

THE DYNAMICS OF AFRICA'S CULTURAL AFFINITY AND THE GLOBAL ELECTORAL OUTCOMES: EVIDENCE FROM EKITI STATE OF NIGERIA

By

Isaac Adegbenga ALADEGBOLA, (Ph.D.),

*Department of Political Science and International Relations,
Crawford University, PMB 2001, Igbesa, Ogun State Nigeria.*

isaac.aladegbola@crawforduniversity.edu.ng

stainlessade2004@yahoo.com +234-803-427-3929

Abstract

Are politicians only rewarded by voters for distributive allocations? Are patterns of voting always a function and reflection of how goods are distributed? The patterns that have emerged on the electoral politics of Ekiti State of Nigeria since it was created in 1996 and the event of June 21st 2014 gubernatorial election and the outcome of 2015 general elections in the state has challenged the “common position within the political accountability framework that examined whether political incumbents are always rewarded by voters in return for distributive allocations”. Employing empirical research method, this study interrogates the unexpected electoral outcome of the 2014 and 2015 elections in Ekiti State and considered the trends of Ekiti elections from 1999 to 2018 covering the Fourth Republic. Tracing the relationship between identity and distributive politics, the study finds that cultural affinity and state homogeneity are additional relevant factors which shape electoral outcomes in Africa beyond the explored distributive goods and distributive politics that generally shapes global electoral outcomes.

Key Words: Cultural Affinity, Homogeneity, Electoral outcome, Democratic Accountability, Distributive politics, Nigeria

Introduction

The reality of the theory of democratic accountability that assumes that politicians are motivated by the desire to retain public office seems to

be a global phenomenon. Contemporary political history, especially as it relates to Nigeria, bends us to share the position of some studies (Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, Brusco, 2013; Carbone, 2012; Levitt & Snyder, 1997; Green, 2011; www.personal.umich.edu) which overwhelmingly find that “incumbent politicians are rewarded by voters for distributive allocations” (Golden & Min, 2013: 84). The Nigeria experience also indicates that individuals and groups dictate political fortunes depending on how the politicians handle them in terms of resource distribution and allocations.

Further reflections on the patterns that have emerged on the electoral politics of Ekiti State of Nigeria since it was created in 1996 and the event that surrounded the June 21st 2014 Gubernatorial election and the outcome of 2015 general elections in the state has challenge the above position. It is such that a blanket supposition of distributive politics alone may not always hold in explaining African situation in matters of electoral outcome.

In June 2014, Ayodele Fayose became the governor of Ekiti State of Nigeria. It was the second time that he defeated the incumbent governor as an opposition candidate. Fayose is the only Nigerian who has defeated an incumbent state governor twice: he beat Governor Niyi Adebayo in 2003 and Governor Kayode Fayemi in 2014. This is historically and politically strange in Nigeria, given the vast state resources at the disposal of the incumbent which were readily deployed to garner supports. For years, political leaders who provided their voters with goods and services were more likely to gain or remain in power. However, this story provides “another set of models within the political accountability framework that examines whether political incumbents are always rewarded by voters for distributive allocations” (www-personal.umich.edu). The assumption here dictates that “if the intention of political authorities in making allocations is to improve their own electoral fortunes, the current investigation is to assess whether their effort is always successful” (Golden & Min, 2013: 84), especially with the incumbent loss of the election in 2014 in Ekiti. The consistent pattern in the Ekiti state electoral behaviors and outcomes since creation in 1996 provides us a reason to re-examine the subject of 'why people vote the way they vote' in Africa. The study therefore is an effort to

expand the frontier of knowledge on finding reasons for voting pattern beyond the known distributive politics and distributive goods within the theory of political accountability.

In this regard, the two elements of cultural affinity and state homogeneity are tested assumptions in looking at the gaps and finding reasons why people vote the way they voted in Ekiti elections. Cultural affinity in the context of this paper rest mostly on the historical and persistent conservation of known creed, language, customs, ideas, beliefs, the way of life and social orientations unique to a particular society and has connected the people together over time. This is seen to have generated strong feelings and close relationships between the people arising from their similar qualities and their economic structures. State homogeneity as used in this paper bothers on what influences that geographical nearness of different towns and villages have on the pattern of socio- cultural, economic, and political behaviour that evolve in a given population. It strongly raises the quality of being homogenous in affecting the decision making as different from a divisive amalgamated society.

The experience from Ekiti in accounting for reasons for electoral outcomes has raised a problem showing that political behaviour in the elections may not only rest on element of distributive politics that is in the literature. The question in this study is to further test why Ekiti people voted the way they voted especially in 2015 general elections and find out whether there is a consistent pattern in the history of their electoral behaviour. The main objective of this study therefore is to find an explanation to the theory of democratic accountability beyond the existing distributive politics and distributive goods. So, two major posers arose: how can we explain the unexpected outcome of the 2014 state election in Ekiti, carried also to 2015 general elections in Nigeria and, do identity politics interacts with distributive politics? Does this have implications in future elections in the state? The study set out to interrogate these posers.

Distributive politics

It is a difficult venture finding out what informs human electoral behaviors at a particular time and situation. What subsists however is an

age long perception to improve the understanding is by seeking to explain the empirical aspect of political life by means of methods, theories and criteria of proof that are accepted. The consistent years of criteria of proof in global electoral experience are the perspective of distributive goods and distributive politics around the world.

