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LEADERSHIP STYLE AND IMPLICATIONS ON POLITICAL PARTIES' VICTORY IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF PDP IN 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Generally speaking, there are several factors that may aid or determine electoral victory of political parties in a country like Nigeria. These, among others, include effective organizational structure; good policies and programmes; strong financial base, and so on. However, at the centre of all the aforementioned variables is the question of leadership and leadership style within the political parties. Consequently, this paper interrogate leadership problems and issues in connection with electoral victory of political parties in Nigeria, with particular reference to People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the country's 2015 General Elections. This is also with a view to recommending viable solutions and /or options for attaining such victory by political parties set to participate in the forthcoming 2019 General Polls. The main objective of this research work, therefore, is to examine the place of leadership and leadership style, viz a viz electoral victory or failure of political parties in Nigeria, using the performances of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections as our case study. The research work is basically qualitative in nature, with data drawn largely from secondary sources which include: text books, Newspapers, Magazines, Journal articles and other online materials. Participatory theory of leadership was found to be apt in analyzing this problem. The study, however, finds out that leadership style is very central to electoral victory or failure of political parties in Nigeria, and concludes that a participatory leadership style that ensures an effective internal democracy is necessary for peace, stability and by extension, progress and victory of the political parties.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Political Parties, General Elections, PDP, Nigeria.

Introduction

On May 29, 1999, Nigeria returned to democratic rule after long years of military rule. The People's Democratic Party (PDP), which is one of the political parties registered in 1998, became the major contemporary and dominant party in Nigeria. It won every Presidential election between 1999 and 2011, and was until the 2015 elections, the governing party in the Fourth Republic although in some cases, amid a few controversial electoral circumstances.

The party became engaged in intra party crisis which led to frequent change of the party's leadership through presidential manipulation, mass defection, lack of internal party

democracy, especially in its candidate selection processes, Obasanjo's Third Term ambition, failure to tackle corruption, insecurity, poverty, failure to obey the internal zoning arrangement, abuse of incumbency among others (Innocent et al 2017).

As a result, the party became "an academy of intrigues ridden by lack of coherence, cordiality, internal wrangling, squabble, divisions, schisms and factions. The various levels of party hierarchy have been factionalized (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2014). The inability of the party to manage these self-inflicted antagonisms, crises and conflicts have resulted in the withdrawal or decamping of many of the founding fathers and chieftains of the party. The inability to surmount the inherent contradictions led the party to lose out in the 2015 General Elections. Even after the defeat, the party remains largely factionalized, having two national chairmen until it was resolved at the Supreme Court(Innocent et al 2017). This paper therefore argues that, for political parties to sustain their electoral victory, they must be internally organized and democratic.

The task of this paper is therefore, to examine the implications of leadership tussles or crises on electoral strength or victory of political parties, using the former ruling PDP as case study in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. To achieve the objective this paper is divided into five sections. The first section introduces, the second focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework, the third discusses the nexus between political parties' leadership and electoral victory, the fourth x-rays political party leadership and the performances of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria the fifth and final section concludes the discourse and offers some policy options.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

There exists a body of literatures on political party. Indeed, parties were among the first subjects of analysis at the very birth of modern political science, as exemplified by the classic works of Ostrogorski (1964 [1902]), Michels (1962 [1911]) and Weber (1968 [1922]).As observed by Montero and Gunther (2003) ,studies of parties became fully blossomed as a subfield in political science in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.In fact, Since 1945, approximately 11,500 books, articles and monographs have been published that deal with parties and party systems in Western Europe alone (Bartolini, Caramani and Hug, 1998).

