

# NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC (1999-2015) AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES:

How long can Patronage or 'Politics of the Belly' Last?

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## ABSTRACT

*The relationship between elections and the vitality of a democratic society is clear. Elections have proven to be the best means of strengthening the mandate of a performing administration or removing a non-performing one. This paper argues, however, that the outcomes of several elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic have proved contrary to the common trend in most advanced democratic systems, in which electoral outcomes are based on performance. While in some cases, especially in political party primaries, candidates with little or no democratic credentials have emerged during general elections, in other instances administrations with relatively high records of infrastructural development have been voted out. This study traces the most probable causes of this paradox to Nigeria's money politics and a possible misinterpretation of the concept of development. It is essentially a literature-based study, descriptive but also analytical. The paper concludes that the country will have to contend with the politics of underdevelopment for as long as immediate and pecuniary benefits constitute the expectation of the generality of followers.*

**Keywords:** electoral outcomes, patronage politics, stomach infrastructure, development, Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Elections are among the most ubiquitous phenomena in many parts of the contemporary world, particularly in political systems that have embraced competitive politics. In light of this, it is widely held that the linkage between elections and democracy is clear; so far, no better method has been found for selecting the leadership of a democratically governed society (Ogunsanwo 2003, p. 11). Similarly, it is notable that the emergence of democracy as the 'most preferred form of government' is partly linked to 'the power that periodic and credible elections give the electorate to determine who will rule over them' (Iwayemi 2014, p. 1). Thus elections should ideally provide an opportunity to make yesterday's winners today's losers and vice-versa (Jinadu 1997, p. 1).

In their ideal form as described above, in which ordinary people matter, elections therefore make it possible for the electorate – especially commoners – to participate in the selection of their representatives and those who govern them. In addition, elections should help to limit the scope of politicians, other elected officials, and political appointees who might want to give great weight to narrow private interests (Bates 2008, p. 348-390; Iwayemi 2014, p. 1; Lewis 2006, p. 8).

It is arguable, therefore, that elections in which performance and political accountability are considered provide the best mechanism for inducing 'elected politicians to govern in the public interest' (Iwayemi 2014, p. 1).

To what extent has Nigeria's Fourth Republic conformed to this theory, particularly in terms of electoral outcomes? The main motivation for this question is those paradoxical instances of aspirants with relatively higher democratic credentials losing to aspirants with lower credentials in primary elections, and administrations with relatively strong evidence of infrastructural development being removed – while others with little or no evidence of such development are retained in general elections. There are also cases where administrations generally regarded as having performed well have struggled to be re-elected.

In the case of an aspirant with relatively higher democratic credentials losing in a primary election to an aspirant with lesser credentials, I found the 1999 presidential primaries of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) useful for illustration. Against general expectations among the party's founding fathers, General Olusegun Obasanjo, a military former head of state, defeated Dr Alex Ekwueme, the Second Republic's vice-president. To illustrate other instances of administrations with relatively high levels of attainment, especially in terms of physical and infrastructural development, either not being re-elected or struggling for re-election, I selected Osun, Ekiti and Lagos states in the 2003, 2014 and 2015 governorship elections, respectively.

In all of these, the core issue of interest is the probable connection between the electoral outcomes and patronage, or politics of the belly – described in the contemporary political lexicon of Nigeria as ‘stomach infrastructure’ (Iwayemi 2014). Obviously, this warrants some pertinent questions. For example, in line with the general notion of the fundamental difference between economic growth and development, what factors should be regarded as the basis for running government in the public interest in Nigeria? Usually these factors are the building of physical infrastructure that is supposed to enhance ultimate development, or patronage in the form of occasional sharing of money, food items and other materials.

In other words, how important are economic factors in voters’ decisions? To what extent have high poverty and illiteracy levels, particularly since the days of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and other similar economic programmes, affected the voting behaviour of ordinary Nigerians – and, on the other hand, the opportunistic behavior of many of the country’s political elites? How and where did core community values such as integrity, hard work and accountability, among others, get so badly eroded?

Are there correlations between Nigeria’s identity, clientele and prebendal politics, the general notion of a supposedly welfaristic state, and recent electoral outcomes? This question is particularly relevant to electoral outcomes that seemed to have favoured ‘big spenders’ or ‘highest bidders’. How long can or should the current system, which is clearly not fully altruistic, public-spirited, or – in a real sense – development-oriented, be sustained? These questions and other similar ones will shape the direction and focus of this paper.

The rest of the paper is divided into four sections: conceptual prologue, theoretical explanations on elections and politics of the belly in Nigeria, selected cases, and the conclusion.

### *Conceptual Prologue*

By way of consolidating the content of the introductory section of the paper, I devote this section to explaining some basic concepts that are germane to a deep understanding of the paper’s subject matter. These concepts include elections, electoral outcomes, and patronage or politics of the belly. Although I never intended to construct universal definitions for these terms, I will attempt to offer explanations that should be useful for the purpose of this paper.

In broad terms, elections refer to ‘the process of elite selection by the mass of population in any given political system’ (Anifowose 2003, p. 21). Although Birch (1972) and a host of other prominent scholars have debated the nature of representation, a point of consensus is that the representation process is intrinsically linked to elections and voting.

The concept of political representation is implicit in the very idea of constitutional government, and elections are essential to the functioning of a truly representative government. In other words, at the centre of the democratic idea of representation is the notion of participation, which describes the extent to which individual members of society share or become politically involved in the life of that society. Thus democracy cannot be conceived, whether in theory or created in practice, without the creation, recognition, encouragement and expansion of opportunities to participate – especially through elections (Agbaje 1999; Anifowose 2003, p. 21).

