

FLAWED PARTY PRIMARIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF ELECTORAL CREDIBILITY IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The recurrent issues of flawed party primaries and controversial party candidature in Nigeria's contemporary political milieu are antithetical to democratization. This paper sets out to examine the critical interplay between party primaries, intra-party conflict and quest for credible elections in Nigeria's fourth republic. Using the Group Conflict Theory which postulates that conflict among individuals is borne out of irreconcilable selfish interests, the paper argues that the endemic controversial party primaries, parallel congresses, wave of party cross-carpeting, superimposition of candidates and post-election litigation are traceable to non-adherence to institutional rules that guide the conduct of party primaries in Nigeria. Essentially, data for the study are sourced through documentary method in conjunction with content technique of analysis. Findings of the study reveal that the prevalence of intra-party conflict and dubious primaries are inimical to Nigeria's quest for sustainable democracy. Thus, despite the existence of formal rules, political parties flout the guidelines with impunity and jeopardize the democratic system. The study therefore recommends for the adoption of punitive measures that are backed by the law against individuals who circumvent INEC statutory rules, electoral acts and party constitutions.

Keywords: Fourth Republic, Electoral Credibility, Intra-Party Conflict, Political Parties, Party Primaries.

Introduction

In viable democratic states, elective positions are contested through the instrumentalist of political parties. Nigeria is no exception. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) made provision for the existence of political parties. The constitution also provides in 153 that is only a political party that can canvass for votes for any candidate at any election. (Omotola, 2010). To this end, political parties are indispensable institution of democracy and democratic society. John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, have all shed lights on the imperative of popular choice as the pivot of democracy, each addressing the questions of who holds power and influence over public policy and decision making at the local, state, and national levels of government. Government depends on the consent of the governed, which may be given directly or through representatives. Elections and democracy are inseparable as they promote majority

rule without violating minority rights, maintaining the willingness to compromise, and recognizing the worth and dignity of all people. This participation can occur either by direct or representative vote. For voting to be effective at any level, people need access to information, so they can make informed decisions. Indeed, everyone has the right to participate in government. Everyone has a voice in the government. Within democratic systems, interest groups compete in the political arena, with each promoting its policy preferences through organized efforts. People with common interest form organized groups to promote their causes and influence the political agenda. It also asserts that a healthy competition exists in the development of the policy agenda and in the selection of the policy makers. A country's democratic maturity can be assessed by the transparent manner in which election are conducted in that country, in accordance with the rule of law and in obedience to the acceptable international norms. Democracy has gone beyond; government of the people, by the people and for the people as slated by Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). In recent times, democracy has become expansive and demanding both in conceptualization and practicability; it has developed capacity for critical questions especially in societies that claim its practice. Some of these questions include;

- What is the degree of fairness and freeness in government actions and activities?
- Are institutional decisions guided by objectivity and public opinion?
- Is the doctrine of equality and transparency present in government's course of actions?
- To what extent does the issue of partisanship influence government's decision and judgment?
- How well has tolerance fared among different political blocs and interest groups?
- Is rule of law and accountability the underlining principle in governance?
- What is the degree of mass participation in government policies?
- Are government's organs corporative, autonomous and free enough to exercise their constitutional functions without fear of the executive?

These are the fundamental issues in the framework of democratic practice. In the light of the above, Jega (2007) sums that effective democratic practice, free, fair and credible elections including internal party democracy as well as good governance are interconnected. From this perspective, good governance implies that the activities of government institutions, administrative decisions should be fairly guided based on the essential elements of democratic culture. Thus the basic ingredients and essential elements of democracy therein presupposes the presence and functionality of issues like tolerance, rule of law, institutional autonomy, mass participation and objectivity as they become the building block for good governance.

From the foregoing, we can establish that the cardinal elements of democracy as mentioned above should be the lens and compass with which governments decisions, actions and policy choices can be assessed and scored. Therefore, Okhaide (2012) observed that the need of political parties to adhere to the principle and practice of internal party democracy cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria there is a quest for the enthronement of internal democracy among the registered political parties, particularly as it relates to conduct of parties' primaries where candidates are chosen to stand for election on the platform of their political parties.

