PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONS IN KOGI STATE BETWEEN 1999 AND 2015: A CASE STUDY OF THE PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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ABSTRACT
Politics is a way of life and democracy has come to be seen as the world best practice in fair and equitable representation. This paper therefore tries to unravel the history, party politics and democracy in Kogi State especially in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the nature and history of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), one of the dominant political parties in the state in the period under review. Understanding the major political features of the state apparatus of the party is a big step in unraveling the dynamics of party politics in the state. In so doing, this paper deployed historical methodology and usedboth primary and secondary sources. This study examined the emergence of the Peoples Democratic party in the state as well as some major factors responsible for the success of the party in the 2003 elections and thereafter. It further highlighted some factors responsible for the defeat in the 2015 elections respectively. The paper argues that the major factor that influenced politics in Kogi state are ethnic issues or what is known as ethnic politics between the three major ethnic groups of Ebira, Igala and Okun. Intra-party squabbles and struggle for hegemony is also a factor among other factors. Findings in the paper reveal that these internal issues and personality clashes played a serious role in the party's success and failure in elective positions within the state during the period under consideration. Thus, internal crisis, occasioned by personality clashes and ethnicity is a major factor that affects party politics in Kogi state.

Introduction

Political party is one of the political institutions of a competitive democracy. It also serve as a yardstick through which democratic governance could be compared in States, in that, "the structure and operation of party politics in states usually serves as measuring rod for determining the fragility or otherwise of democratic systems."[i] That is, a situation where political parties are poorly structured to perform "articulative", aggregative, communicative and educative functions, such a system is likely going to be associated with poor political culture which tend to make the democratic process so fragile. While in a situation where political parties are well structured to perform these functions, such a system is often associated with participant political culture which tends to ensure a stable democratic process. Many studies have underscored the importance of political parties in consolidation of democracy, for instance, Omotola in his 2009 study expounded that political parties are the makers of democracy such that no democratic or undemocratic settings can exist without them[ii] he established this by linking the fundamental roles of parties that are central to making sure that the will of the people is done in a democracy. Similarly, Agudiegwu portends that "the strength and effectiveness of political parties is directly proportional to the degree of resilience democracy enjoy."[iii] These concepts of the roles and importance of political parties was summarized by Muinat and Ambali that "political parties pose as an instrumental paddle of democratic foundations, which employs diverse processes in ensuring such democratic structures are guarded and protected."[iv] Not only are parties instrumental to the selection of political candidates, they are also saddled with other vibrant responsibilities such as political mobilization of citizens to vote, training of the candidate, political socialization among others. While parties are essential part of state governance in democratic societies, it should be noted that they are also an institution of their own, with several features such as administrative arms, and such other arms delegated to perform economic functions, social functions, and even political functions within the party. This helps ensure that the party also runs smoothly and is strong enough to present a 'strong' candidate. Therefore, of paramount importance is the understanding of the internal structure and characters of parties.

Party Politics has been a strategic part of Nigeria's democracy since the inception of her independence, even when her republics were truncated by several military incursions in the form of coup de tat. Starting from the era of independence, party politics played more strategic role in the election of key strategic offices of the President, senators, governors, and local government administrators in Nigeria. Throughout the country, leaders emerged from the platforms of various parties among which were the popular National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon, which later became National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), Action Group (AG), Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), Alliance for Democracy (AD), National Youths Movement (NYM), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Progressive Congress (APC) among several others.

The People's Democratic Party has a long history in Nigerian party politics. Its origin dates back to 1998, in preparation for the new democratic consolidation.[v] The end of the military dispensation, and the necessity to have a democratic one in place, made it essential for party formation in the wake of the fourth republic. The party was registered by General Abdulsalam Abubarkar (The then Military Head of state). The Party received wide range of support from various individuals and groups in the country. It was made up of different individuals like traditional chiefs, Academicians, Businessmen and also retired military officials.[vi] The party was originally formed by a conglomeration of majorly four groups, which includes the Institute of Civil Society (ICS), which was also known as G-34, resulting from the 34 individuals, led by Alex Ekwueme, who signed the petition against Abacha's self-succession during his regime. The Second Group comprised of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), also known as the All Nigeria Congress, who were conversely not opposed to Abacha's self-succession, but were also not part of his regime, this group was led by S.B Awoniyi. The third group was the former followers of Late Shehu Musa Yar Adua, popularly known as the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), having prominent members like Atiku Abubakar and Chief Tony Anenih. The fourth group was the Social Progressive Party (SDP). The diverse nature of foundational membership will reflect in a multi-dimensional structure that the party will adopt in all areas of its internal formation

and administration, at all level. It should be noted also that the party's resilience to rule and also ensure no return to military rule in Nigeria is demonstrated by her many years of consolidation of power, until the 2015 general elections which she lost to the All Progressive Congress.