This popular perspective however has its root in the theory of democratic accountability. The crucial message in this theory and its critical assumption is that “politicians are motivated by desire to retain public office; it is also this desire that enforces accountability, elections discipline where incumbent could be threatened by the loss of office for inadequate performance” (see Golden & Min, 2013: 77-78, www-personal.umich.edu). Broadly, studies that concern democratic accountability “conceptualize distributive allocations as attempts by politicians to protect themselves electorally by targeting specific individual and group of voters” (www.annualreviews.org). It comes in various forms and means; “target of goods to core or swing voters; political favoritism in targeting government goods, goods disbursed according to the electoral cycle and studies of whether elected officials gain votes from the disbursement of government goods or even money” (Golden, Miriam, & Min, 2012).

Golden and Min (2013:84), maintained and we find it so that studies (www-personal.umich.edu) overwhelmingly find that “incumbent politicians are rewarded by voters for distributive allocations, and in particular for those that are clientelistic and from which recipient can be excluded”. Hence, it is needful here to do a review of the studies of the means and processes of distributive allocations. This attempt does not only open the levels of literature position on the subject, it at the same time exposes the limitations of this perspective and thereby justify the gap where this study provides alternative explanations to why people vote the way they vote. This may be a contribution to the growing literature on the subject.

To start, it is instructive to state that in Nigeria, and Africa like other continents of the world, there are preexisting literature on this subject matter that addresses the issues of patronage politics, patrimonialism and other forms of non-programmatic “linkages” between political

parties, the politicians and the voters (Baldwin, 2015; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Aina, 2002; Agbaje, Onwudiwe and Diamond, 2004; Janda, 1980; Olaniyi, 2004; Osaghae, 2014; Oyediran, 1981; Olawale, 2007; Weltz-shapiro, 2012; Hoffman and James, 2013; Van De Walle, 2007; Keefer, 2007). These stories on non-programmatic linkages are now further situated within the political accountability framework which “examines whether political incumbent are rewarded by voters for distributive allocations” (www-personal.umich.edu). “If the intention of political authorities in making allocation and spending is to improve their own electoral fortunes, these studies assess whether their effort is successful”. A quick query is that it is a difficult question to study because doing so requires assumptions about how voters would have behaved in the absence of distributive allocations. It is a gap that needs further examination.

Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco, (2013) wrote extensively on the puzzle of distributive politics. They examine the relationship between the clients and the citizens within the purview of distributive politics. The book (assets.cambridge.org) is about distributive practice that politicians use to try to win and retain office. It examines closely “the strategies of clientelism, machine politics and patronage” (Stokes et al, 2013:7), all of them nonprogrammatic distributive strategies. The book pointed useful attention to some countries where distributive politics has shifted overtime from vote buying and other non-programmatic forms to programmatic politics. To the authors, political authorities make choices about distribution. When these authorities hold on office depends on their winning elections, their choices become bound up with political strategies and that the mode of strategic distribution very widely. Using examples, they cited “progreso/opportunidade” as form of cash distribution in the name of “anti-poverty program in Mexico; Emergency food aid in Argentina where a municipal social worker in a provincial town receives, one by one, town people lined up outside her office door seeking to be placed on a list of beneficiaries form an Emergency food programme”; housing improvement programme in Singapore and “la effective” in Mexico where candidate “Eru viel avila signed voters up at campaign events for another ATM-style card that qualifies the owner on promised healthcare, food support, education, sports, cultural sponsorships, old age pensions

and agriculture subsidies” (assets.cambridge.org; Stokes et al, 2013:4-7).

The authors rightly observe that in most non-programmatic politics of clientelism and patronage, it actual benefits contingent on individual's political support. Nevertheless, even with programmatic politics, the question is whether the roles of distribution are public. The literature delves on the “evidence of bias in the distribution of public resource even in Western Europe and European union”, Scholars identify predictable partisan differences in spending priorities and in places like Nigeria where clientelism hold sway, “the party or candidate offers material or monetary benefits only on the condition that the recipient returns the favour with a vote or other forms of political support” (assets.cambridge.org; Stokes, etal 2013:.13).

While it is true that politically discriminatory distributions generate good will among recipients who may, as a consequences be more likely to support the benefactor candidate or party, but there is also on event where recipients may defect and vote for different party and there may not be any possibility of been punished for it. Again, what happens when the other competing parties offers similar largess for the voters, what now informs their decision?

Carbone (2012) also found out “if new democracies deliver social welfare” using Ghana and Cameroon as cases. The author discovers that the assumption that the many and the needy will benefit from democratic change has not gone without challenges. Part of the author's finding is that “if neo-patrimonialism and clientelist distributions remain the core business of politics even after election are introduced (pascal.iseg.uti.pt), the assumption that voters are in a position to demand and obtain responses to their social-welfare needs may be misplaced” (Cabone, 2012:158). The author confirmed that “many studies that tried to test democracy-welfare link, in particular, hint at a more complex relationship” (pascal.iseg.uti.pt; Cabone,2012:158).

Levitt and Snyder, Jnr (1997) examine the wide belief that “incumbent member of congress are rewarded by the electorate for bringing federal dollars to their district but however discovers that the empirical evidence

supporting that claim is extremely weak” (Levitt and Snyder, 1997:30). The author pointed out the possible “omitted-variable bias that arises because representatives are likely to exert more effort to bring money into their district when they are electorally vulnerable than when they are electorally secure” (p. 32). The author discovers that despite the much talk about it, “there is little systematic evidence supporting the model or that additional spending or employment yield electoral benefits”. This point is a deficit to distributive politics as it may be difficult to measure representatives' perceptions of their electoral vulnerability.

