

# **Deconstructing the Philosophical and Socio-Political Underpinnings of Electoral Behaviour in Ekiti State, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Ekiti State is one of the most literate communities in Nigeria and adjudged to be a politically sophisticated entity within the federation. Expectedly, its politics becomes a research interest for political observers, policy makers and scholars alike. However, the 2014 governorship poll and 2015 general elections in the state present some socio-political paradoxes, contradictions and nuances that need an analytical examination. What could have propelled a state rich in human capital to prefer the choice of “stomach infrastructure” over sustainable development? What could have precipitated the rejection of a manifesto-driven candidature in preference for “I will put smile on your faces” sloganeering? This study interrogates the philosophical and socio-political underpinnings that may have shaped the political behavior of Ekiti people within the context of its larger Yoruba nation in particular and Nigeria in general. It also examines the nexus between performance in government -as a political investment - and electoral rewards by the voters. It employs the concept of prebendalism to further examine the interplay between *politics of the belly* and voting behaviour in an electoral contest.

**Key Words:** Electoral Behaviour, Stomach Infrastructure, Politics, Election, Democracy

## **Introduction**

Whether held under authoritarian or democratic regimes, elections have a ritualistic aspect. Elections and the campaigns preceding them are dramatic events that are accompanied by rallies, banners, posters, headlines, and television coverage, all of which call attention to the importance of participation in the event. Whatever the peculiar national, regional, or local variations, elections are events that, by arousing emotions and channeling them toward collective symbols, break the monotony of daily life and focus attention on the common fate (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009).

Competitive, free and fair elections are the *sine qua non* of democracy. However, other institutional components of good governance are also much more likely to be vibrant and effective in a democracy than it would be in a non-democracy. These include an independent judiciary with a clear and predictable rule of law; an elected parliament that is autonomous and capable of checking and scrutinizing the executive branch of government; and a civil society with the freedom and resources to monitor, evaluate, question, and participate in the making and implementation of policy (Diamond, 2004).

In reality, Almami (2010:1) submits that Africa's experience with electoral democracy has been mixed: progress has been made but challenges remain. The various elections in the past several years—from Kenya and Zimbabwe to Ghana and Sierra Leone—have become historical landmarks for different reasons, varying drastically in their conduct and outcome. This mix of electoral experiences has generated considerable debate and passion on the subject of transparent, free, and fair electoral processes among election stakeholders, especially as democratic progress itself can come with further challenges; as more elections are held, and as these elections become increasingly competitive, one-party and military regimes face potentially destabilizing challenges that could increase the risk of fraud and violence.

Electoral democracy is based on the principle of free and open competition among alternative political parties, representing divergent policy programs, groups of candidates, and sectors of society, so that citizens have a range of genuine choices at the ballot box. If party organizations are unduly constrained, then this limits the ability of citizens to articulate their demands, express their preferences, and hold rulers to account (Norris, 2004:5). The electoral system of a country is the critical institution which shapes and influences the rules of political competition for state power because it determines what parties look like, who is represented in the legislature, how accountable these representatives are to the electorate and above all who governs. It is good to know that the way an electoral system operates determines the degree of public confidence and support for the democratic system itself. An electoral system regulates elections and other related activities (Adetula, 2008: xviii).

In other words, the will of the people manifested in the election of their representatives elected in a free, fair, credible and transparent atmosphere constitutes the leitmotif of the democratic process. For democracy to thrive, therefore, there must be a level playing field for all contestants to public office. Furthermore, there must be fully operational variables such as a free press, independent judiciary and an informed and discerning electorate, capable of making rational choices among competing ideologies and candidates put before them by the various political parties (Oyebode, 2012).

For the 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State, a number of posers have been raised particularly in respect of the choice of the electorate among the major contestants: Does performance matter? If not, what matters? What does the Ekiti election tell us about the electorate? They voted their preference. Is their preference for Fayose or against Fayemi? Can preferences be wrong? Where preferences reflect interests, can interests be misinformed? Can we firmly declare that emotional appeal as against rational appeal took the better part of most voters in Ekiti or is it just a manifestation of politics of spite? Can this trend be a pointer that can reveal the specific type of appeal that can sway the mind and voting pattern of the average Nigerian voter? Can the voting pattern in the 2015 Ekiti elections be regarded as an affirmation of the 2014 governorship election?

