

Nigeria's 2015 General Election

*Continuity and Change in
Electoral Democracy*

LADI HAMALAI, SAMUEL EGWU
AND J. SHOLA OMOTOLA



Nigeria's 2015 General Elections

Ladi Hamalai • Samuel Egwu • J. Shola Omotola

Nigeria's 2015 General Elections

Continuity and Change in Electoral Democracy

palgrave
macmillan

Ladi Hamalai
National Institute for Legislative
Studies
Abuja, Nigeria

Samuel Egwu
Department of Political Science
University of Jos
Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

J. Shola Omotola
Research and Training Department
National Institute for Legislative
Studies
Abuja, Nigeria

ISBN 978-3-319-54095-5
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-54096-2

ISBN 978-3-319-54096-2 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017939865

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical and Structural Issues in Nigerian Politics	13
3	Continuity and Change in Nigeria's Electoral Democracy	45
4	Party System and the Dominance of the People's Democratic Party	73
5	Trends in Voter Behaviour, 1999–2015	103
6	Trends in Election Outcomes, 1999–2015	125
7	Democratic Governance and Political Accountability, 1999–2015	139
8	Electoral Reform and Electoral Administration, 1999– 2015	165
9	Party Politics in the 2015 Nigerian Elections	183
10	The 2015 Presidential Election	203

11 The 2015 National Assembly Election	231
12 The 2015 Gubernatorial Election	251
13 The 2015 Elections and the Future of Electoral Democracy	273
Bibliography	303
Index	307

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Ladi Hamalai is the Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS). An Associate Professor, she was the pioneer Project Coordinator of Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP), National Assembly, since 2004. She holds Doctorate Degree in Development Studies of the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. Dr Ladi lectured in the University of Maiduguri and Nigerian Defence Academy from 1982 to 2003. A specialist in economic policy making in Nigeria, she has authored several international publications and holds National Awards: Member of the Order of Federal Republic (MFR), 2001 and one of the 50 Women of Distinction honoured by the Presidency in 2010.

Samuel Egwu is Professor of Political Economy and Development Studies in the Department of Political Science, University of Jos. A former President of the Nigerian Political Science Association, he previously worked as the Governance Adviser to the United Nations Development Programme in Nigeria. He has published extensively on governance in Nigeria. He was a member of the 2014 National Conference as a Kogi state delegate to chart a new political course for the country. In 2017, he was appointed a Resident Electoral Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

J. Shola Omotola (sholaomotola@yahoo.com) is Professor of Political Science and Head of Department at the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. He has previously worked as a Consultant and Head of the Socio-Political Unit of the Department of Research and Training, National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), National Assembly,

Abuja, Nigeria. He was, until August 2015, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Redeemer's University, Nigeria. He obtained his PhD in Comparative African Politics and Governance from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His primary research interests are in comparative African governance institutions, democratization and election studies, legislative studies, oil and environmental politics in the Niger Delta and conflict and peacebuilding. His publications on these and related themes have appeared in *African Affairs*, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, *African and Asian Studies*, *Africa Review*, *Africa Today*, *African Security Review*, *African Sociological Review*, *Journal of African Law*, *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* etc. He is co-editor of *The State in Contemporary Nigeria: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges*, 2016; *The Legislature and Governance in Nigeria* (2014); and *Horror in Paradise: Framework for Understanding the Crisis of the Niger Delta*, 2014.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Composition of federal house of representatives by political parties, 1959–1964	84
Table 4.2	Composition of senate by political parties, 1979–1983	84
Table 4.3	Composition of house of representatives and senate by political parties, 1999–2015	85
Table 4.4	Composition of governorship seats by political parties, 1999–2015	86
Table 5.1	Nigeria voter registration profile (1959–2015)	112
Table 5.2	Voter registration and turnout in Nigeria’s presidential election, 1999–2015	113
Table 5.3	Voter registration and turnout in burkina faso, cape verde, chad and ghana presidential election since 1991	116
Table 5.4	South African elections: Voting age, population, voter registration and turnout	116
Table 5.5	Voter registration and turnout in Sri Lanka and Singapore presidential election since 1994	117
Table 5.6	A comparison of the percentage of voter turnout in the last parliamentary	118
Table 6.1	Presidential election result by political party (1999–2015)	131
Table 6.2	Distribution of governors by political parties (1999–2015)	132
Table 6.3	Re-election and retention rate in the US senate	132
Table 10.1	A summary of selected election observation reports in Nigeria, 1999–2015	213
Table 10.2	Results of the presidential election, 2015	217
Table 10.3	Results of 2015 presidential election by geo-political zones	218
Table 10.4	Result of the 1999 presidential election	218

Table 10.5	Spatial breakdown of voter turnout in presidential elections, 2011 and 2015	219
Table 10.6	Result of the 2003 presidential election	220
Table 10.7	Result of the 2007 presidential election	221
Table 10.8	Result of the 2011 presidential election	222
Table 10.9	Voter turnout in presidential elections, 1959–2007	222
Table 11.1	Composition of the national assembly, based on the 1999 election results	235
Table 11.2	Composition of the national assembly, based on the 2003 election results	236
Table 11.3	Composition of the national assembly, based on the 2007 election results	237
Table 11.4	Composition of the national assembly, based on the 2011 election results	237
Table 11.5	Women representation in the NA, 1999–2011	238
Table 11.6	Composition of the national assembly, based on the 2015 election results	244
Table 12.1	Configuration of governorship seats among parties before the 2015 election	253
Table 12.2	Results of the 2015 gubernatorial elections	266

