

All Progressive Congress (APC) Intra-party Conflicts and Management of Governorship Election by Independent National Electoral Commission in Kogi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

In Kogi State of Nigeria, Intra-party conflicts emanate in different forms while the most debilitating part of the conflict to the society as a whole and the electoral process in particular are those arising over the selection of party leadership and candidates. While there has been a plethora of works on intra party conflicts and the entrenchment of democratic values within those parties in Nigeria, the sphere of intra-party conflicts within the All Progressive Congress (APC) during the Kogi 2019 and its attendant effects on INEC's conduct of the election have received little attention. The study objectives include evaluating the causes of intra-party conflicts with the APC in the 2019 governorship elections in Kogi State and investigating if such conflicts had any effect on the operations of INEC in its conduct of the 2019 gubernatorial polls in Kogi. Data were obtained through unstructured interviews and questionnaire, and analyzed using simple percentage. The population of the study covers the members of the (APC) in the state, INEC, Security personnel and observers. A sample of 105 respondents was chosen from the population of the study. Findings of the study were that the following factors led to intra-party conflicts within APC: nepotism, tribalism and corruption, non-inclusiveness in decision making, Neglect and non-compliance to the party constitution, Power or leadership tussle, Concealment of vital information, Injustice, unfairness, godfatherism and imposition of candidates. The study also discovered that intra party conflict impedes the smooth efficient management of election by INEC in the following ways: Inability of INEC to properly monitor party primaries, undermining INEC's capacity to deliver efficient elections, Apathy on the part of the voters caused by conflicts escalating into violence, Negative Impact on Lives and Properties as prolonged violence leads to far-reaching consequences that affect not only the electoral process, but also the overall well-being and prosperity of citizens. This study has established the facts that intra-party conflicts have a great impact on the effectiveness in the conduct of the 2019 governorship election in Kogi State. The study recommended training and capacity building for party officials on intra-party conflicts; put in place effective measures to enforce existing provisions of the law on party primaries; the party should create level playing ground amongst aspirants and member inclusiveness in all party activities to check constant intra-party conflicts.

Keywords: All Progressive Congress (APC), Intra-party Conflicts, Conflict Management, Independent National Electoral Commission.

Introduction

Political party is a platform for aggregating interests and opinions within a polity. Political parties' personalities in liberal democracy are constantly shaped and reshaped by ever-recurring conflicts of interest among the different actors within their folds. Put differently,

conflict, in different shapes and dimensions, is part and parcel of the operational architectures of political parties in a liberal democracy. Internal political wrangling is therefore a feature in most political parties globally with the Democratic Party of America, the oldest functioning political party in the world still having its fair share of conflict (Omotola, 2010).

Many studies on political parties in countries such as Switzerland, United Kingdom and Australia, generated similar conclusion with regard to the weakening effect of intra-party democracy on political parties albeit with some minor positive effects (Ladner & Brandle 1999; Anstead 2008; Gauja 2006). The occurrence of party fissions has dramatically altered the shape of the Italian party system. Indeed, both small and large parties were (repeatedly) hit by party fissions or by switch of Members of Parliament (MPs). (Andrea 2016).

Researches in the field of political science on intra-party politics, across the world according to Andrea (2011) have also pointed out that sometimes parties do behave as if they were united nonetheless they are actually divided into many subgroups. Looking at American politics, Lee (2018) observes and provides evidence that measures of leadership turmoil, party factionalism, primary challenges, and intraparty dissent in media coverage reveal deep fissures among Republicans at the elite level in (Clayton 2021).

In Africa, political parties are products of distinct historical, socio-economic and political conditions that influence their character and functioning different from those prevailing in western democracies (Shale and Matlosa 2008). Quite a good number of African political parties are poorly organised and lack institutional capacity, their decision-making processes are unstructured and power often lies in the hands of the party leader and a few of his cronies who are usually wealthy enough to bankroll the party (Wanjohi 2003). One of the major challenges facing political parties in Lesotho is internal conflicts, most of which are caused by fierce contestation over the leadership of these institutions. No single political party in Lesotho seems immune from conflicts related to leadership (Ibrahim 2019).