Dahlberg and Johansson (2002) tested theories of vote purchasing behavior of incumbent government. The study finds support for the hypothesis that the incumbent government used a grant program under study to win votes in Swedish election. The author also finds support that party's distributive transfer to regions where there are many swing voters. Showing that distributive politics is not all, it is instructive to note in the study that the model do not find support that predicts that “the incumbent government transfers money to its own supporters to gain electoral victory” (Kim,2007; Dahlberg & Johansson, 2002:27).

In the varieties of distributive politics, Burgess, Jedwab, Miguel, Morjaria & Miguel (2013) Considers ethnic favoritism as a situation where “co-ethnics benefit from patronage and public decisions, and this receive a disproportionate share of public resources, when member of their ethnic group control the government” (halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr; Burgess etal, 2013:2). Using evidence from road building in Kenya, the author had strong evidence of ethnic favoritism as districts that share the ethnicity of the president receive twice as much expenditure on road and have four times the length of paved roads built (www.nber.org). While this is true in many African countries, the requirements of having support base beyond a particular district in gaining electoral victory limits the validity of the evidences.

Green (2011) in his article discusses patronage “as a series of institutional choices or strategies which hinge upon a series of tradeoffs” (p. 421). The author impressed on the importance of patronage as “a mechanism by which politicians build and maintain political support

(personal.ise.ac.uk; Green, 2011 :421). The study reinforced the rapidly growing literature on patronage that has attempted to understand how, why, where, and when politicians allocate material incentives to their constituencies. The author strongly supports that inasmuch as rulers are the ones who decide when, where, and to whom they will allocate patronage, their institutional choices are governed by the desires to maximize their individual political power. It also holds that where politicians face serious political competition they have incentives to use public resources or policy concession to win elections or maintain support. In most cases, their spending of public goods that are both observable and measurable is those whose benefits are easy to trace back to the politician who created them. However, the evidences in the study has not suggest what role a competitive election, the media and a cheer crave for change could play in altering the decision that voters may take in who ultimately wins their votes. Cox (2007) paper on swing voters, core voters and distributive politics raised a number of critical questions:(1) How do political parties allocate targetable goods-such as private goods targeted to individual. (2) Local public goods targeted to geographic areas. (3) Breaks targeted to specific industries or firms-all in order to optimize their electoral prospects. The thesis in the paper is that parties largely engage in electoral targeting, distributing benefits to optimize electoral outcomes. The paper examines previous literature on electoral targeting and came out with a typology of transfer. The author listed three pure types of transfer that appear to have been used in elections. The study stated the transfer as (1) the benefits that are delivered upon verification of an individual vote; (2) benefits that are given to a voter before she or he votes; (3) benefits that are promised upon victory of the relevant candidate or party (eprints.ise.ac.uk; Cox, 2007:3-5).

Cox's study is a typical framework that fits in to the Nigeria electoral corruption and bribery. The limitation that however elicits further investigation even in the Nigeria electoral behavior is that there is no subsequent effort to verify how the electorate voted until the winner is announced which may not always favor candidate that gave the benefits. Further in the study, a variant of identity politics theory is used along distributive politics to provide explanation to the deviant electoral behavior in the case study.

Identity politics

Identity politics and its elements appear crucial to the understanding of the analysis of the deviant electoral pattern in our case study. In a general language, identity politics includes the ways in which peoples' politics are shaped by aspect of their identity through loosely correlated social organizations. It involves a tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background etc. to form exclusive political alliances moving away from traditional broad-based party politics. Basically it is called “identitarian politics referring to political positions based on the interest and perspectives of social groups with which people identify.” (www.forgottensouls.com).

Rutherford Jonathan (ed), (1990) in his collection of essays opened up the above explanation as a way in which notions of identity can inform changing conceptions of democratic politics to the extent where “categories of identity gender, race, class and sexuality are re-examined to allow a move away from a fixed moralistic approach to identity politics towards a recognition of difference, autonomy and interdependence” (muse.jhu.edu). The import of this could mean that other factors like class, culture and personality aside distributive politics could determine peoples' voting behavior. Even in American politics, when conservative and moderate commentators talk about identity politics, they usually mean exposing ideas and policies that are peel specifically to women and minorities. In our case study where the state is homogeneous, minority may mean the long deprived poor persons on issues of participatory democracy by the ruling elite even though they are in the majority. In this regard Olsen Kelvin (2015) identifies a point of convergence between economically oriented, distributive approaches to social justice and cultural oriented identitarian ones. When a candidate is able to identify this convergence, Olsen, claims that “the disadvantaged groups will have equal abilities to participate in the social processes that construct and value identities just in a way the equality will promote human agency in both the cultural and economic spheres” (philpapers.org). The experience in Ekiti where parties, incumbency factor and access to state resources channel to distributive politics are largely set aside equally find expression in Merriam-Webster (2018) where identity politics is seen as a situation in which groups of people having a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social or cultural identity

tend to promote their own specific interest or concerns without regard to the interest or concern of any larger political group.