Introduction

This book examines the significance of the 2015 elections in consolidating Nigeria's democracy. It is situated within the historical context of the difficulty at routinizing democracy since the attainment of nationhood in 1960 and the return to civil rule in May 1999, in particular. However, the book goes beyond a narrative of the elections as an event or a series of events that occurred during the conduct of the 2015 elections. Rather, it attempts to offer a holistic analysis of Nigeria's electoral process in terms of how the unfolding dynamics of limited changes in the constitutional, institutional, attitudinal and the behavioural frameworks that underpin electoral competition in Nigeria played out in the elections. Therefore, the book attempts to examine the conduct and outcome of the 2015 elections against the background of the pattern of electoralism that had been established since the return to democracy in 1999. But more importantly, the book seeks to draw attention to the dialectics of continuity and change that have been thrown up by the elections and how the lessons learned can be used to build a more enduring democratic system, not only for elections whose outcomes are widely acceptable, but also a democracy that is truly accountable to the Nigerian people in terms of service delivery and addressing the challenges of poverty and social exclusion.

WHY THE BOOK MATTERS

Elections have always been a central defining theme in the democratization process, especially of new democracies and even more so in Nigeria where flawed and bitterly contested elections have repeatedly brought democratic aspirations of the citizens to early grief. Though generally regarded as inadequate, given that elections cannot in and of themselves make a democracy, their regularity has been hailed as an important step towards democratic consolidation (Diamond, 2008; Lindberg, 2006). As such, election studies will continue to be an attractive unit of analysis in democratization studies. Secondly, and specifically in Nigeria's case, elections have always been considered, as in many other African countries, as arguably the weakest link in the democratization process, failing to satisfy their widely acclaimed democratic qualities of competition, participation and legitimacy (Omotola, 2013). This was the general trend and perception of Nigerian elections prior to the conduct of the 2015 elections (Obi, 2008; Adebayo and Omotola, 2007).

The general outlook towards the 2015 elections was gloomy. The electoral environment was excessively polluted by a number of factors and the terrain became endangered and slippery. Among other concerns, the reactivation of the north-south divide, rooted in ethno-regional and religious identities, as demonstrated in 2011 when the two leading presidential candidates, namely Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, were packaged and largely behaved as though they were bearers of ethno-regional and religious torch, sent the signal that the 2015 elections may not be significantly different from the precious ones, especially the 2011 elections. Indeed, the 2015 elections elevated ethno-regional and religious polarizations in the country to an unprecedented height. Added to this were the vexed question of the introduction and use of Permanent Voters Card (PVCs) and Electronic Card Reader (ECR), including the accusations and counter-accusations on the alleged lopsidedness in the distribution of PVCs between the two leading political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC), and by logical extension between the north and the south. There was also the raging security dilemma, exemplified most notably by the Boko Haram insurgency with stronghold in the north-eastern part of the country. The influence of the insurgency was so strong that it provided the excuse for the federal government to postpone the elections for over one month. Electioneering campaigns too were largely

uninspiring, with the language of politics provocative and offensive, indeed characterized by the resort to hate speech.

It was, therefore, hardly surprising to see the ascendancy of doomsday prophecies about the elections and the democratization process. In an open letter to then President Jonathan, for example, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, a former Minister of External Affairs under the Babangida administration, after a careful review of the electoral landscape, concluded that the presidential election, irrespective of its outcomes, could instigate post-election violence of great magnitude than had ever been witnessed in the country (Akinyemi, 2014).

Before Akinyemi's prediction had been a much more terrifying warning by John Campbell, a former US Ambassador to Nigeria, suggesting that unless urgent steps were taken to address the challenges facing the country, Nigeria could disintegrate in 2015. The coincidence of the 2015 elections with the projected year of fulfilment of this 'prediction' only added troubling dimensions to the 2015 elections. Given the unfavourable electoral environment as highlighted earlier, Nigerians were worried about the probable fulfilment of this prediction. It follows, logically, that so many things were grossly stacked against the successful conduct of the 2015 elections, with the fear that the elections may go the troubled ways of their predecessors since 1999, particularly the 2011 elections, if not worse.

However, Nigeria defied the odds. The elections were not only generally peaceful, with limited election-related violence and deaths compared to previous elections, they also produced unprecedented, positive outcomes that could advance democratization if well harnessed. One of the most unique outcomes of the election was that it led to the alternation of power, the first of its kind in the annals of Nigeria's electoral history. While it was already significant that an opposition party could defeat an incumbent government, a rare feat in electoral democracy, it was even much more important that the incumbent president, who had just lost power, could quickly concede defeat and congratulate the victorious opposition candidate even before the final tabulation and announcement of official results. Interestingly too, there were no petitions/litigations against the results of the presidential election. This was also the first time such a thing would happen since 1999.

