

## **Institutionalization of party primary elections and intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria**

Emmanuel O. Ezeani; Daniel C. Ikpegbu & Kingsley U. Ezeani  
Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

### **Abstract**

The institutionalization of party primaries and candidate selection has elicited a robust discussion among scholars. Party primaries have been marred by various degrees of internal conflicts, squabbles and crisis with the implication that the internal structure of the parties are often mired in endless contestations. This paper interrogates the conduct of party primary elections by the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the resultant intra-party conflicts. Specifically, the study investigated if the imposition of candidates by party stalwarts accounts for unusual defection of party members from PDP to other political parties in 2014. It also examined if the disagreements over zoning arrangements in the 2022 presidential primary election account for the emergence of G5 governors within PDP. The study adopted qualitative documentary method of data collection while content analysis was used in analysing the data. The findings from the study revealed that, the imposition of candidate by party stalwarts led to party loyalties' defecting from the party to other political parties. It also found that the disagreement over zoning arrangement led to emergence of G5 Governors. Hence, the study recommended that since PDP is not an elite party, it is necessary that the rank and files of the party is determined by collective action who flies the party flag in a general election.

**Keywords:** Candidate Selection, Political Parties, Elections, Primary Elections

### **Introduction**

Elections have become an important element of modern representative government. This could account for why elections are so clearly tied to the growth and development of representative democratic government that is held to be very important indicator of the presence or absence of such government (Nnoli, 2003). Elections are seen as the most modern form of recruitment of personnel into offices and it is deemed to be a very crucial aspect of the democratic process irrespective of the type of democracy that is practiced. Democracy therefore, suggests a system government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or indirectly through representatives. At one and the same time the legal equality of all electors exists side by side with their freedom to choose which of the political aspirants would represent them. Consequently, elections in Nigeria cannot be thought of without political parties as there is no provision for independent candidacy in the country's constitution. Political parties remain the only platform in Nigeria for democratically elected leaders to emerge.

It is truism that political parties have remained active and indispensable tools in institutionalizing democracy in most democratic politics in the world today. Particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, political parties are seen as group of people who share common conception of how and why state power should be organized and used. They differ from other forms of organization in society in the sense that, they do not only seek to influence government policy, but they also undertake or seek to undertake responsibility for actually formulating and implementing government policy. Political parties constitute an important mechanism used by the ruling classes to consolidate and advance their aspirations. Therefore, their nature and functions tend to conform to the ruling class interest in the survival and advancement of its system of domination (Nnoli, 2003). Amongst features of political parties is that, it plays an intermediate role in democratic societies by acting as a connecting cord between the government and the people, thereby ensuring all tenets of democracy are upheld in the country. Nevertheless, an important *raison d'être* of political party is the existence of political diversity in society. Consequently, this diversity is usually the function of social, economic, religious and demographic differences, hence, the nature of a party varies with the nature of the diversity that is dominant in society.

By this, Political parties are not monolithic organizations. They aggregate coherent or divergent views, include amateurs and professionals, gather members and sympathizers, and are organized along hierarchical or strataarchical structures (Bolleyer, 2012; Haute & Gauja 2015; Scarrow 2015). This modular attribute of political party is sometimes harming because it is invariably annihilating the overall mission or vision of the party. As a social group, political party are not immune to conflict due largely to people's natural tendency to have disparities in opinion and interest whenever they associate with one another, whether or not they pursue a common interest. Irrefutably, members of a party or group are liable to focus on personal interests over group interests for self-gratification, which in turn could easily occasion clashes with personalities and sentimental affiliations. Dudley (1973) claims that one basic attribute that is common to every human organization is the interaction and interdependence among their members. Invariably, the varying interests of party members are controlled by political parties for the purpose of realizing a broadly unified front to achieve the objectives of the party. While some others will be promoting self-interest which may results to unintended crises and conflicts, some others will be projecting general interest of the party inadvertently will be

difficult to harmonize. Due to this diverse party composition, intra-party conflicts occur frequently between and within the party units.

In order to popularize and democratize party politics and remove the abuses of the party machine during the selection of party candidates for elections, political parties through the electoral system design primary election within the party where the rank and files of the party are able to vote and decide who should represent the party as candidate in the election. This ensures the emergence of candidates capable of winning the election (Nnoli, 2003). Hence, Section 84 of Nigeria Electoral Act 2022 provides that:

- (1) A political party seeking to nominate candidates for elections under this Act shall hold primaries for aspirants to all elective positions which shall be monitored by the Commission
- (2) The procedure for the nomination of candidates by political parties for the various elective positions shall be by direct, indirect primaries or consensus.
- (3) A political party shall not impose nomination qualification or disqualification criteria, measures, or conditions on any aspirant or candidate for any election in its constitution, guidelines, or rules for nomination of candidates for elections, except as prescribed under section 65,66 106,107,131,137,177 and 187 of the constitution (Electoral Act, 2022).