Kogi state is one of the 36 states and the federal Capital Territory that makes up Nigeria. It is located in North Central Nigeria. With its capital as Lokoja, the state is known as the Confluence state and lies on coordinates 7°30'N 6°42'E. It covers a total land area of 29, 833Km2. It is the only state in Nigeria which shares a boundary with 9 other states; FCT to the North, Nasarawa state to the North East, Benue State to the East, Enugu state to the South East, Anambra State to the South West, Ondo State to the West, Ekiti state to the West, Kwara state to the North West and Niger state to the North.[vii] Politically, Kogi state is divided into 3 senatorial districts, and is divided into 21 Local Council areas which are Adavi, Ajaokuta,Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela/Odolu, Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Kogi, Lokoja, Mopa-Amuro, Ofu, Ogori-Magongo, Okene, Okehi, Olamaboro, Omala, Yagba-East, and Yagba West.[viii] Kogi state was created in 1991, and since the transition to civil rule in 1999, and the change of power from the All People's Party in 2003, the party in power in the state was the People's Democratic Party (PDP) until the 2015 election which brought in the All Progressive Congress (APC) into power at both the National and the Kogi State levels.

The term politics has no one universally accepted definition, it has been examined by different scholars from different perspectives. However, a common assertion is that politics is about the state, and refers to issues that affects or concerns the city-state. This has made scholars like Modebadze to assert that politics can be define as the study of the state[ix] The study of Modebadze in his work *The Term Politics reconsidered in the light of recent theoretical developments* explained that the term politics have come to be associated with specific group of individuals who participates in taking care of issues relating to the state, among this groups are politicians and political parties. And that it also is the art of guiding or influencing governmental policy. His study explained that the term "politics", is derived from the Greek word "Polis", which means the city state According to Greek Philosophers, Politics was a subject which dealt with all the activities and affairs of the city state. Their City States were known as "Polis". City state was an all-inclusive term, as the ancient Greeks made no distinction between the state and the Government on one hand, and State and Society on the other. They never differentiated between personal life and social life. Hence according to them Politics was a total study of man, society, state, morality and so on[x]

The work of Abdurahman Suberu on *The Struggle for and the Creation of Kogi State (1983-1991)* presented the political dynamism that surrounded the political history of Kogi state, especially during the era of struggle for state creation. The study discussed how the area which was previously known as Kabba Province, which comprised of Ebira (then called Igbirra), Idah, Kabba, and Lokoja divisions[xi] were merged with other divisions such as Idah division to become Kogi state in 1991. The study traced the origin of the struggle for the creation of Kogi state to 1967, and later the creation of twelve states by the then regime of General Muritala Muhammed. The study terminated at discussion on the coming to power of Prince Abubarkar Audu under the platform of the National Republican Convention (NRC), and the coming to power of General Sanni Abacha through a military coup on November 17, 1993 to May 29, 1999. However, the account of political issues within the state must be further examined, especially with further probe into party activities of that of the PDP which managed to rule the state for about thirteen years, and this is the crust of this present study.

Statement of Problem

While there is a great deal of literature on "politics" and "party politics," although less than one would expect in view of the importance of the subject. Most of that which is available seeks to examine the nature of parties. Hence, there is a narrow concentration on "history, roles and characteristics," and particularly of state levels/arms of political parties. A study of this aspect of Nigerian politics is important to an understanding of her political dynamics and government formation politics.

Brief History of the PDP

The Peoples Democratic Party's history in Nigerian party politics is a long and significant one in the study of Nigeria's democracy this is largely because it had significantly been at the epicenter of the party politics in Nigeria since the emergence of the fourth republic, until the

coming of the All Progressive Congress (APC). The origin of the PDP dates back to as early as 1998, with the declaration of the intention of the Abdulsalam Abubarkar's government to conduct elections and return the country to democratic rule, after a long time of military rule.[xii] The end of the military dispensation, and the necessity to have a democratic one in place, made it essential for party formation in the wake of the fourth republic. The party gathered membership from people like traditional chiefs, Academicians, Businessmen and also retired military officials.[xiii]

