

Elections, Governance and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Political and development theories present free, fair and credible elections as sine qua non for good governance and development. However, while the literature focuses on the link between free, fair and credible elections, good governance, and development; not much attention have been devoted to the implications of flawed elections on governance and development. Lack of attention on the impact of flawed elections on governance and development particularly applies to countries like Nigeria with long history of flawed elections and extensive record of development and governance challenges. Assessments of elections in Nigeria, for example, are largely focused on bringing out the fundamental flaws of election management without analyzing the developmental implications of flawed elections. To complement the existing literature, this article looks at the ways in which elections have influenced governance and development in Nigeria. It contends that flawed elections reflect in shoddy governance which in turn has impeded development. At the end, the article suggests ways in which the electoral process can be modified to support good governance and development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Elections, Democracy, Governance, Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Elections involve activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in positions of authority in a society. The electoral process begins with pre-election activities such as constituency delimitation, voter registration and electoral campaigns, and culminates in election and post-election activities like voting, vote counting/compilation, declaration of election results and election litigation. Political scientists and development theorists link free, fair and credible elections to good governance and development. In brief, they argue that free, fair and credible elections provide the basis for the emergence of democratic, accountable and legitimate governments with the capacity to initiate and implement clearly articulated people-oriented development programmes. Again, they claim that free, fair and credible elections empower the electorate to hold the government accountable and to demand strong credentials and workable development agenda from prospective government officials. In other words, free, fair and credible elections bestows on governments the legitimate authority to initiate and implement policies on one hand, while on the other hand, they empower the citizens to hold governments accountable for their actions and/or inactions. Credible elections are, therefore, *sine qua non* for good governance and development.

Since 1999, elections have become more regular in Nigeria following the successful conduct of six consecutive general elections in the country. In the past, stable democratic governance was extremely difficult to attain. Nigeria's attempt to practice parliamentary

democracy at independence in 1960 was interrupted by a military coup in 1966. In 1979, Nigeria made a transition from military rule to presidential democracy. Again, the democratic government was removed via a military coup in 1983. The third democratic experiment in Nigeria began in 1989 but was aborted in 1993 following the annulment of the presidential election, which would have marked the highpoint of the transition. Following intense domestic and international pressures on the military government, and the sudden demise of the then military Head of State, General Sani Abacha, the military government finally relinquished power to an elected civilian government in May 1999¹. The period since 1999 has marked an extra-ordinary progress for democracy in Nigeria, considering that the country is able to conduct six consecutive general elections for the first time in its history.

Although elections are now more regular in Nigeria, the quality of these elections has become a matter of major concern to both the actors and the observers. The 2003 and 2007 elections were particularly marked by dissatisfaction by candidates, voters and observers. To illustrate with the 2007 general elections, there were complaints that many prospective voters were disenfranchised following the omission of their names in the voters register or misplacement of their names in voting centres. There were also reports of late arrival of election officials and/or materials, snatching of ballot boxes from election officials and stuffing of the boxes with invalid ballot papers, as well as allegations of collusion between election officials and politicians to alter election results and subvert popular mandate (Ibrahim and Ibeanu 2009). Dissatisfaction with the 2007 general elections reflected in the barrage of litigations brought before the election tribunals and courts as well as the number of election results that were nullified (INEC 2007, Ugochukwu 2009). In fact, the 2007 elections have been described by many as the one with the lowest level of credibility in Nigeria's history (Ibrahim and Ibeanu 2009). Many of the flaws that characterized the 2007 general elections were encountered in the subsequent elections.

Academic literature on elections in Nigeria have not adequately considered the implications of flawed elections for governance and development. Rather, majority of the literature focus on assessing and explaining the outcomes of specific elections (Onu and Momoh 2003, Ibeanu 2003, Lewis 2003, Olurode and Anifowose 2004, Fawole 2005, Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006, Ibrahim 2007, Suberu 2007, Oshodi 2007, Jega and Ibeanu 2007, Ibrahim and Ibeanu 2009, Omotola 2009, Orji 2010, Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart 2010, Obi 2011). The assessment of Nigerian elections published by domestic and international election observers, Civil Society Organizations, and the Independent National Electoral Commission have also failed to highlight the development implications of elections (EUEOM 2003, ICG 2007, INEC 2007). Although the empirical data and analysis contained in the extant literature bring out the fundamental flaws of election administration, we need to include an analysis of the developmental implications of flawed elections in these assessments.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, this article examines the relationship between elections, governance and development in Nigeria. It contends that flawed elections reflect

¹ For a lucid analysis of Nigeria's political history see, Dudley 1982, Diamond 1988, Joseph 1991, Ihonvbere and Shaw 1998, Osaghae 1998, Oyovbaire 2008.

in shoddy governance which in turn impedes development. The data used in the study were drawn mainly from documents, including published literature, official documents, and media reports. The analysis in this article draw from my observation of Nigeria's electoral process, governance situation and development trends. This article is organized in five sections. After this introduction, the second section will explore the link between elections, governance and development in political and development theory. Thereafter, the article will analyse the situation with elections in Nigeria. In the fourth section, the article will examine the ways in which elections have influenced governance and development in Nigeria. Finally, the article would suggest ways in which the electoral process can be modified to support good governance and development in Nigeria.