However, while the institutionalization of party primaries and candidate selection has commanded a robust discussion among scholars, party primaries have been marred by various degrees of internal conflicts, squabbles and crisis within People's Democratic Party. The idea of political party's candidate selection process enjoys unrivalled eminence in political discourses and analyses in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, matters relating to internal party democracy and political inclusion are well spelt out in regulatory mechanisms such as the Nigerian Constitution, Party Constitutions, the Electoral Act, Party Manifestos, etc. These laws are legal instruments for guiding the conduct and behaviour of actors in the affairs of parties. For example, *Article 1 of the INEC Regulations for the Conduct of Political Party Primaries* for the nominations of candidates into various positions provides that:

A political party seeking to participate in any election organized by the commission (INEC) must conduct primaries, wherein all eligible members of the party must be given equal opportunity to participate

in the primaries of the party for the purpose of selecting candidates for elective positions.

However, PDP party primaries and conventions are mere platforms of voice affirmation of elite's consensus, which most times renders candidate selection process less credible. The process through which candidates emerge in PDP is often fraught with controversies, which often lead to violence and litigation. In fact, a greater percentage of those that emerge from the party primaries are products of imposition, consensus and compromise. Internal party democracy is one issue which the party have to contend with. An assessment of the process of emergence of candidates in PDP therefore, becomes necessary to identify the democratic deficits inherent within the party. This study therefore, interrogates the institutionalization of party primary elections and intra-party conflicts in the Nigeria PDP between 2014 and 2022.

### **Scope and Methodology**

This study is focused on understanding the institutionalization of party primary elections and intra-party conflicts in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria. Although, the party have the constitution where basic rules, regulations and laws guiding its affairs could be located, it was in article 17 of the PDP constitution where it is reported (see Appendix). Consequently, this research is a diachronic study which looks at intra-party conflicts in the 2014 Gubernatorial primaries and the 2022 Presidential primary elections of Peoples Democratic Party in Nigeria. Therefore, this study is meant to unravel how the imposition of candidates by the party stalwarts led to massive defection of party loyalists in the 2014 gubernatorial primaries as well as how the disagreement on the zoning arrangement/formular led to emergence of G5 groups in the 2022 Presidential primary elections. Qualitative documentary method was used for data collection while content analysis was utilized for analysis. This was done through extracting non-quantitative document and transforming it into a qualitative verifiable data (Asika, 1991). In using this content analysis method, we organized and as well synthesize the textual data with a view of searching for patterns and discovering what discovering what is relevant from available sources like books, journal articles, conference papers, and internet among others.

### **Political Party Primary Elections and Nomination of Candidates: Unending Debate**

Nnoli (2003), basically noted that, in every political party, there is usually a large number of politicians who wish to be elected to public office, and these numbers are much greater than

the available vacancies, therefore, parties do have need to choose candidates who would represent them in an election. He further contends that, political parties do this selection of candidates in two ways which are: by appointment by the party leadership and by primary election. The first method he argued enables candidates who were versed in party ideology, principle, programs and loyal to the party to emerge. He was quick to add that, the method is open to corruption and is prone to abuse by a clique that may not represent the interests of the party or the electorate. On the other hand, the second method is designed to popularize and democratize party politics and remove the abuses of the party machine during the selection of party candidates for elections. Here, the rank and file of the party are able to vote and decide who should represent the party as candidate in the election. It was noted that this method ensures the emergence of candidates capable of winning the elections. It also ensures the loyalty of party supporters to the cause of the party during the elections.

Micheal (2013), Alfa & Otaida (2019), Sadeeque & Dele (2017), in their studies argued that candidate selection and nomination procedures differ among democracies and among typologies of parties. This imply that what is obtainable in a political party is likely to be different from another party. The difference may be determined by the legal framework guiding them and what they intend to achieve. This point was further corroborated by Epstein (1989) cited in Alfa & Otaida (2019), when he asserted that candidate selection in a party is absolutely an internal affair irrespective of legal regulations. It is a predominantly extra-legal process by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective public office will be designated on the ballot and in election communication as its recommended and supported candidate or list of candidates. In any case, candidate nomination, which in broader terms is synonymous with recruitment, is one of the important functions of political parties across democracies. **Katz (2001)** notes that candidate selection “is a vital activity in the life of any political party. It is the primary screening device in the process through which the party in office is reproduced. The method(s) which a party(s) employs in candidate selections and nominations has incontrovertible implications on those selected or elected and indeed how they behave in either party or public office (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997).

Internal party democracy is one issue which the parties have to contend with. 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 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 noncompliance to political party guidelines which causes crises in a political party. Intra-party politics refers to the extent to which the conduct of internal party affairs embodies the principles of selectivity, accountability, transparency, inclusivity, participation and representation. It suggests a bottom-up approach in the building of the party structures and organizations in a manner that ensures internal distribution of power and dispersion of authorities at different levels rather than concentration of such powers in one organ (Sam, 2014). The functioning of every democratic system depends to a large extent on the nature, character, composition, organization, ideals and institutionalization of political parties and party politics (Ogundiya, 2011). The emergence of representative democracy and republican government brought the need for political parties as well as the way and manner individuals are to be elected to assume political positions.