Essentially, most electorate believe that internal party democracy does not only affect the credibility of election but also the quality of the leadership, governance and development. In relation to the selection of viable and competent candidates is most importantly and firstly done through the organization of primary election which is a type of poll organized before the general election for the purpose of nominating a party's candidate (Keithly, 2012). Thus making it relevant activities in ensuring that internal democracy of the party is properly upheld. However, while the institutionalization of party primaries and candidate selection has commanded a robust discussion at theoretical level. It has enjoyed limited Applicability in Nigeria with the implication of political parties in the country have been marred by various degree of internal conflict, squabble and Crisis with the implication that the interest structure of the party are often mired in endless contestations. Odibachi (2010) rightly asserted that since the inception of the first republic in 1999, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has maintained the front burner in the perpetration of internal crisis resulting from the selection of candidates through party primaries. This according to Aniche and Egboh (2015) contributed to the eventual defeat of the party's 16 years-rule in 2015 general election. Specifically, in august 2013 there was a major crisis in People's Democratic Party (PDP) during their national convention. The crisis led to the creation of KawuBaraje faction in the party and BamagaTukur faction in the party. The result of these internal squabbles was the eventual creation of New People's Democratic Party by the KawuBaraje led faction (Aleyemi, 2013). Similarly, Kura (2011) further noted that 2006 primaries which preceded 2007 election were also marred by Resultant Chaos and internal crisis. Event in the 2007 election were revolved around Obasanjo's third term Presidential ambition. Yar'adua's consequent selection and other cases of intra party rift. Within these unfolding

events, candidate imposition and political sabotage were clearly evident. Obasanjo who was at the time president declared the election as *a do-or-die affair*. Alumona and Obianyo (2014) stated that AtikuAbubakar used the People's Democratic Movement as his formidable political machine to ensure the victory and defeat of certain candidate within the party and also to plot the nullification of Obasanjo's third term presidential ambition. In retaliation Obasanjo sabotaged Atiku and his supporters' registration, following Atiku's defection to the Action Congress (AC) later Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) to pursue his presidential candidacy. Following his defection, other members of the party infused harassment and forceful withdrawal from the presidential race, which led to the emergency of Umaru Musa Yar'adua as the presidential candidate which also blossomed into crisis. According to Irem (2006), the process leading to the emergence of Umaru Musa Yar'adua was not truly democratic because there seemed to be an undemocratic consensus by leader of the party prior to the convention in his favour.

In the same vein, other series of unconstitutional candidature in this fourth republic democratic dispensation were evident in 2011 primaries leading to the imposition and substitution of candidate. Adekeye (2017) succinctly puts it that in Imo gubernatorial race, Mr. IfeanyiAranume was replaced with Engineer Ugwu and in Lagos, Hilda Wiiliams who emerged as the winner in the primaries was also replaced with Senator MusilliuObanikoro. Similarly, Kura (2011) observed that disregard for constitutionalism culminated into a scenario whereby Mr. RotimiAmechi was replaced with Mr. Celestine Omehia. With emphasis on the 2019 party primaries held between Saturday August 18 and Sunday October 7 2018, the ruling all progressive congress was embroiled with internal crisis. Thus APC governors were at war with the party's Chairman Adams Oshiomole over the Choice of the mode of the primaries to adopt Ojo (2018). Specifically noted that APC had parallel Primaries in Bauchi, Taraba, Cross River, Rivers, Imo, Delta and Ondo States. It is against this backdrop that the chairman of the independent electoral commission Prof. Mahmud Yakubu decried that the various Primaries conducted prior to the just concluded 2019 election constitutes some of the most acrimonious in the nation's history (Olotor, 2018) the primaries were characterized by series of election anomalies such as vote buying , armed violence and victimization of opponent during which five victim were recorded dead in Zamfara, Two deaths and scores of injuries in Ebonyi and one

death in Lagos, (ojo,2018). Those among the inimical practice associated with party primaries in Nigeria inform the basis the basis of this study which set out to investigate the implication of the above trends on credible election and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Political Party

The attempt to conceptualize political party has attracted multiplicity of definition by various scholars. To this end, Sartori (1976) aptly conceived political party as any political group identified by an official label that presents candidates at election and is capable of placing through election (free or non-free), candidates for public office. This view was also corroborated by Coleman and Smith (1996) who define political parties as associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and to some extent maintaining legal control either singly or in a coalition or electoral competition with other association over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective sovereign state. From the foregoing, political parties may therefore be conceptualized as organizations whose members have values, ideals and aspirations in common and at least participate in the organized contest/struggle for political power (Udeuhele, 2015). This view was also Epstein (1967) when he asserted that political parties are simply organized or loosely organized groups, under a recognized label with sole intention of controlling power through election.

