

PARTY PRIMARIES, CANDIDATE SELECTION AND INTRA-PARTY CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: PDP IN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper underscores the interplay between intra-party conflicts, candidate selection and party primaries in the People's Democratic Party (PDP). It employs the theoretical explanations of the Group Conflict Theory which posits that conflicts within groups are borne out of incompatible interests catalyzed by selfish nature of individuals. Findings from the qualitative analysis signifies that while institutional structures have been enacted to avert conflicts within the party, non-adherence to the dictates of such structures have birthed a wide range of internal conflicts within the party, thus resulting to cases of defection, factionalization, proliferation of political parties, unconstitutional change of party leaders and most importantly, the defeat of the party in 2015 general elections. It was recommended that effective restructuring of internal laws and polices within PDP, establishment of punitive measure and the practice of transparency by the INEC would ensure good governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political Party, Party Primaries, Candidate Selection, People's Democratic Party, Nigeria.

Introduction

It is incontestable that political parties have remained vital and indispensable tools in institutionalizing democracy in most democratic institutions in the world today. Arising from the catalytic feature of political parties, they serve an intermediate role in democratic societies (Orji,

2013) by acting as a connecting cord between the government and the people, thereby ensuring all tenets of democracy are upheld in the country. This justifies the reason why most literatures explain democracy in the context of political parties; Agudiegwu et al (2015:105) emphasized that “the strength and effectiveness of political parties is directly proportional to the degree of resilience democracy enjoy”, Omotola (2009) similarly opined that political parties are makers of democracy such that no democratic or undemocratic settings can exist without them. From these, it is therefore a truism that political parties pose as an instrumental paddle of democratic foundations, which employs diverse processes in ensuring such democratic structures are guarded and protected. In line with this, they are thus carved as institutions which sponsor a wide range of aspiring political office holders through a formal and constitutional process, setting them aside as the parties’ official candidates (Janda, 2005).

In relation to the above, the selection of viable 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 candidates for a political office (Keithly, 2012), thus making it a relevant activity in ensuring that internal democracy of the party is properly upheld. This is because, not only does it create room for political position of average party members, but also weakens the influence of political elites within the party, which will consequently aid the institutionalization of the party (Schmidt et al, 2013). In turn, institutionalization will allow for a proper method of channeling social demands, and will also help in ensuring that most of the party activities are in order. Thus, it suffices to posit that parties’ survival, effectiveness and buoyancy is largely anchored on its internal process of party primaries and candidate selection process.

However the rhetoric is that while the institutionalized process of party primaries and candidate selection has maintained a cogent position in the discussion and activity of party politics, it has continued to elude applicability; political parties in Nigeria have been marred by various degrees of internal conflicts, squabbles and crisis. The internal structure of the parties has been subjected to battles, hatred and oppression. Rather than embracing consensual agreement and democracy within political parties, Toyin (2014) asserted that what exists within them can only be equated

to battles such that party politics has exhibited more crisis than cohesion for national development such that virtually all the political parties have been perpetually enmeshed in conflicts owing to lack of internal democracy and imposition of party candidates and party leadership (Odiachi, 2010).

Amidst such, the People's Democratic Party maintained the front burner in the perpetration of internal crisis resulting from selection of candidates through party primaries. Aniche et al (2015) maintained that no political party has been bedeviled by internal conflict like the People's Democratic Party. Such crisis arise out of indiscriminate imposition of candidates by powerful members of the party, substitution of candidates who have won the primary election with others who did not and disrupting internal rules and regulations, which have resulted to defection of members to other parties and factionalization within the party. Additionally, enduring crisis in the People's Democratic Party also contributed to the defeat of its 16-year incumbency in the 2015 general elections.

This inescapable situation of the Nigerian political parties thus creates a need for the analysis of intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party vis-à-vis its candidate selection and party primaries in Nigeria's fourth republic; how did the People's Democratic Party emerge as a political party in Nigeria? What are the legal and institutional frameworks backing its process of candidate selection? What are the empirical cases of crisis in the party arising from candidate selection? What are the implications of such internal crisis on the party and the country at large? And what are the solutions that can be proffered to curb consistent occurrence of crisis in political parties? Having been in political control since the inception of fourth democratic dispensation in 1999 to its defeat in 2015, it suffices to assert that no political party have experienced massive spate of internal crisis like the People's Democratic Party, making Aina (in Olanrewaju) to aver that "The PDP is a marriage of strange bedfellows who do not only misunderstood themselves, but are regularly feuding". In essence it's victorious rise and fatal fall makes the party an accurate representation of intra-party crisis of other political parties, which will thus be of immense value to political office holders, policy makers and independent researchers.

In an effort to fulfill such, the paper is sectionalized into several parts; the first part focuses on the conceptualization, the second part focuses on explaining the development of People's Democratic Party. The third explains the legal framework of candidate selection and party primaries in Nigeria, the fourth part highlights the spate of party primaries and candidate selection and the bane of intra party conflicts in Nigeria, the fifth part explains the implications of intra party conflicts in Nigeria, while the sixth part discusses the conclusion and ways forward.

Statement of the Problem

Maintenance of internal democracy, through the process of selecting candidates among political parties in Nigeria, particularly in the People's Democratic Party has remained a vexed issue (Akubo et al, 2014). Therefore, enhancing democratic process since the launch of the fourth democratic dispensation has also been a daunting task in the country. After decades long colonial rule, military rule and epileptic democratic surge, it was expected that the new democratic dispensation would create an avenue for the maximization of democracy in the country. The trend remains an overt reliance on structures of political parties to aid in the achievement of such democracy; since political parties are dividends and makers of democracies, it is expected of them to not only aid in achieving the needed democracy in the country, but also ensure that they maintain democratic principles within themselves. In essence, political parties were seen as the purveyors of the democracy, because they themselves exude democratic principles among members. Hence, the achievement of these roles is largely hinged on the capability of the party to foster internal unity, relations, democracy and cohesion.

However, although these political parties theoretically befit constitutional qualities and prospects ascribed to them, enhancing internal democracy remained a herculean task in practice; they have been bereft of proper adherence to their respective constitutional party structures, particularly in the process of selecting candidates and conducting its primaries. Such discrepancy has sparked odious cases of internal conflicts among them, resulting to the enmeshment of intra-party conflicts in the fabric of political parties. In the spate of this, intra-party conflicts in Nigeria have

reduced political parties to a “liability than an asset to the common man and the system at large (Omotola, 2010: 141)”. Amidst these, the People’s Democratic Party has unfortunately remained the carrier of such odious legacies of internal crisis. Since its establishment, it has demonstrated wide ranges of internal conflicts, thus creating the necessity for the study of the political party. Therefore, through the employment of qualitative analysis obtained through relevant secondary data materials such as textbooks, magazines, online materials, articles and journals among others. The study aims at addressing the problem through the following questions;

1. What is the historical explanation of the People’s Democratic Party?
2. What are the legal and institutional framework guiding party primaries and candidate selection in People’s Democratic Party?
3. How has party primaries and candidate selection contributed to intra party conflict in Nigeria?
4. What are the implications of intra party conflict in Nigeria
5. What are the solutions that may be proffered to ensure the smooth running of intra party politics in Nigeria?