The party was originally formed by a conglomeration of majorly four groups, which includes the Institute of Civil Society (ICS), which was also known as G-34, resulting from the 34 individuals, led by Alex Ekwueme, who signed the petition against Abacha's self-succession during his regime. The Second Group comprised of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), also known as the All Nigeria Congress, who were conversely not opposed to Abacha's self-succession, but were also not part of his regime, this group was led by S.B Awoniyi. The third group was the former followers of Late Shehu Musa Yar Adua, popularly known as the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), having prominent members like Atiku Abubakar and Chief Tony Anenih. The fourth group was the Social Progressive Party (SDP). The diverse nature of foundational membership will reflect in a multi-dimensional structure that the party will adopt in all areas of its internal formation and administration, at all level, and to examine this in relations to the party formation at Kogi State level is core to this present study. It should be noted also that the party's resilience to rule and also ensure no return to military rule in Nigeria is demonstrated by her many years of consolidation of power, until the 2015 general elections which she lost to the All Progressive Congress.

The Kogi State chapter of the party also emerged in the year 1998, and the first state chairman was Chief John Odawon[xiv]in whose house the founding members of the party within the state met, because then there was no secretariat as you have it today.[xv] Some of the party's founding members who established the party's foundation in Lokoja include; Chief John Odawon, Architect Olorunfemi, Hassan Salawu, Margaret Orebiyi among many others.

Kogi State PDP in the 1999 Elections

The party alongside other political parties in Kogi State such as the APP, ANPP after their primary elections presented their candidate, Dr. Arch. Stephen Olorunfemi a citizen of Kogi West, who ran against the popular Prince Abubarkar Audu, of the All People's Party a Kogi state indigene from the Kogi East area. The Peoples Democratic Party however could not win the elections, for some reasons which include: Ethnic issues related to the choice of party candidate, and intra-party squabbles.

First, Ethnic Issues: The ethnic struggle for hegemony between the three major ethnic groups of Ebira, Igala and Okun in Kogi state is reflective in several areas of endeavors including politics. Like Ake argued, a major feature of ethnicity in politics is the entrenchment of struggle for hegemony and supremacy. The PDP party primary in 1999 was contested by two major candidates, Architect Steven Olorunfemi from Okun area and Dr. Stephen Achema, who is an Igala man. The party primary elections ended in the favour of Stephen Olorunfemi who emerged as the party candidate, however, several members of the party who were from the East, were dissatisfied with the result of the election hence, massive party defections were recorded and many party members decided to support the APP candidate who was from the East.[xvi]A basic truth however, is also that much of the voters population from the east voted massively for the APP candidate Prince Audu Abubarkar, hence, the struggles within the party over candidacy splitting allegiances and the fact that the party was just formed, and the candidate presented still gaining popularity compared with Prince Audu who was already a popular political figure in the state.[xvii]Aside this, there were several party defections from PDP due to the primaries in 1999, and massive support for the Prince Abubarkar Audu who was from the East, hence the loss of the Election by the PDP.

Secondly, the party was barely established as efficiently as it later became in the 2003 elections. By the period of the 1999 elections, the necessary strategic planning and considerations that were later made for instance, choice of candidate, efficient and effective campaigns, and encompassing leadership across board was not yet fully in place to ensure that the party becomes formidable against the opposition, hence she could not win the election.[xviii]

The PDP Emergence in the 2003 Gubernatorial Elections

The party though defeated in the 1999 elections, was able however to win the 2003 elections, and took over power from the incumbent governor, Prince Abubarkar Audu.The following factors were largely responsible for the success in the 2003 elections;

Strategic choice of candidate: This is an essential factor because unlike in 1999 elections when the candidate was chosen from Kogi West against a candidate from Kogi east, which made the Eastern votes within the state majorly directed at the candidate from Kogi East, the 2003 elections presented a viable candidate also from Kogi East, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, hence, politically balancing the odds,[xix] and also working endlessly to ensure that other areas also supported the candidate, this gave the party the credence, and this strategic choice helped her to correct the 1999 mistake.

Also, strategic campaign moves and steps were taken to enhance political campaigns, for instance, a system of "One man–Four persons campaign"[xx] in which party members were encouraged to strategically engage people actively at least four different times, such that every voter would have at least been reached by four different party members canvassing for their support in the election.