Having x-rayed some of the definition of political party, it is obvious that the existence of political party and participation in political contestation, as well as establishing government is essential to the sustenance of democracy in any state. It is on this basis that Schattschneider (194) classically observed that political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in term of political parties. Political parties organize and rationalize Policies (garret 2002) It is in recognition of the indispensable nature of political parties especially in representing democracies that Yarai (1999) reason that modern political party are specially political institution of representative democracy, indeed political party are practically inevitable in the people's quest to establish a necessary link between them and the society emphasizing on the role of political party , to include representing, elite formation and recruitment , goal

formation, interest articulation and aggregation, socialization and mobilization and organization of government. Nevertheless, it is imperative to note that the ability of a political party to perform part or all of the above function is determined to a large extent by the degree of institutionalized democracy and party system in a state or nation hence an emerging or nascent democracy like Nigeria these functions are often undermined by weak democratic institutions and weak internal democracy.

Party Primaries

Political party primaries are provided by law to serve the purpose of candidate selection. This informs why scholars have continued to emphasize on the primary of parties' primaries in the life of political party and democratic election. Akindele (2011) defines party primaries as the initial electoral contest amongst candidates for the purpose of winning the contest. In the same vein, Keithly (2012) maintained that the selection of able and competent candidates is most importantly and firstly done through the organization of primary elections which is a type of poll organized before the general elections for the purpose of nominating a party's candidate for a political office. Indeed, the conduct of party primaries not only creates room for political position for average party members, but also weakens the influence of political elites within the party, which will consequently aid the institutionalization of internal democracy within the party and by extension guarantee credible general elections (Schmidt et al, 2013). On the above basis, it becomes imperative to note that political parties and their pattern of primaries can make or mar democracy. Political parties essentially serve as the paddle of democracy ensuring that the very foundations of it are strengthened. This is achieved when the processes through which party candidates emerge are guarded and protected. Essentially, the institutionalization of political parties through credible party primaries will allow for proper method of channeling social demands and ensuring that most of the party candidates and activities follow the prescriptions of the law. To this end, party survival, effectiveness, and buoyancy is largely anchored on its internal process (Kura, 2014). According to Omodia (2019) the structure of political parties be it masses, elitist/cadre and mass-elite could vividly impact on the freeness and fairness of the electoral process in that in an elitist dominated process would lead to excessive monetization of

the electoral process, experience the manipulation of the masses by the political elites for selfish and class benefits, an ineffective and restrictive political mobilization of the citizenry for voter registration and enhanced political participation in voting.

In Nigeria's context, the fourth republic party primaries with the various political parties that have existed and operated in the country's political space have been characterized by controversies. At some point, the primaries tend to be keenly contested and in most cases tend to snowball into court litigations challenging the process. In minor political parties, the scenario is often an adoption of a single candidate to monitor all party operations in the country ranging from registration and mode of conducting party primaries. These rules are thus provided through electoral acts which are usually provided prior to the conduct of elections such as the 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 acts used for 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections respectively (Adekeye, 2017; INEC, 2019). In the same vein, political parties also have their own constitutions that guide the modus operandi for candidate selection (primaries). For example the PDP constitution states that:(Section 17.1). The National Executive Committee shall subject to the provision of this Constitution, formulate guidelines and regulations for the nomination of candidates for election into public offices at all levels and shall be the final authority for the resolving of all disputes relating to the choice of candidates for the party for any election; for confirming the names or list of names of candidates for any elective public office in the federation. In addition to the above, Section 17.2a-i and in particular, states that the National Executive Committee shall regulate the procedure for selecting the party's candidates for elective offices. For example, NEC is to regulate National Convention where the party's presidential candidate is to be nominated. Similarly, primaries for Governorship candidate should be held at state congress; at local government constituency headquarters for council chairman and House of Assembly; at constituency headquarters for House of Representatives and at Senatorial constituency headquarters for senators. At board level, councillorship candidates and 25 delegates by direct primaries in which all registered party members participate are elected. As required by the PDP constitution, NEC does formulate additional guidelines to regulate congress and National conventions.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The Theoretical Framework that is adopted for the study is the realist group conflict theory. This theory is traceable to the works of scholars such as Levine and Campbell (1972), Markus et al (2013) and Colella (2013). According to these proponents, respective group members strive to maintain possession and control over the limited valuable resources, which thus breed competition among the advantaged and disadvantage members of the groups. Essentially, the theory is based on certain assumptions thus: Humans are naturally selfish and would always want their interest to rise above the interest of others thereby instigating conflict within and among members of the group members; psychological and behavioral element among members are determined by the compatibility and incompatibility of their interest ; and the result of the consequent conflict is zero sum, that is the success of one member or members to achieve desired purpose, translate to the defeat of another member or members.