The theoretical explanation to the contradictions in Ekiti, where both candidates are from the same homogenic, cultural group yet with one having upper hand finds much expression in the variant of identity politics as exposed by political anthropologist. Cohen Anthony (ed), (2000) explain how relationship between groups are informed and under-pinned by understandings group members have regarding their own distinctive identities and the nature of boundaries dividing them from other group members mainly on political construction. Gupta, Akhil, & James Ferguson (eds), (1997) buttress this, calling it “structures of feelings that connect people in ways that are meaningful to them to particular locales, and the formation of locality, involved the delineation of 'self' and 'other' through the process of identification with larger collectivities”. It is also a question of identification, cultural transformation and registration of cultural differences (Hall, Stuart & Paul du gay eds. 1996; www.oxfordbibliographies.com). Mach, Zedzislaw (1993) and Martin Alcoff, Linda & Eduardo Mendietta, (eds), (2003) works show that such identities could be aggregated through mere symbols and symbolic forms of rituals and myths that could go a long way to legitimize the social order. It could also be used as an exclusion strategy in a system of unequal power relations between social groups as in the case of Nigeria and Africa experiences.

In all the arguments above, and in relations to our case study, identity-based politics described the deployment of the category of identity as a tool of framework, political claims, promote political ideologies no matter how loosely organized, or stimulate and orientate social and political action usually in a larger context of inequality or injustice and with the aim of asserting group distinctiveness and belonging and gaining power and recognition. This position is presented as team identification by Daniel Lock and Bob Heere (2017). While identity politics seems to be common with adversarial democracy and multi-ethnic groupings, the Ekiti experience has shown a variant where it could also happen in monolithic and homogeneous society and “the factors of social locations, identification, emotional attachment, ethical and political values and the politics of belonging could engender who

the people prefers and vote for in a political contest” (see researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au). This is expanded in the works of Yuval- Davis (2006) And Jonathan and Thomas (2003). It could also provide an explanation to the limitations of distributive politics. This framework explains the Ekiti State, Nigeria experience discussed in the next section of this study.

Research Design

This study was based on “[ethnographic fieldwork” (www.koeppe.de) conducted among poor peasants, artisans, students, and elite groups of Ekiti State, Nigeria from June to August 2014 and April to May 2015 after the state and general elections respectively. Predominantly, qualitative methods, through both primary and secondary sources were used in the research. The primary methods of data collection involved the use of key informants, and semi-structured interviews triangulated with in-depth interviews (survey), employing open-ended questionnaires. The fieldwork was conducted mainly in Ado Local Government area: Some of the key informants were also located in the main towns of the state like Ilawe, Ikere, Ikole, Igede and Emure. The Chosen local government apart from been the state capital, it is also the biggest and a fair representation of all the elements in all the villages in the other 15 local government areas. The study relied much on the data collected by students of Public Administration of Adekunle Ajasin University who were on their one-year Industrial attachment in the local government and were sent out to interact with the groups of people that represents the bulk of voters in Nigeria. It also had the touch of direct observation and interview with the researcher who was also available during and after the elections.

The study's reliance on twenty key-informant and in-depth interviews was due to the need to concentrate on individual key participants that are in position to shape electoral opinion, while indepth interviews were designed to establish an overview of popular perceptions of the populace on electoral behaviour. These methods were complimented by materials sourced from archives and media documents. The data collected were then subjected to qualitative analysis.

The Ekiti State 2014 Elections

On June 21st 2014, incumbent Governor of Ekiti State of Nigeria, Kayode Fayemi entered the gubernatorial elections of Ekiti state with the aim of renewing his bid to govern for another four years. Governor Fayemi belonged to the All Progressive Congress (APC), an alliance formed in 2013 by three of Nigeria's biggest opposition parties. A highly educated academic, politician and godson of a former Governor, he was seen as a well performing governor who was transforming Ekiti. His opposition candidate Ayo Fayose came from a more modest background and had served three and half years as governor of Ekiti State before he was impeached in 2006. He was contesting Fayemi under the banner of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), although this party did not traditionally have a large following in Ekiti State. Thus, at first sight it looked as if Fayose did not have much of a chance to win. However, "when the electoral results began appearing on social media, people were shocked to see that Fayose was winning by a wide margin at virtually all the polling units" (Akinnaso, 2014; Onwuka, 2014). In the end, the election was adjudged free and fair and the incumbent thoroughly defeated. The Ekiti election ran contrary to the elections in Ondo, Edo, Anambra and Osun states where the incumbents emerged as winners. What explains this outcome?

Analysis of Findings

An analysis of the major findings of this research will now be engaged in. As argued earlier on, this is majorly a result of fieldwork carried out after the 2014 and 2015 elections. The findings are discussed under sub-headings.

The Failure of incumbency factor

For a record second time, the new Governor of Ekiti State of Nigeria (Governor Ayodele Fayose) won the elections as an opposition candidate defeating the incumbents who were gunning for their second term in office. The first thing the research found out is that this was historically and politically strange in Nigeria, where at every election; the incumbent has always used the state resources and the distribution of public goods to garner supports and votes to retain themselves for the constitutional right of second term of another four years in political office. The second is that, how does it happen? More so as the two

defeated incumbents in respect of Ekiti elections have been labeled as “Performing Governors” (Fieldwork, 2014, 2015).