In Nigeria, intra-party democracy is regulated in Sections 221-229 of the 1999 Constitution (As Amended), which provides for making leadership elections compulsory for all parties. The procedures are however often disregarded as political actors like godfathers and shadow parties, government executives and leaders within and without the party's remain a central figure in internal politics. Also, when the rules are adhered to, the godfathers and gladiators have means of circumscribing them, influencing the process in order to determine the outcomes in their favor thus over heating the polity (IDEA 2005). Nigeria's electoral history has always been marred by series of intra-party conflicts, these conflicts or internal wrangling have telling effects on the conduct and outcome of elections in Nigeria with some having far-reaching impacts on not just the electoral process but also the socio-political scope of the Nigerian State. In particular, intra-party conflict has a tremendous negative influence on the conduct of INEC elections in diverse ways in Nigeria. This study examines the effect of intra-party conflict on the management of election in Kogi State, using the 2019 Governorship election as a case study.

The study will be of significance by adding more knowledge to the body of studies on intra-party conflict in Nigeria giving light to its causes and implications, while making meaningful

and practicable recommendations that could help mitigate its causes and effects on the electoral and democratic process in Kogi State, Nigeria and the world as a globe.

The aims and objectives of the study are evaluating the causes of intra-party conflicts within the APC during the 2019 governorship elections in Kogi State and its implications for the conduct of the 2019 gubernatorial election by the INEC in Kogi State.

The research is guided by the following questions: What were the causes of intra-party conflicts in the APC in Kogi State? What were the effects of intra-party conflicts within the APC on the conduct of the 2019 Governorship election by INEC in Kogi State?

The study scope covers the gubernatorial electoral period of 2019 in Kogi State. Attention was given to the APC and how the trajectory of intra-party politicking and subsequent conflicts affected its dynamics during the gubernatorial polls of 2019 in the state conducted by INEC. The study will be premised on the causes of intra-party conflicts within the APC, leadership tussle, leadership and aspirant nominations, non-inclusiveness and how these factors affect the conduct of the 2019 governorship polls in the state.

Three important key words to the study are; Political party; conflict and Intra-party conflict and these are defined below:

Political Party: Political party generally refers to an organization that mobilizes voters on behalf of a common set of interests or ideologies. Political parties play pivotal roles in political life by setting policy agendas, nominating candidates for public office, monitoring the work of elected representatives and organizing and directing human and material resources towards a common goal.

Conflict: Conflict is a perceived divergence of interests or beliefs that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. It can manifest itself in many forms, some of which may be violent and inflict pain and suffering on both parties in conflict and to other people who may not be directly involved, due to its spillover effect.

Intra-Party Conflict: Intra-party conflict can be defined as a conflict which occurs when members of the same political party pursue incompatible political goals or try to influence the decision-making process of the party to their advantage. Intra-party conflict often plays out in the selection of members for elective positions both within and outside the party.

Conceptual Discourse

Political Party

According Lemay (2001), a political party is referred to as any group of politically active persons outside a government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who thereby control the operations of government and determine its policies. Political parties provide a veritable platform for conveying representation into elective offices in democratic systems.

Political parties are also widely seen as a sine qua non for the organization of the modern democratic polity and for the expression of political pluralism (Dode 2010). Almond (2000) argues further that, political parties have two major, but multifaceted functions in any

democracy; these variables according to him are anchored on Input-Output functional variables and the historical method that provides a perspective background for discerning party politics vis-à-vis the problems associated with political instability in the Nigerian State. Omodia (2010) succinctly noted that political parties serve as an index through which democratic governance could be compared in States, in that, the structure and operation of party politics in polities tend to serve as measuring rod for determining the fragility or otherwise of democratic systems. These numerous functions performed by political parties in the democratic system make them vibrant and indispensable players in the democratic process.

Intra-party Conflicts

Intra-party conflicts are a generalized trend in Nigeria. These conflicts may be covert or overt, violent or non-violent, prolonged or short-lived depending on the specific political context of each situation. The adverse effects of the discords within parties are the all-pervasive phenomenon of party splits, the proliferation of parties and the prevalent trend in many countries today towards the appearance of independent candidates. Intra-party conflicts, especially violent ones, are a result of a lack of intra-party democracy. Intra party conflicts may be prolonged and protracted or may intensify around election periods in relation to the selection of party leaders and the nomination of election candidates (Basiru 2019).