The realist group conflict theory is applicable to this study especially as it relates to the explanation and understanding of power relations, competition and conflict in Nigeria's political parties and their activities notably the People's Democratic Party that ruled the country between 1999-2015 and the All Progressives Congress (APC) since its ascendancy into power in 2015. With emphasis on intra-party conflict arising from lack of credible primaries particularly the PDP which ruled Nigeria for sixteen (16) years (1999-2015) Kaura (2011) aptly noted that the primaries which preceded the 2007 general elections were marred and chaos and internal crisis. Thus, events in the 2007 election revolved around Obasanjo's third term presidential ambition, Atiku's presidential ambition, Yar'adua's consequent selection and other cases of intra-party's rift. Olusegun Obasanjo who was at the time president declared the election "a do-or-die affair". On this basis, Alumona (2014) stated that Atiku Abubakar ensured the nullification of Obasanjo's third term presidential ambition through an organized plot. In retaliation, Obasanjo was quick to sabotage Atiku's presidential interest under the PDP resulting to the latter's defection to the Action Congress (AC) and this led to the emergence of Yaradua as the PDP presidential candidate.

Other series of unconstitutional candidature arising from fraudulent primaries were also evident in the 2011 primary elections leading to the imposition and subsequent substitution of certain candidates such as IfeanyiArarume who was replaced with Engr. Ugwu (Omodia, 2011). Similarly, in Lagos State, Hilda Williams who emerged as the winner in the primaries was also replaced with Senator MusiliuObanikoro while in Rivers State, Mr. RotimiAmaechi was supplanted with Mr. Celestine Omehia (Adeyeye, 2017). With emphasis on the 2019 party primaries held between Saturday August 18 and Sunday October 7, 2018, the ruling All Progressives Congress was embroiled with internal crisis. Thus APC governors were at war with the party's Chairman Adams Oshiomole over the choice of the mode of the primaries to adopt *vi-za-viz* direct or indirect primary election. Ojo (2018) specifically noted that APC had parallel primaries in Bauchi, Taraba, Cross River, Rivers, Imo, Delta and Ondo States. It is against this backdrop that the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Prof. Mahmud Yakubu decried that the various primaries conducted prior to the just concluded 2019 election constitutes some of the most acrimonious in the nation's history (Olorok, 2018). The primaries were characterized by series of electoral anomalies such as vote buying, armed violence and victimization of opponents during which five victims were recorded dead in Zamfara, two deaths and scores of injuries in Ebonyi and one death in Lagos, (Ojo,2018). These among other inimical practices associated with party primaries in Nigeria inform the basis of this study which set out to investigate the implication of the above trends on credible election and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Methodology

The need to arrive at the objective of this study necessitated the adoption of appropriate research design for the study; therefore, the study adopted the descriptive qualitative research design. The choice for this type of research design was basically informed by the fact that the study has enough qualitative data that are readily available and accessible to use in relation to the subject matter under study. The use of the above research design enabled the research to critically examine the incidences of flawed party primaries in the PDP and the APC. Essentially, secondary sources of data were utilized. Secondary sources of data entails that the study

extracted the research relevant data from existing studies such as: archives, journals, articles, textbooks, internet materials, newspapers, official reports, and government gazettes for the purpose of qualitatively analyzing them as well as INEC official documents. In all, the content technique of analysis was employed to critically x-ray the nexus between party primaries and intra-party conflicts and the long term implication on sustainable democracy and electoral credibility in Nigeria.