The National Assembly (NA) (federal legislative) and state elections also exhibited certain unique characteristics. The most obvious and significant relates to the recomposition and reconfiguration of power

in both chambers of the NA, where for the first time since 1999, and as in the presidential election, the ruling party lost its majority in parliament. Though the PDP had been dominant in parliament since 1999, signs of its gradual decline began manifesting in the 2011 elections when the opposition made considerable gains against the PDP. Similar tendencies manifested in the state elections, where the PDP also lost many of the states under its control to the APC. All these feats were unprecedented.

Yet, the 2015 elections were not all about positive outcomes. There were also some negative manifestations as the elections radiated some old tendencies in Nigerian elections. These included the prominence of ethno-regional and religious considerations, pockets of pre-election violence, excessive use of money in violation of the regulation governing campaign financing, abuse of party primaries at different levels, low level of women participation and success in elections, violation of regulations governing media, especially in terms of equal access to all parties in state-owned media outlets, and resort to hate speech, among others.

The import of the foregoing is that the 2015 elections were characterized by elements of continuity and change; the former exemplified by the long established traditions in Nigerian elections and the latter by the unprecedented heights recorded in various aspects of the elections, most notably the alternation of power. Therefore, it is pertinent to critically explore and explain both tendencies of continuity and change, in the 2015 elections. How do we account for continuity and change in the 2015 Nigerian elections? What factors underpin the dynamics of continuity and change in the elections? What lessons can be drawn from the overall governance of the elections for the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy? These are some of the broad concerns which this book seeks to address.

We are cognizant of the few publications that have been made on the subject. However, most of such publications are journal articles analysing different aspects of the elections shortly after the elections. To the best of our knowledge, there is not yet a book-length publication on the subject. Moreover, the comprehensiveness of this book, both in terms of its theoretical orientations and empirical illustrations, makes the book a worthy scholarly intervention. By underscoring elements of continuity and change in the 2015 elections, the book has strong historical grounding, as well as comparative insight.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THE BOOK

This book focuses on the dynamics of continuity and change in the 2015 Nigerian elections. With such a focus, the book offers much more than a mere narrative of the story of the 2015 elections. It also presents a critical and comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's democratization process from a largely institutional perspective. Consequently, the theoretical framework of the book addresses important issues of federalism, ethnicity and class as core analytical themes in the understanding of Nigerian government and politics. Guided by the insights offered by these frameworks, the book explores other salient themes in Nigeria's electoral processes since 1999, including the rise and fall of the PDP, voting patterns and behaviour, democratic accountability beyond elections, party politics, as well as separate chapters on the Presidential, NA and Governorship elections. In each of these themes, the dynamics of continuity and change were underscored, including institutional innovations and designs, as well as critical reform issues that engendered more effective administration of the 2015 elections.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The book is situated within the mixed method of research, drawing on both the qualitative and quantitative design supplemented by historical and comparative analysis. Data for the study were drawn largely from secondary sources, including books, journals, official publications by relevant electoral stakeholders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and election observation groups, seminar/conference papers, newspapers and magazines and other internet sources. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, together with quantitative tools such as tables, graphs and percentage analysis.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The book is organized into 13 chapters. Each of the chapters discusses important theoretical issues around politics and elections in Nigeria, as well as critical trends and developments in party politics and elections beginning from the return to civil rule in 1999 and the 2015 general elections. The first chapter provides a general introduction to the book,

underscoring the significance of such an intervention at this particular point of Nigeria's democratization.

Chapter 2 explores some of the salient theoretical considerations in coming to terms with issues of power, politics and democracy in Nigeria. These issues have given and continue to give Nigerian politics, shape and structure, including the determination of the party system, the issues that frame electioneering campaigns and structure voter preferences, and define the deep structural, institutional and behavioural elements of Nigerian politics. Some of these theoretical and philosophical issues impact on social cleavages such as class and ethnicity, the secularity of the state and the impact of the federal idea and consociation measures on the management of diversity and the electoral process. Not only do these issues resonate in the electoral process as witnessed in the 2015 elections, they are intertwined and linked in the way they frame issues of politics, power and democracy in Nigeria. The appeal to ethnic, regional and communal constituencies by politicians frame politics and elections around these issues with dire consequences for national unity and coherence, yet these identities are readily mobilized by class conscious actors. Ethno-regional political organizations such as the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Ohaneze N'digbo and Afenifere that mask class interests in ethnic garbs should be understood in this manner. Beyond the crisis of internal democracy that crippled the PDP and other parties, the challenge of managing ethnic diversity and of balancing ethnic and regional representation in the recruitment of party leadership and rotation of key executive and legislative positions bring to the foreground the high points of the 2015 general elections. In a similar manner, contestations around the secularity of the Nigerian state played out in the emergence of Boko Haram-led insurgency which threatened Nigeria's unity and the elections.

In Chapter 3, the book offers a panoramic overview of the dynamics of continuity and change in the 2015 elections against the background of Nigeria's democratization since 1999. Specifically, the chapter highlights salient elements of continuity in the areas of the politics of brinkmanship that has always been a recurrent feature of Nigerian politics since the First Republic. This is exemplified in the undue influences of ethno-regional and religious identities, raising tension in the elections to a dizzying height. Other elements of continuity include the problematic nature of party primaries and candidate selection, especially at the state level, the violation of regulatory norms on campaign financing and media accessibility, as well as the continuing low level of women participation and

representation in politics, among others. With respect to change, the 2015 elections heralded, for the first time in the annals of Nigeria's election, the alternation of power between the ruling and opposition parties. Moreover, the election witnessed considerable measure of improvement in the quality of electoral administration for a number of reasons. These include electoral reform initiatives, leading to innovations and improved capacity of INEC for electoral governance, the deployment of technology (card reader), strong civic engagement and citizen agency and the emergence of a strong opposition through party merger, among others.

