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POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES IMPOSITION IN NIGERIA: A MENACE TO DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Democracy operates principle of majority which requires equal political opportunities and liberties to aspirants to contest under political parties in recent times. Therefore political party has made formation of (representative) democracy easier and possible via the instrumentality of elections. Nigerian democracy is threatened by candidates imposition by some powerful party leaders due to lack of political parties internal democracy. The study adopted liberal theory of representation as its theoretical framework. With the aid of observational and secondary methods of inquiry, the study revealed that the practice of candidate imposition within political parties and sometimes in general elections by some powerful political parties leaders is affront to democracy as it disintegrates political parties, breaches human right of political parties members among others. The study also revealed that candidates imposition due to lack of political parties internal democracy practice threaten Nigeria democracy as it produces incompetent leaders who could not articulate the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians into achievable policies and programmes. Consequently, Nigerians are frustrated to the level that they are ignited easily and lure into violence which jeopardize national security. Creation of commission to regulate and monitors political parties primary elections and other activities, providing equal political opportunities to political parties members among others are recommended to strengthen political parties internal democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Political Party, Primary election, candidates Imposition, Democracy and National Security.

INTRODUCTION

Naturally, democracy operates principle of majority which emphasizes decision(s) must accordance with the desire of the populace. The principle of majority can be popularly achieved at the end of every decision made electorally and such decision(s) is upheld and binding in democratic states. Prior to general elections in democratic states, there is a tradition which ought to be genuinely

exercise within political parties that wish to contest in the aforementioned elections. The tradition is the primary election among members of a political party in which the voted (winner) becomes the flag-bearer of such political party in readiness for the general election(s) with other political parties flag-bearers.

Primary election is core to harmonious relationship among members of any political

party because it is the fountain-head and fundamental to the existence and practice of political party internal democracy. Simply put, political party internal democracy is the freedom, justice and equal political opportunities a political party member enjoys in accordance with the political party's guidelines (rules) in regards to political liberty such as to vie for elective post(s) and wide consultation of members to arrived at party (consensus) decisions (authors emphasis).

Democracy is about participation and representation in governance (Onyilo, 2016). A true democracy wherever it operates, it offers equal level play ground for all individuals and groups, equal participation and political liberties of various dimensions (Orhero and Ogbe, 2017). Therefore, political parties are expected to operate on a platform of impartiality to enable members contest among themselves for political parties flag-bearers in preparation for general elections. Equal political opportunities and liberties are antidote to imposition of any kind, be it candidate or vital political party decision(s) which bears internal democracy in political parties. Absence of internal democracy in political parties can be best described as democracy without democracy because political parties are the substructure upon which a nation's democracy is built. This is why Ogbe (2015) notes that imposition of candidate is a product of lack of political party internal democracy and when a country's political parties lack internal democracy, the country's democracy is threatened.

Sadly, in Nigeria, lack of political party internal democracy due to impunity causes imposition of candidates and sensitive political party decisions which threaten the unity and legitimacy of political parties flag-

bearers. An example, was the factionalised Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over leadership tussle. One of the faction was led by Senator Ahmed Makarfi while the other was led by Senator Ali Modu Shariff (Akinyemi, 2017; Nnochiri, 2017). The case was settled in favour of Senator Ahmed Makarfi led faction by the supreme court (Aziken, Umuro, Nnochiri, Akinrefon, Yakubu, Marama & Aina, 2017) due to lack of political party internal party democracy. Another case was, the protest that was carried out by All Progressive Congress (APC) Amuwo-Odofin local Government area Ward A2 constituents demanding for their mandate that was given to unpopular candidate in the councillorship primary election (Coretv, 22/6/2017) and the Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area APC supporters rejection of imposition of chairmanship candidate in the party's primary election (Coretv, 29/6/2017)

The practice of imposition, particularly of candidature, has become political culture of most political parties in Nigeria. The ex-deputy Senate President, Ibrahim Mantu reported by Umuro (2014) asserted that "today, all the parties are guilty of lack of internal democracy, ... leaders sit at the parties secretariats to send names to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)" It is high time for Nigerian political parties to acknowledge that imposition of candidates due to lack of political party internal democracy is the chief root of the country's development problems; leadership, social and economic ills. In this regard, the paper set to examine the effects of Nigeria's political parties candidates imposition on Nigerian democracy and national security due to lack of parties internal democracy via qualitative method particularly observational and secondary methods of data procurement.