New democracies, such as Nigeria, face an immediate challenge of survival as governments ‘struggle to maintain constitutional rule and electoral processes that are threatened by conflicts, military coups, or aspiring dictators waiting in the wings’ (Lewis 2006, p. 10). In addition, *all* democracies are confronted by several other important tasks. These include ‘broadening personal freedoms; encouraging genuine political participation; promoting the accountability of leaders; resolving conflicts; advancing a general rule of law; and building efficient and effective public institutions’ (ibid.).

Added to these challenges is the uphill task, particularly in societies such as Nigeria and others with long encounters with military rule and abuse of office generally, of achieving quick economic advancement, prosperity and general economic wellbeing for ordinary citizens, through democracy. In many ways, elections constitute a crucial factor in meeting almost all these challenges, by creating regular channels for political competition and opportunities for citizens to evaluate and change leaders.

Elections do not have a single universal character, just as they are neither simple mechanisms of public accountability nor a means of ensuring total political control (as I will analyse later, in the case of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic). However, elections represent a ‘two-way street’ of political communication, especially in providing the government and the people – the elite and the masses – with the opportunity to influence one another. In this regard, the central functions of elections may be summarised as follows:

- Recruiting politicians and public decision-makers
- Providing representation
- Influencing policy decisions
- Educating voters
- Building legitimacy
- Strengthening elites
- Providing succession in leadership
- Extension of participation to many people

(Anifowose 2003, p. 24).

With reference to this list, I should note that elections provide essential validation for democracy by increasing the confidence of individual citizens in their ability to participate meaningfully in public life. In other words, when the majority of people feel that their personal interest in politics and their engagement in elections make a difference, and citizens share feelings of personal political efficacy, they are more likely to value the democratic system (Lewis 2006). Invariably this enhances the vitality of the system and increases the probability of sustainable development.

For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to define electoral outcomes simply as the result and probable consequences of an electoral exercise. This could also mean the decision of the electorate in an election, which is often based on the fears or hopes of voters. Is that decision, for instance, based on some altruistic purpose such as accountability, competence and good governance, or on particular self-serving, clientelistic and prebendal interests?

On a more general note, it may be useful to ask the question: Do elections decide or shape policy direction and outputs in contemporary Nigeria? Obviously elections alone do not decide policies, because they are not referendums but rather a method of choosing candidates or parties.

While elections or electoral outcomes should ideally enable a democratic society to translate the preferences of its citizens into wise policies, they do not, in reality, always produce such results. The opinions of Magstadt and Schotten (1988, p. 10) and Anifowose (2003, p. 27) on the inherent limitations of elections as vehicles of public choice are useful in this regard. These authors noted that

- Candidates might find they cannot carry out their promises once elected to office. Certain pledges might prove impossible to implement, either because candidates deliberately overstated what could be accomplished or because they simply underestimated the forces of resistance.
- After being elected to office, a candidate might simply have a change of heart about the desirability or feasibility of a policy. The influence of new interest groups, exposure to more and better information, or the realisation of the intricate relationship between various domestic and foreign policies can have a profound influence on a newly elected official.

All of these issues, depending on the capacity of the incumbent office-holder to manage them, will also affect the outcomes of subsequent elections.

Finally, on the conceptualisation of key terms in the paper, I take the liberty to explain the concept of patronage politics in line with several extant explanations on related issues, such as oligarchy, *bossism*, machine politics, and several other terms.

All these terms describe the activities of individuals with strong personalities, who command personal loyalties and may use corrupt inducements to gain or retain power for themselves or others (Leeds 1981, p. 139; Michels 1915).

Although this phenomenon and related ones – such as clientele and prebendal politics, and patrimonial rule – are often associated with Nigeria and other countries in the less developed world, it should be noted that until the 1970s bossism still characterised the political activities of then mayor Richard Daley of Chicago (USA). Daley controlled many city appointments and was re-elected for a fifth term in 1971 (Leeds 1981). His accomplishment was, however, generally regarded as exceptional in the United States at the time.

To my knowledge, the expression ‘politics of the belly’ was popularised by Francois Bayart in his 1993 publication *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly*. This work could, however, be regarded as an adaptation of several prominent scholarly works produced before it, all related to the abuse of official privileges and the personalisation of the state and its institutions in many parts of Africa. It is, for instance, in this sense that the understanding of governance and politics in Africa is generally argued to be devoid of the pursuit of public interest or service. Rather, it entails the pursuit of private ends.

Similarly, Williams (1980) cited Nigeria as an instance in Africa where a narrow conception of politics, one that reduces politics to the contest for political office and its spoils, largely exists. It is also in this sense that Dudley (1975) notes that politics in Nigeria ‘is not about alternative policies but about the control over men and resources’ (cited in Okunade 2008, p. 20).

The introduction to the 1979 Nigerian Draft Constitution declared that the ‘preoccupation with power and its material benefits’ was a major interest, and that political ideals ‘as to how society can be organized and ruled to the best advantage of all, hardly enter into the calculation of the Nigerian ruling class’ (cited in Okunade 2008, p. 20).

I now turn to the next section of the paper, in which an attempt is made to offer theoretical explanations of elections, electoral outcomes, and the politics of the belly in Nigeria.

#### THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS ON ELECTIONS AND POLITICS OF THE BELLY IN NIGERIA

How best can Nigeria’s political society be conceptualised? Stretched a bit further, this question can read: What is the best theoretical framework to analyse the political economy of democratic elections and their outcomes in Nigeria?

Several scholars have analysed Nigeria’s politics with emphasis on the activities of the dominant class and, in particular, its consumerist behaviour patterns (Joseph 1987). Others find the ‘loyalties’ of Nigerians to linguistic,

regional and ethnic groups to be so prevalent and salient to political life that they make these sentiments the main focus of their analyses. While Sklar (1965), Nnoli (1978) and Kasfir (1979), among others, adopted and profoundly advanced the arguments on ethnic politics and the politicisation of ethnicity, the seminal essay by Ekeh (1975) on the concept of the 'two publics' remains a classic.