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. 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.

Alfa & Otaida (2019), in their studies argued that, the political impact of candidate selection could be viewed from four basic perspectives which are: Participation, Representation, Competition and Responsiveness. They contend that these factors are components of citizens' basic awareness of contemporary representative democracy, that is a form of government

whereby the citizens take part in making choices among parties or candidates (participation), who compete with each other in an attempt to be representatives of the people and who are expected to exhibit responsiveness to their yearnings and aspirations after being elected. Participation they observed is crucial to democracy. In contemporary representative democratic era, there is universal adult suffrage, whereby the generality of the adult citizens exercises their franchise. However, participation at the intraparty level requires critical evaluation too. In several democracies, candidate selection methods are increasingly inclusive (Hazan 2002). Currently, parties give the opportunity to their rank and file to participate significantly in all shades of democracies. It has been established that in the event of declining membership, one of the strategies through which citizens are brought back into the party fold by the political elites is by giving them increased roles and sense of belonging in the affairs of the party. Of special prominence in such inclusion is allowing them to take active part in the process of candidate selection (Scarrow 2000). Representation underscores the fact that various sub-groups in the society must be reflected in its composition. Such groups are gender, education, class, ethnicity, religion among others.

Concerning competition, they further noted that in a democratic setting, what features prominently are free competition of interests, values as well as identities. Within the parties, competition takes place among the candidate seeking the support of those responsible for selecting them for the general election. This could be the entire voters, members of the party, the delegates of the party, the party elite or a single leader of the party. Competition result in accountability and makes leaders responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of those who select them in order to win their favour in subsequent competitions. Consequently, they maintained that responsiveness invariably implies accountability on the part of elected representatives. Those elected by the electorates are expected to be accountable and responsive to the aspirations of the electorates. In other words, their studies argued that method of candidate selection to be seen as democratic, it must fundamentally enhance and facilitate all the four perspectives of democracy; a great deal of political participation, representation of all potent social forces and a variety of views, genuine competition for realistic positions on the list of the party's candidates and a valid electoral link that would make the elected representatives address the needs and grievances of the people.

Iwu (2020), had shown that, there is a great nexus between how candidates emerge in party primaries and the ability of the ordinary electorates to demand accountability from them. He observed that the disparity between the few elites including their clients and the other masses shows that the elected political office holders have not been accountable to the masses in whose trust they hold office. He therefore argued that it is as a result of the type of political party primary election conducted in Nigeria. Primary election is an election conducted by a political party in order to select one or few people out of many to represent the party in a general election. Political parties conduct primaries that serve as a platform for recruiting and giving individuals' active political roles, thus, party leaders are always in search of prospective individuals that will help parties to achieve their goals in a pluralist democracy (Hazan and Rahat, 2010). Scholars enumerated different forms of political party primaries as direct, closed, open, blanket, nonpartisan, and runoff. Each of these primaries stipulates a different dimension on how parties can conduct their primaries.

Direct primary in the form of political party primary guarantees that ordinary party members have a direct influence on who emerges as party flag bearer. Two perspectives can be identified in the explanation of direct primaries. One holds that it is a device for transferring control of nominations from the party leadership to the rank-and-file members. The other perspective sees it as shifting control from the party to the state. That is, its processes rest on state law. In that instance, it is an official election held at public expense on a date set by the legislature and is supervised by public officials (Iwu, 2020). Closed primary election is that primary whereby the voters (rank-and-file) can participate in the nomination of candidates only in the party to which he or she belongs and the verification is through registration as a party member. Where there is no deadline for party membership registration, it means the register will remain open. Open party primary on the other hand, does not require that the voter registers as a party member before he/she can vote in a party primary. It is believed that most party elites and leadership fear this form of primary election because there is the possibility that voters from the opposition party can vote for weak candidates in another party who can easily be defeated in the general election. The nonpartisan primary is used to elect public officials on a non-party label. It is defended because partisanship should not be permitted to intrude in the selection of certain officials. Eliminating the party label goes with the assumption that the issues and divisiveness that dominate party politics can be kept out of local elections. Runoff or second primary is a by-product of a one-party political environment. The primary provides that if no candidates



obtain a majority of the votes cast for an office, a runoff will be held between the two leading candidates. The differences in candidate selection procedures among parties is explained partly by the nature of a political party, and partly by “national laws, intra-party decision-making and the electoral fortunes of parties” (Pennings & Hazan, 2001). However, the extent to which parties democratize their candidate selection procedures, despite its generic importance depends on the national laws and internal party rules, as well as the extent to which party leaders adhere to these laws.