### **Background to Yoruba Socio-Political Ecology**

The Yoruba of the south-west zone, according to Osuntokun (2011:21) were the first to organize themselves against British imperialism. In fact, as far back as the time of the Governor-Generalship of Sir Fredrick Lugard, Lagosians under their leaders were involved in protesting against water rate imposed on them without consultation. In 1923 Dr J.C Vaughan and Ayo Williams with Ernest Ikoli organized the “Union of Young Nigerian” to demand a say in the affairs of the country. Later J.C Vaughan, H.O Davies, Ernest Ikoli and Samuel Akinsanya formed the Lagos Youth Movement which metamorphosed into the Nigerian Youth Movement in the 1930s. Throughout the period of the dominance of the Nigerian Youth Movement and later the N.C.N.C, Yoruba people have always played politics of principle such as the abandonment of Samuel Akinsanya’s candidacy of the

legislative council in preference for Ernest Ikoli, an Ijaw which created a crisis when ironically the Yoruba were accused of tribalism for supporting an Ijaw man. When in 1951 Obafemi Awolowo formed the Action Group, Yoruba opinion continued to be divided and the Yoruba did not see any reason for everyone to belong to the same party. Osuntokun submits, as a matter of fact that:

Politics of principle continued to dominate Yorubaland through the period of the hegemony of the Action Group to the extent that the Action Group, a sitting government party lost the federal elections of 1954 to the N.C.N.C in the West. In other words, a pattern of political division and different approach to politics was firmly established in Yorubaland. So nothing really is new in the apparent lack of political unity in Yorubaland today.

The high level of civic consciousness in this zone translates into a community capacity to define the correct political line and to impose sanctions for political misbehaviour. The zone is noted for imposing sanctions on politicians adjudged to have broken rank with tradition or to have acted in a politically embarrassing manner in relation to what is perceived as the collective interest of the Yoruba.

While examining the fortunes of Nigeria and the destiny of Yoruba race with particular reference to leadership, Kolawole (2009:39) submits that the liberal approach of the Yoruba to leadership should ordinarily be a commendable group attribute. But in a pluralist society like Nigeria where the principles of true federalism are in abeyance rather than observance, where ethnicism determines the colour of relationship, it becomes a handicap. He notes further:

The Yoruba people do not suffer fools gladly. Ironically, they do not follow a genius blindly either. They seem programmed to ask questions. The Yoruba people are the greatest critics of their Yoruba colleagues in power. It does not matter whether he is a President, Governor, Minister or Local Government Chairman. The most vociferous opposition to Awo's quest for national leadership came from a united though a minority Yoruba group.

As noted by Sekoni (2014:14), the response of the average Yoruba voter to election is determined by his view about the credibility of the electoral process. Yoruba people react to the organization of elections in three basic ways; spontaneous celebration after the result of voting is seen to reflect the choice voters believe they have made; immediate contestation or protest against an election they presume to have been rigged; and delayed

reaction to an election they also perceive to have been rigged. All of these three patterns of response on the day after an election have been witnessed in the region since the emergence of voting for political parties in the country.

The Yoruba value of plurality of perspective allows the average voter in the region to respect the principle of multiparty democracy. This principle also allows individuals to choose which of the parties is closest to his/her expectations in and from life. This explains why there are Yoruba people in all political parties. In the Yoruba region, twins belong to different or opposing political parties, the same way they may choose to belong to different religions. Siblings are happy with each other regardless of the parties or religions they espouse. But when an election leads to transferring the victory of candidate A to candidate B, friendship ends and tension emerges even among family members. While emphasizing the importance of the region to national politics, Akinnaso (2015:64), observes that from the early days of independence, the South-West has always been the battleground zone in presidential politics. Save for the unusual presidential election of 1999, in which former President Olusegun Obasanjo was the preferred candidate from the onset, no one has been elected Prime Minister or President without winning the South-West.

### **Ekiti State Creation and Electoral Democracy**

Ekiti state of Nigeria was created on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1996 along five other states by General Sani Abacha regime. The state which was carved out of the old Ondo State has its headquarters located in Ado Ekiti and it covers twelve local government areas that made up the Ekiti Zone of the old Ondo State. However, Ekiti State on creation, took off with sixteen local government areas, having had additional four carved out of the old ones.

The creation of Ekiti state for the people of Ekiti in the realisation of their self-determination aspiration was received with overwhelming joy, pomp and pageantry by indigenes at home and abroad. The initial impetus for the agitation of the creation of the state by Ekiti people was borne out of a feeling of neglect, marginalization, impoverishment and the desire and quest for self-assertion, autonomous development

and meaningful participation in events and situations that directly impacted on their lives and destiny (Oyebode, 2001:xi).

