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Internal Party Democracy and Candidate Selection in Nigeria: A Review of the 2018 All Progressives Congress's Primary Elections

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Abstract

Since the commencement of the Fourth Republic, the process of selecting candidates has always been a source of conflict for political parties. This cannot be unconnected with the fact that their primary elections are in most cases devoid of democratic ethos. This has adverse effects on stability of political parties and democratization process. It is on this basis, that, this paper derived its twin objectives. Firstly, the paper undertakes a conceptual and theoretical exposition of internal party democracy cum candidate selection. Second, it reviewed some primary elections held by the All Progressives Congress so as to determine the extent of its adherence to principles of internal democracy. Adopting the qualitative research method in which data were largely derived from secondary sources particularly through relevant journal articles, textbooks, government publications, newspapers and magazines, it was discovered that the process of candidate selection within the APC was largely tainted by conflicts and intrigues largely due to perceived disregard for laid down rules guiding the conduct of primary elections. The paper however concluded with recommendations on how to foster internal party democracy as it relates to candidate selection so as to boost stability of political party and democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political Party, Internal Party Democracy, Candidate Selection, Democracy, All Progressives Congress

Introduction

Political parties all over the world are the cornerstone of representative democracy and electoral process. By virtue of their functions, they remain one of the prominent and critical political institutions of representative governments. Parties help to articulate group aim, foster quality political leadership, formulate and promote policy alternatives and present voters with coherent electoral choices by recruiting political leaders through selection of candidates to represent them at elections (Scarrow, 2005). With their significant functions, political parties no doubt are the heart beat of democracy. Thus, electoral democracy without political parties is a mere fallacy. The existence of vibrant political parties is no doubt a precondition for democratic governance. However, much as political parties are of crucial importance to modern representative governments, the success or otherwise of such governments to a large extent depend on the nature of the quality of Internal Party Democracy (IPD) of political parties most essentially as it relates to the selection of candidates to contest elective posts during general elections.

Presenting candidates for elective posts in the general election is a question of how parties arrive at the choice they present to voters and specifically, whether and to what extent parties need to be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within the larger society. One of the ways by which a party can exhibit the attributes of internal democracy is through the conduct of transparent, inclusive and credible party primary elections (Scarrow, 2005). As noted by Okhaide (2012) there is the need for political parties to take to the ideals and practice of IPD because the quality of internal democracy within political parties to a reasonable extent can be used to determine a country's level of democratic growth. In essence, the process of selecting candidates for general elections within a party is an important task because the stability of a party largely depends on well established and institutionalised internal party democratic structures.

A party's stability can be accessed through the manner in which it conducts the process of selecting candidates for a general election. Therefore, the obligation of political parties to abide by the principles of IPD cannot be underestimated. When candidate emerge through transparent primary elections, it translates to the fact that party structures and organization are participatory and inclusive which thus, results in the harmonious co-existence of members within the party. In this regard, party discipline and cohesion are enhanced. Party discipline based on due process is the substance of party cohesion both of which are crucial to the sustainability of any democratic system. Party discipline as the foundation for party cohesion however, requires complete adherence to the letter and spirit of party constitution (Jinadu, 2011).

Since the commencement of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, there has been an unending quest and outcry for the institutionalisation of IPD and adherence to its ideals and principles specifically as it relates to the selection of candidates to fly party's flag during elections. The period of selecting candidates for general elections has always been a source of tension and sometimes violence. Such tensions at times threaten the existence of political parties. These in most cases emanate from perceived deliberate imposition of candidates at the expense of other candidates who might have contested and probably emerged winner in primaries. The deliberate imposition of candidates during party primary elections undermine the very essence of democracy and generate post-election disputes which culminate into litigation through which aggrieved candidates seek redress while others resort to self-help by institutionalizing violence. These have serious implication for party stability and the democratic process. It is on this premise, that, this paper examines internal party democracy and candidates' selection using the 2018 All Progressives Congress's (APC) primary elections as points of reference. Following this introduction is the section on conceptual and theoretical exposition of internal party democracy and candidates' selection. This is followed by an overview of the emergence, structure and objectives of APC. Following this is a review of the 2018 APC primary elections. The last part concludes the paper.