Discussion and Analysis

Trajectories of Controversial and Flawed Party Primaries

The phenomenon of flawed party primaries has pervaded Nigerian political space in recent times. In line with the above, Omodia (2011) specifically revealed the prevalence of controversial party primaries and its implications on electoral credibility in Kogi State state. It was rightly observed that the Kogi State 2011 Gubernatorial Election was characterized by low turnout of electorates which was far less than half of registered voters. Thus, during the Kogi state gubernatorial election of December 3, 2011, there was a clear indication of poor mobilization and educative function of political parties which poses a major threat to free and fair elections. Accordingly, the emergence of Idris Wada as PDP candidate of September 22, 2011 party primaries for the December 3, 2011 gubernatorial election was challenged by the winner of the January 2011 party primary, JibrinIsah and his supporters based on the fact that Idris Wada, the declared winner of the September 22, 2011 party primary was not a card carrying member of the PDP as at the time he was invited to contest party primary. Furthermore, the above study revealed that the electoral process in the party primaries was fraudulent as a result of manipulation of delegates 'lists in favour of Idris Wada who was the governor's anointed candidate. This further resulted to pockets of thuggery and sporadic shooting in Dekina Local Government Area which was the local government of both JubrinIsah and Idris Wada. Corruption has become a common act in Nigeria in both public and private domains. The consequence has become a systemic failure as the menace has almost become an accepted way of life in the country (Ucha, 2010:51).

Scholars have also stressed that one thing that undermines electoral credibility in Nigeria is the phenomenon of corruption among politicians. Thus, as the country advances in age, the cankerworm of corruption has concomitantly grown in size and manifestation to such an extent that the name Nigeria is now globally associated with corruption. Accordingly, Ibekwe, Udoh and Olawoyin (2017) in line with the 2017 Nigeria Corruption Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics estimated the value of bribe paid to public officials by Nigerians in a year to around ₦ 400 billion. The equivalent of \$4.6 billion in purchasing power parity. This sum is equivalent to 39% of the combined federal and state education budget in 2016 alone. In a further light, Otive (2016) captures that documentation on Nigeria's corruption level by Transparency International (TI) indicates that in 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143rd out of 183 countries. In 2012, Nigeria was rated 139th out of 176 countries and in 2013; Nigeria was placed at the 144th position out of 177 countries. In the last report of January, 2020, Nigeria was ranked 146th out of 180 most corrupt countries in the world. In lieu of the foregoing, a nation with the above score sheet on corruption perception index can be said to have been encircled by the whirlwind of systemic corruption reinforced mainly by a primitively corrupt ruling class and impoverished gullible masses. Taking a glance at the unbridled corrupt practices during Obasanjo's regime, Oyedele and Dipo (2016) clearly stated that president Obasanjo, after the return to democracy in 1999 introduced corruption in Nigeria and the national assembly. Not only that Obasanjo's administration shared \$74 million Halliburton bribe with his cohorts, but also bribed lawmakers to vote for Senator Evan Enwerem against Dr. Chuba Okadigbo as the senate president. It is also on record that the above regime shared \$50 million each to lawmakers in her third term bid in 2007. Close to the 2015 general elections, Jonathan's administration and prominent members of the PDP the nation's resources to finance personal campaign demands, the fall out of this looting spree culminated to the \$2.1 billion Arms Deal Scandal. Thus Nigerians woke up to the infamous scandal that involved the sharing and stashing of \$2.1 billion, money meant for the purchase of arms and ammunitions for the Nigerian Soldiers battling the Insurgents in the North East region of the country. Under the watch of the Former National Security Adviser (NSA), Col. Sambo Dasuki, politicians and strong PDP elements invested this money into 2015 general election enterprise and other private issues.

Furthermore, Adekeye (2017) reiterated that the conduct of Party Primaries, Candidate Selection and Intra-Party Conflict in Nigeria was particularly witnessed in the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). The study employed the group conflict theory as its framework of analysis and sourced data from documentary materials. It was specifically noted that between 2011 and 2015, there were cases of escalating intra-party crises in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) spiraling into conflict between the then Chairman, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur and the State Governors which led to the factionalization and later defection of five state governors. Similarly, serious controversies led to the resignation of Tukur, who was replaced with Adamu Muazu. Within the same period, Jonathan's presidential ambition ended up tearing the PDP more and more apart until its defeat by the APC in the 2015 general elections. The underlying factor lies on the failure of the party to take on need for the effectiveness restructuring of internal laws and policies within the PDP, establishment of punitive measure and practice of transparency by the INEC so as to entrench good governance in Nigeria. Similarly, the government and the electoral body contributed to the establishment of indiscriminate political parties as most of them are merely periodic and made up disgruntled members. Thus, if political parties are regularized, party members will learn to remain within their political parties and solve their internal problems within them.

Similarly, Niworu (2019) x-rayed the issues of Party, internal Democracy and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria with emphasis on the All Progressive Congress (APC) 2018 primary elections. It was particularly argued that the events which surrounded the party's conduct of her primaries in certain states showed a clear departure from democratic ethos. Essentially, the study argued that the All Progressive Congress (APC) Change mantra came as a sign of relief to the Nigerian electorates but findings revealed that the worst electoral scenario was recorded under the APC led government where party internal democracy was relegated to the background. Similarly, the study found out this worst scenario created a fertile ground for politicians with looted public funds to hire armed political thugs to manipulate primary election results.