The paper is thus poised towards the following objectives:

1. Dissecting the origin, nature and history of the People’s Democratic Party
2. Examining the legal and institutional framework of intra party primaries and candidate selection in People’s Democratic Party.
3. Explaining party primaries and candidate selection as the bane of intra party conflict in the People’s Democratic Party.
4. Explaining the implication of intra-party conflicts in Nigeria.
5. Proffering recommendations that will aid in the smooth running of intra party politics in Nigeria.

Political Party, Intra-Party Conflict, Candidate Selection and Party Primaries: Conceptualization

Political Parties: Political parties are structures and organizations through which individuals jointly pursue their political goals, which are usually hinged upon the purpose of controlling political power and occupying political positions. In critical dimensions, Ikelegbe (2013) asserted that political parties do not just aim at attaining the control of political power, but also are platforms for the harmonization and expression of diverse interests, and also acts as a link between the government, state and the people. In relation to this, Umoru et al (2014) believed they can therefore not be neglected as links connecting the state, civil society and democratic consolidation. These links are targeted at enhancing democratic sustainability and consolidation of a political system. This can be done by performing functions like interest articulation and aggregation, policy making, good governance among other socio-political and economic functions. In essence, Kura (2011) asserted that they act like gatekeepers of democracy, because political parties determine the stability or instability of a political entity.

However, while above scholars have projected political parties as democratic and positive structures necessary for democratic consolidation, Simbine (2013:8) believed they are undemocratic structures themselves because they were “bred to be agents of democratic erosion and collapse, rather than strong ramparts for the construction and consolidation of democracy”. Similarly, Umoru (2014) also argued that the negative state of political parties could be accrued to the fact that the structures have been manipulated party elites who segment the party into “owners” consisting powerful members of the party and “joiners” consisting of the less powerful members of the party. In essence, these portray a theory-practice gap in the roles political parties are expected to perform and the actual roles they perform. Nevertheless, political parties still stand as major purveyors of democratic principles in Nigeria, because they create platforms through which individuals participate in suffrage and other civil rights.

Intra-Party Conflict: Conceptual understanding of intra-party conflict is related to the understanding of conflict itself. Scholastic credence should therefore be ascribed to the foremost conflict theorist; Karl Marx, who defined it as a situation when there is an existence of divergent interests in a group, or among various groups with each group or class targeted at pursuing her interests, usually resulting to the emergence of conflicts among those groups (Charles et al,

2007). Conflict can also be described as a “situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals, yet from their perspective, entirely just goals (Wolff, 2006:3)”.

In line with this, Nkechi (2011) defined intra-party conflict as a period of great shock, distress or difficulty within a political party, resulting from the inability to resolve internal disputes and reconcile internal differences. Christopher (2013) posits that conflicts which occur within political parties are natural occurrences among humans, which occur in the process of struggling for limited social elements like prestige, positions, wealth and recognitions. To Momodu (2013), conflicts within political parties arise out of political goal incompatibility among its members and also during the process of decision making whereby every member strives to influence the process at the detriment of others. Based on the above definitions, this paper makes certain deductions, intra-party conflict is caused as a result of discrepancy of goals and interests; it is a natural phenomenon which occurs in every socio-political setting and as long as there is interrelationship, there will be conflict.

Candidate Selection: Ranney (in Gauja, 2013:99) gave a definition of candidate selection to include “process by which a political party decides which of the persons is legally eligible to hold an elective office will be designated on the ballot and in election communication as its recommended and supported candidate or list of candidates”. Candidate selection represents one of the most important functions of political parties, and as such, the methods, techniques and styles of candidate selection have lasting implications not only on the party, but also on those selected and their actions in the political office (Kura, 2014). Gauja (2013) also opined that candidate selection is important in the legislative composition due to the fact that since individuals vote for the political candidate rather than the individual, the political party can influence the composition of the legislation. The ultimate importance of candidate selection was why Bjarnegård (2013:116) defined it as the “secret garden of politics” stemming from the clandestine manner which political parties select their representatives and also its inherent importance in representative democracy. Additionally, the process of selecting candidates within a political party is reliant on the nature of the political party and also by the national laws binding all political parties of such country.

As such, it suffices to say that the process of candidate selection cannot be totally divorced from party politics, especially a democratic one like Nigeria. In this work, candidate selection can therefore be described as the techniques through which political parties select candidates who will represent them at the national level.

Party Primaries: Aluoma et al (2014: 2) defined party primaries as “the initial electoral contest amongst candidates for the purpose of winning the nominations of their parties for the general contest”. He also categorized the types of party primaries into closed, semi-closed and open system. While in the closed system only registered members of the party are allowed to vote, registered members and independent members are allowed to vote in the semi-closed system. The open system thus allows the party members and also members of the rival party to vote, which may thus be subject to abuse and contradictions. Olaifa (2011) explained the importance of party primaries when he asserted that they serve as a litmus test for the political parties and are also expected to ensure the elements of democracy are propagated.

Internal Democracy and Party Politics in Nigeria

Political parties, as democratic institutions are expected to be the carriers of democratic frameworks, through which democracy can be properly actualized in the whole country at large. Critical analysis of political parties have summated that they are indeed a vital aspect of promoting democracy. Other scholars have asserted that they not only promoted democratic principles, but are themselves “makers” of democracy (Omotola, 2009:612), of which their absence also translates to an absence of democratic principles or structures. In essence, political parties are sine qua non for the entrenchment of democracy. To Aleyomi (2013:286), they are also expected to perform “institutional guarantees” through which effective discharge of their democratic duties can be properly carried out. Within such, political parties are expected to possess an internal democracy, which is expected to ensure democratic governance. One of the foremost proponents of internal democracy; Scarrow (2004) believed Intra-party democracy is “a very broad term describing a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision making. Part of the reasoning behind it is that parties using internally democratic procedures are likely to select more capable, appealing leaders and candidates and to

have more responsive policies, and, as a result, to enjoy greater electoral success. Other considerations relate to parties “practicing what they preach”. This clearly reveals that party primaries and models of candidate selection are one of the most important elements of entrenching internal democracy among political parties.