Internal Party Democracy and Candidate Selection: A conceptual and Theoretical Exposition

The idea of IPD which emerged in the epoch of mass parties (Duverger, 1961) has become prominent in literature on political parties owing to its ability to connect ordinary citizens to government and the governance process and to contribute to the stability and legitimacy of the democratic systems in which the political parties engage in electoral competition for political power (Scarrow, 2005). IPD is a comprehensive concept which encompasses an extensive variety of procedures for carrying party members along in intra-party deliberation on issues and decisions affecting the party. It is democracy within the party and the extent to which a party ascribe to and adhere to the basic and universal norms and ideals of democracy (Scarrow, 2005). To Cular (2004) "Internal party democracy means that the party's should be formed "bottom-up" and that the internal distribution of power should be marked by dispersion at different levels, bodies and individuals rather than by the concentration in one organ" (p. 34). In a similar vein, Wolkenstein (2016) located the definition of IPD within the context of the traditional conception of the role of political parties in a democracy that is, connecting citizens to the government. He claimed that IPD is the instrument used in establishing and sustaining the connection between the people and government. He further argued that political parties which internally stick to democratic ethos empower its members and afford them access to demands of the constituents and provide them with opportunities to channel these demands into policy decisions.

The above definitions share certain commonalities. For instance, they emphasise the fact that IPD is a viable medium through which citizens or better still members of a political party are given voice in the governance process. Second, they depict the notion that party structure, organisation and activities are not and should not be the exclusive reserve of a select few within the party. Third, they see IPD as a micro democratic project within the larger democratic society. The third point may have suggested why Cular (2004) observed that unlike most definitions of democracy at the level of political system, the definition of IPD does not mean a state can be distinguished from other forms of internal party order. It is rather about the extent by which a party can be rated in terms of internal democratic tenets. Thus, unlike the overall democratic project, internal party democracy should be taken as a neutral term and valued only if it contributes to the quality of the overall democratic process.

Candidate selection as a concept is underscored by one of the main definitions of political party given by Sartori (1976) that is, "a political party is any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (pp. 63-64). This assertion has been buttressed by Cross and Katz (2013) when they posited that: "choosing candidates and leaders is a strategic process with important implication on the nature of the party itself as it might reflect its democratic ethos" (p. 115). As a concept, candidate selection is the procedure through which political parties take the crucial decision of who will be on the ballot paper as their recommended candidate(s). It involves the decisions of political parties regarding who to put forward as candidates under their label for

general elections. Simply put "It is the primary screening method in the process through which the party in public office is reproduced" (Kartz, 2001, p. 277). The process through which candidates are selected by political parties is party primaries. A primary election is the preliminary step in the process of electing a candidate to fly a party's flag at the general elections. It is an election which narrows the field of candidates before the general elections are held. Primary election can be categorized into two: these are the closed primary and the open primary. In the closed primary, only party members can vote, in the later all voters can take part and may cast votes on a ballot of any party. Party primaries are mechanisms for managing diversity, accountability and inclusion in the governance of political parties including relevant electoral process for party and public offices. Above all they remain one of the most crucial elements of IPD.

Theoretically, IPD can be enhanced through various party activities. Mimpen (2007) opined that there exist two important instruments of fostering internal democracy. These are: free, fair, credible and regular elections to occupy positions within parties and to select candidates to represent parties in major elections. The second involves equal opportunities for all members such that all interests are equally represented and attended to. This instruments according to him fosters the internal democratic setting of parties in which the political party is open to all members in terms of inclusiveness in party activities. In a similar contribution, Sindre (2016) observed that IPD can be determined by party leadership election institutionalisation which can be measured by the extent of adherence to formal rules and regulation governing the election of party leaders. According to him, attention should in this regard, be paid to the existence or non-existence of formal rules most especially as codified in official party documents such as party statutes and constitutions.

The centrality and importance of the procedure of candidates' selection to IDP has also been stressed by Wolkenstein (2016) when he offered two models of IPD. These are the candidate selection model and the direct participation model. He stressed that the candidate selection model has remained the prevalent model of IPD. The basic tenet underlying this model is that the process of selecting party representatives should be an all inclusive affair and should provide opportunities for members to air their preferences. In addition, it has been stressed that candidate selection procedures should be reasonable competitive. The direct participation model however, emphasise that rather than indirectly influencing party's decision through voting at primary elections to select candidates, party members should be able to air their views so as to directly influence party decisions. The most common form of this model is voting by members of political parties not only for candidate selection but for determining policy alternatives. This model compared to with candidate selection model give more sense of belonging to party members than the candidate selection model (Wolkenstein, 2016).