A third set of scholars prefers to look beyond the internal dynamics of the Nigerian society, and emphasises 'the dependent nature of the country's political economy, treating domestic politics as subordinate to the activities of external forces and agents' (Joseph 1987, p. 45). Yet, borrowing from the principal-agent model that has a wide range of applications in the field of economics, political science and beyond (Olopoenia 1998, p. 20; Besley 2006), others apply the theory of incentives and strategic behaviour to explain the political economy of democratic elections in Nigeria.

These apart, several studies during colonial rule, in the immediate post-independence years and, to a lesser extent, many years after, have emphasised the colonial origins of the modern state of Nigeria. Such studies also examine the effects of colonialism on almost all facets of life, including competitive elections and other processes in which individuals aspire to hold sensitive public offices. In other words, the colonially contrived state was generally regarded as an alien structure, good only for exploitation by indigenous officials for the benefit of their primordial communities.

Other scholarly efforts have adopted the classic Weberian explanation of the dangers of patrimonial tendencies in modern political administration to advance the neo-patrimonial model of analysis. This model is found, for instance, in the efforts of Weber (1978), Clapham (1985), Ergas (1987), Callaghy (1987), Theobald (1990) and Ikpe (2005), among others, to show how beneath the layers of administration, legal procedures and constitutional order inherited from the colonial state, neo-patrimonial administrative states have been organised 'through an array of personal linkages and patron-client networks' (Ikpe 2005, p. 13). In these regimes, power is concentrated and personalised, and rulers have broad discretion over almost all aspects of public life – including democratic elections, which are either outright rigged or whose outcomes are determined by inducement of voters. There can, however, be occasional changes in voting behaviour and patterns, just as Nigeria witnessed in its 2015 presidential election.

At this point I should note the interconnections between these theoretical frameworks and clientelism as well as prebendalism, the latter which Joseph (1987) popularised in Nigeria. In other words, neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism produce similar consequences in any political system where they thrive.

In Nigeria, as in other similar examples, the personal prerogatives of rulers typically override the rule of law and organisations, giving rise to weak and

unstable institutions. It should be noted, however, that in addition to other peculiarities of military rule there are great tendencies for neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and prebendalism to worsen under it.

The foregoing gamut of theoretical explanations is supplemented by others, such as the theory of 'state capture'. The World Bank (2000) used this model to analyse the activities of weak, sensitive public institutions under 'individuals who are egoistic, rational and prone to the pursuit of self-centred goals' (Olopoenia 1998, p. 16).

I have found it apposite to adopt an eclectic framework of analysis in this paper. It combines profound explanations of the effects of the colonial beginning of Nigeria, the politicisation of ethnicity, leadership failure across the civil-military political cycles, inconsistent followership, and the exploitation of the dark sides of governmental powers by people saddled with the performance of the basic functions of government. The paper also focuses on the manipulation of certain cultural elements, particularly in the traditional patrimonial system (which, incidentally, had its own 'safety valves'), and on the abuse of the culture of gift-giving among almost all ethnic and tribal groups in the country.

The eclectic framework also emphasises the inherent dangers in the possible trivialisation of the politics of 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly. Such politics were popularised in Ekiti State during the 2014 governorship election, and appear to have enjoyed widespread acceptability less than a year later. Take for instance Adedayo (2015, p. 29), who is of the opinion that although this brand of politics is described in some quarters as *jejune*, un-intellectual and elementary, the Ekiti people – as reflected in their voting pattern in the 2015 general elections – seem to say it is what they want. In a way, such politics might become desirable in other parts of the country before long.

But can it be sustained, and for how long? Can it be regarded partly as an affirmation of the assertion by Jeremy Bentham, British philosopher and jurist, who said that government is government only if it seeks the happiness and good of the greatest number of citizens? In view of the probability that most beneficiaries of this brand of politics are acolytes and praise singers, is this not a continuation of the sycophantic followership – which coincided with the high levels of poverty and despondency under General Ibrahim Babangida, and which the Fourth Republic inherited?

Finally, I quote from a section of the inaugural speech of President George Bush of the United States in 1989, in which he alluded to the need for a refinement of the old ways of dealing with issues of governance, jurisdiction and even economy. He said, 'We can't turn back the clocks... but when our fathers were young... our differences ended at the water's edge'. In light of this sentiment, is it not necessary to reconsider certain humane qualities and values, especially in



terms of the welfare of the ordinary people, in our bid to attain developmental goals in Nigeria?

I will attempt to address these questions in my explanations of the selected cases that are analysed in the next section of the paper.

#### SELECTED CASES: PDP'S FIRST PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES AND OTHER ELECTORAL EXERCISES

To start with, the list of my selected cases is made up of the PDP's first presidential primaries in 1999, the Ekiti State 2014 governorship election and the outcome of the 2015 general elections there, and the 2014 and 2015 governorship elections in Osun and Lagos States respectively. A minor reference will also be made to the outcome of the 2003 governorship election in Osun State.

##### *PDP's First Presidential Primaries*

I consider it logical to commence the analysis of the PDP's presidential primaries in 1999 with a critical examination of the Abubakar transition programme, which paved the way for the reintroduction of civil rule that gave birth to the Fourth Republic. The programme brought out one of the points made in the comparative literature about most transitions from authoritarian rule being 'pacted affairs' (Adekanye 2014). This involves arrangements 'for power transfer negotiated by cartels of elite group interests, be they ethnic, social class-based or both' (ibid.).