They are culturally homogenous and they speak a dialect of Yoruba language known as Ekiti. The homogenous nature of Ekiti confers on the state some uniqueness among the states of the federation. Slight differences are noticeable in the Ekiti dialect of the Yoruba language spoken by the people. This is affected by their partial locations, especially the border communities to other states (Ekiti State Government Bulletin, 2011). Some core values used to guide the conduct of the people before the horrendous nature of politics in this clime became a constant feature of their existence as once observed by Omilusi (2006):

The state is a conglomeration of compact rural communities of distinct history where communalism operates in its real form. The people there live for the benefit of their neighbours and common good is the core value. Honour and integrity also play essential roles in every action and speech of that growing up boy or girl in the neighbourhood. Quest for materialism does not receive public attention. Rather, education is seen as an indisputable path to greater things in life... Admitted that the hooliganism of ethnic militias and incessant religious crises that characterize other parts of the country are not yet here with us, but the face of politics has horrendously changed to accommodate insecurity of life and property.

Based on the 1999 constitution, promulgated as Decree 24 of 1999, Ekiti state was recognized as one of the states in the country for the conduct of the local government, state and federal elections. As at 2006, Ekiti State's population was 2,398,957. It has a land area of 6,353 sq. km, bigger than only four States: Imo, Abia, Anambra and Lagos. It is divided into sixteen local government areas, 177 electoral wards, 26 state constituencies, 6 federal constituencies and 3 senatorial constituencies. The State is homogenous, the people being all of Ekiti-speaking Yoruba stock. With the voter registration conducted by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), the State has a population of 733,766 registered voters.

The quest for the creation of Ekiti was a long-cherished ambition of the people of the State. The excision of Ondo State (of which Ekiti was a part) from the Western State in 1976 was a half-way station on the road to the fulfillment of this dream, which came to reality in 1996. Thus when the people of Ekiti State elected their Governor and members

of the State House of Assembly in 1999, they were hopeful that self-determination would result in rapid socio-economic development. The Alliance for Democracy won the election of 1999, but lost the 2003 governorship election which brought in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to power (NGF, 2013:8).

The outcome of the 2003 election, as well as the behaviour of the people at the polls, can be attributed to a number of variables. One is the non-performance of the incumbent, which further impoverished the people. The peoples' disenchantment with the AD government was so much that not even the huge amount of money dolled out days before the election could make them vote otherwise. Another variable is the desire of the people to align with the government at the federal level and the desire of President Obasanjo to "capture" his constituency (South-West Zone). The people perceived the prolonged neglect of the state by successive administrations to be consequent upon their traditional and historic romance with the opposition party. As such, they believed that voting in at the state level a party that controls the centre, would attract the much-needed "federal" presence (Abe, 2010:134). However, the mainstream politics-aligning with the party at the center-introduced to the zone in the 2003 election (which actually led to five out of the six states in the zone being controlled by the Peoples Democratic Party) did not reflect any significant change in the living standard of the people(Omilusi, 2014:231). It merely corroborates one empirical way of defining political parties in Nigeria; *that they are vehicles for the expression and exercise of conflicts over the control of power*

However, the PDP's hold on power was tenuous because of internal party crises, which paved the way for the simultaneous impeachment of the Governor and Deputy Governor on 16 October 2006. The political intrigues that culminated in their impeachment also resulted in the removal of the State Chief Judge, who was side-lined by the State House of Assembly to pave the way for the impeachments. The impeachment imbroglio led to a situation in which the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, the Deputy Governor and the Governor simultaneously claimed to be the State's chief executive for a few days. Ostensibly because of the flawed process followed by the State House of Assembly in removing the executive and the multiple claimants to the political

leadership of the State, President Olusegun Obasanjo declared a State of Emergency in Ekiti State on 19 October, 2006 and appointed retired General Tunji Olurin as a Sole Administrator for six months, during which period he presided over the 2007 general elections in Ekiti State (NGF, 2013:8).

INEC declared the PDP winner of the 2007 election in the state, but the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) went to the Election Tribunal to challenge the result. In August 2008, the Election Tribunal confirmed the PDP candidate, Eng. Segun Oni, as winner of the gubernatorial election. Dissatisfied, the ACN candidate, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, went to the Appeal Court which in February 2009, nullified Oni's election and ordered re-run elections within 90 days in 10 out of Ekiti's 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Although INEC again declared that Oni had won the re-run elections conducted in April 2009, Fayemi disagreed and again went to the Election Tribunal. The Tribunal dismissed his petition in May 2010, so he proceeded to the Court of Appeal, which declared him the winner of the election in October 2010. Dr. Fayemi thus assumed office as Governor in October 2010 after a protracted judicial struggle.