To most lecturers interviewed in Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, the 2014 election ran contrary to the elections in other states of Ondo, Edo, Anambra and that of the neighboring state of Osun held in August 10th, 2014. This is significant as they have the awareness that the election in Ekiti has been adjudged as free and fair and had met international best practices in its conduct. From the interview sessions, many of the key informants from the main incumbent party did not expect Fayose to win not only because as incumbent, they have the political structures around the state, they also relied on the event that the same man who won in the 2004 election had served in his first term for three and half years (instead of four) having been impeached in 2006. But most local government party chairmen of PDP interviewed ascribed the success to the fact that Fayose remained with the people even after his impeachment and so was able to come back in 2014 to defeat the incumbent as he did in his first term. A consistent pattern re-echoed. What factors had influenced the politically strange voting behaviour in Ekiti, with some elites who actually wanted the incumbent to continue and they were so embarrassed by the turn of events, more so, the winner (an opposition) won overwhelmingly in all the sixteen Local Government areas of the state. He contested against an incumbent who was adjudged as transforming Ekiti, he also contested in a zone where his party (PDP) is seen as the wrong party. In addition, Fayose who had a Higher National Diploma was running against a classy and urbane Fayemi who had a PhD in a State whose slogan is the “Fountain of Knowledge”, so it looked as if Fayose's ambition was dead on arrival, (Onwuka, 2014:27). In June 21st, 2014 when results from individuals began appearing on social media, it was a shock that Fayose was winning by a wide margin in virtually all the polling units (Onwuka, 2014:29). A chieftain of his party, Mr, Dokun Bolarinwa said they decided to stay with him because of the discovered emotional attachment the large number of mostly poor people have towards him. Some other key informants had stated that they knew it will translate to electoral victory since people that votes are at the grassroots and not the few vocal elites.

The deviancy in the electoral behaviour

Findings from this study also show that a known electoral behaviour may not always hold in all cases. The prelude to 2015 general elections indicated that the wind of change was in the air. The popularity of the APC candidate for the presidency soared and it appeared that the odd of the election was against the ruling PDP at the center. It equally appeared that the defeated APC in Ekiti State will use the chance to launch itself back to electoral reckoning. The APC as a party recovered its boldness and launched a massive opposition Judicial, Media and Political Propaganda against the ruling PDP Government in the State (Fieldwork, 2015). Political pundits had expected that the tide will change against the PDP because there was so much disenchantment against the PDP at the center. Predictably, one chief Dare Oloruntoba, a strong APC stakeholder called it a 'political tsunami' waiting to happen.

Surprisingly, while all the states in the South-west of Nigeria gave majority of their votes to APC at the presidential elections, Ekiti State was deviant; it was obvious that the people followed the incumbent governor, Mr. Ayodele Fayose, as majority voted for the PDP. At the emergence of Buhari as the president in the general election, the band wagon effect was also largely expected at the National and State assembly elections all over the country. Loyal party men in PDP even became jittery (Fieldwork, 2015). While this prediction came to reality in many states of the federation, Ekiti State maintained its consistency with PDP wining all the National Assembly--House of Representative and Senate--and the party went ahead to capture all the state assembly sits. Governor Ayo Fayose was a factor in that election as he led the campaigns in all the Local Government areas (Fieldwork, 2015). It was also discovered that many of the candidates of the PDP were relatively unknown or is labeled as not so educated or popular enough to defeat other candidates in the said election (PDP Party secretariat, Ado Ekiti, 2015). Onwuka, (2015:27) had captured the events succinctly when he wrote that:

Fayose's popularity in Ekiti was restated on March 28, 2015 when he got the record of being the only South-West state where Goodluck Jonathan beat Muhammadu Buhari. On the same day, all the three Senatorial seats in

Ekiti were won by the PDP, while all the six seats of the House of Representatives were won by the PDP. With the results, he silenced those who said his governorship victory was procured through inducement or fraud. But that was not all: two weeks later when the House of Assembly election was held, the PDP won all the 26 seats.

Onwuka confirmed further that:

...he had won all the court cases against his eligibility and election. The only option left to get him out was by impeachment before June 5 when the tenure of the old legislature would expire. And with Buhari of the APC sworn in as President on May 29, it looked as if Fayose and his Deputy could be removed, as the Governor would not get any Federal Government Protection.

Surprisingly, for the whole week, the mass of the people 'kept vigil' with Fayose's government like soldier ants, and prevented any entrance of the self-exiled 19 men of the APC from gaining access to the hallow chamber of the assembly, where they had planned to impeach the new governor. As the tenure of the old Assembly expired without the house able to conduct any sitting, Fayose subsequently escaped the threat of impeachment in spite of their overwhelming majority. On the following Friday, he rode into the Ekiti State legislative complex on a commercial motorcycle, popularly called 'Okada' for the inauguration of the new parliament. He was accompanied by crowd of commercial motorcycle riders

It became curious how Fayose has been able to win the hearts of Ekiti people so much that the main stream South-West party (APC) did not even win a seat in that state, a state where five years to that time there was jubilation when the court sacked Mr Segun Oni of the PDP and declared Fayemi of the APC the winner. This was a state where just four

years before then, the APC (existing then as the ACN) won an overwhelming majority in the House of Assembly.

Stomach infrastructure or what?

