.

Conclusion

The usual brouhaha in the parties bear on lack of internal party democracy and crass disregard for the principle of party supremacy. A situation where both the ruling APC and the main opposition PDP are in perpetual turmoil does not augur well for the nation's relatively young democracy. The perennial wars of attrition in the main political parties will do the country and her people no good, either. Rather than strengthening democracy, it will whittle away the belief of the masses in the efficacy of the time-tested system of government. If care is not taken, the attendant tenuous situation both parties have found themselves may, unwittingly, create a conducive atmosphere for centrifugal forces threatening the corporate existence of the country to fester. Membership and candidate recruitment combine with unbridled struggle for the control of party structures to generate convoluted intra-party relationships that negatively influence party performances in Nigeria. That the defeat of President GEJ in 2015 presidential elections was a function of the dissociation in the PDP at the time and that like the situation in APGA, that APC would loss grasp of seats in both state and national contexts to opposition if

it failed to mediate safely and better the contending interests in its fold. Consequently, political party leaderships in Nigeria are enjoined to act within the stipulations of their party constitution and grant all members equal and adequate opportunities of participation in party affairs by conducting their elective conventions and nominations freely and fairly.

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