Chapter 4 of the book examines the rise and fall of the PDP from its formation in 1998 through its 16 years of controlling power at the national level and in most of the 36 states of the federation, to the 2015 elections when it was defeated by the opposition APC. The significance of PDP goes beyond the fact that it was a dominant ruling party for over one decade of Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999. The greater significance of the party probably lies in its being a semblance of a national party that came to be associated with Nigeria's democratic stability. Conscious of its size and membership which cuts across Nigeria's ethnic and regional divide and incorporating leading political elite from the minority ethnic nationalities, the party, just as the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in the Second Republic, adopted a zonal principle in the distribution of party offices as well as key executive and legislative positions. The party's handling of the zoning principle, especially in the aftermath of the death of President Umaru Yar'adua in 2010 created a series of events leading to the implosion of the party just before the 2015 general elections.

What the chapter offers is the sociology of the party by tracing its history to the emergence of G-34, a group of politicians who confronted the General Sani Abacha regime, and the different political groups and tendencies that coalesced to giving birth to the party. The analysis also brings into focus, the prominent role of retired military generals and 'money bags' during the formative stage of the party, which partly explains the basis for oligarchic tendency within the party and the very roots of the crisis of internal democracy. It was the grievances within the party fuelled by a combination of agitation by the northern elements, who claimed to be shortchanged with the assumption of the Presidency in 2010 and the hijack of the party hierarchy by a desperate President Jonathan, who wanted a second term that led to the inevitable fragmentation within the party and the defection of five governors, party leaders and parliamentarians into the opposition APC in the countdown to the elections.

Chapters 5 and 6 broach a very important theme in electoral democracy which pertains to voting pattern and voter behaviour. While Chapter 5 dwells on voter behaviour as it relates to trends in voter behaviour, Chapter 6 deals with voter behaviour as it affects outcomes of elections. In the context of electoral democracy, voter behaviour and its determinants are useful in determining the legitimacy and inclusiveness of the electoral process. In the absence of parties that are ideologically rooted, reliance on electioneering campaigns that are not issue-driven, and the low level of class consciousness, voters are more likely to harken to appeals to ethno-religious and regional identities, the common strategy of vote buying or party identification framed by the prevailing system of patronage politics. However, analysis of voter behaviour and establishing the factors shaping voter preferences need to be handled with caution because of intervening variables such as entrenched culture of candidates' selection rather than elections as well as the low capacity of election management bodies to conduct free and fair elections.

The continuation of this theme in Chapter 6 dwells on outcome trends in elections conducted since 1999. The importance of election outcomes is stressed bringing out the central importance of election outcome as a measure of 'choice' and 'voice' that are critical to the understanding of electoral democracy. The chapter highlights the limitations in interpreting election results since 1999 as a measure of 'choice' and 'voice' in Nigeria's emergent democratic culture precisely because of incumbency factors at all levels. The power of incumbency is manifested in the ability of sitting presidents and governors to determine election outcome, again, made possible by the institutional weaknesses of political parties and the helplessness of citizens. The chapter further draws attention to the paradigm change represented by the 2011 general elections in this regard, which marked a departure from the 2007 elections, by restoring a measure of public confidence in the electoral process.

In Chapter 7, the book provides an audit of Nigeria's electoral democracy in terms of democratic accountability beyond elections as a formal, procedural process. Without necessarily dwelling on known criticisms of liberal democracy in terms of its inability to offer citizens voice in the policy-making arena, the chapter demonstrates the deficit of Nigeria's electoral democracy. For instance, despite increased space for civic groups to engage the democratic process beyond successfully challenging authoritarian rule, the level of accountability of the state to citizens in the dimensions of responsiveness and answerability has been abysmally low. Aside the occasional use of protests and the social media, not much space

for citizen's engagement with the policy process has been offered. Issues highlighted in the chapter include weak electoral governance, the disempowering neoliberal economic policies pursued by the government since 1999, the high levels of corruption and impunity, mounting insecurity challenges and declining levels of civic participation.

The series of electoral reform implemented in the aftermath of the 2007 elections leading to the appointment of Professor Attahiru Jega as the Chairman of INEC as well as the amendment of the 1999 Constitution (Federal Ministry of Information, 1999) and the Electoral Act (2010), with the former largely focused on electoral matters, and how the reform initiatives impacted on the conduct of the 2015 elections in particular, is the focus of Chapter 8. It traces the long road and trajectories in the reform agenda (as limited as it was) and the internal, institutional and organization reform within INEC itself that culminated in the improved election environment and improvement in the conduct of the 2011 but even more significantly on the 2015 elections.