Ugorji (2022), noted that, the use of non -democratic process in the conduct of party primary elections over the years has impacted negatively on democratic development in Nigeria. For her, the import of the 2010 electoral act, coupled with the actions of party elite and chieftains has continued to affect the use of democratic process in the conduct of elections. The resultant effects she contends are imposition of candidates and lack of conducive environment or level playing grounds for members to participate in the electoral process. Majority of party members are sometimes restricted from active participation in politics, either as a voter or candidate for elective position. This situation favoured party chieftains, money bags and god fathers, who with impunity dictate who gets what, when and how within the party. It is therefore argued that the imposition of candidates by the political elite in a party is a total disregard to democratic process and it impacts negatively on internal party cohesion which causes intra party crisis and a source of inter-party defections.

### **Imposition of Candidates and Defections of Party Loyalty’s to other Political Parties.**

Political parties, as democratic institutions are expected to be the carriers of democratic frameworks, through which democracy can be properly actualized in the whole country at large. Critical analysis of political parties has summated that they are indeed a vital aspect of promoting democracy. Internal party democracy portends the establishment of a permissible climate where every member of the party is given equal opportunity and privilege to contribute to decision making process and the general administrative functions of the party. In this regard, the limited number of powerful rich members does not determine the fate of the party but the overall consensus of the party stooges and members. Essentially, intra-party democracy is aimed at ensuring a level-playing ground for all members of the party in making decisions to stimulate active participation of party members in the affairs of the party and, in turn, effectuate

a vibrant party that is capable of steering the affairs of the state in a manner that will meet the expectations of the entire citizens of the state.

Scarrow (2004), one of the foremost proponent of internal party democracy believed that intra-party democracy as a broad term describes a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision making. Part of the reasoning behind it is that parties using internally democratic procedures are likely to select more capable, appealing leaders and candidates and to have more responsive policies, and, as a result, to enjoy greater electoral success. Other considerations relate to parties “practicing what they preach”. This clearly reveals that party primaries and models of candidate selection are one of the most important elements of entrenching internal democracy among political parties. Party politics and process of ensuring democracy have always recognized intra-party democracy as one of the elements and pillars necessary to achieve good governance within political parties, which is also expected to radiate outwardly in creating a healthy democratic development and stability in the country (Matlosa, 2008). In Nigerian politics, structures of ensuring internal democracy among political parties are deeply entrenched in various institutional frameworks like the constitution, the electoral act among others. In essence, one can assert that internal democracy has been considered sacrosanct in Nigerian business of politics.

The emergence of a candidate under any political platform worldwide is a function of democracy through party primaries. Candidates of various compositions and caliber are given the room to contest for who will bear the party flag and run for electoral office under the platform. The essence is to give the masses room to choose who represents them and who will speak for them in a defined democratic arrangement. It is believed that democracy is the prevailing global practice based on its content that it provides a government that is practically instituted by the people, thus, the desire for candidatures to emerge from the grassroots through party nominations under primaries. Party nomination is a process where candidates emerge under a political party platform to contest in the actual election through the instrumentality of people’s votes. It starts from ward level then to local level to state level and then to federal level. At this stage, the impact of the card-carrying members of the political parties is weighed and it’s imperative measured. Scholars are of the view that, the implication is to ascertain where the political pendulum swings, whether to the side of the few individuals who have the magic wand (wealth) to subvert the electoral process or to the people who decide on who represent them.

In analyzing the issues of candidates' selection process in the PDP, reference is given to the operation of the party within the contexts of the relevant institutional designs. Accordingly, there are five categories of institutional designs governing the formation, operations and activities of political parties in Nigeria. These are:

- The 1999 Constitution
- The Constitution of Individual political parties
- Electoral Acts
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) statutory rules
- Other informal rules.

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides rules guiding political parties in Nigeria. Thus, internal constitution of the People's Democratic Party is constructed in relation to the stipulations of the 1999 constitution. In relation to the conduct of primaries and selection of candidates, the political parties must provide for the conduct of a periodic election on a democratic basis for the election of its principal officers, executive members and members of its governing body, at regular intervals not exceeding four years (FGN, 1999). Similarly, the constitution of the PDP also outlines legal guidelines for conducting primaries and selection of candidates for political offices. These political offices include the office of the President, Governor, Senator, and Member of the House of Assembly, Local Government Chairman, Ward Officers, Councilors and also office of the 3 delegates to Local Government congress and State Congress at the National, State and Local levels respectively. Therefore, registered members of the party who have been able to meet the requirements will be eligible to contest for such positions in relation to the party guidelines approved by the National Executive Committee. These guidelines as stated in the chapter eight (8) of the party's constitution includes; the possession of minimum of secondary school certificate and a one-year membership span, as at the time the primaries are conducted.

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

prior to the conduct of elections. In essence, the institutional and legal frameworks are normative guidelines for regulating the behaviors of party members and ensuring orderly organization in the party. The degrees at which these institutional and legal frameworks are able to guide the actions in the political party have a direct impact on the level of internal democracy and cohesion in the party. In essence, it can be said that they serve as a means to maintaining democracy within the party and in the national polity.