The Nigerian example, in this case, was uniquely characterised by the ethnic factor, in which the then Abdulsalami Abubakar military regime needed to address the logjam in the aftermath of the annulled 12 June 1993 presidential election results, by ensuring that a particular geographical zone presented the next president of Nigeria in the 1999 elections. What is probably unique about this agenda was the preponderant influence of a special class of retired military generals, 'acting no doubt in concert with other dominant elites particularly from the "far" North and probably under some prodding from certain Western powers' (Adekanye 2014, p. 164).

As reported in *The Guardian* newspaper on 5 October 1998, the decision to adopt a particular candidate was probably thought out and formulated at the private luncheon parley held by General Abubakar with most of the country's former military heads of state, top retired generals and former police chiefs. This lunch was held on Saturday 3 October 1998.

The only two ex-military heads of state reported to have been conspicuously absent from that meeting were retired Generals Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari. Although no explanation was provided as to why the

two did not attend, the unfolding events, particularly Obasanjo's subsequent declaration of interest in the presidency – an action which appeared to many discerning minds as an end product of pressure – revealed that Obasanjo had not been invited. Similarly, subsequent events revealed that General Buhari either turned down the invitation or was not invited because of his longstanding character, which abhors corruption and corrupt tendencies.

Thus, in line with the focus of this paper on patronage politics and politics of the stomach, it did not take too long to know that Obasanjo would most probably defeat his most formidable opponent in the presidential primaries, Dr Alex Ekwueme, who was vice-president in the Second Republic and one of the most prominent founders of the PDP. In my view, apart from the fact that Ekwueme's place of origin – Anambra State, south-east of Nigeria – was not favoured by the then military's political calculation, which zoned the presidency to the south-west, the financial capability of the supporters of the two aspirants made a huge difference.

Ekwueme probably enjoyed the financial and moral support of such 'old political horses' as Adamu Ciroma, Abubakar Rimi, Bamanga Tukur and Solomon Lar, as well as relatively younger people such as Jerry Gana and Sule Lamido, all of whom were not only democratic enthusiasts but also part of the PDP's formation. However, powerful financiers, especially notable retired generals such as TY Danjuma, Ali Mohammadu Gusau, Mohammadu Wushishi and IB Babangida, supported Obasanjo and, subsequently, the PDP's presidential campaign in the 1999 election (Adekanye 2014).

Thus it was perhaps not accidental that Obasanjo and his PDP won the presidency and an overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly, as well as more than half the 36 state government seats. That was in spite of the accord between the then All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD), in which Olu Falae, a prominent Yoruba from the south-west (like Obasanjo) and Umaru Shinkafi were presented as presidential and vice-presidential candidates respectively.

Before rounding off on the connection between the Abubakar transition, the election of Obasanjo in 1999, and Nigeria's politics of the belly, the influence of some of those dominant interests behind the political scene should be noted. This is particularly true of the exclusionary character (*a la* social closure, see Parkin 1982) of inputs into the end product. What the involvement of those dominant elite interests signalled was that 'Obasanjo's rise to civilian presidency could scarcely be regarded as having marked the end of the democratic struggle', but just its beginning – and 'a necessary one at that' (Adekanye 2014, p. 164).

An important implication of this kind of democratic transition, which Adekanye (2014) likens to Latin America's *democraduras*, is the supposed goal of

a struggle to broaden and deepen the stakes and interests in such a way that they become more inclusive and sustainable with the passage of time. Judging by the outcomes of almost all the primaries in Nigeria's 16-year-old democratisation, the country's 'experiment' is still significantly unlike Latin America's democraduras. This, for instance, was exemplified by the PDP's 2014 presidential primaries in which all other aspirants, except President Goodluck Jonathan, were tactically prevented from participating.

Even in the primaries of the All Progressives Congress (APC), it is hardly possible to argue that Buhari's personal attributes of honesty, doggedness and dutifulness alone, excluding the financial muscle of some backers and supporters, won him the overwhelming votes from party delegates.

### *Ekiti State 2014 Governorship Election*

The 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State, in which Governor Ayodele Fayose was brought back to the office he first occupied in 2003, will probably be the first to mind in any discussion or analysis of 'stomach infrastructure or politics of the belly' in contemporary Nigeria. However, Fayose seemed to rekindle and adopt the populist agenda of the late Adegoke Adelabu and Lamidi Adedibu, both of Ibadan, Oyo State, origin. Part of my subsequent analysis will dwell more on this point.

It should be noted that although the urbane and courteous personal attributes of the then incumbent, Kayode Fayemi, and the better-than-average performance of his administration in terms of road and other physical infrastructural development as well as some social security services were regarded as sufficient for his re-election in some quarters, several other factors probably accounted for his defeat. Chief among these were the widely reported inaccessibility of Fayemi to a large section of the downtrodden masses, and his cat-and-mouse relationship with the State's Workers' Union and a few other important sociopolitical groups.

Although it cannot be overemphasised that governance requires seriousness, discipline and possibly stepping on toes, the peculiarity of the African continent – especially in terms of poor economies and disturbing levels of underdevelopment – requires a sort of balancing. This balancing is between strict compliance with best practices found, for instance, in the United Kingdom, Canada, America and other well-managed economies, and the broad welfarism that often takes the shape of patronage or redistribution of resources which large sections all over Africa and several other parts of the less developed world still need.

In the case of Nigeria, a country reported by *Sunday Punch* on 4 August 2013 as 'habouring one of the largest populations of the poor in the world', the point on poverty cannot be overemphasised. As I note elsewhere, it may not be

controvertible that up to 70% of Nigeria's entire population still lives on less than the United Nations poverty threshold of \$2 a day. This figure is obtained if the ₦18 000 (less than \$120) a month minimum wage for workers in the public sector of the economy is considered (Yagboyaju 2014, p. 37).