Chapter 9 is a reflection on party politics as played out in the 2015 elections. It discusses the significance of the elections against the background of the threat analysis by the US-based think tank, the National Intelligence Council which, in one of its discussion papers in 2005, predicted the possible breakup of Nigeria. This prediction which derived from scenario building anchored on the realities of elite fragmentation and other sources of threats to Nigeria's coherence later became an 'urban legend' in Nigeria, and worked into a narrative that wrongly portrayed the US government and the think tank as Prophets of Doom. The repeated echoing of this prediction by the former US Ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, in the period leading to the election especially when insurgency in the north-east was at its peak raised fears that electoral dynamics could hasten the prospect of Nigeria's breakup. As the chapter shows, not only did the so-called self-fulfilling prophesy fail to come to pass, Nigeria conducted elections which turned out to be largely credible and peaceful. Issues discussed in the chapter include the realignment of political forces aided by the internal crises which had festered within the ruling PDP leading to its implosion in August 2013 and the emergence of a strong opposition, the acrimonious party primaries in the two leading parties with the exception of the transparent process through which the opposition APC elected its presidential candidate and the constitution of the National Peace Committee in response to the intemperate utterances and deliberate fanning of ethnic, religious and regional embers by the leading candidates.

The presidential election which received the most attention from Nigerians and the international community conducted on 28 March 2015 is discussed in [Chapter 10](#). The chapter draws attention to key trends in the electioneering campaigns and the manner in which political alliances that took place prior to the elections played out. In particular, the chapter examines the geo-political patterns of voting and some evaluation regarding the credibility of the election. However, one of the most important highlights in this chapter is the victory of the opposition APC and the alternation of power that occurred for the first time at the national level in Nigeria's post-independence electoral history.

[Chapter 11](#) examines the elections conducted into the National Assembly (NA) on the same day as the presidential election on 28 March, 2015. The analysis is situated within the context of the significance of the election as dictated by the changing party configurations in the NA occasioned by the emergence of the APC and the defection of legislators from the ruling PDP. While the elections did not differ remarkably from the other elections, it resulted in the creation of a majority for the new ruling APC in the two chambers of the NA.

The book, in [Chapter 12](#), discusses the governorship elections that took place on 1 April. The analysis in the chapter draws attention to the significant difference between the governorship elections and the presidential election conducted a week earlier in terms of the level of violence and the perception of being fair, free and credible. Domestic and international observers including the African Union Election Observer Mission (AU EOM) reported, for example, that a number of political party functionaries, candidates and individuals engaged in the use of violent and inflammatory language in the run-up to the election which was conducted with state assembly elections. The numerous infractions and the high level of violence reported in states like Abia, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Katsina, Imo, Rivers and Sokoto is indicative of the challenges with conducting elections and entrenching electoral democracy in Nigeria. This section also gives broad indications at the subnational level, the changes that took place at the national level in terms of realignment of political forces, especially the significant in-road made by the APC into the traditional strongholds of the PDP in north-central states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara and Plateau.

In [Chapter 13](#), which provides the conclusion to the book, a broad indication is provided for the future of electoral democracy in Nigeria, drawing from the lessons of the 2015 elections. While it is expected that stakeholders in Nigeria's electoral democracy will build on the achievements

of the two recent general elections, especially improving the internal capacity of INEC in the areas of logistics, the refinement of technology deployed in the elections especially the card readers, adequate training of ad hoc staff, taming the culture of corruption within the organization, and improved partnerships and collaboration with the other stakeholders, the road to elections that have integrity and credibility appears to be a long one. It could be more so considering possibilities that successive leadership of INEC may lack focus in driving further reform of the electoral process or may lack sufficient good will that had been enjoyed from stakeholders by the Professor Jega-led INEC. Furthermore, if one were to take the reputation of elections in some states to mirror the prevailing level of electoral malfeasance, there are challenges to address in the long run. These challenges necessarily must put at the centre the deepening of electoral reform including exploring alternative to, or complementing the present majoritarian electoral system by looking at Proportional Representation (PR).

But there are other substantive issues explored in this chapter which relate to the limits of liberal democracy in driving governance and development agenda. While not discounting the importance of routinizing electoral democracy, there is need to interrogate the adequacy of the liberal democratic agenda which appears to foster political environment conducive to market reforms rather than the core issues of governance, popular empowerment and securing livelihood for majority of the people. In other words, even if Nigeria perfectly gets right the procedural form of democracy in which the vote counts and elections become a mechanism to change unpopular governments on a regular basis, it may not yet provide citizens the space to truly make the state accountable, and to deliver social services especially to the poor. It is this dilemma that led us to revisit the debate about the alternative which social democracy presents to the African people including Nigeria where progress in democratization has co-habited with social exclusion and the disempowerment of the majority.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, P. F. & Omotola, J. S. 2007, 'Public Perceptions of the 2007 Nigeria's General Elections', *Journal of African Elections*, 6(2), pp. 201–216.
- Akinyemi, A. B. 2014, 'Open letter to Jonathan, Buhari, By Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi', 22 December; available at <http://blogs.premiumtimesng.com/?p=166391> (accessed on 28 February, 2015).