Election, Governance and Development in Theoretical Perspective

In political and development theory, scholars have attempted to establish a link between election, governance and development by portraying election as a key element of democracy. According to Diamond et al. (1988: xvi) democracy must include:

Meaningful and extensive *competition* among individuals and organised groups (especially political parties) for all positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of *political participation* in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social is excluded and a level of *civil and political liberties* – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (emphasis in original).

The implication of the above is that democracy fundamentally involves healthy electoral competition for governmental positions.

Scholars have also tried to link democracy with good governance and development. The coupling of democracy, governance and development is one of the well-known themes of the new orthodoxy in political and development theory. The connection between the three concepts was first made by students of the liberal school, who maintained that there is a close relationship and mutual reinforcement among democracy, governance and development, and accordingly holds that none can thrive or function well in isolation of the others.² The formulation suggests that free, fair and credible elections, and by extension – democracy, provide the basis for good governance. Governance is good if power is managed and exercised on the basis of democracy, rule of law, transparency, accountability, participation and human rights. Englebert (2000: 24) defines good governance as a composite of 'the quality of state institutions, the accountability of governments, the stability of property rights and the absence of corruption'. Mkandawire (2007) adds to our understanding of good governance by providing a triadic measure of the phenomenon. These measures include: its developmental orientation, that is, the extent

² For a fine synopsis of the study of development in the liberal tradition see, Schraeder 2004: Chapter 13.

to which resources are fully mobilized and used in a responsible and sustainable manner within a competitive global environment; the extent to which the regime is democratic and respectful of human rights; and the extent of social inclusiveness and equity that assure citizens decent living and full participation.

To further expound the link between democracy, governance and development, development theorists claim that most of the core elements of good governance are by-products of electoral democracy. These elements include: (1) accountable leadership, (2) transparent administration, (3) popular participation in governance, (4) rule of law, (5) respect for human rights, and (6) effective public management. The thinking in the development literature is that it is difficult to achieve good governance without free, fair and credible elections. In simple terms, free, fair and credible elections are elections: (a) in which the people can freely vote, (b) in which there is a level playing ground for all participants, and (c) in which the people believe that conditions (a) and (b) applies. Credible elections confer legitimacy on elected governments and provide the basis for assessing the responsibility and answerability of governments to the governed. Through the mechanism of credible elections, citizens participate effectively in the management of public affairs and ensure that governments remain in power only for as long as they pursue the common good and enjoy the support of the governed. The main point here is that popular participation and democratic accountability, which are off-shoots of credible elections, are fundamental to good governance and development.

The prominence of democracy and governance perspective in development theory is largely associated with the thinking of the donors led by the World Bank. According to Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara (1998: 106), 'giving the concept of governance a prominent place in their analysis of development problems in recent years has allowed the international lending institutions to work themselves out of an intellectual and practical dead-end, into which they had earlier been pushed by their extreme reliance on free-market ideals'. The thinking and policies of the international financial institutions in the 1970s and 1980s were shaped by a free-market ideology that degenerated to sheer *economism*. However, as the experiment in free-market reform progressed, it became clear that no economic project was likely to succeed unless minimum conditions of political legitimacy, social order and institutional efficiency were met. At this point, the concepts of democracy and governance proved extremely useful since they allowed the international financial institutions (and the donor community in general) to retreat from *economism* and to reconsider crucial social and political questions related to development. The concepts of democracy and governance provided a window to the legitimation of the postcolonial state in Africa which has remained a subject of contestation and instability:

Governance is particularly relevant to former colonial peoples who in the rapid rush to decolonization and the crystallization of postcolonial authoritarianism have rarely enjoyed the opportunity to legislate a form of polity rightfully their own. It is an affirmation of a people's right to self-determination, to participate fully in political affairs and to have their rulers accountable to them for their actions (Bratton and Rothchild, 1992: 284).

The concern with 'good governance' in many developing countries was added to neoliberal economic programmes, to make them more efficient. The emphasis on 'good governance' involves attempts to ensure that citizens participate actively in the governance process, and in this way, ensure that leaders are accountable to the citizens. The critical point here is that the combination of active citizens' participation in governance, accountable and transparent leadership, and effective public management would give rise to genuine development. Thus, the linkages between elections, governance and development can simply be reduced to the fact that development is anchored on effective governance and accountability which depend on the extent to which citizens are able to vote governments in or out in competitive elections.