Party politics and process of ensuring democracy have always recognized intra-party democracy as one of the elements and pillars necessary to achieve good governance within political parties, which is also expected to radiate outwardly in creating a healthy democratic development and stability in the country (Matlosa, 2008). In Nigerian politics, structures of ensuring internal democracy among political parties are deeply entrenched in various institutional frameworks like the constitution, the electoral act among others. In essence, one can assert that internal democracy has been considered sacrosanct in Nigerian business of politics.

However, despite such strong support for intra-party democracy, it has been argued that it is not a panacea; extant literatures regarding intra-party democracy have exuded polarized opinions among its adherents who believe it is a vital aspect of ensuring national democracy, and among skeptics who believe internal democracy would further weaken democratic institutions of the country. It is no doubt that intra-party democracy, just like every concept in political science is highly contested. Posers regarding whether internal democracy is about participation, centralization, accountability or inclusiveness have been raised by scholars like Sartoni(1965), Michels (1968) who have expressed skepticism towards intra-party democracy. Katz et al (2013) gave a cogent explanation of the abstruse concept;

If inclusiveness is a key consideration, in terms of candidate selection, is the concern about the inclusiveness of the electorate or is it about the diversity of the group of candidates ultimately selected? And, who is either group meant to be inclusive of-party members, party supporters in the electorate or the electorate generally?

Spoerri (2008) have asserted that the critics of intra-party democracy can be grouped into three categories: those who see it as a normative concept, thus difficult to achieve, those who view it as undesirable, and those who believe it is harmful. Hence, Michels (1968:365) belonging to the

first group argued that "the notion of the representation of popular interests...is an illusion engendered by a false illumination, an effect of mirage". This implies that internal democracy is somewhat oligarchic, such that every political party possesses certain groups of powerful individuals who have the power to manipulate or influence voting choices, such that the idea of protecting the interest of the majority becomes fallacious.

The second group of intra party democracy skeptics view internal democracy as unnecessary and does not have a direct effect on the national pursuit of democracy. For Schattschneider E.E, Internal democracy of political parties is necessity due to the fact that Democracy is expected to be competition between the parties and not within them (Disch, 2012). Belonging to the third group, Duverger (In Pettitt, 2014: 134) averred that "Democratic principles demand that leadership at all levels be elective that it be frequently renewed, collective in character, weak in authority. Organized in this fashion, a party is not well armed for the struggles of politics"

However, whatever the standpoint is, internal democracy have gained much acclaim in Nigerian politics; it is believed to promote a "virtuous circle" by acting as a connecting cord between the citizens and the government, thereby ensuring national stability and legitimacy among political parties (Aleyomi, 2013:286). The propagation of internal democracy is evident in the country's constitution, internal constitution of the political parties and also in the electoral acts. Paradoxically, despite such institutional designs, political parties in Nigeria cannot boast of proper adherence to the frameworks of intra party democracy; the penchant willingness of Nigerian political parties to violate tenets of democracy, while having institutional structures of democracy at the background has always been the case. In order words, while the Nigerian constitutions and party rules entrenches and celebrates the importance of internal democracy, most political parties violate such democratic rules. Giving an instance on the lack of internal democracy, Omoweh (2012) asserted that leadership structures within political parties have not been able to promote internal democracy. In 1979, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) ensured offices were separated between AdisaAkiloye who was the National Chairman and ShehuShagari who was the president. However, internal democracy was still not practiced as they were cases of undemocratic conduct of elections.

Same was evident in the People's Democratic Party in the Fourth Republic, particularly between 1999-2007, where President Olusegun Obasanjo who was the President, also served as the national leader and solely appointed candidates for positions without adherence to the party's institutional structures. As such, "the choice of Party candidates for elective positions and political appointments was prerogative on the national leader" (Omoweh, 2012:50). In essence, lack of adherence to the structures which are expected to promote internal democracy breeds conflicts and internal strife.

This paper therefore maintains that internal democracy is a vital aspect of ensuring coherence, stability and constitutionalism within political parties. This is because internal democracy does not only serve as a compass which gives parties a direction, but also a mediating element which political parties can fall back to avoid or alleviate crisis. However, lack of internal democracy, particularly in process of candidate selection and party primaries in the People's Democratic Party thus calls for critical attention and analysis, and is perceived to be responsible for outbreak of crisis within the political parties.

Party Politics and Intra-Party Conflicts in Nigeria: Historical Review

The study of intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party would be inadequate without underscoring the historical manifestations of party politics in Nigeria. To Omolusi (2010), party politics revolves around the activities of institutional structures competing through electoral process in a bid to gain control over personnel or policies of government and scarce resources through institutionalized procedures, which Yusuf (2015) unequivocally asserted has resulted in more pains than gains to the country's democratic process. For apt comprehension of party politics and intra-party politics in Nigeria, it is necessary to trace it to the establishment of political parties in Nigeria to colonial rule in the country.

Political parties in the colonial period grew out of the struggles against colonial domination and strive for political independence. Such struggles led to the establishment of the Nigerian National Democratic Party in 1922, spearheaded by the then nationalist; Herbert Macaulay. To Sklar (2015) the party which was focused on championing the interests of the local people and

protecting their rights which the colonial masters spuriously violated had the objective of attaining municipal status and local self-government for Lagos, encouragement of non-discriminatory private economic enterprise, Africanization of the civil service among others. Upon its establishment, the party recorded huge success in the pursuance of its goals; it served as a platform through which local people expressed their grievances and displeasure against the rulings of the colonial elites. However, it was not without its shortcomings, it was personalized and controlled by educated elites within the party. Additionally, it was not nationalistic, as most of its activities were confined to the environs of Lagos.

The establishment of the NNDP spurred the emergence of another agitation groups called the National Youth Movement. Unlike the NNDP, the NYM was controlled majorly by graduate students, particularly those in the Kings College, coupled with the influence of Dr. Nnamdi Arzikiwe. Soon, the NYM also met with its own shortcomings which were as a result of ethnic politics that loomed in the party. However, despite the shortcomings of the NNDP and NYM, the two opened doors for more party politics and emergence of political parties in the country

The groups of political parties; the Action Group (AG), the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the NCNC also culminated another set of political parties which succeeded the NYM and NNDP. However, although they were largely ethnicized and elitist in nature, Omodia (2010) opined that their major objectives revolved around acquiring power and achievement of independence for the country. While highlighting the major importance of the political parties, he asserted that "even when parties were elitist formed, they were deeply rooted in the people in terms of interest articulation, aggregation, political socialization and elite recruitment coupled with political communication (Omodia, 2010: 66)".

