INTRA PARTY DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL SECURITY: A FOCUS ON ALL PROGRESSIVE CONGRESS (APC) IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

Intra party democracy has generated debate among scholars given the trending in electoral democracy in Nigeria. Primary and general elections in Nigeria have presented issues and contradictions since 1959 general elections. Political security is at the core of human security as enunciated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994. The study is set to examine whether political security has been protected in the practice of intra party democracy in the country. Theoretically, the study will make use of cognitive dissonance theory. The study adopted the documentary method of data collection. The results indicate that political security has suffered severely under intra party democracy in Nigeria. Thus, the study recommends that appropriate measures taken by the relevant institutions to punish human rights violators.

Key Words: Intra-Party, Democracy, political security, General elections and Ebonyi state

1. Introduction

The Nigerian democracy since 1999 has been fraught with a number of electoral violence and other related electoral problems. Juxtaposing Nigeria with other democracies in the world, there is a whole lot of differences in terms of conducting elections, intra party democracies, stability in the electoralprocess, and the assurance of political security. In western democracies, particularly, election has been regarded principally as the of form representation, and undeniablyas the only fundamental means of operating a political system. In the Nigerian state, and in reference to the developing countries, the account of elections and democratic consolidation has been replete with a number of electoral irregularities and manipulations organized by manner of client-patron relationship (Nwankwo, 2015). Political conflicts are endemic issues in every human interaction. Seen from this angle, conflict can be referred to as disagreement between two parties over something necessary to them (Isaac 2012).Coser argued that conflict is a struggle over values, claim to status, power and scarce resources which the aim of the opposing parties is not only to gain the necessary values and expected results, but possibly to harm or eliminate the contending rivals.

These conflicts continue to characterize the Nigerian political landscape since the era of our political independence in 1960. Taking a cursory look at the Nigeria's political history, the country has had several elections where intra-party democracy contests were evaluated with merits, demerits and contradictions leading to identified threats and violation of political security. This has spanned through the 1964/5, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and the 2019 general elections respectively. Political parties have played crucial roles

pre, and during the conduct of these elections in Nigeria. In the light of the foregoing, the study focused on intra party feud in APC in the 2019 general elections in Ebonyi state.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Political Security

It is imperative to have a cursory look at the concept of political security. Political security is subset of the human security measurement as espoused in the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) as articulated in 1994. Meanwhile, UNDP (1994:29) affirms that "Human security is not a worry about armaments- it has to do with human life and dignity". It reported human security in seven dimensions:

- ➢ Economic security,
- ➢ food security
- ➢ health security,
- ➢ Political security
- ➢Community security.
- ➢ Environmental security
- ➢ Personal security

From this view, political security is that aspect of human security, which makes it possible for the citizens or individuals to live in a political society that ensures the protection and promotion of basic human rights and freedom of expression. Political security in the political society measures the extent and the degree where the fundamental human rights are guaranteed under the guise of liberal democracy in Nigeria. The Nigerian liberal democracy has been fraught with a number of challenges particularly the human rights questions since the attainment of her political independence in 1960.

3. THEORETICAL TRADITION

For the due pursuance of democracy, culture and good governance, there is a struggle for peaceful co-existence and disciplined strategy to the pursuit of political power and its attendant corollaries, party system has been evolved as basic instrument. In the timely words of Agbaje (1999) a party system remains a network of relationship which parties interact and influence the electoral process. All structures and organizations of political parties are geared towards attaining the core values of democracy. Indeed, democracy as contending liberal ideology stands as the "government of the people, by the people and for the people" is still far from full realization in the contemporary political societies (Bassey, 2015). In a bid to explain further using emancipatory political tool, Dahl (1971) described the closet political to it as polyarchy. Polyarchies for him are rules and administrations which have been fundamentally popularized and liberalized that are reasonably inclusive and extensively open to full political contestation. It is obvious that emerging democracies have to pass through reforms in the garb of democratization. Democratization, therefore refers to the making, nurture and broadening of more egalitarian social relations, and norms of leadership and power structure (Levine, 1988)

To give further explanations to conflicts and electoral violence in the political system, several contending theories have emerged in the recent with a view to explaining the intractable political conflicts and violence. Some theorists have written extensively on the nature, causes and impact of conflicts and violence in the contemporary. Reliance on the given school of thought to which they stand for, such interpretations have tended to emphasize a set of interrelated theories, while paying less attention or explanatory relevance of several other competing perspectives. Some of these include: structural conflict theory, realist, biological physiological, economic, human needs, and psycho-cultural conflict theories. In this study, we chose to apply theories of cognitive dissonance and frustration aggression theories.