Methods of data collection

This study used observational and secondary methods of data gathering. Observational method is a primary scientific tool of inquiry which affords a researcher to watch and record event(s) simultaneously with their spontaneous occurrence (Orhero and Ogbe, 2017). Textbooks, journals, newspapers and visual media were sources of the secondary method of inquiry of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Political theory is imperative to the study of political issues. Political theory helps as noted by Agbaenyi (2015) to; find solutions to challenges facing our time, offers us the explanatory tools for issues bothering our minds, serves as theoretical framework for political analysis and a guide for keeping logical sequence and consistency. Hence, the study is anchored on liberal theory of representation. The theory demonstrates the true spirit of democracy. John Lock and Thomas Jefferson are the chief expositors of this theory (Gaubá, 2003).

The liberal theory of representation rely on the wisdom of the people (masses) and treats the people representatives only as their agents or messengers who act in accordance with the masses interests and aspirations. Hence, the theory views representatives of the people as their true representatives because the representatives ought to translate the interests and aspirations of the masses into concrete policies proposals or actions. The essence of democracy is the dividends of its practice, which include delivery of goods and services, and to bring about growth and development in a society. The said situation is the only condition that would spur the elected to inquire, articulate and aggregate the interests and aspirations

of the people into policies and proper execution of such policies, which is the true spirit of democracy.

However, the true spirit of democracy uphold by the liberal theory of representation is being threaten in Nigeria by lack of political parties internal democracy. The provision of election in a democracy as articulated by Gauba (2003) is intended to make sure that government will exercise its powers with the consent of the people. Sadly, Gauba's view on democracy as the exercise of government powers with the consent of the people is contrary to practice in Nigeria because of irregularities in the nation's elections, from political parties primaries to general elections.

From the teaching of liberal theory of representation, candidate imposition is assault to political parties internal democracy. Therefore, lack of political parties internal democracy bring about candidates imposition which consequently produces unpopular leaders that often times demonstrate incapability to govern. Hence, democratic governance and national security are in jeopardy, which is the situation of Nigeria in the recent times. Lack of political parties internal democracy cum-candidates imposition caused Nigerian democracy to be one without democracy because it does not encourage proper development of the true spirit of democracy as liberal theory of representation uphold. Consequently, the foundation of Nigerian democracy is threatened because political parties are substructure upon which nation's democracy is built. Therefore, internal democracy of political parties in a nation like Nigeria is pivot to the development and survival of her democracy.

Conceptual Understanding

Political party

Political party is a social structure made up of people with like minds and ideologies aimed at election contest, with a hope to win and form a government of either a country, state(s) or localities. Igbe (2002) opines that political party is an organized people with common political belief, ideologies, principles and interests who are united with the sole aim of capturing control of the machinery of government by constitutional means. Ojo (1973) equally views political party as a group of people with the purpose to win and exercise political power especially to gain the control of the government. He went further to say that the aforementioned purpose sets political parties apart from other institutions that struggle for power. Nnoli (1986) views political party as a group of people who share a common conception of how and why state power should be organized and use.

The following are functions of political parties as observed by the authors of this paper;

- **Mobilizes and increases political participation of electorates:** Political parties mobilize people to vote for them during elections in order to win and form government, in so doing, they increase the level of political space and participation of the people.
- **Formation of Government:** This happens after a political party has won an election(s).
- **Trains citizens through political education** on their civic rights concerning voting an election.
- **Involve in electoral contest:** A political party contest with other political parties in an election to win but not the

political parties flag-bearers in democratic states.