Analysis of the relationship between elections, governance and development further centres on debates about the nature and outcomes of the relationship between democracy and development. There are two major dimensions to this debate. The first concerns the question of whether democracy is a precondition for development or vice versa, while the second dimension of the debate enquires whether democracy is favourable or inimical to development. There is an enduring view that democracy is not a prerequisite for development. In the 1960s, theorists in the modernization school argued that democracy was a concomitant of 'modernity' and hence an outcome of socio-economic development, not a condition of it (Lipset 1960). They claim that democracy requires a high level of literacy, communication and education; an established and secure middle class; a vibrant civil society; relatively limited forms of material and social inequality, and a broadly secular public ideology. All this, it is argued, was a product of prior economic development. Summarizing evidence derived from a study of seventy-one countries over a century and a half, Samuel Huntington (1991: 14, 270-274) stress the significance of a high level of socio-economic development in promoting the successful consolidation of new democracies. Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi (1997) also convincingly confirm the overriding importance of socio-economic factor in the entrenchment of democracy. Their statistical analysis of 224 regimes in 135 countries between 1950 and 1990 highlights the positive role played by rapid economic growth in democratic consolidation. To highlight the relationship between democracy and development, Robert A. Dahl (1971:103) asserts: 'the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy'.

Evidence derived by scholars from the West and elsewhere corroborates the claim that development is a crucial condition for the emergence and sustenance of democracy (Leftwich 1993). The foundations of most advanced industrial economies, like Britain (1750-1850), Bismarckian Germany, and Meiji Japan, were laid under non-democratic regimes. The major post-1960 development breakthroughs in the Third World – Brazil, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and China – have occurred under conditions that cannot be described as strictly democratic. In fact, Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore insists that democracy is not a prerequisite for development. According to him: 'I believe what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy. The exuberance of democracy leads to indiscipline and disorderly

conduct which are inimical to development'.³ Economic development in the countries mentioned above was accompanied by strong demands for establishment or extension of democracy. This underlines the view that democracy is a consequence of development.

The argument that development is a prerequisite for democracy, and not vice versa, is been challenged by several scholars (Goodin 1979, Kohli 1986, Sklar 1987, Bhagwatti 2002, Knutsen 2010). Opponents this view anchor their objection on four major grounds. Firstly, they argue that democracy and development are both compatible and functional. In this sense, they claim that if there is a trade-off between democracy and development, a slightly lower rate of development is an acceptable price to pay for a democratic polity, civil liberties and rule of law. Secondly, they contend that democracy embodies incentives that promote development, beyond the ability of the state to force the pace through draconian state action. Examples of such incentives include popular participation, civic activism, and free flow of information. Thirdly, they argue that the quality of development can differ among democratic and authoritarian regimes, and even within democratic regimes. In this sense, they contend that the quality of democracy matters for the quality of development. It can be inferred from the above argument that the quality of elections matter for the quality of democracy and in turn the quality of development. A defective oligarchic democracy that emerged from flawed elections may well distort economic choices in an inefficient direction, imperilling prosperity. In contrast, genuinely democratic regimes that are products of credible elections are better able to provide the capacity and incentives required to adopt and implement people-oriented development policies. The incentive and ability to vote, to mobilize, and to be heard are the key ways in which the quality of democracy can bear on the quality of development. On the whole, the quality of development can generally be better under democracy; and the better the quality of democracy, the better the quality of development. Finally, they insist that there is nothing specific about the fact that democracies sometimes record poor economic performance. They point out that there have been many more non-democratic than democratic regimes which at various times have had dismal developmental records. The point here is that the relationship between democracy and development is more complex than most theorists present it.

Based on the theory and evidence derived over the years on the relationship between democracy and development, one can argue that countries require robust markets together with democracy and good governance to quicken their pace of development. If we combine democracy and authoritarian rule with prevalence or absence of robust markets, four types of outcome are likely to emerge (Bhagwati 2002: 157, see also Table 1 below). (a) Democracy with robust markets would have strong developmental performance and satisfactory social indicators. (b) Democracy without robust markets would have weak developmental performance and unsatisfactory social indicators. (c) Authoritarian rule with robust markets would have strong developmental performance and relatively satisfactory social indicator. (d) Authoritarian rule without robust markets would have dismal developmental performance and unsatisfactory social indicators.

³ Interview with Fareed Zakaria in *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 1994: 109-126.

Three core lessons can be derived from this simple typology. First, in countries where neither democracy nor markets are functional, the basis for development is impaired. Second, democracy without markets is unlikely to deliver significant and sustainable development. Third, a robust market without democracy is unlikely to deliver balanced development. Finally, democracy and markets must act as complementary forces in fostering sustainable development.