Conceptualization of Political Party

The interest of many scholars in the study of political party has generated varied definitions. Dowse and Hughes (1972) define political parties as:

> associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition with other similar associations, over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective state

In another contribution, Sartori (1976),sees political party as any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections and is capable placing through elections(free or non-free candidates for public office. Similarly, Agbaje (1999), defined political party as a group of persons bounded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of

government and its offices. Elsewhere, Agbaje (2008), opined that political party can be identified by three things namely: a label in the minds of its members and the electorate; an organization that recruits and campaign for candidates seeking election and selection into public political office; a set of leaders who try to organize and control the legislative and executive branches of government. In a similar vein, Joseph (2012), identified the features of political party to include : the desire to capture governmental power through peaceful and constitutional means; a political ideology which will define what the political party stands in terms of its policies and programmes; continuity in terms of party's actual existence on the political scene; the organizational structure that enable the party to develop popular policies; and broad –base membership that earns the party credibility and acceptability which enable it to attain success at the poll.

In the opinion of Joseph (2012), political party is a group of citizens on the basis of agreeing on broad principles trying to capture the government through constitutional means. This constitutional means involves nominating suitable candidates for elective positions, campaigning for and supporting such candidates, financing election campaigns, developing the party manifestos among others.

Political party does not only seek power but also mobilize people and resources to access the executive and legislative machinery of the state as well propagate the party's set ideas, vision and policies. It is the aim of a political party to take charge of the state machinery and thus influence in varying degrees and as far as possible the executive, legislative, judiciary arms of government with the attendant state powers (Joseph, 2012).

Study on political parties remains very relevant because of the important roles it plays in modern democracy. In fact, in the early 1940s, Schattschneider (1942) succinctly summarized their importance by stating that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties". Several decades later, similar words were used by other scholars to illustrate the central role played by parties. As described by Stokes (1999), parties are "endemic to democracy, an unavoidable part of democracy. Americans have long believed that "political parties lie at the heart of American politics" (Aldrich, 1995). Not to be outdone, West Europeanists have asserted that "European democracies are not only parliamentary democracies but also party democracies" (Müller, 2000). Following this, Agbaje (2008) identified the main functions of political parties to include: representation; elite formation and recruitment; goal formulation; interest articulation and aggregation; socialization and mobilization as well as organization of government.

Party System

A party system is a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence the political process (Agbaje, 2008). Party system also refers to a collection of parties competing with one another in election for the control of public offices (Joseph, 2012). Also, Sartori (1976) describes a party system as the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition. The most common way of differentiating between different types of party system is the reference to number of parities competing for power. Thus, Duverger distinguished between one party and multi-party systems. This categorization has its limitation as it focuses only on number. Joseph (2012), provided a more elaborate differentiation when he opined that party systems can be differentiated by: the number of relevant parties; the degree of polarization

which could be either extreme or moderate and the relative size of political parties by their electoral strengths.

There are various types of party system, having distinguishing characteristics. Thus, we can talk of single party system, dominant party system, two-party system and multi-party system. A single party system is one in which there is in existence one party that is officially recognized. This is the commonest practice in communist countries like Cuba and China. The dominant party system manifest where one large party dominate the political scene for a sustained period. Under this arrangement, elections are mare formalities because of multiple fragmented opposition parties that are too weak to win enough votes to displace the dominant party. This was the case in Nigeria in the hey days of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The two-party system is the practice where two parties' stands above others, in terms of the chances of winning elections, even though there are many legally recognized parties. This is the common practice in the United States of America (USA) and the Great Britain. In the Nigeria's aborted third republic, two parties were legally recognized by decree. In a multi-party system, no less than three parties exist. Joseph (2012) identified two variants of multi-party system: moderate or limited multi-party system and fragmented or extreme multi-party system.

Leadership

The concept of leadership has generated volumes of literatures. Barnard in Basu (2012), a leading scholar in the field defined leadership as the quality of the behavior of individuals, whereby they guide people of their activities in organized effort. In the view of Basu (2012), leadership entails influencing and energizing of people to work together in a common effort to achieve the purposes of the enterprise. Similarly, Adair (2011), opine that leadership involves managing performance of team members, operations and strategies.