- Diamond, L. 2008, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build a Free Society throughout the World*. New York: Times Books.
- Electoral Act, 2010, Federal Government Printer, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Federal Ministry of Information. 1999, *1999 the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Abuja: Federal Ministry of information.
- Lindberg, S. 2006, *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Obi, C. I. 2008, 'International Election Observation Missions and the Promotion of Democracy: Some Lessons from Nigeria's 2007 Elections', *Politikon*, 35(1), pp. 69–86.
- Omotola, J. S. 2010, 'Elections and Democratic Transitions in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic', *African Affairs*, 109(437), pp. 535–553.
- Omotola, J. S. 2013, 'Opposition and the Challenges of Multiparty Democracy', *The Nigerian Electoral Journal* (Special Issue on Opposition Politics in Nigeria), 5(2), pp. 1–46.

Theoretical and Structural Issues in Nigerian Politics

INTRODUCTION

Power and politics remain at the heart of democracy. Indeed, it is unthinkable to discuss democracy without reference to the concepts of power and politics. To begin with, power constitutes the basis of politics – the central attraction in so far as it remains a relational phenomenon associated with the ability of power holders to influence the course of action especially in the public sphere. The arena of politics does not only represent an important instrument for capturing and consolidating power but more importantly, it is also about mediating interests, which more often than not, are conflictual in nature. Power and politics are, therefore, vital variables in any fruitful discourses about democracy. Thus, the concepts of power, politics and democracy are inseparable and the relationships among them indisputable. Yet, such relationships are not as simplistic and straightforward as they appear to be on the surface. Despite the allusion of mainstream literature to the mutual linkage and inseparability of the two, most of such studies tend to be biased in favour of advanced democracies of Europe and North America at the expense of developing democracies.

But more importantly, there is a tendency to assume that the underlying logic of politics and the struggle for power is ‘tribalism’ and for those who care about the sensitivity of using the prism of tribalism in contemporary Africa, the ‘ethnic paradigm’ is privileged above other considerations. In fact, mainstream western interpretation of Nigerian politics and political events often simply have issues around the divide between the

Hausa/Fulani Muslim north and the Christian south that is assumed to be predominantly Yoruba and Ibo. The internal struggle for power within the PDP, for example, is simplified along this fault line just as the analysis of chances of the presidential candidates in the 2015 elections was reduced to this simple dichotomy. Again, along this line, analyses of the chances of candidates in governorship contests are reduced to Muslims versus Christians even by the Nigerian media. Yet, we do know that embedded in Nigerian politics are layers of identities including class and ethnicity that frame political issues and determine how the electorate vote in elections.

For instance, it is well-established that the idea of a monolithic north of Hausa/Fulani is a figment of western imagination. Not only is the notion of a unified Hausa/Fulani communal identity and interests false and misleading, the emergence of a strong ethnic minority identity that is also internally undermined by religious division makes a simplified construction of differences along ethnic and religious lines problematic. Similarly, it is difficult to sustain the notion of a Christian south confronting a Muslim north in Nigerian politics considering the significant population of Muslims especially among the Yoruba of the south-west. In other words, it is important to examine the range of theoretical and underlying structural issues that shape political discourse and actions in Nigeria in order to understand how the complex interaction among them have defined, are defining and will continue to define Nigerian politics.

This chapter provides an analysis of the overarching context and framework of Nigerian politics that is useful in explaining the nature and outcome of the 2015 general elections. Accordingly, the chapter examines the salient theoretical issues and undercurrents in power, politics and democracy in Nigeria. Therefore, the chapter discusses these issues as they relate to the success or failure of democracy, and how, at the empirical level, they explain the workings of politics and democracy in Nigeria.

POWER, POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

First, we start with the idea of democracy. The literal meaning of democracy, ‘as indicated by its etymological origin in ancient Greek’, according to Plattner (2014: 83) ‘is the power or rule of the people’. Walker (1966: 286) underscored this salient point when he writes that in its original (classical) formulation, democracy was about the ‘doctrine of popular rule’, under which ‘public policy should result from extensive, informed discussion and debate’, thereby increasing ‘the citizen’s awareness of

his/her moral and social responsibilities, reduce the danger of tyranny, and improve the quality of government'. While it is incontrovertible that the original notion of democracy embodies individual liberty/freedom, equality in social and economic spheres was also part of the original meaning of democracy (Osborne 2010). More than any other writer in recent times, Ake (1996b) takes to the cleaners the reformulated version of democracy which reduces the content of democracy to the promotion of civil and political liberty or liberty, while expunging the idea of equality from its original meaning. This, to him, remains the legacy of the bourgeois revolution which has succeeded in giving universalization to liberal democracy, which is not only increasingly becoming illiberal but ends in the democratization of disempowerment.

Thus, whereas the majoritarian notion of democracy largely remains valid in the contemporary usage of the term, given the emphasis on free and fair elections, the liberal conception of democracy seems to have altered its classical conception or better still diminished and narrowed the meaning of democracy. It is to overcome this limitation that informs the popular advocacy for social democracy especially in the developing world. The concern seems to be that the liberal notion of democracy, while still recognizing the salience of rule by the people, by aspiring to still ensure the sovereignty of the people through periodic elections, free and fair or not, also tends to constrain popular influences on democracy through the undue 'elitization' of power and politics. The entrenchment of elite oligarchy in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, increasingly exemplified by the direct capture of the process of party primaries and candidates' selection by moneybags, provides a clear example. Such a tendency may be considered to be at the very heart of the elitist conception of power and politics, with its 'clear presumption of the average citizen's inadequacies' (Walker 1966: 286). As a consequence, as Walker (1966) points out, 'democratic systems must rely on the wisdom, loyalty and skill of their political leaders, not on the population at large'.