In the first attempt, Fesinger (1951) developed a theoretical framework about communication's influences referred to as cognitive dissonance that is one of the most psychological concepts that illuminate violent behavior. Cunningham (2003) noted that:

> *"Men prefer a situation of stability in respect of values, behavior and their environmental conditions when people experience a difference between what they perceive and what they desire (cognitive dissonance) they seek to reduce this dissonance gap through action filtering information or altering perceptions"*

Cognitive dissonance is therefore experienced when there is an inconsistency between preferred values and the actual values states. Such a situation has disposition to engender fear, emotional imbalance and the craving to injure or eradicate the cause. This difference could be apparent within the economic, social, cultural, political and religious sphere as these cases form the micro unit of interpretations that could be seen as the structural backdrop conditions affecting the individual levels (Alao, Atere, andAlao, 2015).

The predisposition factors to electoral conflict in the intra party elections could largely be explained that members of the political parties who felt short-changed in their expectation resorted to violent behavior. This is applicable to several political conflict and electoral violence in emerging democracies like Nigeria.

Another theory, which correlated with the above submission is the frustration aggression theory developed by John Dollard and his associates initially developed in 1939 and has been expanded and strengthened by scholars like Berkowitz (1962), and Yates (1962) appears to be the most common explanation for violent behaviour stemming from inability to fulfill needs. The theorists who rely on this explanation use the psychological theories of motivation and behaviour as well as frustration-aggression. Where the expectation does not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambition.The main explanation that the frustration-aggression theory provides is that is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as realists and biological theorists assume, but that it is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of

the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. Both theories have adduced sufficient explanations to intra party feud and violence related cases in Nigeria.

4. POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND IDEOLOGY IN NIGERIA

Political party is the group of men and women who have common goal with a view to capturing and retaining power and offices of government for as long as possible in the state. Party politics has been the anvil of political activities in Nigeria since the colonial epoch. Its origin in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era. As far back as in the early 1920s, political parties had existed in the Nigerian state. At that time there emerged a political party called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923 spurred by the Nationalist Movement under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay. Its main activities were contained in the Lagos axis. It contested and won victory into the three seats of the legislative council. Sequel to the existence of NNDP was the birth of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936, which in the same vein were present in Lagos and Ibadan. The emergence of NYM increased the tempo of political activities in the 1930s (Akinboye&Remi, 2005). It is important to note that governing and prevailing consciousness in the lives of these parties was ethnic driven on regional basis. These attitudes have continued to govern the conduct of political parties even in the contemporary Nigeria. Ethnic politics has remained a vital political culture in Nigeria and Africa at large (Nnoli, 1978 and Nnoli, 1989).

Nigerian party politics from the inception was condemned to ethnic driven political interest and ideology (Nnanta, 2001). In the follow up to the existence of NYM and NNDP were formation of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons, which later transformed to National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), was birthed in 1945. It had national outlook in the inception, but quickly resorted to regional party peopled and dominated by the easterners, the Action Group (AG) which was formed in 1951 was dominated by the westerners and the Northern Peoples' Party (NPC) was also formed in 1951. The parties could not be differentiated on ideological spectrum. These parties contested the 1959 general elections that ushered the country's statehood (Akinboye&Remi, 2005).

It would be recalled that the 1966 military intervention sounded death knell to the parties of the first republic. The party politics were based on multiparty foundations. In the second republic, the nation also relapsed to multiparty politics. The five contending parties that featured prominently and after fulfilling the requirements set for registration of political parties in 1978, include: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity partyof Nigeria (UPN), the Nigeria's Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP). The NPN which was dominated by the Northerners' had control of the national government. It also controlled most of the states of the federation. The four others UPN, PRP, NPP and GNPP constituted governments in other states of the federation from 1979 to 1983 when the marauding military officers overthrew the NPN led federal government.

Subsequently, the defunct third republic witnessed a different scenario which the country operated a two party system. The military at that time superimposed two political parties, namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC), in the country. At the collapse of the third republic and the take of the federal government by the military led by Gen SaniAbacha in 1993, the country was returned to multiparty system. The following political parties were registered in the build to the 1998 general elections, namely the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), the Grass-root Democratic Movement (GDM) and the Congress for National Consensus (CNC).

The death of Gen Sani-Abacha led to the dissolution of these parties by the regime superintended over AbdulsalamiAbabukar who ushered in a transition programme which was billed to terminate in 1999. This period was also characterized with the operation of multiparty arrangement.

It will be recalled that nine political parties were given the opportunity to test run their popularity across the federation. Consequently, three out of the nine registered parties won councillorship and chairmanship positions across the seven hundred and seventy four local government areas. The following parties emerged victorious namely: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP), and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). It was on the basis of these parties that the governorship, House of Assembly, National Assembly andpresidential elections were contested and won in 1999, which ushered the return of civil rule.It is on record that APP has transformed to ANPP in 2003, and APC in 2013. It is APP that has undergone major alliance and merger since the return of democracy in 1999. This study is set out to investigate the roles of APC in the 2019 general elections and how her roles have affected negatively or positively the state of human security with emphasis on political security.