However, the political parties were berated with internal conflicts; major internal crisis resulting from leadership conflicts and ethnic sectionalism were recorded in the NCNC; the leader of the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), Dr. Nnamdi Arzikiwe, was to be the Premier of Western Region following the victory of his party in the Western regional election. The emergence of Dr. Nnamdi Arzikwe as the Premier of the Western region was against the support of certain members, particularly the Yorubas. Mbah (2011) asserted that members of the

NCNC, majorly Yorubas felt uncomfortable with the success of Nnamdi Arzikwe, thereby threatening to defect. It was reported that a Yoruba member of the party said “I don’t want to be part of a situation where Yoruba land would be set on fire, so I am crossing over to the other side”. Thereby defecting to the Action Group, which was majorly a Yoruba party. Therefore, despite his success, he was denied the premiership position.

While ethnic segregation and factionalization culminated into the decamping of Nnamdi Arzikiwe to join the Eastern region, similarly, intra-party crisis which bedeviled the Northern People’s Congress leading to the factionalization of Aminu Kano from the party, to form the Northern Elements Progressives Union (NEPU). The factionalization was borne out of his perceived marginalization of minority interests in the Arewa Cultural Group and his desire to protect the interests of those minorities. Consequent marginalization of minorities by the Hausa-Fulani majority also culminated into the formation of United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) by Joseph Tanka. To Dudley (2013) the party was riddled with conflict of interests among its members, ranging from a discrepancy between its elected representatives and top native authority officials, to the dominating role played by the Native Authority officials in controlling the party affairs. Such autocratic and oligarchic patterns was defined as a system of “court politics” by Professor Miller.

Internal Crisis which loomed in the Action Group is also marked by political rivalry which was majorly between Awolowo and Akintola’s ideological differences and party leadership. The rift was so grave that Uche (1989) asserted that the political scandals were publicly disclosed and birthed myriad of conflicts leading to massive violence and state of emergency in the Western region. Akintola was later dismissed from the party, which led to the formation of another party- Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP).

The inception of the Second republic in 1979 following some years of military rule marked the party politics among five established political parties National Party of Nigeria(NPN) Nigerian People’s Party(NPP) Great Nigerian People’s Party(GNPP), Unity Party of Nigeria(UPN) , People’s Redemption Party(PRP). Toyden (2002) opined that political parties in the second republic were a metamorphosis of the first republic that also mirrored the activities of those in

the first republic. In this period, intra-party relation was a mixture of cooperation and conflicts; while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) enjoyed some level of internal cohesion, certain elements of conflicts were still evident within the party. An example was when Alhaji Aminu Kano left the party due to the sabotage of his presidential ambition, to form People's Redemption Party (PRP).

Additionally, authoritarian activities loomed in the UPN and GNPP; within the parties, presidential and gubernatorial candidates also doubled as their Party chairmen, thus suffocating the possibility of internal democracy. The resultant effects were defections, factionalizations and splits. Sunday Afolabi and Akin Omoboriowo of Oyo and Ondo states defected from UPN to NPN (Ilufoye, 2011), other cases were Arthur Nzeribe's defection from NPP to UPN, Chief Abiola's defection from NPN, the split of PRP into Aminu Kano and Micheal Imodu faction among others (Ilufoye, 2011). In essence, the second republic recorded internal strife, with the UPN having the largest number of intra-party crisis.

The third republic started with the transition programme, General Ibrahim Babangida emphasized on his desire to rid Nigeria party politics of the ethnicization, politics of ownership and party crisis which bedeviled it in previous republics. This saw to the establishment of two political parties along ideological lines; the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which was a leftist or welfarist party and the National Republican Convention (NRC) which was a capitalist party. Although the party was later dissolved upon cancellation of the highly controversial 1993 election, which marked the beginning of another military dispensation ended in 1999, it is no doubt that the party witnessed its own share of intra-party conflict within the short time. Intra-party relations in the party were marked by factional feud and in-fighting. The National Redemption Party (NRC) was divided among various factions like the Republican Action Committee by Tom Ikimi, the Republican Solidarity led by Umaru Shinkafi, Bamanga Tukur and Adamu Ciroma and the NRC consultative forum led by Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) was also marked by internal feud and factionalization leading to the emergence of the Yaradua and Kingibe factions (Ilufoye, 2011)

The death of General SaniAbacha, and consequent end of the military junta, ushered in the Fourth republic. Momoh (2013) captured the feature of party politics in the fourth republic; Political parties experienced reoccurring internal feuds leading to factionalization and also the proliferation of political parties. The situation was accurately summarized by Abutu (2013:5)

In general, the political parties that emerged in the fourth republic were hardly anchored on the forces that spearheaded the struggle against military rule. In fact, in most cases, the individuals who formed and dominated these parties constituted an integral part of the authoritarian political establishment, and participated in the so called democratic transition programmes with little or no regard for any prior liberalization of political space as a prelude to electoral contest.

At the inception of the fourth republic, the main parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), have always been said to be largely affected by "deep internal crises, disorder, recurring tensions and turmoil manifested in factional fighting, expulsions and counter-expulsions, multiple executives and dual offices (Akubo, 2014: 85)"

The literature reveals the extent to which previous Nigerian republics have been marred by incessant internal strife. Indeed, intra-party crisis is historically deep-seated in the fabric of the country's party politics, borne out of single-leader control, Godfatherism, Sit-tightism and most importantly, utmost disregard for constitutional structures. Therefore, existing literatures may have revealed the possibility of this sweeping trend creeping into the fourth republic; People's Democratic Party which is the oldest political party today have not seem to be divorced from such internal strife. This thus creates a need for a critical analysis of the People's Democratic Party.

Theoretical Perspective

It is discernible that intra-party conflict is an in-group discrepancy between members of the same political party, out of their respective desire to ensure the superiority of their ideas, needs, goals and aspirations above those of others in the same political party. Within this context, realistic

group conflict theory suffices as the best which provides the accurate theoretical explanation of this.