Finding reasons for the new development became an interesting investigation. The open-ended questionnaire distributed and collated by the students contained a number of reasons that could possibly account for the unusual electoral behaviour, more so as the issue became a national political discussion. Reasons range from distributive goods and distributive politics as a result of the poverty level of the people, generosity of the candidate; Likable personality; Legacy of past performance, Elitist vs Common man; strong practical political understanding of the environment; expected benefits; Group influences; and desire for a single term among others. The opposition party, the press and most educated elites interviewed had put the reasons in a more organized form; they chanted much on what they termed reasons of "Stomach Infrastructure". Academically, the new political lexicon was used as a mockery of distributive politics and was raised by the elites and the defeated party accusing the winner to have appeal to poverty of the people and that he had used resources to secure the support of the people. The winner too became comical, when at his swearing in ceremony, he appointed Special Adviser on Special Duties and Stomach infrastructures. In spite of the loudness of the reasons given, the contradiction is that, it was obvious that the defeated incumbent had also given more on 'Stomach infrastructure' and the well talked about "election day cash for votes" with his access to state resources. This position was evident from the data gathered from different social groups of mass of mostly poor people who endured the long wait at polling booths to vote on the day of elections. (Fieldwork,2015) Also in the words of Onwuka, (2015: 27):

It was alleged that the Ekiti people voted for Fayose because of the food items and other gifts that he distributed during the campaign. It did not matter that Fayemi also shared his own gifts, and as an incumbent governor, had a deeper pocket than Fayose. It also did not matter that Ekiti State had been portrayed as the state of the intellectuals: the state where every

household had a professor. So, in reality, such a state would have the least potential to be induced with gifts during elections.

Analyses beyond the status-quo

The socio-cultural map of Ekiti shows that it is a unique entity, quite different from other states in Nigeria. The population of Ekiti State shares common ties of cultural unity, a common dialect (language) and all towns and villages have a prefix 'Ekiti' at the end of their name. The towns are mostly defined by their rural outlook; including the state capital where in most cases, the elites live in the outskirts, generally referred to as Government Reserved Areas (GRA). With this arrangement, the elites are often regarded as strangers or 'indigenous expatriates' and are subjected to societal envy and sometimes hatred, especially if the individual is a politician who cannot relate to the local community. This ranges from the ability to speak the local dialect, the ability to relate to the cultural norms and associating with local age groups within the community. Such politicians are tagged outsiders given to capturing the common wealth of the people for his or her cosmopolitan consumption rather than solving the people's problems. On the other hand, however, an educated elite may be a 'home boy' who, despite being rich and well-travelled, could fare better if he bonds with the locals, belong to an age group and possibly adopts his father's old building, paints it and uses it as his campaign headquarters, where he mixes freely with the 'locals' on a daily basis and 'shares', rather than flaunts his wealth. In the same vein, the educated elites (which are many in the state) fares very well in the state when they are able to blend naturally to this natural bond without any cultural betrayal or not able to speak the dialect and drink the local palm wine together with others at social evenings. A new position stepping up strongly is the role of cultural affinity and state homogeneity that played more dominant role in separating the two contestants in the Ekiti State episode.

Sociologically and ecologically, Ekiti State is a unique Sociopolitical entity largely different from so many other multi-ethnic and plural

States in Nigeria. The state had similar traditional communities including the State capital devoid of much city elegance. Every rich elite with a life of opulence could suddenly attract a prop of the eyes. Individual elites in such bracket are more of an expatriate indigene or a stranger that may curry societal envy and or hatred, especially if the individual is a politician who cannot relate to the common affinity. From all indications of the data gathered, and in the analysis and as it relates to Ekiti and the Ekiti elections, the new Governor represents a 'home boy' while the defeated incumbent was largely seen as part of the 'indigenous expatriate' class more so as he had been more out of the state and out of the country before his emergence as his party's candidate (Fieldwork, 2015)

Ekiti and the emerging patterns

A critical study of electoral history of Ekiti State since its creation via military fiat in 1996 indicates a reason for elasticity in the analysis of distributive politics as the only basis for electoral outcomes. The understanding of Ekiti element of identity politics as a framework that explains its electoral deviancy is key to the theory of Democratic Accountability. On this, there has been a consistent difference between the cultural blends of the people and some candidates who cannot relate very well with the ecology of the state. The play out of the contradictions has dictated every turn of events and outcome of elections and in most cases the reasons for change of government in the young state, more than the reasons of 'stomach infrastructure' or the distributive politics. This contradiction has labeled the voters in the state as the most sophisticated in Nigeria (Adelakun, 2014). The first civilian Governor, who came in with a ride of aristocratic mien, a son of a former military Governor of the old western region of Nigeria, lost his second term bid unbelievably to Fayose. Mr Ayo Fayose then came up with grass root supports, took his campaign as a village home boy to defeat the elitist incumbent alongside his largesse of distributive goods that he shared in the state.

Governor Ayo Fayose was however impeached by the State House of Assembly as a result of the conspiracy of the elites in his party and the mounting opposition he unexpectedly defeated. With corruption case on his neck, he was ingloriously removed in 2006. Other elite (Mr.

Segun Oni also of PDP who contested against Dr. Fayemi of APC) was planted in an acclaimed rigged election, he ruled for another three and half years before he was removed by an appeal court of Nigeria as a result of electoral fraud. Dr. Fayemi, educated elite from the APC, an opposition party, was adjudged to have won the election by the appeal court and was subsequently sworn in for four years' tenure. He went to the June 21st 2014 election to renew his bid to govern for four years' tenure and was almost assured of a victory until the emergence of Governor Ayo Fayose as a candidate of the national party. In the coincidence of history, the 'home boy' whose first tenure was cut short in 2006, came back eight years after, scaled the hurdle of his party's primary which was 'hotly' disputed, he rode on the crest of populism and was finally elected in June 21st, 2014 as the Governor of the State. The press became washed with so many headlines, 'what is it about this Fayose "Ekiti and the politics of the absurd", "Fayose's style of ' politics needs to be studied and researched upon to unravel what makes him tick" (Adelakun, 2014; Onwuka, 2014, 2015; Akinnaso, 2014).