Wolkenstein (2016) however, argued that the two models of IDP above are not adequate for fostering IPD. He argued that the two models limits members ability to play active part in party affairs because they "bracket out processes of preference-formation" (p. 304) which has detrimental effects on the capacity of political parties

to connect citizens to crucial political and government decisions. More so it weakens the democratic potentials of IDP. He however, suggested that to address the shortcomings of these models, there is the need to be deliberative in internal party activities. He thus, recommended the deliberative model of IPD. The underlying notion of this model is to coordinate party activities in a manner that members play active part in party policy decisions. Deliberation, according to him, 'is a practice that involves jointly engaging in discursive exchanges about specific issues. It is about finding agreements on, or getting clear about the nature and depth of disagreement over these issues in conversation with others' (Wolkenstein, 2016, pp. 304-305). It is important to note that the deliberative model in itself cannot function in isolation of the candidate selection model and the direct participation model. What is obtainable is that the candidate selection method and the direct participation model perform certain indispensable functions within the party which the deliberative model cannot perform. For instance, it is considered unavoidable for political parties to present candidates for elections. This, which can only be actualised through the conduct of party primaries, is considered one of the major ways of enhancing IPD.

Much as the procedure for selecting party candidates enhances IPD, the danger of candidate selection process leading to violence has been underscored. In a study on Candidate Nomination, Intra-Party Democracy, and Election Violence in Africa (2018) Seeberg, Wahman and Skaaning observed that, although there is burgeoning literature on African democratisation and electoral violence, little attention has been focused on violence during party primary elections. They stressed that violence during selection of party candidates, though having different causes from those of general elections, is a variety of intra-party feud which jeopardises the quality of IPD and general elections and also undermines the overall quality of democracy. Thus, they posit that the dangers that the candidates' selection violence portend goes beyond the candidates' selection period. Such violence according to them, endanger the democratisation process and consolidation of the democracy. Aside these, the dangers can also be seen in the fact that party unity and cohesion is threatened. Thus, there is a high possibility of intra-party conflict arising.

In another study, *Party Primaries, Candidate Selection and Intra-Party Conflict in Nigeria: Peoples Democratic Party in Perspective*, Adekeye (2017) emphasised the interplay of party primaries, candidate selection and intra-party conflicts in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The focus of the study was on how the inter play of process of candidate selection and party primaries within the PDP generated internal crisis and feud among party members. Findings from the study revealed that the non-adherence to the ideals and principles of party rules, regulations, legal framework as well as institutional design was the major driver of intra-party conflicts within the PDP. Rather than follow due process in conducting primaries through which candidates emerges, party constitution, rules and regulations and institutional design were subverted thereby giving prominence to imposition of candidates (Adekeye, 2017).

IPD has indeed been constrained within political parties in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Several factors have been held responsible for this.

Matlos (2004) outlined the challenges facing IPD in Africa to include the following: "leadership, primary elections, party funding, gender equity, and management of the internal affairs of the party" (pp. 9-10). He argued that: leadership of political parties remain a contentious issue and is capable of generating intra-party feud if not well managed. It was further stressed that the ability of a political party to foster democracy to a large extent depends on the quality of its leadership. In this regard, a party's performance during general elections and primary elections is a function of how effective and visionary its leadership structure is. The idea however, is that most political parties in Africa lack the pre-requisite quality leadership required for the conduct of party primaries through which candidates are selected (Matlos, 2004).

Primary election as a challenge facing IDP revolves around the fact that the process through which candidates are selected to fly parties flag during general elections have been largely devoid of democratic ideals, principles and ethos. This in turn generates controversies and conflict arising from the way and manner in which such primaries are conducted by the parties' leadership. Under these conditions IPD cannot thrive because the selection process is not open and inclusive. Again, party funding within political parties constitute another challenge facing IDP. The extent of transparency in the utilisation of party funds is another criterion used to measure the level of internal democratic norms among political parties. In Africa, the disbursements of party funds are in most cases not a party issue but that of a select few within the top echelon of the party. This breeds disgruntlement among party members thus having adverse effects on party activities. In addition, the extent to which gender equality is entrenched in political parties determines and fosters IPD. The perception is that the experience of women empowerment within political parties is not an encouraging one both in qualitative and quantitative terms (Matlos, 2004). The management of internal party affairs and activities constitute another yardstick for determining the extent of IPD. The management of internal party affairs entails the management of day-to-day party activities. When the process of management is not open and inclusive party members nurture grudges which in most cases manifests during selection of candidates.