Structurally, the PDP is organized and administered at Ward, Local Government, Senatorial District, State, Zonal and National levels. At each of these organizational levels, there are relevant organs responsible for managing the party affairs. For example, at the National level, there are five organs, viz: The National Convention (NC), National Executive Committee (NEC), National Working Committee (NWC), Board of Trustees (BOT), and the National Caucus. There are also similar organs at all other levels of the party structure. The duties and functions of each of these organs are clearly stated in the 2006 PDP Constitution (as amended). Already the 1999 Constitution and INEC statutory rules mandated parties to conduct periodic democratic congresses and conventions to select these officers. In doing so, parties must inform INEC about such exercises for it to supervise the process.

In addition, to the above, section 17.2a-i of same PDP constitution in particular, states that the National Executive Committee shall regulate the procedure for selecting the party's candidates for elective offices. For example, NEC is to regulate National Convention where the party's presidential candidate is to be nominated. Similarly, primaries for governorship candidate should be held at state congress, at local government constituency headquarters for council chairman and House of Assembly, at constituency headquarters for House of Representatives and at Senatorial constituency headquarters for senators. At ward level, councillorship candidates and 25 delegates by direct primaries in which all registered party members participate, are to be elected. As required by the PDP Constitution, NEC does formulate additional guidelines to regulate congresses and National Conventions.

It is argued that the process of selecting candidates for election cannot be thought of without the activities of stakeholders. Two broad categories of stakeholders were enumerated by scholars which are: internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders vary from one party to another, and they include but not limited to, political godfathers; former or reigning

governors; members of the National Assembly, special advisers, etc, while external stakeholders include, among others, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, civil society organizations (CSO), media and so on (Sadeeque & Dele, 2017). In the real sense of the word, every party member is a stakeholder in the party but in Nigeria only a few see themselves as their party's stakeholders. Typically, these are the party's "godfathers". A godfather is a wealthy individual who controls party structures and determine who gets what, how and when within the party (Egwu, 2014). Within the PDP power lies with the godfathers instead of the party executives. Godfathers manipulate primordial sentiments, as well as use money to maintain their dominion over other party members. They render party organs impotent, especially during party primaries, conventions and congresses. Party constitutions and other extant laws regulating candidate selections are also rendered ineffectual.

The practice of imposition, particularly of candidature, has become a political culture of most political parties especially within PDP being a dominant political party 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) ...." 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.

**Table 1. Candidates that emerged as a result of Imposition in Selected State**

S/N	State	Candidate	Party Stalwarts	Method of Imposition	Source
1	Rivers	Nyesom Wike	Patience Jonathan (Wife of the President)	15 aspirants deleted from the list leaving only 1 aspirant	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
2	Abia	Okezie Ikeazu	Theodore Orji (State Governor)	Handpicked delegates with no organize election	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
3	Enugu	Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi	Sullivan Chime (State Governor)	Different delegate list	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
4	Taraba	Darius Ishyaku	Theophilus Danjuma (Billionaire and former army general)	Change of Venue from Taraba to Abuja	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014

5	Oyo	Teslim Folarin	Party National Working Committee	Tampering delegate list	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
6	Lagos	Jimi Agbaje	NWC and BOT members from Lagos	Difference between number of accredited delegates (806) and vote turn out (867)	Premium Times, 9 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
7	Akwa Ibom	Udom Emmanuel	Godswill Akpabio (State Governor)	NWC support of governorship been zoned to Eket Senatorial district	Daily Post, 8 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
8	Sokoto	Abdallah Wali	Party National Working Committee	Tampering delegate list	Premium Times, 9 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
9	Benue	Terhemen Tarzor	Party National Working Committee	Delayed commencement of primary not on the scheduled date	Sahara Reporters, 14 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
10	Katsina	Musa Nashuni	Ibrahim Shema (State Governor)	Skewed primary election	Daily Post, 8 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014

Table 1 above captures candidates that emerged as a result of imposition in 2014 gubernatorial primary elections in selected states. Such impositions were carried out through subtle means, offering the party stalwarts opportunity to ensure their candidates flies the party flag. In a joint briefing carried out by aggrieved gubernatorial aspirants in Rivers state, it was alleged that, names of 15 aspirants were deleted from the list of contestants for the state governorship primaries, leaving only Nyesom Wike who was at that time the preferred candidate of the then first lady, Patience Jonathan. Similarly, the Taraba State governorship primary was moved to Abuja allegedly done in order to favour the candidate of billionaire Theophilus Danjuma, while that of Enugu state has its delegate list tampered with, giving room for the conduct of parallel primaries by different aspirants (Sahara Reporters, 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2014). Lagos State wasn't free from the imposition as there was more votes secured by the winner of the primary as against the number of accredited voters.