Table 1: Relationship between Regime Type and Markets

Democracy with robust markets, e.g. Western democracies	Democracy without robust markets, e.g. India before the 1990s
Outcome: strong developmental performance and satisfactory social indicators	Outcome: weak developmental performance and unsatisfactory social indicators
Authoritarian rule with robust markets, e.g. China since the late 1980s	Authoritarian rule with robust markets, e.g. Myanmar and other Third World autocracies
Outcome: strong developmental performance and relatively satisfactory social indicators	Outcome: dismal developmental performance and unsatisfactory social indicators

To address the implications of elections for governance and development in specific terms, we have to locate elections with the broader context of democracy. To achieve this, the distinction made by Bhagwati (2002: 153) between the ideology and structure of democracy is very pertinent. The ideology of democracy is that of the process of governance-by-consent, while the structure of democracy consists of the institutions by which that ideology is implemented. The institution of elections is a core aspect of which sets it apart from authoritarian rule. Elections create avenue for civic engagement, representations, and voice. They provide mechanisms through which the citizens can directly express their interests and preferences. The restraint on arbitrary use of power that elections facilitate can also be a powerful incentive for development. Being aware that citizens through the institution of elections can remove them from office, state officials in democratic societies may be more inclined towards initiating and implementing development-oriented policies than their counterparts in authoritarian settings.

The above notwithstanding, elections can also undermine development in many ways. Generally, elections can lead to widespread waste through corrupt practices and inefficiency as well as through rent-seeking and unproductive profit-seeking activities. Elections can also aggravate neo-patrimonialism – a practice whereby a network of corrupt individuals capture and influence the government. These issues are usually captured under the theme: *money in politics*, and they have become a major concern to many democratic states (Öhman and Zainulbhai 2000, Adetula 2008). In the rest of this article, I will examine the ways in which flawed elections influence governance and development, beyond the ones discussed above. But first of all, let me attempt to analyse the situation with Nigeria’s electoral democracy within a historical context.

Nigerian Elections in Historical Context

Nigeria has a long, discontinuous history of elections, spanning almost hundred years, beginning from 1923 when the first election in the country was held. The 1923 election did not allow for popular participation. The 1922 Constitution that introduced elections in Nigeria laid down highly restrictive electoral laws for the country. As a result, the initial elections in Nigeria were not based on universal adult suffrage; instead, they were guided by an income-based male suffrage. The restrictive nature of the colonial electoral system is exemplified by the regulation which stipulated that only adult males with a gross national income, from all sources, of not less than one hundred pounds (£100.00) were allowed to vote. Under this circumstance, just a small fraction of adult males were considered eligible to vote. According to Okafor (1981: 197), only 3,000 and 1,000 out of an estimated 40,000 and 10,000 adult African males in Lagos and Calabar, respectively were eligible to vote. Other aspects of the restrictive electoral system include the limiting of political activities in Nigeria to only Lagos and Calabar, the requirement that every candidate for nomination to a position shall deposit a sum of ten pounds (£10.00) towards the cost of the election, and the rule which requires all prospective voters to register in their municipal areas. This particular regulation raised so much anxiety as some prospective voters were concerned that the colonial state would use such registration exercise as basis to impose further taxes and rates.

The elections held between 1923 and 1954 were based on the restrictive electoral laws imposed by the colonial state. However, following the enactment of the Lytleton Constitution of 1954, Nigeria's electoral landscape began to be liberalised. The Constitution provided the legal framework for the first general election in Nigeria based on an adult suffrage that is broader than what hitherto exists. In the first place, the Constitution diversified the scope of elections, making provision for separate elections into the regional and central legislatures. To this end, different electoral laws were put in place for the three regions of Nigeria. Thus, in the Eastern Region, only persons above 21 years were allowed to vote; in the Western Region, only adult males who paid taxes could vote; while in the Northern Region, voting was by the indirect college system limited only to adult male tax payers. Additionally, a prospective election candidate was required to: (1) be a British subject or a British protected person of the age of 21 or more; (2) be born in the region in which he was seeking election or his father was born in that region; and (3) be resident in that region for a continuous period immediately before the date of election of at least three years in the case of the Northern Region, or at least one year in the case of the Eastern and Western regions (Nnadozie 2007: 52-53).

Nigeria has conducted twelve general elections between 1954 and 2019. To examine the nature and quality of these elections, I will adopt an analytical framework that divides Nigerian elections since 1954 into transition and consolidation elections, and separates the elections according to the degree to which their credibility is contested or accepted. Transition elections are elections organised by a departing political authority, which include those organised by the departing colonial authorities in 1954 and 1959, and those organised by military regimes in 1979, 1993 and 1999. On the other hand, consolidation elections are elections organised by a civilian regime and are intended to consolidate civil

rule. These include the 1964/65, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections (Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006: 37).