Another factor was the issue of national support from the party and government at the national level, especially from the arm of the party at the national level, which is also in control of the central government. Sources described this "support as the power of incumbency"[xxi] which entails that the government at the central level and the party gives both monetary and technical support to the party at the state level, to help them win against the opposition. This point agrees with the popular assertions of Kura about party financing and selection of candidates in the PDP in which he asserted that the party engages in raising massive financial supports through every means including crooked once, which served as a major source for which the party maintains a grip on power and is able to spend extensively on elections among other measures often employed to win elections.[xxii] The Human Rights watch captured some involvement of the government at the federal level in state elections when it stated that "federal officials have tolerated and often encouraged"[xxiii] actions and steps at the state and local government levels, which sometimes are not legal or are anti-democracy, just to support the activities of their own party. Another example in this regard is the claims and counter claims by the PDP and APC about the use of state funds by the federal government to aid political campaigns across Nigerian states[xxiv]

From the above discussion, it is clear that the party at the national control of governance (i.e the party whose candidate is the incumbent president) often capitalizes on supports from the central to aid her political activities at the state level against the opposition, and from the sources engaged in this study, the PDP in Kogi State benefited from this arrangement to hoist the sitting governor and establish themselves in power.

Table 1.1. Showing the Kogi State 2003 Governorship Elections Result and the Various Party Candidates

S/N	Governor	Deputy Governor	PARTY	Received votes
1	Evan. Love Laraba Emma	Mal. Ahmed Musa-ododo	AD	1,346
2	Prince Abubakar Audu	Patrick Adaba	ANPP	293,089
3	Kato Frank	Olu Oritogun	APGA	2,056
4	Alhaji Saidu Audu	Alhaji Usman Suleiman	NAC	54
5	Adeyanju Johnson Babatunde	Obadaki Abdulmalik	NCP	77
6	Nuhu Audu	Omuya Adairaji	NDP	3,116
7	Prof. Abdullahi M.	Alabi M.N.O.	NNPP	618
8	Alhaji Ibrahim Idris	Philips Ozovehe Salanu	PDP	481,264
9	Kabir M. Shuaibu	Arc. Raphael K.O.	UNPP	97,237

Source: INEC 2003 elections result mainframe page. Available online at: http://www.inecnigeria.org/2003elections/results/gubernatorial/mainframepage.htm.Accessed 23rd July 2023.

The election results above depicted a clear win of the election by the Peoples Democratic Party against the incumbent Prince Abubarkar Audu. While some accounts for instance, Human Watch Report of 2004, faulted the election as riddled with violence[xxv], the PDP candidate was later sworn in under the umbrella of the PDP.

The Loss of the 2015 elections

With the coming to power of the PDP in 2003 election, the party was able to consolidate power and produced the state governor in the 2007 and 2011 elections respectively. However, the party lost political control of the state to the APC in the 2015 elections. That was held on November 21 2015. Some of the major factors responsible for the loss of the 2015 elections in Kogi state include:

Intra-party Squabbles and Struggle

Intra-group conflict can be described as a form of conflict that happens within a party or said group, in this case squabbles within the PDP. Like Holland opined, intra-group conflicts can be caused by factors like economic factor e.g competition over scarce resources, social factors like miscommunication, and perceived bias or even political issues such as power struggle.[xxvi] As revealed by evidences, one of the major factors responsible for the loss of power of the party at the state level was the intra-party crisis or feud between party members who became split into factions some of which were loyal to the then incumbent governor Captain Idris Wada and some of which were loyal to the former governor and god-father of the then incumbent, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris.[xxvii]And yet another faction of the party were displeased for the non-rotation of power to other regions by the party as previously agreed on prior to the election and first tenure of Captain Idris Wada.[xxviii]The feud led to many prominent party members leaving the party to join parties like the SDP or even the APC some of these people included Achuba Simon, Shaba Ibrahim, Simon Ocholi, Alhassan Idoko among others,[xxix] while some who remained in the party and were not in support of Wada's candidacy were not enthusiastic enough to work for the party because they felt betrayed by the incumbent governor. A narration of the account

by Folorunsho a former Special Assistant to governor Ibrahim Idris accounted thus;

> *Many people among us did not enjoy any benefit from Wada's government especially after his first two years in office, when he started quarrelling with Ibrahim Idris and the party machinery that he used to make him governor, and since he neglected us and refer to us as thugs, we decided to work against his re-emergence*[xxx]

Causes of the Feud in the Party

Personality Struggle: This was majorly a crisis between the governor Idris Wada and the predecessor, largely over the running of the affairs of the state. The sitting governor felt he needed to consolidate power and stop the interference of the former governor who was his political god-father, however, this turns out to dissatisfy the governor and his own supporters within the party, which then created a faction between party members loyal to the governor, and those loyal to the former governor. The statement above represented the major view of key party members of the PDP Interviewed in the state during this study and from their discussions and assertions the key issue that can be deduced is that;