Realistic group conflict theory is an economic theory used to explain inter-relationships among members of a group. The theory is based on certain assumptions; humans are naturally selfish and would always want their interests to rise above the interests of others; conflicts within and among members of the group are borne out of incompatible interests among group members; psychological and behavioural elements among members are determined by the compatibility and incompatibility of their interests; and the result of the consequent conflict is zero sum, that is, the success of one member or members to achieve desired purpose, translates to the defeat of another member or members. Alexander et al (2009:367) unravels how in-group discrepancy occurs and the effects it has on the group at large. To him, “groups run the risk of losing out valuable inputs and perspectives when the contributions of lower-status members are devalued or ignored. When group members fail to offer or consider unique information, group performance and decision quality are prone to suffer”

Scholars like Levine and Campbell (1972), have provided more explanation on the theory. To them, respective group members strive to maintain and possess control over the limited valuable resources, which thus breeds competition among the advantaged as disadvantaged members of the group. While the disadvantaged groups compete and strive to gain such resources and status, the advantaged group repels such attempts by acting against any form of threat to the resources they control. As such, the competitions among the two groups for scarce resources breed hostility among them. Markus et al (2013) added that in some cases, competitions resulting to hostilities and conflicts may not necessarily be as a result of the feeling of threat to the resources they seek to control, or control, but may also be as a result of relative feelings of deprivation by those groups; the feelings of being marginalized or poor in relation to others. In essence, Colella (2013) asserted that competition is the heart of the realistic conflict theory.

The realistic group conflict theory have been used by scholars to explain power relations in party politics and thus the theory provides accurate explanations of how competitions, and conflict unravels in the People’s Democratic Party(PDP); despite the fact that the party represents one

group where the sole interests of the party and the country is supposed to be of major concern, the party is still marred by the desire of party members to further their selfish interests above the interest of other members, which results to spanning competition and conflict among them. In this Omoruyi (in Omotola, 2009: 626) stated that “the so- called parties are not in competition with one another. They are in factions; these factions are more in competition with themselves than with another party”. This represents the extent to which the People’s Democratic Party members fuel antagonisms with themselves within the party, rather than with other party members. It therefore suffices to say, political party conflicts are more evident within political parties than between political parties.

The People’s Democratic Party: History, Nature and Formation

The People’s Democratic Party has a long history in Nigerian party politics. Its origin dates back to 1998, in preparation for the new democratic consolidation. Osumah (2009) asserted that the end of military dispensation in the country created the necessity to have political parties which are not only devoid of ethnic-based typology of political parties that marked the previous republics, but which will also help in entrenching the fact that the country is indeed ready for democratic consolidation. This led to the establishment and registration of the party by the then General AbdulsalamAbubakar. The Party received wide range of support from various individuals and groups in the country. It was made up of different individuals like traditional chiefs, Academicians, Businessmen and also retired military officials.

Originally, the party was formed by a conglomeration of majorly four groups, to which Nkechi (2011) referred the party to a coat of many colours. The groups includes the Institute of Civil Society (ICS), which was also known as G-34, resulting from the 34 individuals, led by Alex Ekwueme, who signed the petition against Abacha’s self-succession during his regime. The Second Group comprised of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), also known as the All Nigeria Congress, who were conversely not opposed to Abacha’s self-succession, but were also not part of his regime. It was led by S.B Awoniyi. The third group was the former followers of Late Shehu Musa Yaradua, popularly known as the People’s Democratic Movement (PDM), having prominent members like AtikuAbubakar and Chief Tony Anenih. The fourth group was the

Social Progressive Party (SDP). The mosaic nature of the party signifies the extent to which politicians were willing to unite in the formation of a democratic rule and also ensure that the military was sent to the barracks (Na'Abba, 2001). Today, the structure and organization of the political party is hierarchical in nature in order of Local Government Area, State and Zones and at the National Level. Based on its constitution, Ikelegbe (2009) outlined the organs of the party to include (i) Ward Executive, (ii) Ward Congress (iii) Local government Executive Committee (iv) Local Government Area Congress (v) Senatorial District Working Committee (vi) State Caucus (vii) State Working Committee (viii) State Executive (ix) State Congress (x) Zonal Working Committee (xi) National Caucus (xii) National Working Committee (xiii) National Executive Committee (xiv) Board of Trustees (xv) National Convention

The party is targeted at achieving certain objectives. Olaifa (2011) outlined the objectives of the party to include; to seek political power for the purpose of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria and promoting the security, safety, welfare of all Nigerians; to promote and establish political stability in Nigeria and foster national unity and integration; to provide good governance that ensures probity and participatory democracy; to offer equal opportunities to hold the highest political, military, bureaucratic and judicial offices in the country to all citizens; and provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise.

These objectives reveal the extent to which the party is targeted at maintaining the country's democratic system. Before its defeat in 2015, the party has won every election at the National level for 16 years and has struggled to materialize those values and objectives represented in its constitution. It has however been a different ball game in practice and would be analysed in consequent sections of this paper.

Party Primaries and Candidate Selection: The Legal and Institutional Framework

Institutional and legal designs are important elements of ensuring the effectiveness of political parties. This is because they define the operational structure of the party and also regulate behaviors within the party (Kura, 2014). Additionally, institutionalizing political parties allows for the propagation of democracy due to the fact that political parties which are institutionalized

are not subjected to the whims and caprices of few ambitious leaders within the party (Lindberg 2007; Huntington, 1968). In essence, institutional and legal frameworks are important elements of achieving democracy and averting internal conflicts within the political party. Against this backdrop, Ikechukwu (2015) highlighted five categories of institutional and legal designs guiding the operation of political parties in Nigeria. It is within these that legal frameworks guiding primaries and candidate selection in the People's Democratic Party is carved. These include;

1. The 1999 Constitution;
2. The Constitution of the People's Democratic Party
3. The Electoral Acts
4. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) statutory rules
5. Other informal rules.

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides rules guiding political parties in Nigeria. Thus, internal constitution of the People's Democratic Party is constructed in relation to the stipulations of the 1999 constitution. This is because it provides guidelines to the formation and operation of political parties in the country. As stipulated in Section Sections 221-229, every political party must:

- a. Ensure its names and addresses of its national officers are registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission.
- b. Its membership must be wholly open to all Nigerians
- c. Ensure that its constitution is registered and accepted by the INEC
- d. Its name, logo or symbols must not be in support of any ethno-religious or regional element
- e. Ensure it has its headquarters located in Abuja.

In relation to the conduction of primaries and selection of candidates, the political parties must provide:

a) 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; b) 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).

Similarly, the constitution of the PDP also outlines legal guidelines for conducting primaries and selection of candidates for political offices. These political offices include the office of the President, Governor, Senator, and Member of the House of Assembly, Local Government Chairman, Ward Officers, Councilors and also office of the 3 delegates to Local Government congress and State Congress at the National, State and Local levels respectively.

Therefore, registered members of the party who have been able to meet the requirements will be eligible to contest for such positions in relation to the party guidelines approved by the National Executive Committee. These guidelines as stated in the chapter eight (8) of the party's constitution includes; the possession of minimum of secondary school certificate and a one year membership span, as at the time the primaries are conducted.