The challenges confronting political parties with regards to entrenching intra-party democracy are many and varied. Primary elections serve as a pivotal litmus test of the extent and degree of democracy within party. Often, the process of nominating party candidates for purposes of contestation of state power during elections tends to be fraught with controversy and conflict as a result of the way in which it is carried out by the party leadership. With Nigeria in focus and as a prime example, democratic process no doubt is bedeviled by poor party politics as a result of inter woven factors of 'ethnicization' of party politics, poor political leadership, excessive westernization of the concept democracy', party indiscipline, lack of clear cut-party ideologies, lack of internal party democracy (Ntalaja 2000).

It is thus safe to unequivocally assert that the desperation for political power in the country is because politics is often seen as a means to an end. The means is the power and control and the end is to make money or rather embezzle and loot money, a sort of open sesame to wealth to be in power is to control state resources that are often converted to personal use.

Causes of Intra-Party Conflicts

This section engages what the causes of intra-party conflicts are with cognizance to the Nigerian context. These causes include the following;

- i. Favoritism – promoting one's kith and kin;
- ii. Unequal sharing of resources (leader's constituency gets a lion's share);
- iii. Lack of regular meetings; and
- iv. Centralized authority – power concentrated at the top.

According to Momodu et al (2013), there are many factors that cause conflicts within political parties in Nigeria which are linked to those afore mentioned but defined in clearer terms to localize it to the Nigerian context, they include: leadership tussle, paucity of ideology, absence of internal democracy, interference by the executive arm in the domestic affairs of political

parties, desperation for power as it guarantees opportunity for aggrandizement, culture of impunity, ethnicity and religious brinksmanship.

Review, Issues and Narratives on Inter and Intra Party Politics

This section discusses the growth of party politics in Kogi state, the emergence of APC as a strong political party within the state and INEC's travails over time when it comes to conducting governorship elections in Kogi state.

a. The State of Affairs in the APC before and during the Kogi 2019 Governorship Polls

The APC as a political party was formed in 2013 as result of a merger agreed and signed by the 3 major opposition parties of CAN, CPC and the ANPP aided by a breakaway faction of APGA with the major aim of unseating the PDP. As it was at the national level, so it was at the state level in Kogi that the new merger will bring about bigwigs within the same party. There were founding members such as Abubakar Audu, Mohammed Ohiare, Dino Melaye, Maiyanga Usman. As early as November, 2013, the party in the state had its first crisis, the Daily Trust 22 November 2013 reported that crisis was looming in the party when the deputy national legal adviser of the party James Ocholi, inaugurated the state interim executive committee for the party in the state. This move did not go down well some members of the party known as the Ogbabede concerned elders of the APC from Dekina LGA in the state, the group urged the national secretariat to ensure that the party in the state was not destroyed at its embryonic stage alleging that some chieftain of the party were working parallel to the interest of the party in Kogi. During the 2015 elections in the state, which produced the emergence of Bello following the death of Audu, the party in Kogi state began to witness a new level of crisis emanating from political control of the state's executives. This differences, unresolved led to the emergence of two separate executives produced by two different congresses in 2018, the impeachment of the deputy governor of the state, the exit of party members into the opposition and the APC in the state being engulfed in may legal battles.

The party depleted into factions, the Amateo, Bello/Ahovi faction and the Alex Kadiri led elders' forum. There were different interests groups within the party. There were protests from different factions of the party both in Kogi and at Abuja the federal capital. The internal wrangling ensured that the APC became the major opposition to the APC in Kogi state as factions not loyal to the governor were always in the lead to bring to fore the leadership failure and 'executive rascality' of the Yahaya Bello led administration in the state, more vocal in this regards was the deputy governor himself. The disqualification of some aspirants by the screening committee of the party was also seen as witch hunting, the general mood of the party was distrust and suspicion as claims and counter claims were always made by all factions to the party conflict. The end result was a heated polity soaked in tension as the day of the primaries witnessed a heightened atmosphere of fear. An aspirant Hassan Bawa was said to have walked out of the venue alleging manipulation of the results while other aspirants rejected the outcome alleging it was rigged in favor of the incumbent (Business Day September 8 2019).