S/N	Transition Elections	Consolidation Elections
1	1954 election	1964/65 election
2	1959 election	1983 election
3	1979 election	2003 election
4	1993 election	2007 election
5	1999 election	2011 election
6		2015 election
7		2019 election

Based on insights derived from the history of elections in Nigeria, one can infer that there are more challenges to the integrity of consolidation elections than transition elections. In transition elections, the departing political authority usually stands an umpire with relative autonomy from the political forces contending to capture power. This posture usually bestows on the departing political authority the legitimacy and credibility needed to mid-wife elections with largely acceptable outcome. Again, most transition elections occur at historical junctures where there is consensus in favour of regime change. In this state of affairs, it is usually easier for contestants in transition elections to restrain their actions and ensure that they do not jeopardize the transition programme. To this end, candidates often approach the elections with strong sense of restraint and willingness to accept the outcome of the elections irrespective of any blemish that may be associated with the elections. One can sum up the contention above by citing Amadu Kurfi's (1983: 243) explanation for the relative success of the 1979 elections:

The calm atmosphere prevalent during the 1979 elections was not brought about by the existence of [a] fine political culture in the Nigerian people but was due to the veiled threat of immediate military retribution should law and order breakdown – and worse, the possibility of postponement of the date of hand-over of power to the civilians.

What can be gleaned from above statement is that the presence of a credible umpire and a determination to ensure regime change are the major explanations for the relative success of transition election compared with consolidation elections.

Consolidation elections are more problematic in Nigeria because the political forces with a stake in the elections have more diverse interests and some of these forces now actually in control of state and election machinery. Therefore, in consolidation elections, contending forces in the political process are less able to make compromise because their common interest in removing the incumbent political authority have been achieved and there are no much strings that binds them together. The willingness to exhibit political restraint and make compromise declines speedily in consolidation phase because the common 'enemy' has been eliminated and the former opposition now confront each other

in a new form of political struggle. The new form of political struggle involves the former political opposition engaging themselves in fierce political battles. This was the case in the 1960s when the 'nationalists' who were formerly opposed to the colonial authorities and demanded their exit, turned around to confront themselves in deadly political battles after the colonial authorities had departed. Again, the 'pro-democracy' forces that fought the military leaders have at different times engaged themselves in lethal political battles after the exit of the military governments. Considering that there is the absence of an arbiter (in the form of colonial or military authorities) in the consolidation phase, consolidation elections often witness an unmediated collision of the different political forces. In this circumstance, the electoral landscape is generally turned into a political battlefield, with electoral contests becoming close to 'warfare'. The result of this highly contested political environment is that the rule of law is usually set aside, all sorts of malpractices are employed to outwit opponents, and election results are bitterly contested by the losing parties.

Consolidation elections exhibit some unique tendencies including a deliberate attempt by the ruling party to contrive and monopolise the electoral space, engineer grand electoral fraud, as well as hatch a deliberate plot to move the process towards a one party dominance in favour of the ruling party. This pattern reflected in the 'simulated landslide' victories recorded by the ruling parties in the 1964/65, 1983, 2003, and 2007 elections. In 1964/65 elections, the NPC's desperate manipulation of the electoral process to monopolise political power in Western Nigeria, using the NNDP as its proxy, resulted in the political chaos that eventually led to the collapse of the First Republic (Post and Vickers 1973). In the 1983 elections, the NPN which hitherto controlled seven of the nineteen states wanted to expand its dominion from seven to twelve states through electoral fraud. This manipulation collapsed when the scheme backfired in Ondo State, following widespread violence that greeted the manipulation of the gubernatorial election result in the state (Babarinsa 2003, Kurfi 2005). The 1983 general election was so badly rigged that one analyst described it in these words:

It is very clear that the Nigerian Election of 1983 is a sham election. It was massively rigged and nobody can honestly, truthfully and scientifically state that Shagari and his lieutenants in the state capitals were democratically voted into office. A massive collusion involving the NPN, the FEDECO, the police and some sections of the judiciary had produced governments that could not claim legitimacy by dint of even the most rudimentary requirement of bourgeois democracy (Tijani 1986: 15).

The 2003 general elections witnessed a more sophisticated version of electoral fraud than 1964/65 and 1983 elections. Observers of elections in Nigeria note that the 2003 elections marked a major shift in the pattern of fraud that is associated with elections in the country. They observed that in 2003, the former pattern of electoral fraud - competitive rigging, gave way for a more sophisticated mould known as primitive accumulation of votes (Ibeanu 2003). In the primitive accumulation of votes, political forces attempt to win votes by the use of both objective and structural violence, and disregard of the rule of law. Ibeanu (2007: 6) insists that primitive accumulation of votes is often justified in the name

of communal interests such as clan, ethnic, and religious groups, 'though in fact it is self-seeking, and electoral regulatory regimes are captured by sectional and special interests'.

In the 2003 elections, primitive accumulation of votes reached its apogee in the South-West zone where the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) moved into states hitherto controlled by the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and dislodged the AD in four of the five states it controlled in 1999. The political encounters between the PDP and AD in the South-West zone require a brief exposition. The Yoruba of the South-West zone had early access to western education; this helped them to produce many of the educated elite that championed Nigerian nationalism. The Yoruba elite felt that their progress in education and social advancement would pave the way for them to lead Nigeria (Ukeje and Adebani 2008: 570). However, attempts by two Yoruba sons – Obafemi Awolowo and M. K. O. Abiola at winning presidential elections during the First, Second, and Third Republics failed. The Yoruba blame Igbo and Northern elites for frustrating the ambitions of their sons⁴ (Ibrahim 1999:14, Sklar 1991). The annulment of the June 12 1993 election which M. K. O. Abiola, a Yoruba, was the presumed winner by a Northern military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida particularly provoked the Yoruba elite⁵ (Abegunrin 2006).