Cultural values in electoral outcomes

The defeated Governors' Party went to electoral tribunal, even when its candidate openly accepted defeat. The party, All Progressive Congress (APC) had alleged rigging via what they called the usage of "photochromic ballot papers" by the electoral body. On this, Falana (2014) has saw the allegation as curious. He advised the party to "confront the reality of the election and draw a vital lesson from it and should engage in a critical review of the verdict of the electorate". According to the Lawyer, who was also at a time a governorship aspirant of a party claimed that "Fayemi's case was a victim of the ideological crisis of his party, the APC and that of the arrogance of some of the governor's aides who were allowed to wield enormous powers in the state" (Falana, 2014; flipmagazines.blogspot.com).

"What is it that Fayose does for you guys to love him like this despite all the bad press he gets?" "He cares about us, bonds with us, speaks for us, fights for us" was the reply (Onwuka, 2015:27). The outpouring of goodness on the day of his inauguration bore some levels of testimony to this. Again, Fayose knows how to fan this relationship by his utterances and actions. First, he drove to the inauguration venue in a

dinosaur of a Mercedes Benz (1965 model) to show his closeness to the ordinary people. Rather than the usual ceremonial 'agbada' (dress), he wore a 'danshiki' (local) whose sleeves stopped just below the shoulders. He invited the people to the Ekiti Government House to eat, swim, play and spend the night. He then made a mockery of "stomach infrastructure" that has been used against him by naming a personal assistant on Special Duties and Stomach infrastructure even though there are strong forces that are not happy with Fayose's return as governor. However, his popularity became a growing power by the day and his connection to the people was obvious, when some of his political thugs disrupted the court proceeding trying his eligibility status and the tribunal that investigated his electoral victory.

Arising from these experiences, there are reasons to think on the Sociology of Ekiti elections and the very need to re-examine the place of cultural affinity and state homogeneity in the determination of future electoral outcomes in Africa beyond the explored distributive goods and distributive politics.

Conclusions

This study saw the additional claim of factor of the use of federal might and more of instruments of state coercion via military, police and DSS to aid Ayodele Fayose to victory in June 2014. A level of the use of violence equally played out. Yet, the Ekiti variant of identity politics largely played out in 2018 gubernatorial elections in the state. Governor Fayose was no longer eligible to contest having served out the mandatory two terms. His anointed candidate from his party failed in the election, may be for reason of imposition and internal wrangling in PDP ahead of 2018 election, even though they have the State resources at their disposal.

Apart from the fact that Fayose no longer has access to federal support as his party has been defeated in 2015 at the centre, the obvious reasons for this, pending an academic investigation could largely be adduced to be his candidate's failure to demonstrate similar cultural and identity attachment to the downtrodden who forms the majority of voters in the State. This again was compounded by Fayose's loss of connection with

the people as he was seen to have alienated himself from the people towards the end of his second term in office where he also failed to pay backlog of salaries. So far, there has been a consistent relationship between the cultural blends of the people and the outcomes of the elections in the state. The discovery in this study is that, at election seasons, the people are faced with various complex calculations and decisions. These calculations do not always add up to what we called accepted logic. However, what we call sentimental reasons for voting certain candidates like ethnicity, religion, cultural affinity and proximity to the electorates are as logical to those who vote on that basis as the decision of those who vote a candidate based on his ideas and programmes. This research further indicates that state homogeneity accounted for the outcome of the past elections in Ekiti State more than the reasons of distributive goods. There is therefore a need to further re-examine the place of cultural affinity and state homogeneity in the determination of future electoral outcomes in Africa beyond the explored distributive goods and distributive politics. This consideration may expand the growing thinking in the literature on African political behavior.

References

- Adelakun, A. (2014): "Ekiti Voters, Nigeria's most sophisticated" *The Punch Nigeria Newspaper*. 20 November, Back page.
- Agbaje, AE, Onwudiwe & Diamond, L. (2004): "Introduction: Between the Past and the Future" In Agbaje, A.E, Onwudiwe & Diamond L. (eds) (2014): *Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance, a Festschrift for Oyeleye Oyediran*, Ibadan, University Press. See "Selected themes in African Political Studies" springer nature America, Inc,
- Aina, AD. (2002): "Politics in Nigeria Under Obasanjo Administration." *Monograph Series* No 1. Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria, Department of Political Science and Sociology, Babcock University. See Chrisdonasco.blogspot.com
- Akinnaso, N. (2014): "Ekiti and the Politics of the Absurd" *The Nigeria Punch Newspaper*, 30 September, Back page.
- Baldwin, K. (2005): "who gets the job? Dynamics of opposition and redistribution in Mali" *Unpublished paper*, Department of Political Science, Columbia university.
- Burgess, J, Jedwab, R, Miguel, E, Morjaria, A, Miguel, G. (2013): "The value of democracy: Evidence from Road Building in Kenya" *NBER Working Paper* No 19398, September: pp.1-40. See [Africanpoliticsgroup.org](http://www.africanpoliticsgroup.org). Available at [http:// www.nber.org/data-appendix/w/19398](http://www.nber.org/data-appendix/w/19398) (www.nber.org)
- Carbone, G. (2012): "Do new democracies deliver welfare? Political regimes and health policy in Ghana and Cameroon" *Democratization*, 19(2); 157-183. <https://doi.org/10.80/13510347.2011.572618>
- Calhoun, C. ed. (1994): *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Blackwell, Oxford. (See pure.roehampton.ac.uk)