Electoral Acts and the rules of the Independent National Electoral Commission are also important elements of legal frameworks binding candidate selection and conduct of primaries in the People's Democratic Party. This is why Ikechukwu (2015) asserted that the INEC is the second most important institutional design guiding party politics in Nigeria. Its importance in party activities of Nigeria stems from the fact that it is constitutionally authorized to monitor all party operations in the country ranging from registration, mode of conducting primaries among others. These rules are thus provided through electoral acts, which are usually provided prior to the conduct of elections. Various reforms of electoral act have been entrenched in 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 acts used for 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections respectively.

Informal rules also form another category of institutional framework of candidate selection in the PDP. These rules are not coded in any legal framework, but are guided by the socio-cultural norms of the society. Certain informal designs of candidate selection and primaries were outlined

by Ballington (2004) to include assessment of the costs of time, energy, the likelihood of winning, and by an estimation of the resources needed to run an effective campaign. In the People's Democratic Party, certain unconstitutional considerations such as nepotism, ethnic cleavages, clientelism, and an aspirant's war chest such as the ability to rig elections, influence party officials or delegates who vote at primaries have been institutionalized in the process of candidate selection. More importantly, the zoning formula ranks high in informal framework of candidate selection in the People's Democratic Party. Alumona et al (2014: 15) described the zoning formula as "a type of consociational arrangement devised by the Nigerian political class to address the divisive politics of ethnicity and primordialism that scuttled the democratic dispensation in the first republic". This was designed due to the fact that over 250 ethnic groups are embedded in the country, and as such, there is a need to carve out a regulation which will favour the wide span of ethnic groups and ensure no zone is marginalized in the process of candidate selection in the country. In response, candidate selection is therefore organized and periodically rotated among the country's geo-political zones which includes North-East(6 states), North-West(6 states), North Central(6 states), South East(5 states), South West(6 states) and South -South(6states).

In essence, the institutional and legal frameworks are normative guidelines for regulating the behaviors of party members and ensuring orderly organization in the party. The degrees at which these institutional and legal frameworks are able to guide the actions in the political party have a direct impact on the level of internal democracy and cohesion in the party. In essence, it can be said that they serve as a means to maintaining democracy within the party and in the national polity. This is why Okunronmu (2010) averred that in the weakness of institutions of political party, "intra-party democracy could be the fastest route to chaos", in turn breeding internal conflict.

However, there is deficit in adherence to these institutional and legal frameworks in the People's Democratic Party. This is not surprising as Adejumobi (2007:42) have argued that "political parties mostly do not conform to legal codes of internal democracy, whether at the level of electoral regulations or at that of their own internal party rules". These thus represents the case in

the People's Democratic Party; while proper legal and institutional frameworks have been entrenched to guide the character and activities of political parties, lack of adherence to these have bred internal chaos leading to the emergence of conflicts and rifts within the party. This creates the need to underscore intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party in relation to party primaries and candidate selection.

Party Primaries and Candidate Selection as the Bane of Intra-Party Conflicts in PDP.

Above outline of the legal and institutional frameworks backing party primaries and candidate selection in the People's Democratic Party have demonstrated the extent to which political parties in Nigeria, particularly the People's Democratic Party is determined to ensure internal democracy and smooth turnover of election is achieved. This is because the capability to maintain internal democracy enhances the effectiveness of the political party. In relation, Norris (2004) stated that one of the key issues in intra-party democracy is the process of nomination process due to the fact that it serves as a prism through which power distribution among organs and factions in the political party is understood. In essence there is no gainsaying party primary and candidate selection is pivotal to the process of ensuring democracy both within and outside the political party.

However, despite such commendable and laudable legalistic constructs and importance of conducting selection of candidates through primaries, the party is not devoid of internal crisis and conflictual occurrences; it has been riddled with an avalanche and tales of conflicts and litigations. Reasons for such internal crisis can be accrued to a gap between theory and practice.

PDP internal conflict in 2003 majorly revolved around Obasanjo's second term bid and his hegemonic control over the party structures. The summary of candidate imposition was given by Elischer (2008), when he asserted that;

In order to get the PDP aligned state governors to support his renewed candidacy in 2003, Obasanjo and his then-ally Atiku promised all PDP governors to free them of intra-party opposition to their renewed bid for power irrespective of the various legal suits leveled

against them. Eventually Obasanjo secured his second nomination and all governors were returned as PDP candidates.

Kura (2011) further asserted that the 2006 primaries which preceded the 2007 elections were also marred by resultant chaos and internal crisis. Events in the 2007 elections revolved around Obasanjo's third term presidential ambition, Atiku's presidential ambition, Yaradua's consequent selection and other cases of intra-party rifts. Within these unfolding events, candidate imposition and political sabotage was clearly evident. Olusegun Obasanjo, who was at the time president and towards the end of his presidential tenure declared the election a do-or-die affair, which was in relation to his third term ambition. While he was plotting his re-election, it was asserted that Atiku Abubakar, who was at the time his vice president, was also nursing his presidential ambition. Alumona (2014) stated that Atiku Abubakar used the People's Democratic Movement as his formidable political machine to ensure the victory and defeat of certain candidates within the party and also to plot the nullification of Obasanjo's third term presidential ambition. In retaliation, Obasanjo sabotaged Atiku and his supporter's registration, forcing Atiku's defection to the Action Congress (AC), later Action Congress of Nigeria to pursue his presidential candidate.

Following his defection, other members of the party witnessed harassments and forceful withdrawal from the presidential race, which led to the emergence of Umaru Musa Yaradua as the presidential candidate. The rise of Umaru Musa Yaradua as the party's presidential candidate also blossomed into crisis; According to Irem (2006), the process leading to the emergence of Yar' Adua "was not truly democratic because there seemed to be an undemocratic consensus by leaders of the party prior to the convention in favour of Yar' Adua". This is because prior to the election, twelve governors were said to have signified their interest in the presidential race

Other series of unconstitutional candidature were also evident in 2011 leading to impositions and substitution of candidates. Mr. IfeanyiArarume was replaced with Engineer Ugwu. In Lagos, Hilda Williams who emerged as the winner in the primaries was also replaced with Senator MusiliuObanikoro. Similarly, in River State, Mr. RotimiAmeachi was replaced with Mr. Celestine Omehia. However, in line with the unconstitutional rules of the game, Ararume was

later expelled from the party by the National Working committee, following his rift with the party leadership (Okocha, 2007). The end result was underscored by Kura (2011); disregard for constitutionalism culminated into the absence of party candidates in Rivers and Imo State.