In order to protect the Yoruba from further 'political oppression', a group led by former Ondo State Governor, Adegunle Ajasin formed the *Egbe Afenifere*⁶. A militant group, the *Oodua People's Congress* (OPC) was also formed by a former presidential aspirant, Fredrick Fasehun. These two groups engaged in aggressive agitation for the restoration of Abiola's mandate. The tempo of Yoruba agitation was however toned down following the sudden death of General Abacha and Chief M.K.O. Abiola, and the resolve by Nigerian political elite to concede power to the Yoruba – a concession that produced Olusegun Obasanjo as president in 1999⁷. For a substantial part of Obasanjo's first four-year term, the *Afenifere* resented his leadership. The opposition against Obasanjo stems from the belief that as a military ruler in 1979, Obasanjo failed to stand up in favour of his kinsman, Obafemi Awolowo, whose victory in a presidential election was robbed by the Northern elite. Obasanjo was also accused of not supporting the struggle to uphold Abiola's presidential election victory annulled by a Northern military ruler. These allegations portrayed

⁴ They point to the alliance between the Igbo and Northern elites after the 1959 election, which kept the Yoruba elite out of power and eventually capitalized on a split in the AG to destroy the party and to imprison Awolowo and his supporters in 1963.

⁵ To appease the Yoruba elite, Babangida appointed Ernest Shonekan, a respected Yoruba businessman as the head of an interim national government while departing on 27 August 1993. Many Yoruba elite opposed Shonekan's government pressing for the upholding of the June 12 election. But on 17 November 1993 another Northern general, Sani Abacha toppled the Shonekan government. Abacha appointed prominent Yoruba elites into his government to pacify the Yoruba. But this could not halt the opposition. Then Abacha adopted repressive tactics - assassination, imprisonment, and harassment of Yoruba elites opposed to his regime.

⁶ Ex-Senator Abraham Adesanya became the leader of *Afenifere* following the death of Adegunle Ajasin. For an assessment of the *Afenifere*, see Aduwo 2004.

⁷ The concession allowed for only Yoruba candidates in the 1999 presidential election. Obasanjo contested under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) while Olu Falae vied under the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The *Afenifere* and the OPC opposed the candidature of Obasanjo, ensuring that he lost in the entire Yoruba area to the AD, a party associated with the *Afenifere*.

Obasanjo as pliant and conservative figure, who works at cross-purposes with Yoruba interests, which *Afenifere* stands for. Obasanjo's response to the opposition by *Afenifere* was to paralyze the organization using three malevolent measures (Adindu 2003). First, he co-opted a key member of *Afenifere* – Bola Ige into the inner core of his government. Through Ige, a rival group – the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) that opposed *Afenifere's* Yoruba nationalist ideology was established to supplant *Afenifere*. Finally, the political arm of *Afenifere* – the Alliance for Democracy (AD) was rooted out of the South-west. This was achieved by sponsoring a splinter group within the AD; the intra-party crisis in the AD weakened the party and made it incapable of responding to PDP's primitive accumulation of votes. As a result, AD lost all but one of the six Yoruba states it had previously controlled.

Although all the major political parties that contested the 2003 elections were actively involved in rigging; the PDP simply excelled in electoral fraud, as Hoffmann's (2010) study of elections in Anambra State demonstrates. This made it possible for the party to increase its share of the states it controlled from 21 in the 1999 elections to 28 in the 2003 elections. Among those that criticised the 2003 elections, Iyayi (2003: 16) particularly decried the crude manner the irregularities were orchestrated:

The mandate of the people was stolen in a manner reminiscent [sic] one-stone-age politics where the size of the foot of the master determined the length of a foot. In 2003, the political class did not even have any respect for sensibilities of the Nigerian people to rig intelligently. In awarding votes to victors and the vanquished, the numbers swelled up so much that they exceeded by wide margins the number of voters registered to vote in the elections

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of over 90 civil society groups, in its report on the 2003 general elections, joined in condemning the elections. The group declared:

While the voters waited and persevered in the polling stations to cast their votes, the political class and the political parties had different ideas. The voters wanted their votes to determine the winner of elections while the political class wanted to corrupt the process and rig their way into elective office... On the whole, the results can be said to marginally reflect the choice and will of the Nigerian people (cited in Agbaje and Adejumobi 2006: 39).