The All Progressives Congress: Emergence and Ideology

The All Progressives Congress (APC) as a political party in Nigeria was formed on the 6th of February, 2013. The party emerged as a result of a merger of three prominent opposition political parties. These were: Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). The resolution of the merger was accented to by representatives of the four parties which formed the new APC. These included: Tom Ikimi, who represented the ACN; Senator Annie Okonkwo on behalf of the APGA; Ibrahim Shekarau, the Chairman of ANPP's Merger Committee; and Garba Shehu, the Chairman of CPC's Merger Committee (Agomuo, 2013). However, on the 31st of July, 2013 the party was formally approved by the nation's Election Management Body, the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) to be recognised as a political party. Following this, the licenses of the three former parties were revoked (Owete, 2013).

In terms of its ideology, the APC is renowned for its centre-left political ideology. The party tends to foster market economic policies and a strong incentive towards government regulation. The APC is in support of state's rights. Its social policy also entails a combination of social nationalism. The party believes in mass participation in the control of the major means of production, distribution and exchange. In this regard, the APC believe in the African ideology of public ownership of the means of production without necessarily discouraging private entrepreneurship (Shilgba, 2014). The party believes staunchly in the notion that workers productivity is in consonance with the wages and salaries they are rewarded with. Thus, the party believes in better working condition for the average Nigerian worker. The APC upholds the provision of the 2nd Chapter of the Nigerian Constitution captioned: Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, with the dictate: "the weak must be cared for by a strong society; but a weak and failed society is weak in affection towards her disabled, women and children" (APC Manifesto, 2013).

The manifesto of the APC is geared towards the following key issue areas: the constitution, national security, conflict resolution, national unity, social harmony, job creation and the economy, agriculture and food security, industrialization, infrastructure, oil and gas industry, education, healthcare, senior citizens, youth sports and culture, women empowerment, environment, foreign policy (APC Manifesto, 2013). As fallouts of the above, the APC has strong support for freedom of speech for nation's citizens. The party is of the opinion that guarantee of freedom of speech and expression makes better citizens. As such it places emphasis on affordable and quality education because of the intent that it produces intelligent and well informed citizens who can positively engage in informed discussions aimed at promoting the society. The party also approves of friendly foreign relations with other countries and that both internal and external strength and respect emanate from internal respect for citizens. It also supports devolution of power to the federating states without weakening the centre (Shilgba, 2014).

As part of its belief in democracy and its resolve to foster it, the APC promotes and upholds the practice of internal democracy where there is no imposition of candidates or overwhelming influence of the godfathers. This is however, directed at eliminating all forms exclusion and godfatherism within the party which may be situated between elected public officials, who are at the very top end and the masses at the wide base. In view of this, the party in its constitution clearly stated as one of its objectives "promoting and upholding the practice of internal democracy at all levels of the party's organisation" (APC Constitution, Article 7: viii). This is however, embodied in the following provisions of the Constitution:

All Party posts prescribed or implied by this Constitution shall be filled by democratically conducted elections at the respective National Convention or Congress subject, where possible, to consensus. Provided that where a Candidate has emerged by consensus for an elective position, a vote of "yes" or "no" by ballot

or voice shall be called, to ensure that it was not an imposition which could breed discontent and crisis (APC Constitution, Article 20, p. i).

Taking into consideration the provisions of the party's Constitution as regards nomination and selection of candidates and conduct of primary elections one can deduce that the party's intent to foster internal democracy cannot be in doubt. The party's strong affirmation that no party member shall impose any leader or group of leaders on the people is a strong indication of its resolve to stick to the letters of the guiding rules and principles of the party. No doubt the party has an elaborate and encompassing blue print which does not accord any member or group undue respect or advantage. By the provisions of the Constitution, the party's national leadership exhibits a character which can guarantee members and citizens voice in the actual operations of the political party. This, when put into practice can go a long way in enhancing internal democracy within the party and can consolidate the overall national democratic project and effort.