Evidently, cases of intra-party conflicts in the People's Democratic Party pose as an accurate manifestation of the party's lack of adherence to the legal and institutional frameworks carved to ensure internal democracy and prevent internal conflict. Consequently, this inherent lack of

adherence resulted to crisis in the People's Democratic Party birthed wide span of consequences of which defection of party faithfuls' to other political parties is one of such. The development of cross-carpeting, party jumping and member defection borne out of intra-party conflict is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria's party politics. The rationale for such defections has always revolved around members' inability to attain their political ambitions in the current party. However, pursuance of political ambitions only represents a part of the rationale for member defections from the People's Democratic Party. Nnorom (2014), argued that the absence of internal democracy contributes to gale of defections in political parties, which is borne out of unhealthy party feuds in selection of candidates, clash between and among the party executives, which consequently results to intra party tussles which has continued to contribute to the growth of an odious act of party defection.

**Table 2. Defections of PDP members to other Political Parties as a result of Imposition of Candidates**

S/N	State	Party Faithful	Party Defected to
1	Rivers	Dumo Lulu Briggs; Tonye Princewill	Accord Party; Labour Party
2	Benue	Samuel Ortom	All Progressive Congress
3	Oyo	Alao Akala	Labour Party
4	Ebonyi	Mar	
5	Akwa Ibom	G-22 (Governorship aspirants)	All Progressive Congress
6	Abia	Alex Otti	All Progressive Grand Alliance
7	Lagos	Rafiu Jafojo, Tunde Daramola, Oluyomi Finnih, amongst others	All Progressive Congress
8	Enugu	Chimaroke Nnamani	Peoples Democratic Congress
9	Taraba	Ibrahim EI Sudi	All Progressive Congress
10	National Assembly	Massive cross-carpeting within the two-house chambers	All Progressive Congress

**Source:** Sahara Reporters, (2014)

Table 2 above shows the defection of party faithfuls from PDP to other political parties. Defection within the party took a different look in 2014 as a result of the intra-party crisis that rocked the party in its 2013 National Convention. The disagreement on party's position on leadership and candidature at the 2013 national convention saw to the defection of five of its governors to the newly established All Progressive Congress and subsequently its members at

the National Assembly joined in the wave of defection. The outcome of the 2014 gubernatorial primary election across States also saw to the defection of party faithfuls from PDP to other political parties.

Consequently, the incontrovertible party crisis in the People's Democratic Party have yielded nothing but odious cases of defection to other "peaceful" and prospective parties by members of the PDP. Ahmed (2015), argued that gubernatorial and other primaries across various states were mishandled by the party leaders, who favour and support their anointed candidates. In essence, conflict within the party produced two end results which finally led to the defeat of the party; due to internal wrangling, proper coordination of the party in relation to campaign and other factors could not be achieved; also, certain members of the party lost hope, therefore nursing the idea of defecting to other parties. Therefore, it was not a surprise when certain members of the party expressed their disagreement with such informal and unconstitutional structures, thereby defecting to the All-Progressives Congress amongst other political parties. Hence, we validate our first hypotheses that the imposition of candidate by party stalwarts in 2014 gubernatorial primary elections accounts for the defection of party faithfuls from PDP to other political parties.

### **Disagreement over zoning arrangement in PDP and the emergence of G5 governors**

Zoning has become a political practice in Nigeria under which political parties agree to split political offices between the north and south of the country and also to alternate the offices between the north and south of the country. The principle of zoning is designed to ensure that neither the north nor the south of the country is ever permanently excluded from power and that no one party is seen to only represent one part of the country. For Salawu & Hassan, (2011) cited in Ezeibe, Abada & Okeke, (2016), zoning is one of the manifestations of ethnic nationalism in Africa. Scholars argued that, the idea of zoning was first introduced in the Second Republic, following the Biafran Civil War of 1967–70. In a bid to ease interethnic tensions following the conflict, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) began to operate a zoning system to select party officials. Later, during a National Constitutional Conference that was convened following the annulment of the 1993 elections and the takeover of power by General Sanni Abacha, a number of prominent leaders advocated rotating the presidency between the country's six geopolitical zones (north-central, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-south, and south-west). Although the principle received wide support, the proposal was rejected in



favour of a simpler process of rotating the executive between the north and south. This division was selected to reflect the country's overarching religious cleavage between the mostly Christian south and the mostly Muslim north, although it is important to note that neither region is homogeneous. North–south tensions had been stoked from the colonial period onwards as a result of the divide-and-rule strategies of the British colonial government and allegations of British favouritism towards the north. Moreover, in the run-up to independence southern politicians raised concerns that the north's numerical superiority would lead to southern marginalization. These tensions continued into the postcolonial period and have often spiked around elections, which has led to proposals for a form of power-sharing to maintain national political stability. This helps to explain why, in addition to operating as an informal norm, the idea of balancing power between the north and the south has also been codified by a number of parties.