- **Initiation of government policies:** Government policies and programmes are initiated from the political party manifestos that won an election.
- **Interest articulation, aggregation and goal setting:** Political parties inquire, articulate and gather people interests, and express them to the government and the general public. Through the articulated interests, political parties set political agenda and goals on how the country/government would be governed for the benefits of the citizenry.
- **Constructive criticism:** This comes from opposition parties which helps to check the excesses of the ruling political party and equally directing an erring government.
- **Serve as link between the government and the govern:** This is done on behalf of the people by making demands from the government in accordance with the articulated people's problems such as housing as well as explaining government actions and inactions (public policies) to the masses.
- **Organize primary elections:** They conduct primary elections in their respective political parties in searching for popular candidate(s) that stand as political party flag-bearer in the various political parties.

While Nnoli (1986) was discussing political party, he identified the following as part of the functions of political parties;

- **School for government leaders:** The political party that won an election forms the government. So, in modern states, political parties have become a main source of recruitment of people into political and governmental leadership positions. Thus, political parties are the basic

- schools for most governmental leaders.
- **Provision of choice of government:** Multi-party system provide citizens with alternative programmes of the various political parties, therefore make the choice of a government easier for the electorates.
 - **Identification of good and bad leaders:** Due to the close connection between governmental and political party leadership, political parties also provide society with a ready means of identifying and punishing incompetent ones by voting them out of office.

Political Party Internal Democracy and Candidates Imposition

Candidate imposition is a major feature of lack of political party internal democracy. Candidate imposition is an act in which some influential and powerful political party leaders hand-picked their favourite as a candidate without considering the progress and well-being of the other political party members and the unity of the party. It also refers to anointing candidate by some influential and powerful political party leaders and forcing such upon the rest of the political party members. On the other hand, political party internal democracy means culture and norms which are; tolerance for others' viewpoints, right to compete for supports and votes, free and fair elections, eligibility for public office and playing politics in accordance with the guidelines (rules) of a political party. That is why Scarrow (2005) sees political party internal democracy as a wide range of methods for a political party members in intra-party deliberations and decision making in accordance with basic tenets of democracy. The purpose of political party internal democracy is to create an enable or a level-playing ground for every party member to participate in the affairs of the

party (Olaniyi & Shehu, 2017). Therefore, lack of political party internal democracy refers to injustice, inequity and non-compliance to political party guidelines which causes crises in a political party. This is because from Rukambe in Lamidi and Kabbar (2016) democracy functions better when there is perfect harmony between the will of the majority and respect for the rights of individual and minority groups.

Conclusively, candidate imposition is an act in which a political party powerful leaders exercise their powers and influence over other political party members through hand-picking their favourite candidates to occupied elective office or engineering sham election(s). Therefore, lack of political party internal democracy and candidate imposition are like two sides of a coin, the head and the tail that goes together. The former brings about the latter which are affronts to democracy. Hence, political party internal democracy is an antidote to any kind of imposition either candidate or other forms within a political party.

The Nature of Nigerian Political Parties

In republican states, elections and political parties are pivot to democracy as the main tools and organs by which representation is achieved (Imokhai and Obi, 2015). However, in Nigeria, periodically speaking, since 2007 all the political parties in the country have certain attributes that affects their role and consequently the results of election conducted are often rejected, and therefore seek for justice at the election tribunal. The question that comes to mind is, what are the factors responsible for these unwanted character of Nigerian political parties. Answers to the question raised were provided by Muhammad (2008) cited in Ola (2016). He noted that some of the characteristics displayed by

the political parties were moulded by the nature of the Nigerian society and the operating environment, which he identified to include the following;

- Dominant interests or personality influence
- Ethnicity
- Ideological emptiness of political parties
- Flawed understanding of the meaning and purpose of politics
- Low degree of institutionalization and coherent.
- Indiscipline among political party members.

Muhammad further articulates that internal political party discipline is weak, internecine battles are common, politics and access to public offices are still regarded as a highway to personal enrichment in politics.

Conclusively, the ideological emptiness and internal political party indiscipline (lack of internal democracy) in Nigerian political parties fuel low level of commitment and high level of cross-carpet of politicians today. Consequently, electoral frauds, poor articulation and aggregation of the people's interests and aspirations into policies formulation and execution exist in Nigeria polity. Hence, insignificant developments are recorded.