For those who thought that Nigeria had reached its highest stage of electoral fraud in 2003, the 2007 elections proved that the 'worst is yet to come'. The stage for the electoral impunity that characterized the 2007 election was set by President Olusegun Obasanjo when he declared that the election would be a 'do-or-die affair' for the ruling PDP (Suberu 2007: 98). On one hand, Obasanjo's comment eroded the optimism of some who felt that the 2007 election would kick start a breakaway from the history of electoral fraud in Nigeria. But on the other hand, Obasanjo's comments reflected the thinking within the PDP, especially as a top party official had earlier been reported as saying that the party

would dominate Nigerian politics for at least sixty years. President Obasanjo and, by extension, the PDP did not stop at words. Their threat to approach the 2007 election with all sense of guts was actually applied. The result was a blatantly rigged election in which the people's mandate was overtly stolen. Analysts observed that the electoral fraud in 2007 reached a new height in the history of Nigerian elections. Beyond the stages of competitive rigging and primitive accumulation of votes, electoral fraud in the 2007 election was dubbed 'direct capture of the people's mandate' (Ibrahim and Ibeanu 2009). In conceptualising the specificities of direct capture in the 2007 elections, Ibeanu (2009: 10) asserts:

It does appear that government agencies and the ruling party pulled off one of the most brazen stealing of votes ever recorded in Nigerian history. While in the past, rigging was regarded as an illegal act to be carried out subtly and covertly, in 2007 it was direct, brazen and daring. Indeed, it was an unprecedented direct seizure of votes and mandates. The people's mandate could not have been more directly captured.

The flaws that characterize the conduct of the 2007 elections severely dented Nigeria's image and electoral integrity. At this point there appears to be soul-searching among the Nigerian leadership. This reflected in the public acknowledgement by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua that the election that brought him to office was fundamentally flawed. This posture allowed for a deep reflection on Nigeria's electoral process. Part of this reflection took place among members of the Electoral Reform Committee, a body inaugurated by the federal government to suggest measures that would improve the conduct of elections, restore electoral integrity, and strengthen the quality of democracy in Nigeria. Some of the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee were reviewed and included in the amended Electoral Act. Another major intervention by the federal government to restore electoral integrity in Nigeria was the appointment of a more credible leadership for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). On its part, INEC embarked on internal reforms to address the challenges of electoral integrity. The most significant step taken by INEC was the compilation of a credible voters register. These and more interventions adopted by the government and the electoral management body culminated in the relative success that was achieved since the 2011 general elections.

Implications of Electoral Misconduct for Governance and Development

The discussion in the preceding section indicates that most of Nigerian elections have been characterized by flaws. This section will examine the implications of flawed elections for governance and development. Electoral misconduct can affect governance and development in four major ways. The principal way in which electoral misconduct affects governance and development is through the devaluation of votes. Votes, which represent instrument of popular participation, accountability and voice, have become greatly devalued in contemporary Nigeria by both politicians and the electorate. On the one hand, the politicians violate the promissory value of votes following their failure to deliver the promises they made while asking for votes. The Nigerian electoral process works in such

a way that the outcome of voting has little semblance to what the electorate chose in their ballots. Because elections are not determined by the ballots, Nigerian electorates are alienated from the governance process; they cannot punish politicians who renege on their promises (by denying them re-election). On the other hand, the electorate devalue the psychological value of votes. The psychological value of votes denotes the subjective belief of a voter that his/her vote will make a difference (Ibeanu 2007:6-7). In contemporary Nigeria, most voters do not believe that their votes would make a difference. As a result, there is growing apathy in the political and governance process. But ironically, the breakdown of the process of participation, accountability and voice enables the politicians to get away with their failure to deliver their campaign promises. The Nigerian electorates devalue the psychological value of votes by selling their vote to politicians on the basis of material, clannish, or religious considerations (Bratton 2008). Feeling that their votes do not count, the Nigerian electorates often try to make immediate gains out of the votes by giving them to politicians who can part with money or other material goods (T-shirts, face-caps, bags of rice, scholarships, contracts, jobs etc.). Devaluation of votes releases politicians from the discipline and control that elections impose, and reduces the incentives for politicians to pursue development.

In addition to the subversion of the citizen's capacity to discipline governments, electoral misconduct reduces the incentive for government to initiate and implement people-oriented development programmes. As suggested in the literature on economics of voting, higher economic growth makes an incumbent win more likely (Collier and Hoeffler 2010). Furthermore, there is evidence that elections discipline the economic choices of governments in developing countries. For instance, Chauvet and Collier's (2009) study of the relationship between elections and government economic choices in developing countries reveals that regular conduct of credible elections has structural effects - it significantly improves the overall level of government policies. The positive effect of elections on policy discipline depends on proper conduct of elections. Chauvet and Collier also find that flawed elections exert no significant policy discipline. Elections are, potentially, the vehicle by which citizens hold governments accountable. This process imposes policy discipline on governments. To avoid the restraints imposed by elections, politicians find electoral misconduct highly attractive. Electoral misconduct reduces the incentives for politicians to genuinely attend to development issues. Recent studies suggest that incumbents standing in credible elections are penalized if they do not deliver economic growth. Collier and Hoeffler (2010), for example, find that the time incumbents who fail to deliver economic growth spend in office is about 40 percent less the time incumbents who promote economic growth spend in office. On the contrary, Collier and Hoeffler's study find that incumbents standing in flawed elections face a much smaller penalty; economic stagnation shortens their time in office by only 23 percent. In all, electoral misconduct negatively affects development because it subverts the discipline and control that citizens would have ordinarily exerted on governments to achieve economic performance.