The point raised here should be better understood when it is remembered that quite an insignificant population in the country is employed by the government, and another fraction by the organised private sector. A huge part of the population is either unemployed or engaged in various forms of informal business activities, for which incomes and earnings are unstable because of generally harsh economic conditions.

Ekiti State is peculiar in the sense that it is one of the smallest and it also receives the smallest allocation from central government. To compound its challenges, the state – like so many others – is agrarian and predominantly rural. Thus almost all its inhabitants look to the government for sustenance. Although the Fayemi administration's social security package (in which aged indigenes of Ekiti State and widows collected monthly stipends of ₦10 000 each) was novel and commended, the direct effect was not felt by many other needy groups. These included unemployed people and jobless youths, artisans no longer patronised as before, and commercial drivers and bikers (*okada* riders), among others. Yet for obvious reasons, members of these groups formed the bulk of the electorate. These reasons included the fear of continuity that forced them to register and obtain their permanent voters' cards (PVCs); their joblessness, which afforded them the ample waiting time required for registration as voters and the collection of PVCs; and similar others.

Ayodele Fayose, with his populist style – unlike the polished and refined approach of Kayode Fayemi, which made Fayemi appear somehow elitist – cashed in on the vulnerability of the army of jobless young people and others not gainfully employed, but whose votes counted.

Although the PVCs and card readers were not utilised during the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election, it is not out of place to argue for the possibility of electoral fraud and abuse in general. In this connection it is not inappropriate to link the PDP and Fayose's victory to the subtle intimidation of APC stalwarts, within and from outside the state, who were to attend a mega-rally organised for Fayemi about 72 hours before the election. Captain Koli, of the Nigerian Army, allegedly fingered several people as having hatched a plan to rig the 2014 Ekiti governorship election in favour of PDP in a yet to be fully investigated audio tape. The people concerned were Musiliu Obanikoro, erstwhile minister of state for defence; Iyiola Omisore, the PDP candidate in the 2014 Osun gubernatorial election; Ayodele Fayose; and several top military and paramilitary officers. This tape, if confirmed, is also an indication that Fayose probably won by fraud.

However, at a second look, particularly in view of the outcome of the 2015 National Assembly and State House of Assembly elections in Ekiti, it appears the majority of Ekiti people are saying that whether 'politics of stomach infrastructure' is jejune, un-intellectual or elementary, it is what they want for now (Adedayo 2015, p. 29). This is obviously in spite of any theorising about high-sounding concepts of good governance and dividends of democracy, which are not directly felt by the majority of the common people of Ekiti State.

Similarly, while it is logical that the Ekitis, generally classified as part of the well-educated in Nigeria, should know better, most educated elites in today's Nigeria prefer to live in big cities such as Abuja, Ibadan, Lagos and Port Harcourt, among others, and do not participate in voting as much as the commoners. Obviously, this was also a factor in favour of Ayodele Fayose, whose populist agenda largely accommodated the immediate needs and aspirations of local artisans, labourers, drivers and other categories of transporters, as well as lower-cadre public servants, all of whom formed the bulk of the electorate in a rural state such as Ekiti.

### *Osun State 2014 Governorship Election*

The outcome of the 2014 Osun State governorship election is the next selected case. Governor Rauf Aregbesola's re-election is widely linked to his competence and widespread concrete deliverables in terms of schools and educational facilities, as well as modern roads and other infrastructure provided by his administration. However, there were other factors that worked in favour of the re-elected governor and which, in the light of this paper's major focus, exemplified patronage politics, stomach infrastructure and politics of the belly.

The frosty relationship between the governor and various workers' unions and the Association of Pensioners in the state – which, among other factors, delayed workers' salaries and pensioners' monthly entitlements for several months – was sufficient reason for these sections of the electorate, their dependants of voting age and sympathisers to vote against Aregbesola. This is regardless of the fact that this class of voters also enjoys many of the public facilities provided by the Aregbesola administration. Furthermore, many of them with children at public schools in the state must have benefited from the free school uniform, free students' i-pad and free school meals for some categories of students, as well as the administration's payment of fees on behalf of another category of students for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

In addition, despite longstanding controversies surrounding Christopher Iyiola Omisore, the PDP candidate in the electoral exercise (particularly in respect of his alleged involvement in the 2001 assassination of Bola Ige, then the minister

of justice and attorney-general), he was able to cash in on his closeness to many influential members of the Senate and Presidency. He served in the Senate as chairman of the sensitive Committee on Appropriation, and the Presidency was then controlled by the PDP.

All these factors meant unrestrained access to sensitive material, and, more importantly, to resources pivotal to Nigeria's patronage system and politics of the belly. They obviously accounted for Omisore's relatively good showing in the electoral exercise. In addition, Omisore's electoral victory in all the local government areas of Ife, his place of origin, arguably exemplified identity politics more than any conviction in his ability to deliver tangible development goals as governor of Osun.

In line with many of the prominent works on clientelism, it is never in doubt that identity politics, which negates all elements of performance politics such as political accountability, transparency and healthy competition, is a clear manifestation of a patronage system and the politics of the belly. As it is for the whole of the country, the effects of identity politics on voting behaviour are stronger at the state and other lower levels. This is more so in sections of any particular community characterised by low social capital, higher levels of poverty and illiteracy, and low levels of political education and information dissemination and assimilation (Iwayemi 2014, p. 8).

For Aregbesola, whose spread of votes in the 2014 election and the repeat performance by his party in the 2015 general elections showed him to be the most preferred candidate, I note that there are lessons to draw. First, although he probably also enjoyed the effect of identity politics, he had evidence of concrete deliverables that endeared him to elite voters and many other discerning minds.

Second, he ensured that the electorate got proper positive signals about his performance by regularly mingling with them and through his general accessibility, which placed him far higher than Fayemi of Ekiti State and many of his peers. It is, for instance, on record that Aregbesola – the 'home boy' – went around all the local government areas of the state, several times over, during his monthly endurance trek throughout his first four-year tenure.