The All Progressives Congress, Candidate Selection and its 2018 Primary Elections

The legal framework for enforcing adherence to democratic norms and principles relating to activities and operations of political parties in Nigeria are contained according to Ikechukwu (2015) in five distinct legal documents. These include: the 1999 Constitution, the Constitution of political parties, the Electoral Act, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) statutory rules and other informal rules. These documents also spells out the rules that governs internal party activities most essentially as it relates to the conduct of primary elections for selection of party representatives. For instance, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates that:

Political parties must provide for the conduct of a periodic election on a democratic basis for the election of its principal officers, executive members and members of its governing body, at regular intervals not exceeding four years; members of its executive committee and other principal officers must reflect the federal character of Nigeria, and these officers must belong to different states not being less than 2/3 of the 36 states and FCT (Section 223, Sub-sections 1-2).

In a similar vein, pursuant to the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) particularly Paragraph 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) the INEC stipulates the following provision governing the conduct of party primary elections for the selection of candidates:

A political party seeking to participate in any election organized by the Commission must conduct primaries, wherein all eligible members of the party must be given equal opportunity to participate

in the primaries of the party for the purpose of selecting candidates for elective positions (Act no. 64 (as amended)).

Based on the provisions of the legal framework for selection of candidates by political parties, the primary elections of the APC were scheduled to hold as follows: 25th September, 2018 – Presidential primary election; 29th September, 2018 – Governorship primary elections; 2nd October, 2018 – Senate primary elections; 3rd October, 2018 – House of Representatives primary elections; 4th October, 2018 – State House of Assembly primary elections (Alechenu, 2018). However, prior to the commencement of the primary elections there were series of deliberation as regards the mode by which the primary elections shall be conducted. This had to do whether it would be direct or indirect. On the one hand, the direct method involves registered members of the party getting an equal opportunity to vote for the party's candidate. In this regard, all registered members of a party are allowed to vote in the primary election to elect the party's representative in the general elections. While this method is perceived as tedious and time-consuming, it is also considered as the most transparent and credible method that represents the wishes of majority of party members. The indirect method on the other hand has to do with vesting a group of people known as delegates to vote for the selection of candidates on behalf of the party members. Such delegates are usually elected by party members at the Ward congresses (Toromade, 2018). The party on the long run decided that the state chapters of the party have the freedom to adopt any of the two methods (Busari, 2018).

In the Presidential primary election, the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari was the sole candidate. Despite being the sole candidate, it was required that his candidature be confirmed by registered party members through direct voting. The results of the primary election however, indicated that Muhammadu Buhari secured overwhelming victory in most of the states (*Daily Trust*, 2018). Much as the conduct of the Presidential primaries was successful, the declaration of the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari did not go down well with some members of the party. This led to the rejection of the primary by a coalition of presidential aspirants of the party spearheaded by Alhaji Mumakhhai Unagha and Dr S.K Ogbonnia (Onoyume, 2018). The coalition claimed that the declaration of Buhari as the sole candidate of the party did not comply with the dictates of the Constitutions of the country and that of the party.

It was further claimed that no candidate stepped down for the incumbent President. Thus, the unanimous decision to declare Buhari as the sole candidate of the party was seen as denying citizens their right to seek public office. They however, concluded that there was no level playing ground in the screening exercise of the party. Thus, they perceived the screening process as biased. They complained that while other members of the party who signified interest in the selection process were subjected to rigorous screening exercise, no effort was made to re-evaluate the appropriateness of Muhammadu Buhari for the ticket most essentially as it relates to his educational qualification, state of health and the circumstances surrounding the

nation's ethnic composition (Onoyume, 2018). It is however, important to note that Article 20(1) of the APC Constitution provides for the emergence of a consensus candidate(s), but such candidate(s) shall be subjected to an acceptability test in which a vote of "yes" or "no" by ballot or voice shall be called (APC Constitution, 2013).

However, starting from the 29th of September 2018 the party's gubernatorial primaries commenced in most states of the Federation. In Ogun state, the tussle for the governorship was between Adekunle Akinlade and Dapo Abiodun. It was alleged that Adekunle Akinlade was the proffered candidate of the incumbent Governor Ibikunle Amosun while Dapo Abiodun was favoured by the party's leadership (Omilana, 2018). Prior to the primary election, the state chapter of the party was engulfed in series of controversies. First, the party was polarised as a result of the adoption of Adekunle Akinlade as the consensus and anointed candidate of the incumbent governor-led faction of the party. Second, was the inability of the state leadership of the party to reach a consensus as regards the mode by which the primary elections shall be conducted (Omilana, 2018). While the Amosun-led faction favoured an indirect mode of primary election the other faction and the National Working Committee (NWC) of the party frowned at it.