Candidate imposition strategies employ by political parties in Nigeria

In Nigeria, political parties are floated by individual or groups of persons who have similar interests and these interests are dominant in the political parties activities. Therefore, as articulated by Nwaze (2012) issue of internal democracy of political party does not command a pride of place. Nwaze points out the following as the ways by which political party influential and pow-

erful leaders substitute consensus candidates by subverting the democratic process;

• **Voluntary step down of a candidate:**

Here, a candidate steps down for a 'big man' who pays him handsomely for his expenses, namely time, efforts and resources. Most times, it is the 'big man' that actually makes the contingency arrangement for himself. This is evidence when a sitting governor who is contesting for presidency also has his eyes on the senate. He engineers a sham primaries to favour his stooge whose name is submitted to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) temporarily. When he steps down from the presidential contest, he drop into the senatorial race.

• **Party Agenda:** The candidate who has emerged may not fit the agenda which the political party wishes to pursue at that level, the winner get substituted and internal democracy is consigned to the dust-bin while the people's choice is disregarded.

• **Court Order:** In this era that court orders are being 'hawked', a 'money bag' or even a political party can procure one. This is not difficult, there are uncountable reasons for which a judge can issue an ex-parte order (that is, a special order based on one sided argument).

In addition to the aforesaid strategies, political godfathers use their political powers and financial resources to force other aspirants to step-down in some cases to ensure a manipulated victory for their godsons but if he fails, sham primary election is arranged to give impression that there is internal democracy in the party.

The above discussion shows how candidates are imposed by some influential and powerful political parties leaders upon the rest political parties members.

Effects of candidates imposition on democratic practice in Nigeria

Candidates imposition due to lack of internal democracy in Nigerian political parties have made Nigeria democratic state, "democracy without democracy" as earlier illustrated. This is because healthy internal democracy of political parties make political parties of a nation democratic buds through which nation's true democracy full of democratic principles and culture are developed and observed respectively. Lack of internal democracy among political parties in Nigeria is a challenge to the nation's democracy.

Democracy as observed by Imokhai and Obi (2005) is primarily a means of determining who shall rule and broadly to what end. The Imokhai and Obi view shows that in modern democratic societies, the people do not actually rule directly but they elect leaders or representatives who govern. Therefore, candidate imposition syndrome in Nigeria politics pose a threat to Nigeria democracy and many political parties as well as their questionable flag-bearers whose political ambitions have been cut-down due to undemocratic process and practice.

Below are some of the effects of candidates imposition due to lack of political party internal democracy in Nigerian democratic practice.

- *Disintegration of political parties:* Political Party members who felt shortchanged during party primaries due to imposition, usually leave for other political parties, a situation that breeds bad blood and discontentment in the rank and file of political parties. An example was the alleged Advanced Peoples Democratic Alliance (APDA) that was newly registered by Senator Ahmed Makarfi led faction as alternative platform (Aziken, 2017) of Peoples

Democratic Party (PDP) which collapsed due to the party national leadership tussle (the author's emphasis).

- *Threat to Nigeria democracy:* Imposition syndrome due to lack of political parties internal democracy does not offer equal opportunities to political party members to have a say in making choice of candidates to stand for general elections. Therefore, popular candidates with good qualities of a leader do not emerge to rule Nigerian state rather the handpicked ones who rule for the protection and interest of the powerful political party leaders and their political cleavages. An example was the national leader of All Progressives Congress (APC) Bola Tinubu in September 2016 fought tooth and nail to over turn the governorship primary of the party that was won by Rotimi Akeredolu in order to favour Olusegun Abraham, his preferred candidate. (Daily post 2016 cited in Olaniyi and Shehu, 2017). The described situation is dangerous and aberration to democracy and its practice.
- *Discourage hardworking and loyal old political party members:* Here, when candidates who felt short changed in their original political party primaries cross-carpet to another political party only to be given opportunity to compete for elective posts or offered attractive and valuable appointments over the hardworking and loyal old political party members. This often breeds frustration and bad blood within political parties, which threatens the nation's democracy. The out cry of Obanikoro, the former minister of state for defence and 2015 Lagos state governorship aspirant (under PDP) of the plans to impose a new comer on Lagos state PDP is an evidence of the said situation (Kumolu, 2014). However, though it is not wrong for persons to cross-carpet but they should exercise patience

before seeking for post.