Third, as is typical of most Nigerian politicians with a populist agenda, Aregbesola probably did not forget to take care of many of the personal needs of the ordinary people by way of patronage and politics of the belly. These included the O-Meal, the free feeding programme in which 254 000 students enjoy free meals at the cost of ₦250 a day (Adelakun 2015, p. 64). There was also the O-YES recruitment exercise that led to the employment of 20 000 youths in the first 100 days of Aregbesola's stay in office as Osun State governor, monthly stipends for widows and the aged, and the provision of free railway services to those travelling home to Osun during festivities.

Aregbesola probably also did not leave out traditional rulers and other community and religious leaders, many of whom conduct regular prayer sessions and other forms of solidarity that are often broadcast in the mass media.

Looking back at the 2003 Osun State governorship election in which the then incumbent, Bisi Akande, lost to Olagunsoye Oyinlola, it should be noted that Akande's defeat, in spite of his frugality, transparency and relatively high-level performance of his administration, could be linked to his failure to embrace patronage and money politics. The controversy and widespread fraud (as confirmed by the over-turning of many results by the election tribunals and courts of law) that characterised the general elections of that year, however, probably also helped to account for Akande's unfavourable electoral outcome.

### *Lagos State 2015 Governorship Election*

Finally, the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial headquarters warrants an analysis for a number of reasons. First, its strategic commercial position makes it one of the very few states that can survive for a considerable length of time without financial allocation from the centre. This has long made it attractive to most parties during competitive politics in Nigeria.

Second, being the only state in the whole of the south-west that never fell under the control of the then dominant PDP during its 16-year (1999–2015) control of the presidency and the National Assembly, it looked important to the then ruling party at the centre. Meanwhile, Bola Ahmed Tinubu and other 'progressive elements' who since their days in the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress (AC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and up to the APC in 2014/2015 had been in charge of the state's administration, would not let go without a fight.

Third, in view of its cosmopolitan nature and the high number of non-indigenous residents, Lagos State had all along been regarded as home for all Nigerians (no man's land) and probably the best example of a place where any Nigerian regardless of place of origin could seek and win electoral office. Thus residents of Igbo origin, particularly known for their huge involvement and investments in the commercial activities of the state, became the 'beautiful bride' whose attention was important to all the major parties in the elections.

Fourth, and particularly for the presidential and National Assembly elections, the huge population of the supposed registered voters in the state, second in the whole country only to Kano, was another key factor too strategic to be overlooked. Thus it should not be surprising that President Jonathan, as widely reported by most leading newspapers in the country and other sections of the mass media, shifted his campaign base to Dodan Barracks (the country's

former seat of government) in Lagos for about two weeks during preparations for the general elections. Similarly, Muhammadu Buhari of the APC followed the party's campaign train to Lagos on at least three occasions, unlike during his three previous presidential attempts when he was hardly seen in Lagos.

However, a more pertinent reason for which the outcome of the elections in Lagos State should compel an analysis has to do with the developmental strides of the Babatunde Raji Fashola administration between 2007 and 2015. What impact, for instance, did the administration's efforts in infrastructure-building in the areas of education, health, road networks, public transportation and other similar social services have on the performance of Fashola's party (the APC) in the elections?

To what extent did patronage and politics of 'stomach infrastructure' affect the general outcome of the elections? Is there any link between the PDP's improved performance in Lagos State (so far its best in the governorship and National Assembly elections in the State since 1999) and the widely reported financial inducement of traditional rulers and some other stakeholders by President Jonathan? Could this have won the governorship and far more assembly seats for Jonathan's PDP if Tinubu, the APC's most prominent financier in Lagos and nationwide, was not so favourably disposed to Akinwunmi Ambode, the winner of the governorship seat, and several other APC candidates who won?

These questions are important because of this paper's concern with the issue of election finance and campaign funding, particularly in its crude and elementary form called 'stomach infrastructure' in contemporary Nigeria.

In my opinion, although Lagos State has many better-informed elite voters than Ekiti, Governor Raji Fashola's urbane nature and polished administrative style would put him in the mould of Fayemi, one-time governor of Ekiti State. In addition, although Fashola was probably not as guilty as Fayemi in terms of inaccessibility, he cannot be likened to his predecessor, Bola Tinubu, in the way Tinubu related to the teeming local community supporters in their successive political parties, the AD, AC, ACN and APC respectively.

Drawing from this analogy, it should not be surprising that Fashola, as far as is known, did not control any distinctive political structure either at his own ward, local government or even state level. For me, this partly accounted for the narrow defeat of Fashola's APC in his Surulere residential community during the 2015 general elections. Obviously, this indicated that his administration's urban renewal efforts may not have been sufficient to win elections even in cosmopolitan Lagos.

In other words, Akinwunmi Ambode's emergence as the APC's candidate in the party's primaries that were characterised by subtle infighting in respect of alleged imposition by Bola Tinubu, and the former's subsequent emergence as the winner of the 2015 Lagos State governorship election appear traceable to clientele politics more than to outstanding performance.



For the PDP's improved performance, particularly in the outcome of the governorship and assembly (national and state) elections, it is logical to argue that the strategic numerical strength of the Igbos and probably the commercial influence of many members of the ethnic group in Lagos partly accounted for this. The Igbos' mainstream organisations and groups all along identified with the PDP. The party, apart from its various promises such as more recognition for the people and their traditional institutions, possible reduction in taxes and other levies and, above all, addressing incessant harassment by local and indigenious urchins (popularly called 'area boys') also fielded Igbo as its flag-bearers in many contested state positions.