On the one side of the political system, is a group of the elite, or better still, the 'political entrepreneurs', endowed with certain attributes, notably 'ideological commitments and manipulative skills'; and the citizens at large, the masses, on the other hand, which is 'usually a much larger class of passive, inert followers assumed to have little knowledge of public affairs and even less interest' (Walker 1966). The basis or elements of power, defined as 'all the resources – opportunities, acts, objects, etc – that the influencing agent can exploit in order to affect the behavior of another'

(Dahl 1957: 203; quoted in Adekanye 1999: 163), is not limited to 'ideological commitments and manipulative skills'. Under the increasing influence of globalization and the assumed 'end of ideology', politics, especially in developing democracies, has been marked by the decline of ideology. Consequently, the void created by the absence of ideology has brought to the fore, strategies of political mobilization which tend to rely on crude force and impunity as well as the mobilization of ethnic and religious identities.

One way of disguising the stranglehold of the elite over the core elements of democratic governance, including power and politics, is 'the provision for limited, peaceful competition among members of the elite for the formal positions of leadership within the system'. This is in line with Schumpeter's (1950: 250–283, 1967: 153–188); definition of democracy as that 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. What liberal democracy offers the people are the opportunity to periodically elect their leaders, that is, if elections are properly conducted and the vote counts; other than this, the people lack the opportunity to truly hold their governments to account in between elections.

The fact that democratic transition in Nigeria is taking place in the age of globalization has implication for the quality of democracy and elections. The market ideology promoted under the aegis of globalization tends to deepen socio-economic inequalities, which undermines the possibility of realizing the true meaning of individual liberty that democracy seeks to promote. In particular, the fundamentalism underlying the implementation of neoliberal economic policies such as deregulation and privatization of state-owned enterprises, whose processes have, unfortunately, been dominated, if not the exclusive preserve of the rich due to patronage politics has ensured the poor majority lacks opportunity to express their voice and freely choose their leaders. What this means is that social polarization of society may not positively reinforce the deepening of the democratic process. In addition, as the Nigerian example shows, class inequality may also be reinforced by ethnic and regional inequality because of the differential access to opportunities along these lines.

Irrespective of the theoretical debates about democracy and its relationship with power and politics, a democracy can be recognized with the presence of certain values. Such values, according to Diamond (2008: 22), include freedom of speech, religious freedom, universal adult suffrage,

competitive, free and fair elections, rule of law and equality of citizens, independent judiciary, institutional checks and balances, political pluralism and civilian control of the military.

However, as Omotola (2013) points out, these are not as simplistic and straightforward as they seem because they require the existence of people with democratic mind-set, capable of managing these structures and institutions in line with democratic demands. By implication, the survival or failure of democracy will depend not only on the direction of the maintenance of these forces, but also the nature of society and its regulations.

In an elaborate formulation of the reasons for the success and/or failure of democracies, Diskin et al. (2005: 291–309) explore the political and the socio-economic institutions of democracy, developed into four groups of relevant independent variables to assess why democratic regimes collapse. The first group consists of institutional variables, which focuses on types of regime, including federalism, presidentialism and proportionality in relation to the concentration of powers within it. The second addresses societal variables, with emphasis on factors such as societal cleavages, state of the economy and the democratic historical background of the country. The third consists of what they call mediating variables, which are located between the macro-political and the macro-societal groups, including the nature of the party system to the level of government and coalition stability. The last has to do with ‘foreign involvement’, which many others call external democracy promotion.

While all these categories are useful, we focus more on institutional and societal variables, because they have the most direct correlation to the Nigerian case. This focus is not informed solely by the specific concern of this chapter, but more importantly, against the background of the institutional and societal tendencies observed in Nigeria’s democracy. At the institutional level, for example, Nigerian democracy has been predicated upon a federal structure where power is shared among the federating units in a manner that supposedly guarantees some measure of autonomy for the federating units. The argument in the literature suggests that federalism is an antidote to democratic instability in plural societies. This explains why Lijphart (1984, 1999) lists federalism as one of the majority-restraining elements in his consensual model of democracy. Federalism is, therefore, conducive to democratic stability, and not damaging. Several other scholars (Diamond 1988, 1995; Horowitz 1994) also allude to the importance of federalism in mediating ethnic and other social tensions for

the promotion of democratic stability in plural societies. This, however, conflicts with that of Diskin, et al (2005: 292), which hypothesizes that ‘federal states are more prone to democratic collapse than unitary ones’. It is against this background that the diverse forms of affirmative actions or quota systems, be they ethnic, religious, gender or generational should be evaluated (see, for example, Bird 2014), albeit as an antidote to ethnic party development especially in Africa (Basedau and Stroh 2011; Lindberg and Morrison 2008).