- *A breach of fundamental human rights of political party members:* Section 39 and 42 of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended in 2011) offers Nigerians right to freedom of expression and right to freedom of discrimination respectively, which connote freedom and eligibility of Nigerians to express their choice of candidates through vote(s) without discrimination or deprivation. However, candidates imposition in political parties deny members the aforementioned human rights.
- *Shakes the belief of political party members:* Imposition of various kinds in political parties are capable of shaking the belief of members and the political party internal mechanism

Effects of candidates imposition on national security in Nigeria

National security is imperative to the existence of states of which Nigeria is not an exception. The concept has been variously considered by different scholars. Scholars see national security to include physical protection, defence of citizens and promotion of economic well-being, prosperity and national interest. Adebakin & Raimi in Aegbode and Alonge (2015) view national security as issue that covers critical dimensions that involve economic security, food security, health security, environmental sanity, personal security, community security and political security. To them, it is a sacrosanct and non-negotiable phenomenon in human society.

From the above explanation, national security includes provision, protection and promotion of well-being of citizens as well as national interest of a country. A true democracy promotes national security because

the essence of democratic government by states is for the well-being of their citizens through robust dividends of democracy. However, lack of political parties internal democracy which causes imposition of various dimensions particularly candidature across most political parties in Nigeria since 2007 has significant negative impacts on the country national security.

Negatively, candidates imposition due to lack of political parties internal democracy in Nigeria have caused the emergence of incompetent leaders that could not pilot the nation's affairs to ensure provision of dividends of democracy to the general public. Therefore, they see no need to provide dividends to the masses rather to their political cleavages. The essence of democracy and its practice by states is to provide the general public with conducive environment; welfare, protections and physiological (basic) needs. This is why Pam'sha (1998) views Nigeria as a fragile state, which gives punishment to the peasants (masses) by denying them their fundamental human rights which includes education, food, cloth and shelter as a result of the economic depression of parents. In their observation, Chile and Tsafa (2016) assert that lack of basic necessities by the people in Nigeria has therefore created a pool of frustrated Nigerians who are ignited easily and lured into violence. Therefore, the denial of fundamental human rights and basic necessities of people are threat to national security of a nation, Nigeria as an example.

CONCLUSION

Political parties have made formation of (representative) democracy easier and possible through the instrumentality of election. However, the formation of the said form of government cannot be achieved without general elections in which the various politi-

cal parties flag-bearers contest among themselves for targeted elective post(s). Primary election which is a tradition and genuine source of political parties flag-bearers is being practice in undemocratic atmosphere in Nigeria due to of lack of political parties internal democracy which often resulted candidates imposition by some political parties influential's. Hence, lack of political parties internal democracy is undemocratic and it brings about candidates imposition, consequently it produces incompetent leaders which jeopardize national security in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended for strong political party internal democracy that would vitalize the nation's elections to produce competent leaders for abundant democratic dividends and national security for Nigerians;

- Equal political opportunities should be given to all political party members who wish to contest in an election.
- Mechanism with all sincerity should be put in place by political party that would enable them arrive at consensus on sensitive issues concerning their various political parties.
- Indiscipline among political parties members should be examine and treat with political party consensus rules.
- Political parties should educate their members on purpose of democracy, its principles and genuine practice.
- Old and hardworking political party members should be supported if eligible to contest in an election rather than new members/comers.
- Primary elections should be conducted in free and fair electoral atmosphere without electoral fraud of any kind. This is

because primary election is a electoral buds that develops and produces competent leaders that would provide, protect and promote national security.

- Nigeria National Assembly should ratifies the recommendation of Ken Nnamani Reform Committee which recommends among others the creation of a new body to be known as political parties and electoral offences commission from INEC to regulate and monitor political parties as well as monitoring their primary elections in Nigeria (Nnochiri, 2017). This is to improve conduct of primary elections in Nigeria.

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