The above reveals a glaring lack of internal democracy within the APC during the 2019 gubernatorial polls in Kogi State. According to Vanguard (June 18, 2019), there was a reported lack of agreement among aspirants of the APC heading to the primaries. 20 aspirants under the aegis of APC governorship aspirant forum rejected attempts by the incumbent governor

Bello to adopt indirect primaries. The aspirants insisted on the adoption of direct primaries. The fact that the National Working Committee of the party went ahead to adopt indirect primaries with subtle pressure applied on aggrieved members to withdraw their suites against the party in court depicts a quasi form of imposition which did not augur well with most members of the party in the state. From as early as 2017, there had been a protracted struggle for control of the party between the governor and the elected party leaders in the State (Vanguard December 24, 2017). There were cases of oppression within the party as the executive arm of government continued to bully those it termed as opposition to him within the party.

b. INEC and Elections in Kogi State

INEC had always had it rough when it comes to conducting elections in Kogi State since the return to democratic rule, Kogi is an ethnically heterogeneous state which contributes to the heated nature of elections within the state. In Kogi, INEC has been ordered to organize a fresh election when the courts annulled the 2007 gubernatorial polls in the state, INEC has also had to halt an entire political timetable owing to the dynamics that emanated from the annulled elections, polls have been declared inconclusive by INEC with run off polls conducted. The history of violence and looting that has marred the electoral process in the state has made Kogi one the trickiest states to conduct an election in the state. This was echoed by the Chairman of INEC, Mahmood Yakubu who opined that “Bayelsa and Kogi are not easy states when it comes to conducting governorship elections stating the challenges of the geographical terrain and its effect on logistics and the attitude of the political class” (Premium Times October 16 2009).

The 2019 gubernatorial polls in Kogi had a smooth electoral timetable with parties meeting the deadline for submission of candidates following the conducts of their primaries. The November 16 date set for the polls too did not change even following a process of litigation embarked upon majorly by Natasha Akpoti a lead candidate of the SDP following her disqualification. Even the order of the court did not stop the date as the SDP was only included in the list of Parties contesting the elections (The Guardian 20 December 2019).

c. Intra-party Conflicts of the APC and its ripple effects

Following internal wrangling within the APC which were mostly unresolved, the party began to lose members at the grass root level especially within the Kogi central senatorial district. The defection of these party members swelled the popularity of Natasha and the SDP in the area. Her popularity soon gave rise to fears within the ruling party over the growing influence of the party and its candidate. Hence there are claims that, the APC from its national body influenced INEC's decision to disqualify Natasha and other candidates. This decision will further affect INEC in its conduct, the voter participation, the campaigns and the outcome of the electoral process.

- i. INEC's conduct: due to the closeness of the Election Day to the verdict instructing INEC to include Natasha in the polls; INEC ought to have postponed the elections to enable it adequately prepare. However, INEC went ahead with the polls, as a result in some cases, there was no SDP logo on the ballot while in some cases, the logo was present while the name of the party accompanying the logo was absent. INEC on its part claimed it had instructed its election personnel to use pencil in effecting such corrections. The corrections were not universally adhered to within the state and even

if they were it depicted the level of unpreparedness of INEC for the polls (The Guardian 20 December 2019).

- ii. Voter apathy and participation; According to the statistics for the 2019 polls as provided by INEC, Kogi had a total of 1,646,350 registered voters with 1,485,828 representing 90.2% of total permanent voter cards collected. However, on elections day only 624,514 votes representing 37.93% were cast as declared by INEC. A low turnout. Although in 2019, the voter percentage increased by 2 percent, however when compared with 2015, it is a big drop as it shows apathy in the political process in 2019, 1,010,148 did not show up to vote from a possible 1.6million, while in 2015, 1,379,971 registered with just 868,323 stayed home (cable.ng November 18 2019). The mishandling of the Natasha issue by INEC, violence that engulfed the primaries and the campaign were amongst major reasons that contributed to this.
- iii. The outcome of the polls, saw Bello declared as winner, however the polls was marred by series of violence, death, vote buying, attack on election officials, importation of voters,
- iv. According to situatuionroom.org, the general atmosphere of the state during this period was soaked in tension, apprehension and promising of chaos, there was high level state backed hooliganism and proliferate use of thugs.