Two primary elections were held in the state. One was conducted by the state Chairman of the party, Chief Derin Adebisi on 2nd October, 2018. In that primary election, Adekunle Akinlade who contested against five other candidates was reported to have polled 190,987 votes out of 201,620 valid votes cast across the 236 wards in the state. There was however a twist in the election when the Chairman of the Electoral Committee and the agents of the other five contestants refused to sign the results. The other election which was held on 3rd October, 2018 was overseen by the NWC of the party. In the election, it was reported that Dapo Abiodun won with 102,305 votes. Akinlade scored 23,443 votes, Jimi Lawal scored 51,153 votes while Abimbola Ashiru polled 29,764 votes. Other contestants Senator Gbenga Kaka got 17,771 votes and Abayomi Hunye 9,110 votes (Omilana, 2018). The election which produced Dapo Abiodun has been ratified by the NWC of the party which thus, nullified the parallel primary conducted by the State Chapter of the party (Ugbede, 2018). This development did not go down well with the Amosun-led faction of the party in the state.

The faction saw the process by which Dapo Abiodun emerged as the party's gubernatorial candidate as being largely compromised and not transparent. The Amosun-led faction described Abiodun's emergence as an imposition and accused the Chairman of the party Adams Oshiomole of complicity and desperation (Moses, 2018). To register their grievances against the emergence of Abiodun, some female members of the party led by Chairman of Ilugun Local Council Development Authority, Mofoluke Soremekun, and other women leaders from the three senatorial districts staged a protest at the governor's office carrying placards which indicated agitation for a stolen mandate. They said that they had supported the emergence of Akinlade who hails from Ogun West Senatorial District and who happens to be the anointed candidate of the governor (Adedeji, 2018). The governor who threatened to dump the party for another solicited the intervention of the President in the imbroglio.

In Zamfara state controversies surrounded the conduct of primary elections. While the INEC claimed that it is not expecting the state chapter of APC to submit list of candidates for various elective posts owing to the fact that the party did not meet the October 8 deadline for the conduct of primary elections, the governor of the state, Abdulaziz Yari claimed that the state primary elections were held before the due date and that they were supervised by officials of INEC (Tukur, 2018). It is important to note that the national leadership of the APC had earlier dissolved the state's party executives and barred the Governor from taking part in the primaries. The governor however, claimed that the elections were held on the advice of INEC. He further claimed that it became imperative for him to conduct the primary elections when it became evident that the two committees sent from the national headquarters were not willing to conduct the primaries. This according to him was because the result primaries which he supervised did not go in tandem with the expectations of the committee. It was on this basis, that the results of the primaries were cancelled (Tukur, 2018).

One of the candidates for the primaries, Kabiru Marafa who showed interest in contesting the state's gubernatorial party ticket asserted that no primary election was held in the state, thus, supporting INEC's stand. In an affirmative statement that was contrary to the one above, the governor insisted that primary elections were held. He reiterated this when he asserted that: "the most important thing is that we conducted election on the 3rd and 4th of October and all agencies INEC, Civil Defence, Police, and DSS were there and they signed for us and the report was written by the REC that elections were conducted." In his response, Adams Oshiomhole, the party Chairman claimed that primary elections were held in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution as spelt out by INEC regulation on the conduct of party primary elections. Based on this the governor said the party shall produce candidates for elective posts in the forthcoming 2019 general elections. The case has however, turned to a legal battle (Tukur and Ayitogo, 2018).

In Adamawa state, three gubernatorial aspirants slugged it out for the party's ticket. These were the incumbent Governor Muhammed Jibrilla, former Chairman of the EFCC, Nuhu Ribadu and Mahmud Ahmed, an inlaw to President Muhammadu Buhari. However, the two aspirants challenging the governor alleged that the committee sent by the National Headquarters to oversee the primary election collaborated with the governor to declare him the candidate of the party when no primary elections were conducted (Tukur and Ayitogo, 2018). The same scenario was the case in the senatorial primaries. Candidates vying for the Senatorial ticket also alleged that the incumbent Senator Binta Garba representing Adamawa North was unduly favoured by being declared the senatorial candidate when primary elections were not held. One of the Senatorial aspirants Idris Ahmed alleged that the APC was not fair to them by not conducting a transparent primary election for an authentic winner to emerge (Tukur and Ayitogo, 2018). Nuhu Ribadu on his own part condemned the process from which the governor emerged as the party's governorship candidate. He expressed shock when he heard that result of non-existent primary elections was being announced. To further describe the extent of impunity in the

primary election, one of the aspirants Mahmud Ahmed said he would reject the results of the primaries even if he was declared winner (Alao, 2018).