There was a personal feud between the then incumbent governor Captain Idris Wada and Ibrahim Idris his predecessor over control of the party and the state. The former who was then the sitting leaders of the party, attempted to consolidate his hold on political power and party control, however, the latter also wanted to held on to the party's control, hence splitting the party into factions loyal to either of the two. The Issue became more serious when the party primary election was conducted and the incumbent governor was able to secure the ticket of the party, winning Jibrin Isah Echocho,[xxxi] hence, party members who felt maligned and cheated, and those who felt the party is supposed to support a rotation of power to another region decided to leave the party and join another with their supporters.[xxxii]

This intra-party struggle created two basic challenges;

One, a large number of key officers of the party defected to other political parties leaving the party vulnerable. Most of these individuals were instrumental to the success of the Party in erstwhile elections, especially because they were able to garner people's support at the grass roots. Hence, when they changed their parties, the political party lost many of their supporters.[xxxiii]

Secondly, another large percentage of members that stayed only stayed to work against the interest of the party's candidate, who they believed have side-lined them, or is trying to arrogate all powers in the party to himself and his cronies, hence, most of these key members neither supported him nor encouraged their followers to do same, and this was a major effect of intra-party crisis.

Aside the intra-party struggle is the issue of the nature of candidacy which seems often to come to play in periodic elections in Kogi state. The two major parties' candidates were both from the eastern part of the state, and also seeking re-election. While Prince Abubarkar Audu was a former governor seeking another term, the then incumbent was also seeking re-election, hence, there was a basis for comparison by the people, as to who they believe can help develop the state, especially in the face of biting economic hardship, massive scale of unemployment, and economic crisis which is not only peculiar to the state, but also a national condition then. These comparison seemed to favour Abubarkar Audu whose tenure was seen to have led to more development than that of the sitting governor, coupled with the outrages by a large percentage of the Kogi workers especially about non-payment of salary against the incumbent governor, Captain Idris Wada[xxxiv]hence the massive votes and support for his political party.One of the notable factor that led to the defeat of the party within the state in 2015 elections was the poor level of performance by the party, especially under the regime of the governor Captain Ichalla Idris Wada[xxxv] in terms of infrastructural development, salary payment and other major governmental benefits to the people, as asserted by Folorunsho, "the Idris Wada Administration performed poorly, thereby causing a wide scale dissatisfaction among the people, as well as the clamour for a change of government".[xxxvi] There is no doubt that Nigeria faces challenges of development nationally, and the era of the fourth republic like other previous ones was riddled with apparent failure of the government to perform optimally in terms of human and infrastructural development, given factors like widespread unemployment, high level of insecurity, delayed payment, non-payment or

even half payment of workers' salaries among others, which have often plagued governmental administrations, and often a yardstick to evaluate their performance especially in a democracy, which Lipset argues have economic development as a major requisite[xxxvii]From the foregoing discussion, no doubt, the candidate's popularity also played a key role in the winning of the APC, especially considering the fact that Prince Abubarkar Audu enjoyed massive support as a long awaited "messiah" for the state.

Another key issue was the national support which was no longer there as before.[xxxviii] This was largely because of the change of power at the national level from PDP to APC. The defeat of the incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of PDP, by the new president Muhammadu Buhari at the national level not only meant that the party at the state level can no longer leverage on the support from the central government, but also that the party's morale was negatively affected, and the opposition's resolve was made stronger. These factors were key to the emergence of the APC and the defeat of the PDP in the 2015 gubernatorial elections, and subsequently led to the change of government in power, and terminated the about thirteen years of political rule of the PDP in the state at the state government level.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine party politics within Kogi state, by specifically discussing the PDP and the roles the party played in the state, the emergence of the party in 2003 and the loss of power in the 2015 elections. It was discovered that peculiar political issues within the party, such as power tussle especially between the sitting governor, and the former one during this period was a strong factor that split the party into factions, also, the emergence of the APC at the national level defeating the sitting PDP presidency had both physical and psychological effects on party activities within the state. And ultimately, the various defections, and dissatisfaction by members within the party all culminated to the defeat of the party in the 2015 elections. Thus, it was a combination of both internal issues and external influences that gave rise to the party coming to power in 2003 that also played out negatively allowing the loss of power in 2015.

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