Between 2011 and 2015, other cases of escalating intra-party crisis were also recorded; spiraling conflict between the then party chairman; Alhaji Bamanga Tukur and the state governors led to the factionization and later defection of five state governors. Surrounding controversies led to the resignation of Tukur, who was replaced with Adamu Muazu. Within the same period, Jonathan's presidential ambition triggered another form of conflict between him and the Northern members of the party. It was stated that Jonathan has had a one term agreement with the north, but was later rebuffed by Jonathan who demanded for the documented proof of such agreement, sparking major internal conflict. He thus imposed himself as the presidential candidate to the detriment of other interested members like Sule Lamido.

It is therefore obvious that upholding institutionalized processes of candidate selection and party primaries in the PDP have been subjected to mere abstraction. The pitiable state of internal democracy consequently resulting to conflicts have been captured by Obi (in Adejumobi, 2011: 81)

In PDP of today, all known rules of democracy have been thwarted. The party does not care a hoot about the processes of election or selection.....In the Party, it is not the people that make choice; it is the few who have seized the instruments of power that impose their will on the people. if democracy is to throw open the polity for mass participation in political affairs, the PDP has shrunk the political space thus making democracy look like a closed shop. The sins of PDP against democracy are legion.

It is however no doubt that the People's Democratic Party has witnessed a large spate of intra party crisis. Within the party, unconstitutional and informal structures as against the institutionalized structure control the process of candidate selection. Candidates who are willing to give credence to the political top-dogs within the party have a higher chance of emerging as

the party candidates, rather than those who abide by the constitutional rules. The spate of internal conflict within the People's Democratic Party, although inexhaustible, is not without resultant implications.

Implications of Intra-Party Conflicts in Nigeria

Evidently, cases of intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party pose as an accurate manifestation of the party's lack of adherence to the legal and institutional frameworks carved to ensure internal democracy and prevent internal conflict. Consequently, this inherent lack of adherence could be explained within Riggs (1964) theory of formalism which explains discrepancy between the laid down dictates and what is actually practiced. In this context, the theory-practice gap, which resulted to crisis in the People's Democratic Party has birthed wide span of consequences ranging from member defection, frequent change of executive leaders, factionalization, 2015 Defeat and proliferation of political parties in the country.

The trend of cross-carpeting, party hopping and member defection borne out of intra-party conflict is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria's party politics. Mbah (2011) posits that party defection has positioned itself as a permanent feature in the Nigerian democratic experience. This fact is undeniable in Nigeria, having witnessed the spate since the inception of the fourth democratic dispensation in 1999. The rationale for such defections has always revolved around members' inability to attain their political ambitions in the current party. Against this, members defect to other parties to secure such ambitions and in some cases accommodate the possible thought of returning to their former parties as the case of Mallam Isa Yuguda of Bauchi state.

However, pursuance of political ambitions only represents a part of the rationale for member defections from the People's Democratic Party; Nnorom (2014) asserted that the absence of internal democracy contributes to gale of defections in political parties, which is borne out of unhealthy party feuds in selection of candidates, clash between and among the party executives, which consequently results to intra party tussles which has continued to contribute to the growth of an odious act of party defection. Onyishi (2015) asserted that the internal crisis that riddled the PDP was one of the contributing factors which led to the defection of Mallam Isa Yuguda to the All Nigeria People's Party, prior to the 2007 elections. Additionally, defection arose out of the

rift between AdamuMuazu and Mallam Isa Yuguda; the then governor of Bauchi state; AdamuMuazu frustrated Mallam Isa Yuguda from getting the PDP ticket, which consequently led to his defection to the All Nigeria People's Party.

Additionally, Mbah (2011) and Onyishi (2015) outlined cases of crisis-borne defections from the People's Democratic Party both within the executive and the legislature; between 1999 and 2013, over 13 Senators and 35 members of the House of Representatives were said to have switched. The most remarkable case of defection was witnessed prior to the 2015 elections when five PDP governors defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC). The defection of Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers; Rabiun Kwankwaso of Kano; Aliyu Magatakada Wammako of Sokoto; Abdulfatah Ahmed of Kwara and ex- Governor Murtala Nyako of Adamawa was preceded by a disagreement with the party hierarchy (Daniel, 2015)

Frequent leadership changes within the party also represent another crucial implication of conflicts within the People's Democratic Party. The point worthy of note is that such change of leadership is not only frequent, but also unconstitutional and goes against the institutional dictates of the party. Since its establishment in 1999 to 2014, the party has had up to fifteen national chairmen (Aziken, 2014), of which only a few had the privilege of completing their tenures. Most PDP chairmen have been ousted as a result of internal conflict or rifts with the party hierarchy. Additionally, some of the party chairmen were not even elected, but rather imposed on the party members. Solomon Lar, Barnabas Gemade, Audu Ogbe, Ahmadu Ali, Vincent Ogbulafor, Okwesilieze Nwodo, Haliru Muhammed Bello, Bamanga Tukur, among others have all led the party and have been removed as a result to conflictual occurrences. Umoru (2014) asserted that the main crux is that none of the changes was orderly, open, free, independent or in tandem with the wished of the party majority, but rather in line with the whims and caprices of the party elites, including the presidency.

Imminent factionalization of the People's Democratic Party also holds position as one of the end results on crisis within the party, and has been previously underscored by Harmel et al (in Boucek, 2009:455) when they said "factionalism is a fact of life within most political parties". This is because party members have different views in relation to the selection of a particular

candidate. However, factionalization has received attention from the scholars of party politics, particularly Boucek (2009); in his book, *Rethinking Factionalism: Typologies, Intra-Party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism*, he outlined cooperative, competitive and degenerative factionalism as the three major types of factionalism. While the cooperative factionalism seeks to encourage consensus building and party consolidation and electoral coordination which promotes party harmony and integration of the party; competitive factionalization entrenches the party democracy by widening voter's choice and empowers party followers which consequently leads to a balance of internal power. However, the degenerative factionalization is self-serving and promotes rent-seeking, factional jockeying and shift of focus away from the party's collective goals which ultimately leads to instability or potential break-up or collapse of the party (Boucek, 2009:470)

In essence, degenerative factionalization is an accurate depiction of resultant factions in the People's Democratic Party; internal conflicts within the party did not help to solidify its democratic structures, but create factions. Factionalization within this context is of two types; factions within the party, which case resulted to spanning disagreements; or factionalization which led to total break up from the party. Factions resulting from internal conflict in the PDP cannot be exhausted; the case of Atiku Abubakar vs Obasanjo represents one of the examples where internal squabbles have led to factions. The disagreement was borne out of the controversies surrounding the Petroleum Trust Funds coupled with Atiku's presidential ambition, which Obasanjo was said to have sabotaged. The result of the conflict was when Atiku and his supporters ditched the People's Democratic Party and launched the formation of the Action Congress (AC). Internal crisis also led to the formation of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy as another breakaway faction of the PDP. Other cases of internal conflicts also resulted to some arrived members teaming up with the Alliance for Democracy to form a political party called the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD). The most recent factionalization occurred when seven governors left the PDP to form a new arrangement called "New PDP" The seven governors, led by the then Acting Chairman of the Party; Kawu Baraje, include Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, Babangida Aliyu, Abdulfatah Ahmed, Sule Lamido, Aliyu Wamakko, Rotimi Amaech and Murtala Nyako. In essence, it is no doubt that "Nigerian

parties, rather than serve as a unifying force, now tend to promote disunity (Omotola, 2009: 629)”