All of these issues, as well as the widely criticised 'death in the lagoon' remarks by Rilwan Akiolu, Oba or king of Lagos, added to the tension and heating up of the political landscape in the buildup to the governorship and State House of Assembly elections in Lagos.

However, the effect of the widely reported relocation of President Jonathan and the alleged extensive distribution of money to party stalwarts, traditional and other opinion leaders in Lagos State and other neighbouring communities in the south-west cannot be overemphasised. While it could be argued that financial inducement partly accounted for the closeness of the '659,788 votes won by Jimi Agbaje of PDP to APC's Akinwunmi Ambode and the eventual winner's 811,994 votes' (*The Punch*, 13 April 2015, p. 1), it also possibly accounted for several other incidents, particularly within the PDP in the aftermath of the 2015 general elections. These, as widely reported by *Sunday Punch* newspaper on 19 April 2015, included the alleged mismanagement of ₦2-trillion in election funds and the request for an audit by President Jonathan.

Other incidents included allegations that many top-notchers of the party responsible for sharing the funds utilised most of them for personal cars and houses. There were several calls for the resignation of Adamu Muazu, then national chairman of the PDP, as well as his national working committee and, of course, Muazu's and Anenih's subsequent resignations respectively as national chairman and board of trustee chairman.

In the particular case of Lagos State, post-election squabbles set the Bode George-led group in the PDP against another group loyal to Musiliu Obanikoro, a leading governorship aspirant who lost to Jimi Agbaje in the party's primaries in 2014. The most important of these crises, which also had to do with allegations of election-fund mismanagement and the lingering cat-and-mouse relationship that worsened during the 2014 primary elections, eventually led to the purported removal of Tunji Shelle of the George group as state chairman of the party. And Kamaldeen Olorunoje, a known loyalist of Obanikoro, was named replacement, in an acting capacity.

Although unconfirmed, the allegations of campaign-fund mismanagement and similar others associated with the wrangling within the Lagos PDP were widely reported by *The Punch* newspaper of 12 May 2015 as well as across the electronic media in and around the state.

In the case of the APC in Lagos State, although Ambode's well-publicised academic qualifications and his many years as a public servant in the state were probably sufficient to sell his candidature, they probably would not have helped him defeat the better-known (at least on the political turf) Jimi Agbaje if not for the well-heeled machinery of the APC that was obviously controlled by Bola Tinubu (Olukotun 2015, p. 64).

### *Other Important Aspects of the 2015 General Elections*

To round off this section on the probable effects of the abuse of money and other forms of inducement in the 2015 general elections, particularly in Lagos State, a possible link with the several violent acts by members of the Oodua People's congress (OPC) shortly before the commencement of the electoral exercises in March should be noted. This, for instance, included the OPC's violent march on the streets of Lagos and the tearing down of posters and billboards, especially those of APC candidates.

Although the OPC claimed it demonstrated as concerned citizens against the use of PVCs and card readers by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as well as for the removal of INEC boss Attahiru Jega, one might argue that the group merely attempted to cause confusion and probably intimidate prospective voters because of the widely reported contract for the surveillance of oil pipelines in the Lagos area and other such inducements that the group enjoyed from the PDP-led federal government.

It is quite disturbing that neither the widely reported allegations of mismanagement of the PDP's ₦2-trillion election funds, the controversial and widely criticised presidential fund-raiser of December 2014 in which the party raised ₦21.27 billion (*The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 1), other suspicious acts that had to do with election finance and campaign funding, nor the open acts of violence by OPC and many others, seem to have concerned the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), INEC, police or other relevant regulatory agencies enough to warrant proper investigation and prosecution if necessary.

In the case of the PDP's ₦21.27-billion presidential fund-raiser, several laws on campaign expenses were violated. For example, Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution states:

No association, other than a political party, shall canvass for votes for

any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at any election.

Similarly, the Companies and Allied Matters Act forbids companies in Section 38(2) from funding or donating gifts, property or money to any political party or association. Furthermore, the Electoral Act of 2010 specifies in Section 91(2) that the 'maximum election expenses to be incurred by a candidate at a presidential election shall be ₦1 billion'.

As noted by Simbine and Yagboyaju (2015, p. 18), even if there had been violations all along since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999, President Jonathan, the PDP and its 21 state governors took such violation to a new height. During the December 2014 fund-raiser, 'Tunde Ayeni, leading other donors, gave ₦2 billion on behalf of himself and his unnamed partner and friends', and Jerry Gana, a permanent fixture in any government in power since the late 1980s, under General Babangida 'announced ₦5 billion on behalf of his equally mysterious friends and associates in the power sector' (Simbine & Yagboyaju 2015, p. 18; *The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 26).

Not to be outdone, oil and gas 'friends' also pledged ₦5 billion, the real estate and building sector ₦4 billion, the transport and aviation sector ₦1 billion, food and agriculture ₦500 million, power ₦500 million, construction ₦310 million, road construction ₦250 million, the National Automotive Association ₦450 million, and Shelter Development Limited ₦250 million (Simbine & Yagboyaju, *ibid.*).

Obviously these donations warrant salient questions around transparency in terms of, for instance, the Electoral Act, which caps individual donations at ₦1 million. Questions are raised such as: What are the identities of the 5000 donors behind Gana's ₦5 billion gift? Where did the board of the Niger Delta Development Commission derive the power to donate ₦15 million to the PDP? Having done this for the PDP's presidential campaign, and since its budget draws from the national purse, did it make similar donations to other political parties? Did the shareholders of the sectoral donors, among them quoted companies, approve the spending spree? And finally, how did the power sector, which is yet to muster enough investible funds, come up with a ₦500 million donation?

In view of the economic realities in Nigeria's 16-year old Fourth Republic, it is quite difficult to defend or justify many of these donations and several others. Yet such toxic donations have the propensity to further poison the country's electoral process and shore up the system of patronage and corruption. Indeed, only in an environment of endemic corruption such as Nigeria's Fourth Republic can such flagrant violations go uninvestigated and, more importantly, unpunished even if offenders are caught.