5. APC AND THE STATE OF POLITICAL SECURITY IN EBONYI STATE IN THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The quest for democracy has been hinged on the strengths and capabilities of political parties. The action and inaction of political parties has been a subject of intense debate among scholars of political science. There is no gainsaying that practice of civil rule in Nigeria is devoid of necessary internal democratic intrinsic worth, which conforms to global best practices obtained in the developed world. It is featured with malpractices in the conduct of party primaries. It is eventually indexed with all manner of fraud in the party primaries arranged by the elites and leaders of these political parties in favor of their preferred, imposed and unlawful substitution of candidates and wrongful replacement of candidates who are chosen through the peoples constitutional mandate, the selection of candidates for political positions by the party overlords without recourse to the due process and laid down regulations in the party's constitutions (Ayomola, 2015).

In the view of Mba (2011) internal democracy requires two instrumental conditions. In the first place, it requires involvement in organizing free, fair and credible elections of

internal positions, as well as candidates for representative bodies. The second entails an open participation of all the members and member groups in a way that interests are more or less equally but may also involve in participation or be represented in other forms. The inability of some cabals or the so called patron-client relation order among the Nigeria political elite to maintain or adhere to the principles and tenets of the ideal democracy has result in the emergence and birth of new political parties without ideological focus, and various factions within the party, or party defection among others which have constituted a major threat to democratic deepening in Nigeria (Mba, 2011). This type of behavior of political elites has created party defection popularly known as the carpet crossing, party switching, party ditching, floor crossing, party hopping, decamping and party jumping, and this character really featured in the Ebonyi State Chapter of All Progressive Congress (APC) in the 2019 general elections.

It is on the political map and lexicon of the state that, the state since 1999 has been ruled by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Therefore, it is umpteenth task for the opposition party to take over the reins of power in EbonyiState. The All Progressive Congress (APC)Ebonyi state is a cornucopia of the crop of politicians who failed to win gubernatorial in 2015 that chose to coalesce in APC. These politiciansare strange bed fellows whom could not weave common political front and devoid of ideology. The question of ideology has been scarce in party politics in Nigeria. Ideological stance bonds and binds party members together with a view to wining political power (Nnanta, 2001, and Enemuo, 2005). The question of ideological binding was not obtained in the conduct of All Progressive Congress (APC) during the conduct of her primaries in 2018.

Given the above scenario in the All Progressive Congress during the preparation and conduct of her primaries ahead of the 2019 general elections, the whole exercise was characterized by malpractices. The conduct of the National Assembly primaries became a bizarre in terms of electoral violence. Destruction of properties, killing and sporadic shooting featured prominently at the venue of the National Assembly in the Ezza South/Ikwo Federal Constituency in Onueke, Ezza South Local Government Area (Citizen Advocate, Dec 2018). There were litigations and counter litigations arising from the primaries. The party could not field candidates in some places in the state and also in some state notably Zamfra and Rivers State. Placing side by side, the indexes of political security which include right to life, right to freedom of association, and dignity of human persons as enshrined in the constitution were out rightly violated in the conduct of the APC primaries in Nigeria and Ebonyi State. Holding the governorship primaries of the APC was marred with internal conflict and violence. When the basic and fundamental human rights are not kept and maintained, political security is parlous in that circumstance as articulated and espoused in the United Nation Development Programme article 1994. This is not peculiar to the ruling APC but cut across the activities of the major political parties. Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) primaries and conventions equally contravene the very indexes of political security in Nigeria.

6. CONCLUSION

Contemporary Nigeria continues to play host to all manner of political and electoral malfeasances, critical stakeholders such as politicians and political parties are always implicated in the game. Electoral violence and political violence are being perpetrated by members of the various parties in the conduct of their intra and inter party businesses. Intra party rivalry and violence feature prominently in the conduct of the major political parties activities in Nigeria. The fledgling democracy in Ebonyi State has been contradicted by violent behavior in the parties orchestrated by the inordinate and vaulting ambition of the political class. The Major political parties in the state are enmeshed in this macabre dance.

A cursory examination of the political landscape of Ebonyi State showed that APC activities in the intra party preparation towards the 2019 general elections severally impinged on the political security of the citizens. There were evidenced causalities resulting in the destruction of properties and loss of several lives during the party primaries. The general election for the State House of Assembly was violent ridden in some constituencies. The finding showed that APC and PDP members contributed in the violation of political security of the citizens. Therefore, the study recommends that appropriate punishment should be meted out on any electoral offender. Political parties are enjoined to enlighten their members on the danger inherent in the violation of political security of the citizens during the periods of elections.

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