The federalist approach to democratic stability in plural societies resonates with the main societal variables of democratic stability. Take, for instance, the issue of social cleavages, which can manifest in linguistic, ethnic or religious terms. As the argument goes, ‘countries with deep or parallel social cleavages, or both, are more prone to democratic collapse than those with low or cross-cutting cleavages, or both’ (Diskin et al. (2005: 294). Earlier studies by Lipset (1994), Dahl (1971), Horowitz (1994), Lijphart (1977), and many others lend credence to this claim. Similarly, the state of the economy, strong or weak, has also been identified as another vital societal variable to determine the extent of democratic stability. This body of literature is closely connected to the debate about the relationship between democracy and development (Przeworski et al. 1996, 2000; Hadenius 1994). The final societal factor relates to the history of democracy, whether favourable or not. The main determinant here has to do with the extent of democratic culture, leading to the assumption that countries with undemocratic or mixed historical backgrounds are more prone to democratic collapse than those with democratic historical, cultural and civil societal backgrounds. Some notable studies in this regard include seminal works by Almond and Verba (1963), Huntington (1991), Diamond (1993) and Putnam (1993).

It is at this critical juncture that the intersection between democracy and ethno-religious forces can be located. As studies have shown, the existence of convergent systems of values is a cardinal requirement for democratic stability (Inglehart 1997, 2000). In the absence of such a condition, it does not really matter whether support for democracy is strong or weak; once challenged, ‘contextual circumstances could erode democratic support’ (Moreno and Mendez 2002; cited in Vlas and Gherghina 2012: 337–338). As Inglehart (2000, 96) argues, ‘democracy is not attained simply by making institutional changes through elite level maneuvering. Its survival depends also on the values and beliefs of ordinary citizens’. When consensus and trust

are built around democratic values among ethno-regional and religious groups, the likelihood of survival seems to be higher and vice versa (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993; cited in; Vlas and Gherghina 2012: 337–338). The situation assumes broader significance when intersected with other mediating variables, especially fragmentation and polarization in party politics. When the party system is unduly fragmented and polarized, the chances of democratic success are limited and vice versa.

There are also important studies that allude to the economic foundations of democracy and its consolidation (Przeworski et al. 2000; Leftwich 1996). While our interest here is not to fully go into the debate about the relationship between democracy and development, including the argument about the minimum level of income or growth that is necessary for democratic survival, one must not lose sight of the many ways in which inequality and non-inclusive growth have unleashed anti-democratic forces and tendencies, including insurgency and militancy that tear at the fabrics of national unity and coherence in Nigeria. By implication, while growth is important, the allocation of the proceeds of growth in such a way that enhances fairness and equality is vital for development and democratic survival. Along this line, it may be useful to contemplate the future that awaits Nigeria's democracy in a context in which growth is grossly undermined by the fiscal crisis of the state occasioned by a drastic fall in the international prices of petrol for an economy which has remained essentially monocultural. This would appear to be a more frightening scenario compared to concerns about non-inclusive growth that evolved after the election with an opposition party that promises change in power.

However, in explaining Nigerian politics in general and the combination of underlying structures and factors that played out in its electoral politics since independence, including the recent 2015 general elections, the following are privileged for consideration: a) federalism and the ethnic-regional question, drawing attention to ethnic and regional balancing strategies; b) secularism and religious influences, including the politics of sharia and ethno-religious conflicts; and c) the predominance of class and elite interests including the attendant issues of inequality, domination and oppression as well as the increasing commoditization of politics exemplified by the role of moneybags and godfathers.

FEDERALISM, ETHNO-REGIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The ethnic question has always been an important subject in most meaningful discourses and analyses of the Nigerian project (Ekeh 1975; Osaghae and Onwudiwe 2002; Suberu 2001; Jega 2000a, b; Akinwumi 2004). However, only very few studies have examined the specific relationship between ethnicity and democratization in Nigeria (Olamiyan and Omotola 2015). This problem is not peculiar to Nigeria because, as Ibeanu (2006: 6) observes on a broader scale, what was lacking were 'in-depth studies of the concrete experiences of multi-ethnic African societies in the light of transitions to democracy'. With the exception of a few that identify positive correlations between ethnicity and democracy, the dominant trend in the extant literature points to negative correlation between ethnicity and democracy in Nigeria.

As a concept, ethnicity is beclouded by ambiguity. While some underscore cultural factors, both subjectively and objectively, some others emphasize situational forces in explaining ethnicity. Generally, ethnicity can be defined as an organizational, mobilizational, emancipatory and liberating force, both for individuals and groups, whose success depends largely on its level of politicization. A politicized ethnicity, refers to 'the articulation of interests in the name of the ethnic group and the struggle to redress or defend those interests'. Ethnicity is, therefore, an identity that can influence a person's sense of belonging and influence his/her behaviour vis-à-vis the political community.

Omotola and Olaniyan (2015) review a number of studies that alluded to the possibility of identity transformation, especially in the face of political and economic globalization (Jega 2000a). As Jega (2003) argues, identity (of which ethnic identity is about the strongest) serves as a rallying and organizing principle of social action within the civil society and in state-society relations. One pertinent factor and, perhaps, the single most significant influence on the strength of identity is the perceived existence of an external threat to that identity. Zalewski and Enloe allude to this when they state that 'clearly, one's felt need to claim identity or to restore lost identity will depend on whether there is or has been a threat to that identity' (1995: 286). Usually, threats to an (real or imagined) identity often generate a reaction from the affected to ward off the threat, which may compel identity transformation. The