Ezeibe et al (2016), while tracing the root of zoning in Nigeria political space contend that, the idea of adequate representation of different ethnic groups in the Republic has been recurring since 1960, zoning of political positions in Nigeria officially dates back to 1979. It was first expressed by the National Party of Nigeria in the internal nominations for prominent federal positions. However, the zoning of political offices became pronounced after the debate of the 1994/95 National Constitutional Conference (NCC) established by Decree No. (3) 1994 (FRN Gazette, 1994). It was however noted that the think tank of the conference revealed serious inequalities in the distributions of political power and national resources in favour of the North hence, the adoption of the idea of political offices zoning in Nigeria to secure Nigeria's federalism (Nwala, 1997). Therefore, one may conclude that it is a history of inequalities and sectional domination in the sharing of political power and national resources in Nigeria in favour of the North that marked the origin of the idea of zoning of political position(s).

People's Democratic Party (PDP) has a longer history in Nigeria's political parties. It is argued that the genesis of the party was the Institute of Civil Society (ICS) established in 1997 purposely to enlighten Nigerians about their rights and obligations in a militarized political atmosphere. This was the period when military rule reached its peak in Nigeria, characterised by political assassination, murder, kidnappings, and intimidation. Osumah and Ikelegbe (2009) asserted that the end of military dispensation in the country created the necessity to have political parties which were not only devoid of ethnic-based typology of political parties that

marked the previous republics, but which would also help in underlining the country's readiness for plural democracy. This led to the establishment and registration of several political parties, including the PDP by the General Abdulsalam Abubakar-led Federal Military Government.

Originally, the party was formed by a conglomeration of majorly four political groupings necessitating its characterization as a coat of many colours. The groups included the Institute of Civil Society (ICS), which was also known as G-34, resulting from the 34 individuals, led by Alex Ekwueme, who signed the petition against Abacha's self-succession during his regime. The Second Group comprised of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), also known as the All Nigeria Congress, who were conversely not opposed to Abacha's self-succession, but were also not part of his regime. It was led by S.B Awoniyi. The third group was made up of the former followers of Late Shehu Musa Yaradua, under the aegis of the People's Democratic Movement (PDM). Its most prominent members included Atiku Abubakar and Chief Tony Anenih. The fourth group was the Social Progressive Party (SDP). The mosaic nature of the party signifies the extent to which politicians were willing to unite in the formation of a democratic rule and also ensure that the military was sent to the barracks. The objectives of the party at inception, according to Ojukwu & Olaifa (2013), included:

- I. To seek political power for the purpose of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria and promoting the security, safety, welfare of all Nigerians;
- II. To promote and establish political stability in Nigeria and foster national unity and integration; to provide good governance that ensures probity and participatory democracy;
- III. To offer equal opportunities to hold the highest political, military, bureaucratic and judicial offices in the country to all citizens; and provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise.

The party received wide range of support from various individuals and groups in the country. It was made up of different individuals like traditional chiefs, Academicians, Businessmen and also high-ranking retired military officers (Alfa & Oteida, 2019; Adekeye, 2017). The party objectives reveal the extent to which the party was targeted at maintaining the country's democratic system. Before its defeat in 2015 however, the party had won every election at the National level for 16 years but had at the same time failed to actualize those values and

objectives represented in its constitution. It has however been a different ball game in practice, suggesting disconnect between theory and practice or a dichotomy between policy and politics.

The federal character principle was introduced not to appease any group but to promote national cohesion and promote a sense of belonging to citizens from all parts of the country. While the federal character is entrenched in the 1999 Constitution (as Amended) zoning is not (Premium Times, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2021). Nonetheless, both are predicated on the same central organizing principle, namely, political inclusivity and national cohesion in a secular, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural mosaic, in order to achieve fair and equitable representation. Whilst zoning may have emerged as a product of necessity; it represents in its expediency, a pragmatic response to nation-building. There is growing evidence that countries that have made much progress in nation-building achieve greater strides in economic development. This is mainly because such countries would have achieved consensus on, and developed institutional and political arrangements for, creatively managing their diversity (Guardian, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2021). The principle of zoning is designed to ensure that no part of the country is ever permanently excluded from power and that no national party is perceived as representing one section of the country.

Back in 1998, when second Republic Vice President Alex Ekwueme and the group of eight patriots (later known as the G34) formed what later became the People's Democratic Party (PDP), their stated intention was to build a national political movement guided by equity and justice. It was therefore the group's patriotic intents to rotate the presidential and other prominent political position between the north and South. As the G34 aligned PDP with the idea of power rotation as a necessary basis of strengthening national unity, the departing military authorities tended to side with the party instead of the progressive elements, whose ideas were seen to be too radical for the post-military era. In line with its power sharing arrangement, Dr. Ekwueme (South) relinquished the office of national chairman to Chief Solomon Lar (North) immediately it became obvious that the Presidential standard bearer of the party would emerge from Southern Nigeria (Guardian, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2022). Since then, the party has been observing the power sharing formula especially in the case of party national chairman and that of its presidential candidate not coming from the same zone. The disagreement to adhere clearly with these foregoing arrangement in 2022 is ascribe to have contributed to the emergence of G5 governors within PDP.