Consequently, therefore, the incontrovertible party crisis in the People’s Democratic Party have yielded nothing but odious cases of defection to other “peaceful” and prospective parties by members of the PDP, too many leadership changes not borne out of democratic elements and also resultant factionalization which has led to spanning crisis in the party and breakaway of certain party members. Against this backdrop, the culmination of these factors and the defeat of the PDP in the 2015 elections can be considered to be another implication of intra party conflicts in the party.

Largely, importantly and upon which all others are hinged upon, internal conflict which loomed in the People’s Democratic Party contributed to its electoral defeat in the 2015 elections. Certain cases portraying the extent to which internal democracy of the party have been bastardized did not sit well with some of the party members; Ahmed (2015) argued that gubernatorial and other primaries across various states were mishandled by the party leaders, who favour and support their anointed candidates. Also, party elders such as Ibrahim Shekarau and AminuWali were alleged to have contributed to the defeat of the PDP by imposing candidates for elective offices in Kano state. In essence, conflict within the party produced two end results which finally led to the defeat of the party; due to internal wrangling, proper coordination of the party in relation to campaign and other factors could not be achieved; also certain members of the party lost hope, therefore nursing the idea of defecting to other parties. Therefore, it was not a surprise when certain members of the party expressed their disagreement with such informal and unconstitutional structures, thereby defecting to the All Progressives Congress.

In response, the All Progressives Congress (APC) was able to identify the calculative advantages in the internal crisis looming the PDP, by accommodating members who defected from the PDP. Ahmed (2015) summed up the outcome when he said:

When your house is divided, external political forces would take advantage. And that was exactly the reason the APC exploited the internal crisis in the PDP. Most of

*the key members of the APC were former PDP members.
The PDP leaders had failed to justly address the genuine
complaints of aggrieved members.*

Proliferation of political parties is also seen as the end product of intra-party crisis in the People's Democratic Party. Proliferation of political parties occurs when parties increase in number. Worlu (2009) sees the act in a positive dimension when he asserted that members who cannot actualize their political ambitions within a political party are given the chance to defect or form another political party, through which their dreams are actualized. In cases where party members are forced to remain within a party, conflicts arise. However, while party members are given the choice to form their own political parties, the act may have a negative implication on political parties and the democracy of the country at large. The negative implication was underscored by Akindele (2011); party members, realizing their constitutional right to form other political parties culminates into their unwillingness to come to grips with the problems inherent in the party or find amicable grounds of solving those problems. Instead, they find an escape route of forming other parties.

Summary and Conclusion

This work essentially underscores how processes of candidate selection and party primaries in the People's Democratic Party have culminated to internal crisis within the party, and the subsequent implications of such crisis on the country's democracy. In an effort to achieve this, the study outlines the legal and constitutional framework of the People's Democratic Party. Afterwards, it was discovered that lack of synergy between the parties' laid down rules, legal framework and institutional designs, with processes actual practices are one of the major factors resulting to intra-party conflicts within the people's Democratic Party. Instead of the enhancement of proper adherence to the legal frameworks guiding the party, such as the 1999 constitution, the Constitution of the PDP and the rules of the Independent National Electoral Commission, in the process of candidate selection, candidates are however selected by imposing them on party members and substitution of certain names with others.

To discover the reasons behind intra-party conflicts in the PDP, and also to understand the theoretical constructs guiding such occurrences, the paper adopts the realistic group conflict theory. It was discovered that internal conflicts within the party arise out of the tussle to control limited resources, influence and power within the political party. Through this process, party members thus become competitive with one another, which in turn breed hostilities and conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the implications of intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party are member defections to other political parties, factionalization within the party which breeds distrust among party members, proliferation of political parties in the country. Intra-party conflict in the PDP also resulted to the consequent defeat of the party in the previous 2015 elections.

In line with the above, this paper established that those legal and institutional frameworks carved to guide the party activities are nothing but mere abstractions. In reality, selection of candidates is not done through outcomes from party primaries but through the principle of nepotism, master-servant relationship, continuum of loyalty of the candidates among other factors. This in essence translates to the fact that the People's Democratic Party, which is expected to promote the tenets of democracy, has fallen short in the process of ensuring such goal. Therefore, portraying the political party as a bridge between the government and the people, through the promotion of accountability, democracy, good governance among other factors is not an accurate depiction; the People's Democratic Party is a mess, rather than a mesh of differing individuals who have chosen to "bowl alone" in the furtherance of their selfish, rather than democratic interests. In the face of such conflicting selfish interests, the party has however been marred by internal squabbles, conflicts and crisis among its members which will then result to defection, factionalization or proliferation of political parties to pursue their never-ending personal desires.

Recommendations

1. The need for a systemic overhaul of not only the INEC, but also the country's constitution and electoral laws. This may be done through strengthening the laws that have to do with party finance, candidate selection and other methods of internal democracy. One of the reasons why intra-party crisis continues to thrive is due to the fact that party members are not

punished and are allowed to go scot free. If the punitive measures are properly entrenched, it will curb the rate at which party members engage in squabbles with one another.

2. It is necessary to establish an electoral body which is truly independent, in order to enhance not only election activities, but also regulate and monitor the internal affairs of political parties to ensure they strictly abide by the institutional structures within them. This may be done by making the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) autonomous from the executive branch and also the appointment of viable, effective and trustworthy Chairman.

3. Processes of candidate selection and primaries among political parties must also be made as open as possible; it is necessary to ensure the candidates selected were chosen based on their merits, rather than godfather-support, bribery or corruption.

4. Also, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) must also re-strategize and restructure in order to ensure that the party becomes a viable opposition now that it has lost the 2015 elections. Disciplinary measures should also be taken within the party to sanction erring members who are recalcitrant towards abiding by the party rules and regulations.

5. The establishment of indiscriminate political parties should also be curtailed; in every election in Nigeria, new parties spring up with the intention of contesting the election. However, most of these political parties are merely periodic or made up of disgruntled members. If political parties are regularized, party members will learn to remain within their political parties and solve the internal problems within them.

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