Methodology

The study employed the use of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods to determine the relationship between collected data. Hence, an experimental research was carried out to help evaluate and establish a relationship between the causes of Intra-party conflicts within the APC in Kogi 2019 and what effects these conflicts had on the conduct of the elections by INEC. This study employed the use of an unstructured interview guide of research instrumentation which afforded the researcher the ability to modify questions and sequence of wording in order to extract valuable data from select respondents which are pivotal to the aims and objectives of the study. This was also supported by a guided response type of survey research instrumentation through 105 administered and retrieved questionnaires.

The population of the study is Kogi State with a population of over 3million according to the 2006 National Census figures for the state, However the study will focus on population of the members of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) in the state, INEC staff, security agents, election observers and a sample of 105 randomly selected respondents were chosen from the population under review as they had immediate connection with research topic. Those administered with the questionnaires comprises of 41 members of the APC, 22 INEC staff, 21 security personnel and 21 potential voters and election observers. The respondents were strategically selected at various locations such as: The state party secretariat of the APC, The state INEC office, police and civil defense stations and offices all located in Lokoja the state capital.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is divided into two segments; the first segment presents the demographic information on the respondents and the second segment presents and interprets the data generated from the field based on the research objectives and questions.

Respondents' Demography

In this section information as regards the sex, age, educational qualification and status of respondents under population of the study is presented in percentage tables and further analyzed.

Sex

Sex	MALE	FEMALE
Frequency	65 (62%)	40 (38%)

From the above table, males have the largest number with 65(62%) and females are 40 (38%).

Age

Age	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-65	65 above
Frequency	19 (19%)	33(31.4%)	29(29%)	19 (18%)	5 (4.8%)

From the table above, it indicates; 19 (19.0%) respondents were between the ages of 18-30, 33 (31.4.0%) respondents are between the age bracket of (31-40), 29 (29.0%) respondents are in the age bracket of (41-50), 19 (18.0%) respondents are in the age bracket of (51- 65) and 5 (4.8%) respondents are in the age bracket of (65 and above). The advantage of this demography to the study is that persons who are of the suffrage age was targeted by the study.

Education

Qualification	Postgraduate	BSc/HND	Diploma/OND	School certificate	Others
Frequency	13 (12%)	33(31.4%)	35 (35%)	16 (16%)	8 (8%)

From the demography on educational qualification, those with the highest educational qualifications are: Diploma/OND at 35(35%), closely followed by BSc/HND 33(31.4%) holders; School Certificate holders were 16 representing 16%. Post graduates 13 at 12% while the lowest educational qualifications are those with other qualifications lower than school certificate. The implication of this for the study is that, a vast majority of the respondents were literate enough to understand the questions raised by the survey with little or no contribution from the researcher.

Status

Category	APC Card Carrying Members	Security Agents	INEC Staff	Voters & Observers
Frequency	41 (39.04%)	21 (20%)	22 (20%)	21 (20%)

The table for demography on statuses depicts 41(39.04%) for card carrying members of the All Progressive Congress (APC), 21 (20%) representing security agents, 22 (20%) representing INEC staffs, 21 (20%) representing voters and observers. The study was strategic in targeting this demography as voters and election observers inform an integral part of any electoral process with the 2019 gubernatorial polls in Kogi not an exception, INEC was the electoral umpire that had to deal with the conduct of the elections which made them an invaluable part of the study. APC were also disgruntled over what they termed as dissatisfaction with the incumbent governor from the APC. It meant, the study targeted demography in status of persons who had a heightened level of interests in the polls in 2019.

Findings and Discussions

Objective 1: What were the causes of intra-party conflicts in the APC during the Kogi 2019 governorship elections?