On the other hand, it is also revealed in the study that Executive Governors of States used state actors such as heavily armed military men and other coercive instruments to secure electoral victory for their anointed candidates at the APC primary elections. Furthermore, the study

captured instances of flawed APC primaries such as such those of Borno State where the incumbent Governor Shetima clashed with Senator Modu Sheriff resulting to the fielding of 21 aspirants for the office of the governor. From the review of numerous works of scholars related to this study such as Omodia (2011), Adekeye (2017), Kura (2014), and Niworu (2019), it is imperative to note that most of the works generally observed that flawed party primaries have become the bane of Nigerian democratic experiment and a grave threat to credible elections. This was the case with all the elections from 1999-2019.

Other Cases of Flawed and Controversial Party Primaries

Year of Occurrence	Incidence in the People's Democratic Party (PDP)	Incidence in the All Progressives Congress (APC)
2014	In Kano State gubernatorial primary election ahead of 2015, the emergence of Ibrahim Shekarau's preferred candidate, Malam Salihu Sagar Takai as the PDP gubernatorial candidate created serious controversy in the party. This resulted to litigation, mass defection to the APC and eventual defeat of the Candidate in 2015.	In Benue State, two gubernatorial aspirants of the APC filed a case at a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, to challenge what they described as botched December 5, 2014 primary election that produced Mr. Samuel Ortom as party's a consensus candidate.
2018	Top PDP presidential aspirants such as Atiku Abubakar, Bukola Saraki, Aminu Tambuwal and Rabiu Kwankwaso were reported to have bribed delegates with dollars (\$3000-\$5000) during the 2018 Presidential primary election in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.	Two parallel and controversial gubernatorial primaries were conducted in Imo State by the APC which produced Senator Hope Uzodinma and Uche Nwosu (former Governor Okorocho's son in law) as flag bearers of the same party.
2019	The PDP election committee for Adamawa State Assembly primary election wrote a petition and forwarded to the National headquarters that its members were held hostage by the state Governor and forced to sign and accept fictitious results.	In November, 2019, a Federal High Court, sitting in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State Capital, nullified the APC Primaries and the nomination of David Lyon as the party's gubernatorial candidate.

Sources: Mamah & Nkwopara (2018); Ande & Obensa (2019).

Conclusion

The conduct of the party primaries since the inception of the fourth republic has severally shown the fragility of Nigeria's Democracy. This Democratic Weakness is not unconnected with the lack of respect for internal party democracy and consequent recurring disrespect for party rules particularly in the nomination of candidates for elections. Omodia (2011) argued that party primaries are indispensable mechanism which defines the internal democratic process of the emergence of party's candidate. This study has to a large extent unraveled the fact that the propagation of internal democracy is evident in the Country's constitution, internal constitution of political parties and of course the electoral act. Paradoxically despite such institutional designs, political parties in Nigeria cannot boast of proper adherence to the framework of intra-party democracy which have often resulted to poor rating of the country's electoral process by domestic and international election observers. To reverse this inimical trend therefore requires a high sense of responsibility and credibility on the side of party officials, politicians and election management bodies.

Recommendations

This paper posits the following recommendations:

- i. Strengthening internal democracy and holding on to the rule of law pertaining party primaries is required to save Nigeria's democracy from degenerating into unbridled political anarchy.
- ii. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should live up to their responsibility and remain politically neutral during election period as obtained in other countries. The case of exchanging the people's mandate with huge sums of money is no longer acceptable and the opposition should watch out for this fraudulent acts and expose such INEC officials for good including their prosecution.
- iii. There should be vigilance among the electorates to constantly protect their mandate on election grounds and resist monetary inducement from politicians who have no meaningful agenda for their welfare nor for their children.

- iv. Disgruntled politicians should seek redress in the courts and not resort to violence and killing of perceived opponent's supporters. This is because violence only breeds cycles of destruction which sets back the clock of our common civilization efforts.
- v. Viable opposition within the rules of law should be accepted by the incumbent political officials instead of unleashing the coercive instrument of the state to intimidate opponents. It is when opposition is allowed to thrive that wide range of political space can be created for everyone to sell his or her vision to the masses who ideally wield the sovereignty.

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