In Kaduna state, the controversies which surrounded the conduct of primary elections centred on the process of candidate selection for the Kaduna Central Senatorial District ticket. While the APC leadership insisted that the incumbent Senator, Shehu Sani is the party's candidate, the Kaduna state chapter of the party conducted a senatorial primary on the 6th of October and declared Uba Sani, one of the aides to incumbent governor Nasir El Rufai as the winner of the election (Mohammed, 2018). The primary election was alleged to have been contested for by the following candidates: Sani Saleh, Uba Sani, Shehu Sani, Usman Ibrahim and Shamsudeen Giwa. It is important to note that while other candidates may have been present at the election venue, the incumbent Senator, Shehu Sani was conspicuously missing from the venue of the election. The serving Senator dissociated himself from the primaries claiming that as far as he was concerned he remains the anointed candidate of the party's leadership. Thus, he described the primary election organised by the state chapter of the party as a charade. Following controversies that trailed the Senatorial primaries in the state and his subsequent inability to secure the party's ticket, Senator Shehu Sani dumped the party (Inyang, 2018).

In Kwara state, the scenario was that of parallel gubernatorial elections. Shortly before the primary election, two factions of the party had emerged. One is the Ishola Balogun-Fulani-led faction and the other is the Bashir Bolarinwa-led faction. It is important to note however, that the Ishola Balogun-Fulani-led faction has earlier been dissolved by the National Working Committee of the party but was being recognized by court. Despite being dissolved by the NWC of the party, the faction under the guise of its recognition by the court went ahead and conducted its primary election. In the contest, thirteen aspirants contested for the factional ticket. At the end of the election, Abdulwahab Omotoshe was declared as the winner. Following this, the Bashir Bolarinwa-led faction postponed its primary election (Olowolagba, 2018). The faction on 5th October conducted its primary election with eight candidates vying for the sole ticket. At the end of the polls, Abdulrahman Abdulrasaq emerged winner with 29,098 votes. Other results showed that his closest contestant Prof. Oba Abu scored 23,298. Alhaji Lukman Mustapha recorded 14,233 while Alhaji Yammah Abdullahi scored 22,116 votes. Other results include the following: Alhaji Hakeem Lawal – 18,758; Alhaji Mooshood Murtala – 9,511; Isaq Modibbo Kawu – 5,060; Alhaji Yakubu Gobar – 2,420; and Tajudeen Makama Audu – 3,127 (Ezeigbo, 2018).

The NWC of the APC having recognised the election conducted by the Bashir Bolarinwa-led faction as the authentic election has submitted the name of the winner Abdulrahman Abdulrasaq to INEC despite the court recognition of the Ishola Balogun-Fulani-led faction of the party. Following the perceived injustice and non transparent manner in which the election was conducted, supporters of various candidates protested what they see as deliberate imposition of candidate on the party members. Supporters of Alhaji Shuaibu Yaman Abdullahi, one of the governorship aspirants of the party in the state protested in Ilorin the state capital to register their dissatisfaction with the process through which Abdulrasaq had emerged. They

perceived the outcome of the primary election as a product of injustice. A candidate alleged that his agents and collation officers were threatened and treated with disdain and were denied copies of the results sheets (Mikail, 2018).

In Oyo state, the gubernatorial primary election which produced Adebayo Adelabu, former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the grandson of the notable Oyo state politician, Adegoke Adelabu was decried particularly by Adebayo Shittu, a serving minister in President Muhammadu Buhari's Cabinet. Worthy of note however, is that Shittu was allegedly refused clearance to participate in the gubernatorial primaries by the NWC based on his non-possession of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) certificate (Bada, 2018). Before the primary election, Shittu was reported to have rejected the indirect method of primary election which was the method chosen by the Committee which conducted the election in the state. Part of the reasons for rejecting the indirect method was that the delegates selected to vote constituted the bulk of those purposively selected for the party's state congresses which were still under contest in the court and that circumstances which surrounded the emergence of the leadership of the state chapter of the APC were still subjected to court litigation (Bada, 2018). He complained that the adoption of the indirect method of primary election at the expense of the direct method was aimed at reducing his chances at the primaries and that it would not create a level playing ground for the contestants (Bada, 2018).