In democracies such as the United States of America and France, elements of

corruption may also exist, but they are effectively addressed so as not to fatally injure the system. Laws there demand transparency and specificity in campaign financing, just as other anti-corruption regulations are effectively implemented for the good of the system. In the United States, for instance, campaign contributions from government contractors, personal or business funds, individuals or sole proprietors that have entered into a contract with the government are prohibited by law. Infractions or suspected questionable behaviour are promptly and thoroughly investigated and punished if necessary.

In a similar vein, the case of Nicolas Sarkozy, the immediate past president of France who has since 2013 faced investigations by French authorities over allegations that he received '50 million euro from [the] late Muammar Ghadaffi of Libya as financial help for his 2007 presidential campaign' (*The Punch*, 23 December 2014, p. 26) is useful for illustration.

The implication of all these scenarios is that financial or other material inducement of the electorate is remote, because aspirants and candidates are denied access to slush funds as much as possible. This is apart from the fact that a huge section of the populace in these well-developed democracies lives in relative comfort, which makes such primitive inducement less attractive.

## CONCLUSION

In Nigeria's 16-year-old Fourth Republic (1999–2015), electoral outcomes have so far generally been dominated and characterised by the effects of the country's clientele and prebendal politics. A worrisome aspect of this brand of politics, which obviously stunts democratic growth and impedes developmental attainment, has to do with the phenomenon of money politics or the inducement of vulnerable voters *a la* 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly.

This paper has attempted to address fundamental questions as to where Nigeria is today – for instance, how it got here, where it should be, the strategic steps to take, and who to involve in getting where it ought to be in terms of escaping from the crude politics of financial and common material inducement. The paper notes that although many aspects of the politics of immediate material gains have been part of Nigeria's politics since colonial days, it generated a lot more concern right from the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election up to the 2015 general election, which was won by Ayodele Fayose, the main proponent of the modern-day jejune 'stomach infrastructure' – and his political party, the PDP.

The paper analysed the outcomes of some primary elections (PDP presidential in 1999 and APC presidential in 2014) as well as the Osun State 2014 governorship and 2015 general elections in Lagos State, with illustrations from the Ekiti State template.

In other words, the combined effect of crushing poverty and high levels of illiteracy and unemployment, all of which had worsened under Nigeria's long encounter with military rule, made the populist agenda of Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti State quite attractive. This is quite unlike the elitist and probably exclusive administrative style of his predecessor, Kayode Fayemi. Obviously, despite private transfers to some sections of the electorate ('stomach infrastructure') by Fayose, the antagonism of public-sector workers and even some members of Fayemi's APC contributed to his defeat.

Thus the lesson learned is that the electorate must receive the proper positive signal about the performance of an administration which either seeks re-election for its principal candidate or others from the same political party. And in line with high poverty levels in the country, a democratic and development agenda must be pursued to ensure redistribution of wealth. It is pointless, and negates Bentham's calculus of the greatest good and happiness of the greatest number, if most of the general population for whom an administration supposedly labours to build infrastructure remains impoverished.

It is on this note that the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) promised by the All Progressives Congress (APC) in its manifesto is commendable. In its bid to initially take care of 25 million of the poorest Nigerians, the APC can draw lessons from *Bolsa Familia*, Brazil's version of the programme, with which that country 'lifted tens of millions of people out of poverty in the past two decades' (Ogunlesi 2015, p. 35). However, while welfarism has its own uses in economies where people's lives could be easily imperiled by economic forces that leave the poor and vulnerable behind, Nigerian states need 'to be wary of wholesale mimicry of such programmes' (Adelakun 2015, p. 64).

Osun State under Aregbesola, particularly between December 2014 and mid-June 2015 when salaries of public workers were not paid because of the drastic reduction of allocations from central government, is a clear example of how unsustainable such a programme is. Indeed, the long-term sociological consequences can be more devastating, especially in a rent-seeking economy such as Nigeria's.

These consequences that are generally inimical to Nigeria's democratic process and the wellbeing of its people are multidimensional. First, if well-meaning individuals are not elected as candidates or performing administrations are not re-elected because of their inability to turn the politics of 'stomach infrastructure' into a sustainable programme of wealth redistribution, then it is highly probable that shady characters – such as looters and possibly drug barons – will soon take over governance and public affairs in general. Several cases of elected public officials who have at various points in time, in the course of the Fourth Republic, been extradited or threatened with extradition to England,

America and other places that have more effective legal systems than Nigeria's, provide useful illustrations of this point.

Secondly, a political system in which electoral outcomes negate the principle of political accountability – a basic requirement for re-election in most advanced and even emerging democracies around the world – implies sustenance of a vicious cycle of underdevelopment. Such continuity in Nigeria today can only mean higher levels of despondency among ordinary citizens, many of whom appear to have lost confidence in the successive leadership, particularly over the past 16 years of democratisation.

In conclusion, Nigeria's politics of 'stomach infrastructure' or politics of the belly, which mainly consist of private transfers to a section of the electorate connected to the 'big man', cannot endure or last much longer. It is a disturbing reminder of the politics of settlement under the Babangida military regime. As at that time, the current system has a propensity to breed sycophancy and hero-worshipping among beneficiaries, while many of the people who are excluded are likely to become despondent, irritable and possibly violent.

Professional organisations and other specialised interest groups, and civil society in general – particularly at the local community level, where committed and progressive-minded individuals can be easily identified and supported – can play a pivotal role in addressing these problems. Such people and organisations can keep the phenomenon of 'politics of the belly' in check, and redirect Nigeria's focus towards a more sustainable programme of wealth redistribution.

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