Causes	SA	A	SD	D	N
Nepotism, tribalism, and corruption	90	10	3	2	0
Non-inclusiveness in decision making,	95	7	2	1	0
Neglect and non-compliance to party constitution	85	15	4	1	0
Power or leadership tussle	95	10	0	0	0
Secretiveness and concealment of vital information	80	10	9	6	0
Injustice, Unfairness and Corruption	95	10	0	0	0
Political godfathers and imposition of candidate	95	7	3	0	0

From the data gathered 105, representing 100% of the respondents gave answers to the question from the 105 surveyed while none failed give any response which represent. From the data, the following were highlighted to be the major causes of intra-party conflicts in Kogi State APC:

From the table there was an overwhelming agreement from the responds that the points raised by the study were the major factors that fueled intra-party conflicts within the Kogi APC. 95 of 105 surveyed strongly agreed Injustice, unfairness and oppression in the APC; 90 strongly agreed to nepotism, tribalism, corruption and aggrandizement among leaders of the APC in the state; 95 of the total respondents strongly agreed that god-fatherism, and imposition of candidates, all as major factors that created wrangling within the party. Also from the table 95 of the respondents strongly agreed that non-inclusiveness in decision making; 85 strongly agreed neglect and non-compliance of members to constitution of the APC; 95 strongly agreed, power or leadership tussle between or among members of the APC emanating from conflict of interests between or among members of the APC and 75 opined secretiveness and concealment of vital information to party members, and non-inclusion of members in the affairs of party to be factors that caused intra-party conflict within the Kogi APC during the gubernatorial polls of 2019. These findings are indeed consistent with data retrieved from reviewed literature earlier referenced in the study.

In his view, one of the key stakeholders interviewed agreed that;

“Another factor also is the imposition of candidates, in most cases through the issue of consensus; political players see it as imposition after spending a lot of money”(KSI/SECURITY/JULY 22)

A party stalwart observed that imposition of candidate and god-fatherism are factors that can cause intra party conflict:

“...in the APC, they tried using a consensus which did not work and they intentionally screened out some candidates with flimsy excuses, they didn’t even provide for delegates for some of them. This is because the incumbent governor wanted to re-contest so he used all governing machinery within his reach to ensure that he got the ticket and even disallowed other candidates to have access to delegates. All these became

problematic and some of them had to go to court and then the national headquarters had to set up a committee to look into it and at the end the governor still had his way. Due to this, some of them left the party for other parties so that they can get tickets for the governorship election". (KSI/PARTY OFFICIAL/JULY '22)

Objective 2: What were the effects of intra-party conflicts within the APC on the conduct of the 2019 governorship election by INEC in Kogi State?

Effects	SA	A	SD	D	N
Inability of INEC to properly observes party primaries of the APC	55	35	10	5	0
It affected INEC's timetable for the gubernatorial polls in Kogi 2019	15	15	45	30	0
It affected the submission of names of candidate by the party	5	20	50	30	0
It impedes the smooth and efficient management of election by INEC	85	5	10	5	0
It negatively Impacted Lives and Properties as result of prolong violence	65	20	10	7	3
It led to apathy on the part of the voters.	80	20	5	0	0

The following effects of intra-party conflicts in APC in Kogi 2019 on INEC in the conduct of the 2019 governorship election were extracted from the table 55 strongly agreed while 35 agreed that intra party conflict of APC in 2019 leads to the Inability of INEC to properly observes party primaries of the APC; 45 strongly disagreed and 30 disagreed that it affected INEC's timetable for the gubernatorial polls in Kogi 2019; 50 strongly disagreed and 30 disagreed that it affected the submission of names of candidate by the party; 85 strongly agreed and 5 agreed that it impedes the smooth and efficient management of election by INEC; 65 strongly agreed and 20 agreed that it negatively Impacted Lives and Properties as result of prolong violence, and finally 80 strongly agreed and 20 agreed that it led to apathy on the part of the citizens.

The findings above are in tandem, with data retrieved from scarcely available literature on the effects of Intra-party conflicts in the APC and its effects on the conduct of the 2019 governorship elections in Kogi State by INEC.

Corroborating above finding a key stakeholder interviewed pointed out as follows:

"Definitely it creates problem for INEC, it destroys resources meant for INEC or increases that INEC is supposed to put in the election, one of the major problem of INEC today in Nigeria is litigation and these arose from intra-party conflict, crisis that arose from party primaries, people take up Act to destroy INEC properties because they don't agree with the way and manner a candidate emerge within their party in that case, they are ready to truncate the processes. And when there is continuous litigation INEC is joined, thereby affecting the smooth running of the election unless something critically is done about this internal party democracy definitely INEC will be in problems INEC is the major Hallmark, major casualty when there is intra-party conflict in Nigeria even in Kogi State we have seen it."(KSI/VOTER/July22)