In Ebonyi state, the APC primary election to select candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives took a bloody dimension. The crisis, which occurred in Onueke, headquarters of Ezza South Local Government Area, venue of the Ebonyi Central Senatorial District and Ezza South/Ikwo Federal Constituency primaries, resulted in sporadic shootings between supporters of two different factions of the party. As a result, one person was killed while several others including a policeman were injured (Agwu, 2018). The imbroglio was alleged to have occurred when a faction of loyal to a House of Representatives aspirant from Ikwo clashed with supporters of a gubernatorial aspirant who lost in his bid to secure the party's ticket who hails from Ezza North, over who controls the authentic delegates (Agwu, 2018). In Imo state the aftermath of the primary election which produced Senator Hope Uzodinma as the APC flag bearer has been that of a bitter rivalry between the incumbent Governor, Rochas Okorocha and the serving Senator characterised by hate speech. The governor alleged that Senator Uzodinma has criminal cases to answer and that his source of wealth is not clean (Nwachukwu, 2018). The Senator however, alleged that Okorocha and his cronies are cooking up stories because they never thought he could emerge as the party's gubernatorial candidate (Nwachukwu, 2018).

The occurrences which trailed the primaries examined above indicated that the selection processes for choosing aspirants of the party were tainted by intrigues, controversies, allegations of bias and deliberate imposition of candidates. This arises as a result of blatant disregard for the rule and constitutional provisions guiding the conduct of IPD most especially the aspect having to do with selection of candidates within the party for general elections. While one should not have expected the ruling party to have crisis free primary elections across the country, the magnitude of

allegations of bias, imposition of candidates and the use of unconstitutional means of candidate selection was unprecedented. The use of unconstitutional means of selecting candidates produces non-transparent candidate selection processes which have devastating effects not only on party stability but also on the larger democratic project.

The undemocratic conduct of party primary elections can spell doom for political parties at polls. This may result in legal battles which some may not be resolved until a day to the election. Also, the influence of political "godfathers" in the imposition of candidates affects the performance of a political party at the polls. The political "godfathers" play the role of political gate keepers who dictate who gets "what and when". They monetize elective positions to the extent that the highest bidder gets the nod. The internal crisis which rock political parties due to irregularities surrounding the procedure for nomination flag bearers hinders the conduct of free and fair elections which may affect the stability of the party. Most of the conflicts which arise after general elections usually come as a result of the synthesis of the actions and inactions of political parties during the conduct of primary elections. There is a very high tendency that the traits and character which a political party exhibit during the conduct of its primary election are also exhibited during the general election. These largely determine the success or failure of such political party at the polls

Conclusion

Allegations of candidate imposition, parallel congresses, and undemocratic conduct of primary elections, mass protest, and gruesome murder of candidates have been discovered as features of primary elections in the APC. The party primary elections within the APC are instruments in the hands of the party leaders in the name of "godfather" to impose their preferred candidate on other party members. This hinders the development of norms of internal democracy. The APC has almost been destabilized by internal wrangling which comes as a result of undemocratic conduct of candidate selection process and leadership tussle. There is no doubt that political parties in Nigeria need total re-orientation as regards aggregating members' interest and conducting transparent and credible party primaries. However, the conduct of credible free and fair primary elections will entail fostering party discipline which serves as the basis for the harmonious co-existence of members of the party.

Also, members of political parties should see politics as a call to serve and not as an opportunity to amass wealth. Members should accept defeat at elections in good faith. Lastly, the electoral act 2010 (as amended) part V section 87 and sections 227 and 228 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) which gives political parties relative autonomy to control and decide their internal activities should be amended in such a way that INEC will have the power to oversee party primary elections so as to ensure that due process is followed. The electoral body should also be given the power to sanction any political party which fails to abide by the rules and regulation governing the conduct of party primaries. By

doing this INEC will be empowered to monitor and enforce the practice of internal democracy within all registered political parties in Nigeria.

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