- Cox, G. (2007): "Swing voters, Core voters and Distributive Politics" *Leitner Program Working Paper 14*. Leitner Program in International and Comparative Political Economy, New Haven, US. Available at <http://www.yale.edu/leitner/papers.htmlhigherlogicdownloads3.amazonaws.com>
- Cohen, A. ed (2000): *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*, Routledge, New York. www.sociology.ed.ac.uk
- Daniel I, & Bob, H. (2017): "Identity Crisis: A Theoretical Analysis of Team Identification Research", *European Sport Management Quarterly*. 17, Issue 4: pp.413-435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1306872>; www.tandfonline.com
- Dahlberg, M, & Johansson, E. (2002) "On the vote-purchasing Behavior of Incumbent Governments" *American Political Science Review*, 96(1); 27-40. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3117808>
- Falana, F. (2014): *The Punch Nigeria Newspaper*, 15 July, p. 10.
- Gladhill, J. (1994): *Power and its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics*, Pluto, London. Available at ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk
- Golden, M & Min, B. (2013): "Distributive Politics around the World", *The Annual Review of Political Science*, (16); 73-99. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052209-121553>.
- Gupta, A & James Ferguson eds (1997): *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, University Press. Durham, NC.
- Green, E. (2011): "Patronage as institutional choice: Evidence from Rwanda and Uganda" *Journal of Comparative Politics*, July, pp.421-438 Available at personal.lse.ac.uk

- Hall, S & Paul Du Gay eds. (1996): *Questions of Cultural Identity*, SAGE, London. Available at www.oxfordbibliographies.com
- Hoffman, B & James, I. (2013): "Parties, Ethnicity and voting in African Elections" *Comparative Politics*, 45(2); 127-146. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41714179>
- Janda, K. (1980): *Political Parties: A Cross-National Survey*, The Free Press, New York. Available at ink.springer.com
- Jonathan H & Thomas W. (2003): "Identity Politics and Politics of Identities". *Identities*. Global Studies in Power and Culture. 10, Issue 1, pp.1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890304336>. Available at www.egeyazgan.com
- Kitschelt, H & Wilkinson, S. (2007): "Citizen politician linkage'. An introduction" in *Kitschelt, H & Wilkinson, S eds Patrons, Clients, and Policies; Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 1-49. Available at www-personal.umich.edu
- Keefer, P. (2007) "Clientelism, Credibility, and the Policy. Choices of Young Democracies", *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4); 804-821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00282>. Available at www.hks.harvard.edu
- Kim, K. (2007) 'Favoritism and reverse discrimination', *European Economic Review*, 200701.
- Levitt, S & Snyder, J. (1997): "The impact of Federal Spending On House Election Outcomes", *The Journal of Political Economy*, University of Chicago, 105(1); 30-53. [Http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/262064](http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/262064)
- Mach, Z. (1993): *Symbols, Conflicts, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology*, State University of New-York Press, Albany.

- Martin, AL, & Eduardo M. eds. (2003): *Identities: Race, Class, Gender, and Nationality*. Maiden, MA: Blackwell. Available at www.oxfordbibliographies.com
- Merriam-Webster, (2018): Available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com>.
- Olawale, A. (2007): “Civil Society Organizations and Cross-Cutting Elections Themes” Paper Presented at *IFES Lessons Learned Conference* Sheraton Hotels and Towers, Abuja. August 22-23.
- Olaniyan, AO (2009): “From Accommodation to Exclusion: The Changing pattern of Inter-group relations in Nigeria” *Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3 no 11, 521-525. Available at <http://www.academicjournals.org/ajpsir>
- Olaniyi, OO (2004): “A Geo-political perspective of the voting behaviour of electorate in Nigeria” *Political Science Review* 3(1 & 2), March, Department of Political Science. University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
- Olsen, K. (2015): “Distributive Justice and the Politics of Difference” *Critical Horizon*, 2(1); 5-32. DOI:10.1163/156851601750169982.
- Osaghae, EF. (2014): “Nigeria and the decolonization of the state: centenary on the brink, new beginnings” *The Thinker: A PanAfrica Quarterly for Thought Leaders*. Vusizwe Media, South Africa.
- Oyediran, O. (1981): “Political Parties: Formation and Candidate Selections” In O. Oyediran (ed), *The Nigeria 1979 Elections*, Macmillan Press, London and Basin Stone.
- Onwuka, A. (2014): “what is it about this Fayose? *The Punch Nigeria Newspaper*, 21 October, p. 29.
- Onwuka, A. (2015): “why do Ekiti people love Fayose so much” *The Punch Nigeria Newspaper*, 9 June, p. 27.

- Rutherford, J ed. (1990): *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence and Wishart. Available at www.library.auckland.ac.nz
- Stokes, S, Dunning, T, Nazareno, M, Brusco, V (2013): *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism, The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*, Cambridge University Press, London. pp. 1-25. Available at journals.sagepub.com
- Van de walle, N. (2007): “Meet the New Boss, same as the Old Boss? The Evolution of Political Clientalism in Africa” in H Kitschelt & S Wilkinson (eds) *Patrons, Clients, and Policies; Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*, pp.50-67. Cambridge University Press, New York. Available at www.palgraveconnect.com
- Yuval- Davis, N. (2006) “Belonging and the politics of Belonging” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 40(3); 197-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331> Available at revistaselectronicas.ujaen.es