**Table 3. PDP Zoning Distribution as Ruling Party 1999 – 2015**

S/N	Position	1999-2007	2007-2010	2010-2011	2011-2015
1	President	South-west	North-west	South-south	South-south
2	Vice President	North-east	South-south	North-west	North-west
3	Senate President	South-east	North-central	North-central	North-central
4	Speaker HOR	North-west	South-west	South-west	North-east
5	National Chairman	North-central	South-east	North-east	North-east
6	National Secretary	South-east	South-east	North-central	South-west

**Source:** peoplesdemocraticparty.com.ng

With the defeat of the party in 2015 by the All-Progressive Congress (APC) in the 2015 general election, PDP still maintained its zoning distribution in the choice of its office distribution especially maintaining a clear spread between Nigeria north-south dichotomy in the area of presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate and the office of the national chairman of the party. Hence, the 2018 presidential primary of the party, had only candidates from the North contesting the primary as it was zoned to the north having the then national chairman of the party coming from the south. Relying on zoning arrangement, the 13 serving PDP governors unanimously consented to consensus candidates in the choice of its national working committee at the October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 national convention, leading to Iyorchia Ayu from the North becoming the party national chairman.

**Table 4. Key National Working Committee Distribution by Zone in 2022**

S/N	Office	Zone
1	National Chairman	North
2	National Secretary	South
3	National Treasurer	North
4	National organizing secretary	North
5	National financial secretary	South
6	National women leader	South
7	National youth leader	North
8	National legal adviser	North
9	National publicity secretary	South
10	National auditor	South

**Source:** Guardian, 12<sup>th</sup> April, (2022)

It was expected that the zoning arrangement will also reflect itself during the 2022 party primary and have its presidential candidate coming from the south, unexpectedly, the party decided to throw open its sales of presidential forms thereby, shunning its tradition of zoning the presidency and the principle of rotational presidency as captured within its blueprint of formation and stated within Article 7(c) of its party constitution thus:

In pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness, the party shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and public elective offices and it shall be enforced by the appropriate executive committee at all levels (PDP Constitution, 2012).

The disagreement of zoning formula for the office of the presidency in PDP consequently divided the party particularly between the North and South. Some members of the party majorly from the North argued that it was still the turn of the Northern zone to produce the president in 2023 election having had the last president of the PDP from South. Other members, some from the North and majority from the South claimed that with the 8 years of the Buhari administration, it would be unwise for the PDP to still project a northern presidency hence the need to zone the presidency to the South. Some group in the party denied zoning formula in PDP while others canvassed for micro-zoning the presidency to the South-east. Back in 1998, when second Republic Vice President Alex Ekwueme and the group of eight patriots (later known as the G34) formed what later became the People's Democratic Party (PDP), their stated intention was to build a national political movement guided by equity and justice. It was therefore the group's patriotic intents to rotate the presidential and other prominent political position between the north and South.

As the G34 aligned PDP with the idea of power rotation as a necessary basis of strengthening national unity, the departing military authorities tended to side with the party instead of the progressive elements, whose ideas were seen to be too radical for the post-military era. In line with its power sharing arrangement, Dr. Ekwueme (South) relinquished the office of national chairman to Chief Solomon Lar (North) immediately it became obvious that the Presidential standard bearer of the party would emerge from Southern Nigeria (Guardian, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2022). However, unlike what obtained nearly 20 years ago, when some party faithfuls from the North were prevailed upon not to contest the Presidency on PDP's platform, some extraneous considerations were injected, including ability to win the main election and capacity to fund

the election campaigns. Reacting to the development, a former director in Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and PDP stakeholder in Plateau State, Da Jonathan Akuns, said the traditional power rotation arrangement within the country has always been between the north and south, stressing that since President Buhari is serving out his eight years in office, common sense, morality, fairness and equity demands the next President should come from the South. Akuns contended that those arguing that the South had held the office of President within PDP for a long period miss the point, adding that it was part of the national structure and constitutional provision that north and south should interchange.

### **Conclusion**

The study's broad objective was to examine internal party democracy and intra-party conflicts in the PDP 2022 presidential primary election. However, the study set out to interrogate the following specific objectives: (i) to investigate if the imposition of candidates by party stalwarts accounted for the defections of party faithful's and, (ii) to examine if the disagreement over zoning arrangements in 2022 presidential primary election accounted for the emergence of G5 governors within PDP. However, findings from the study shows that PDP as a party has failed to effectively abide by its party internal democratic arrangement, hence, the intra-party conflicts it does experience after each primary election circle causing its party faithful's to defect to other political parties and the springing up of anti-party groups within PDP.

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