The task of leadership is an all inclusive process. Thus, Barnard in Basu (2012) was of the opinion that leadership depends upon three things: the individual; the followers and the conditions. Leadership is not about the quality of a leader alone but also depends on the quality and character of the followers. The condition in which the leadership operates is equally important. Millet in Basu (2012), supported this view when he averred that the essential circumstances of leadership are political and institutional. Political conditions entail the need to be responsive to external political direction and control. The institutional conditions enabled the leadership to be responsive to the requirements of internal operation of keeping an administrative agency in actual running order.

Participatory Leadership Theory

The study adopts participative leadership theory as its framework of analysis. This theory was first developed by Barnard (1938) and later evolved with contributions from the hierarchy of needs motivational theory (Maslow, 1943), the democratic leadership theory (Lewin, 1943), and leadership systems theory (Likert, 1967) arriving to participative systems theory. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs motivational theory suggests that growth-motivated individuals seeking self-actualization benefitted from participative leadership, because the approach provides such individuals with maximum opportunities for satisfaction. The democratic leadership theory suggests that employees share, invest, and grow the most in collaborative work environments (Bavelas & Lewin,1942).The leadership

systems theory comprises four domains that were (1) exploitive/authoritative, (2) benevolent/authoritative, (3) consultative, and (4) participative (Likert, 1967). The participative systems theory was the original form of the theory for this study, which indicated that the participative system was the most effective leadership approach for the best electoral outcomes when managing political parties.

Participative leadership is a leader's ability to create an egalitarian, empowering, supportive, and collaborative work environment (Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010). Participative leadership is a more organically formulated type of leadership style, rather than a top-down, vertical style of leadership. According to Lorinkova, Pearsall, and Sims (2013), participative leadership is a valuable tool for team building. Grissom (2012) suggested that participative leaders must seek the opinion of team members during the decision-making process and must encourage participation at every stage of project implementation.

Researchers have applied participative leadership theory in various settings to (a) explain job satisfaction among face-to-face teams (Kim, 2002), (b) performance among face-to-face groups (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006), (c) job satisfaction among teachers (Ngotngamwong, 2012), and (d) performance among teachers (Nieto, 2009).

This theory has not, however, been previously applied to electoral outcomes in spite of its relevance in explaining the 2015 general elections in Nigeria as it relates to the then ruling People's Democratic Party.

Party Leadership and Electoral Victory

The ideas of political party leadership and electoral victory are intrinsically inter-linked, interconnected and interdependent. Although political parties are undoubtedly a key ingredient of building a robust democracy, the character of the parties, in terms of leadership, and their *modus operandi* have a significant impact on their electoral victory. They often have glaring gaps that block the exercise of participatory democracy. Thus most political parties, especially in transitional and semi-authoritarian states like Nigeria, lack proper internal democracy. They also frequently fall under the sway of powerful economic and political elites, sometimes called godfathers, who use their resources to control the party at the expense of its members. Parties frequently conduct their business in a secretive way, demonstrating a lack of transparency. In many cases, they only appear around election time to capture votes but fail to account to their supporters once the elections are over. This, invariably, is a leadership problem that is capable of undermining political parties' electoral victory in the subsequent elections.

Some parties also fail to develop their appeal to citizens beyond ethno-regional appeals or the patronage available to incumbents. Also, parties in many developing countries lack adequate capacity in areas ranging from membership recruitment and retention to policy development and resource mobilization (UNDP, 2013). Another leadership weakness demonstrated by most political parties, especially in Nigeria, is the failure to include women in leadership, decision making and policy-making processes. Yet, women belong at the heart of democratic politics. Due to these weaknesses, parties often do not meet the criteria of "robust, transparent, internally democratic and accountability" that characterize strong democratic parties that attracts the support of the electorates during elections.