The third effect of electoral misconduct on development is that it compels leaders to place premium on acquisition of power to the detriment of other aspects of national life including development. As Claude Ake (1985: 112) puts it: 'this state of affairs in turn tends

to block the development of productive forces generally and economic development in particular'. In an electoral system where electoral misconduct is common, power struggle is usually so intense to the extent that those in power perceive politics mostly in terms of increasing their power. Under this circumstance, mobilizing the citizens for development becomes difficult because the people are alienated from the governance process.

Finally, to further worsen the prospects of development, electoral misconduct provides the basis for the outbreak of conflict and violence. Electoral misconduct signify institutional breakdown – a situation where the rule of law is not properly instituted and where the rules and norms of political competition are eroded. In this state of affairs, the ballot loses its quality as the determining factor in political competition, while bullets become the key instrument of gaining power. In the context of flawed elections, it is normally easy for voting to culminate in violence. This is because the contending forces usually find it difficult to accept the outcome of the electoral process. Thus, most flawed elections terminate in conflict and violent encounters among the competing political forces. The effects of conflict on development are well known and may not require rehearsing here (see Adetula 2006: 385). However, it is pertinent to note that conflicts drain scarce resources that should have been channelled to productive ends. On its part, the government diverts the resources it would have used for funding development programmes to conflict management and peacemaking activities including emergency and relief services as well as reconstruction of damaged infrastructures. Lastly, conflicts interrupt the production process forcing the people to abandon their farmlands, market stalls and other economic activities. Here, the relationship between flawed elections and development is not direct; instead, electoral misconduct provides the basis for conflicts which in turn impedes development.

Conclusion

This article examines the link between elections, governance and development. It approached the task by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of elections within the democratic context and highlighting the analytical nexus between democracy and development. To provide an appropriate background for considering the implications of elections for development in Nigeria, this article reviewed the history of elections in the country. It noted that Nigeria has conducted 12 general elections between 1954 and 2019, and these elections can be divided into transition and consolidation elections. Although most elections in Nigeria have been characterized by flaws and misconduct, consolidation elections appear to be the most flawed. Part of the reasons why consolidation elections are particularly flawed is because of the absence of unbiased electoral umpire that could stand as an independent arbiter in electoral competitions. Often, the incumbent government interferes in consolidation elections forcing their opponents to question the outcome of the elections. Again, consolidation elections are often marked by attempts by incumbent parties to dominate the political landscape through brazen manipulation of the electoral process. As the analysis in the chapter indicates, the elections of 1964, 1983, 2003 and 2007 are clear illustrations of attempts by the ruling parties to manipulate the electoral process.

Considering the flawed nature of elections in Nigeria, this article identified four major effects of electoral misconduct on Nigeria's development. First, it noted that electoral

misconduct reduces the incentive for government to deliver development performance. This is because it undermines the capacity of the citizens to control and discipline governments which fail to initiate and implement development policies. Related to the above, the article notes that electoral misconduct devalues vote. Ideally, votes represent instrument of popular participation, accountability and voice, which are ingredients of any meaningful development process. In this circumstance, both the politicians and the electorates are culpable. On their part, the politicians violate the promissory value of votes following their failure to deliver the promises they made while asking for votes, while on the other hand, the electorate devalue the psychological value of votes; that subjective belief of a voter that his/her vote will make a difference. In the context of the erosion of the promissory and psychological value of votes, election becomes mere ritual that lacks the capacity to effect any structural or attitudinal changes. The restraints that elections should ideally instil in the governance process is also eroded; so also the policy discipline that should engineer development.

The third effect of electoral misconduct on development is that electoral misconduct increases the premium politicians place on acquisition of power. In the context of flawed elections, one requires power to gain power. As a result, politicians expend all their energy in the acquisition and consolidation of power to the detriment of other aspects of national life including governance and development. Lastly, the article notes that electoral misconduct provides the basis for the outbreak of conflict and violence, which further worsen the prospects of development. As the experiences of Nigeria and countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe illustrate, contested elections serve as catalyst for conflict, and there is a direct negative relationship between conflict and development.

Although the analysis of this article has provided rich insights to our understanding the relationship between elections, governance and development, more scholarly analyses are required. The analysis of this article is based on analytical insights rather than empirical perspective. While this is useful, it may fail to fully convince some on the veracity of the arguments presented. Therefore, there is a need for further research to empirically demonstrate the implications of the issues raised above on development. Such studies can be based on re-analysis of available data or on the generation of primary data. Considering that elections are now a feature of Nigerian politics, their implications for development need to be constantly interrogated.

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