Another Stakeholder interview supports the fact that INEC Conduct of Elections can be negatively affected by intra party conflict:

"The intra-party conflict can affect the operation of INEC, Already you know there is what is called timeline or time table of elections this is the document that outlined the activities for it election that INEC must be conducted. As we know election is an event or a process one leads to another, if one is not done or is not done timely it might affect the conduct of other for example, what happened in 2019 in Kogi State, regards to the SDP we are all aware that the INEC went to court to challenging the inclusion of SDP as a party on the ballot so that the deputy Governor of the flag bearer of the party is disqualified by INEC." (KSI/INEC/July '22)

A key stakeholder interviewed agreed that intra party conflict can affect INEC conduct of election:

"Once there is crisis in a particular party INEC as an organization is structured on time , there are time lag for every activity to be carried out , once there is this crisis within the party and they are not able to do one function or one activity it continues to drag on like that until at the dying minutes. Those parties would not be able to meet all the requirements and it becomes a problem on INEC to begin to say and it has always impose additional cost on INEC either you have to destroy ballot paper to print another one , ok if this person did not come we can easily go ahead or move on but, it will soon instigate litigation problem in court , so those are the implications on INEC which is the umpire. It delays planning and bring unnecessary cost on INEC". (KIS/VOTER/JULY,'22)

Conclusion

The study has been able to discover that intra-party conflicts had great impacts on the outlook of the electoral process for both the APC in the Kogi state and INEC in the election of 2019. It is a fact that politics is a conglomeration of different interests, some of the political class however reduces politics to a mere investment making machine. For internal democracy to deepen within the ranks of the APC, this negative misconception of politics as a means of acquiring wealth must be changed to a positive conception of politics as an art and science of delivering public good; this tends towards improving the quality of life for the citizenry and not about satisfying the greed of a few privileged class of individuals. The study revealed major factors that led to the conflict within the APC and also weighed its impacts on the effective conduct of elections by INEC in the state.

Although, in spite of the many challenges that rocked the APC in prelude to the 2019 gubernatorial polls in Kogi State, the party still emerged as the winner in the elections defeating the major opposition party the PDP in an election that was roundly termed as rigged, violence infested and proliferate vote buying by local and international observers. It means that the immediate effects of the tumultuous rancor that engulfed the party from within did not have an almost immediate negative impact on the electoral fortunes of the APC although INEC did not have it all good on its part as the poll has been roundly referred to as one of the worse in the history of elections in Kogi State. Security challenges manifested in violence and volatile environment that made it difficult for INEC officials to conduct their duties, and potentially putting their lives at risk. The fear of violence and insecurity discouraged citizens from participating in the electoral process, leading to low voter turnout. The negative impact on life and prosperity cannot be over emphasized as the prolonged

violence far-reaching consequences affected not only the electoral process but also the overall well-being and prosperity of citizens.

Recommendations

The following recommendations thus become necessary as guidelines to follow to avert future reoccurrence of such conflicts within the party at state level and could serve as blue print for the leadership of other parties to adopt in prevention and management of conflicts within their fold and also to help serve as guidelines for INEC In the conduct of future elections:

Training and capacity building for party officials on party management and administration is one of the solutions to curbing intra-party conflicts

Putting in place effective measures to enforce existing provisions of the law on party primaries is a way to address intra-party conflicts.

Creating level playing ground amongst aspirants and members will check constant intra-party conflicts in political parties and inclusiveness in all party activities will control the constant intra-party conflicts

Electoral act amendment should empower INEC in addressing issues on internal democracy within political parties as a means of preventing and quick resolutions of intra-party conflicts. INEC should be pro-active in the push for stricter legislation check to the menace of intra-party conflict through the amendment of Nigeria's constitution to provide for stronger punitive actions against defection by elected officials.

INEC should not only play supervisory roles in the conduct of state congresses, if the issues that emanate from state party congresses are to be mitigated, then INEC must take the lead in conducting and declaration of results within the purview of the amended electoral act to be proposed.

Quick dispensation of justice by the judicial bodies should be encouraged as regards all matters including cases that concerns, party and elections dispute. Also, clearer interpretations of the laws that govern elections should be made as many have mastered the art of finding loopholes with the available laws and enhancement of security measures against future electoral processes.

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