It is therefore, instructive to note that the measure of success of a political party is a product of its leadership constitution, capability, appeal and function. The leadership of a political party establishes the general setting of its members and the focus of their solidarity. The structures and organs of political parties help them to achieve their goals, among which is electoral victory. As a matter of fact, every political party must possess structures and organs. These structures and organizations are usually in hierarchical, arranged from the Ward through the Local Government Area, State, Zones and National level.

Based on article 10 of the PDP constitution, for instance, its organs are constituted as follow (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 (Osumah, O. and Ikelegbe, A. 2014). Although it is contended that there is no universal pattern of the structure and organs of political parties, all political parties like large organizations are inherently oligarchic. This means that the leadership of any party naturally devolves on a small number of leaders.

Party Leadership and the Performance of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections

In spite of its dominance of the country's political landscape since the return of democracy in 1999, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was turned into an opposition party after the 2015 general elections. This, of course, is an ugly experience for a political party that had won four consecutive presidential elections in the past and maintained overwhelming majority of governors and legislators at both state and national levels. In 1999, for instance, the PDP had a comfortable majority with 214 seats in the House of Representatives. It moved to 223 in 2003 and then reached its peak with 263 in 2007, but dropped to 208 and 137 in 2011 and 2015 respectively. In the Senate the party had 71 seats, improved to 76 and 87 in the 2003 and 2007 elections respectively (Daily Trust, 2015).

But the seeds of decline began to manifest in the 2011 general elections when it lost 16 seats in the Senate, winning 71 seats. The number of its senators further dropped to 49 in the 2015 general elections. The loss of 71 seats in the National Assembly and five states in the 2011 elections indicated a further decline in the party's popularity. A PDP victory would have represented the continuity of these historical trends, but amidst a fractured polity that many observers speculated might not survive the continuation of the status quo. An APC victory entailed the promise of a radical deviation from established patterns. Buhari's win overturned general expectations, as most initial analyses by academics, think tanks, and risk assessment specialists like the Eurasia Group had predicted an overwhelming PDP victory(Owen and Usman, 2015).

Thus, as regards the question of why and how did the 2015 elections buck the incumbency trend, Owen and Usman, (2015) identified four factors that had built up steadily over time as follows: (1) the fragmentation of the ruling PDP as the main platform for elite coordination; (2) the government's dismal record in economic management, addressing human development challenges, tackling corruption and securing lives and property; (3) divergent election campaign tactics employed by both parties; and (4) better preparation by the electoral commission, in particular in its use of biometric voter cards. However, a decisive role was

also played by more immediate factors, such as the APC's primary elections, which presented the party as a viable and more credible alternative, and the postponement of the elections in February. The confluence of these factors, they further noted, undermined the historical trend of the certainty of an incumbent victory, and resulted in the historic defeat of Jonathan and the PDP (Owen and Usman, 2015). These factors, no doubt, explain the exceptionalism of the 2015 elections, as would be presented in our subsequent analyses.

It is however, instructive to first, state that faced with the stark reality of its dwindling political fortunes that climaxed in its abysmal performance in the 2015 general elections, the National Working Committee (NWC) of the PDP in the aftermath of the polls inaugurated a post-election review committee on May 5, 2015 to assess its performances. The 17-member committee headed by deputy senate president, Ike Ekweremadu was tasked with nine-point terms of reference, namely: "To identify the remote and immediate causes of the poor performance of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 general elections; trace the origin and process of the seeming decline of the party in its electoral performance; and to take a critical look at the preparations and build-up of the PDP to the 2015 General Elections and determine its inadequacies and lapses".

Others were: "To review and determine the adequacy of the structures for the 2015 general elections and how those structures actually functioned; ascertain the degree of anti-party activities, compromises and outright sabotage that may have contributed to the misfortunes of the party at the elections; look at funding of the elections to determine whether or not the funds meant for the campaigns were adequate and whether disbursements were properly done; and identify different groups in the Party who were to play critical roles before and during the elections and determine their effectiveness or otherwise" (Ukwu, 2015).

Starting with the problems of the party structure and administration, according to the reports from the Ekweremadu committee, most of the structures were not properly constituted at the state level. In several states, the report states, "members of the state working committee were simply handpicked or selected through undemocratic means in flagrant violation of the constitutional process", adding that: "During the conduct of ward and local government congresses, unpopular individuals were selected and imposed as ward and local government executive committee members even when available evidence indicated that those handpicked candidates did not enjoy broad public support." The report also maintains that failure to adhere to the constitutional process in the selection of leaders at the state, local government and ward levels of the PDP is a common feature across the country.

Another factor that contributed to the poor performance of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections is lack of internal democracy. This fact has also been echoed by the Ekwerenmadu committee where it states "Lack of internal democracy deforms and undermines the party's effectiveness and provides incentives for members to work against the party; lack of internal democracy infests the entire party's administrative structure and manifests predominantly in the imposition of leaders at all levels."

Another factor that contributed to the poor performance of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections as earlier mentioned is widespread corruption. Corruption is one of the socioeconomic malaises that bedeviled the Nigerian State for many decades which virtually

eroded all aspects of good governance and effective service delivery to the populace. It has affected democratic governance particularly electoral process with vote buying, bribing of electoral body officials and manipulation of the entire process. This scourge is more widely spread during the PDP reign in power, notwithstanding the declaration of the party to have zero tolerance for corruption and the subsequent enactment of anti-corruption agencies. Many of the elected officials have been accused of various dimensions of corruption ranging from embezzlement to misappropriation of public funds without caring for rules of accountability and transparency. The anti-corruption agencies themselves have been suborned as instruments of fighting perceived political enemies while loyalists were sacred cows that must not be touched.

Lack of party discipline is also a contributory factor to the failure of the PDP in the elections under review. Lack of discipline in the PDP manifests in official wrangling, accusation and counter accusations, washing of dirty linen in the press, litigation, decamping, carpet crossing, and use of arm tactics. A team of undisciplined personnel, it is said, cannot promote stability and subsequent electoral victory. Another explanation for the failure of the PDP in governance, which also contributed significantly to their loss of election in the 2015 polls, is executive lawlessness. The chief executives at the various levels of government were infused with the governing and supreme power of the party; thus, increasing their tendency for the abuse of office.

It is within this context that the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerged. In 2013, Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change, Bola Ahmed Tinubu as leader of the Action Congress of Nigeria, the leadership of the All Nigeria People's Party, the governors in these parties, and other opposition interests merged their parties to become the APC. The APC coalition remained cohesive, unlike previous attempts to unite the opposition, drawing strength and membership from a fractured PDP. Crucially, former Vice-president Atiku Abubakar (1999-2003) and seven governors, including Rotimi Amaechi of the oil-rich Rivers State, walked out of a PDP Convention in August 2013. They formed a splinter faction and shortly after joined the APC. As the PDP increasingly lost the ability to manage its internal squabbles, the APC became stronger, coalescing around a core of south-western veterans of the Action Congress of Nigeria party, northern oppositionists close to Buhari, and ex-PDP dissidents especially from the Middle Belt and Niger Delta regions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ideas of political party leadership and electoral victory are intrinsically inter-linked, interconnected and interdependent. Although political parties are undoubtedly a key ingredient of building a robust democracy, the character of the parties, in terms of leadership, and their modus operandi have a significant impact on their electoral victory. This paper examines the intra-party leadership crises that bedeviled the then ruling party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), leading to its loss of election in the 2015 general elections. Factors identified for the party's failures include: fragmentation of the party with two factional chairmen; the government's dismal record in governance; lack of transparency in the handling of the party's affair and failure to provide level playing field in the choice of candidates for elective positions.

For effective leadership and victory in elections, the paper recommends that political parties must assume its responsibility of political integration by harmonizing interest groups within the party. Political party should also provide platform for resolving issues which may threaten the peace and existence of the party and also the state. The leadership of the party must play pivotal role of ensuring transparency in governance and promote the spirit of participation in its affairs.

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