Ekiti state, apart from being poor is predominantly an educationist and public service state, with majority of its people being teachers and public servants, who are basically salary earners. And going by the significant relevance of money to politics in Nigeria, these people find it difficult to invest such earnings in a 'risky' venture like politics. What then obtains is that people outside the state with more financial clout and most often, backed by a god father, but with less education, usually find it easy gaining access into the political space of the state. Also, because of the pervasive nature of poverty in the state, it is not difficult for people who have money to induce or persuade the masses to vote for them, even when these people have nothing to offer. For instance, the victory of Niyi Adebayo over the likes of S.K. Babalola in the AD primaries was believed by many in the state to have been facilitated by financial inducement of the delegates. As was the case in 1999, the PDP gubernatorial standard bearer- Ayo Fayose- was the least educated of all the candidates fielded by the major parties that contested the election.

Akinnaso (2014) observes that Ekiti State politics has been typified by four main features, namely; cut-throat intra-party intrigues and inter-party competition among contestants; imposition of candidates by political godfathers; physical and verbal thuggery; and electoral malpractices. To be sure, none of these features is unique to Ekiti politics nor do they carry equal weight during each election cycle, but what is unique about Ekiti, according to him, is the conjunctive interplay among the features and the intensity of their manifestations. This was evident in 2007 when the governorship election led to a prolonged legal tussle, a controversial election re-run, and the eventual reversal of Segun Oni's victory by the Appeal Court, which declared Dr. Kayode Fayemi of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria as the winner on October 15 2010.

### **The 2014 Governorship Election: Issues and Perspectives**

Evidently, the poll was an enlightenment lesson on the fundamental distinction between appearance and reality. An apparently puzzled Fayemi noted that his understanding of the people's expectations may have been flawed. He said in his broadcast: "Indeed, a new sociology of the Ekiti people may have evolved. However, the task of understanding how the outcome of this election has defined us as a people will be that of scholars" (Macaulay, 2014:21). Before the electoral defeat, public perception of his administration, largely informed by media presentation, gave him good marks for good governance. Against the background of his unexpected loss, it is apt to wonder whether the media was faithful to its role in re-presenting reality (*ibid*). The landslide victory recorded by the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Mr Ayo Fayose, in the election, adjudged by most observers as remarkably free and fair, seems to reveal that the undercurrents of voter's behaviour and political choice in Nigeria might still be shrouded in mystery that will take a long time to be unraveled (Usukuma, 2014:47).

However, there is little doubt that the underlay of Mr Ayo Fayose's "grassroots politics" and its success in the Ekiti election were principally a class factor. Fayose had plebian appeal and it was so effective he did not even need to articulate a manifesto to win the election (Adelakun, 2014:64). The election did not witness the intellectual debates

that could have also influenced, as is the practice in advanced democracies, the choice of the voters. And perhaps, the pre-election opinion poll would have clearly indicated the likely voting pattern. Akinnaso (2014) argues that it is equally premature to extrapolate from the Ekiti results to the party affiliation of the Ekiti people or their voting pattern in 2015. Fayose's victory did not suddenly turn Ekiti people to People's Democratic Party members. They voted specifically for or against particular candidates and not for or against their political parties. Fayose's victory came from either voters who set out to vote for him or those who set out to vote against Fayemi for various reasons.

As opined by Fagbenle (2014:80): "Granted that Ayo Fayose had a peculiar appeal on his people, and granted that there were other factors that conspired against Dr. Kayode Fayemi, if truly, contrary to long held values of the Ekiti and the Yoruba people, the Ekiti result is owed largely to people's preference for "stomach infrastructure" to long-term overall development of the state, then there is danger in the land and all right thinking people must recognize this and get armed to confront the virus before it assumes epidemic proportion".

### **The 2015 General Elections: A Case of Affirmation?**

It is posited that the March 28 and April 11 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections offered a unique opportunity for the leaders of the APC in Ekiti, particularly ex-Governor Fayemi, to prove that Fayose's victory in the June 21 2014 governorship election was a fluke. They should have demonstrated the APC's electoral strength on the ground to lend credence to their allegation that Fayose's earlier electoral triumph was rigged (Ayobolu, 2015). However, the Peoples Democratic Party won the three senatorial and six House of Representatives seats in the March 28 2015 elections, just as it won the presidential election with a total 176,466 votes, winning in all the 16 local governments. Also, the Peoples Democratic Party cleared all the 26 State Assembly seats as officially declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission being the results of the House of Assembly election conducted on April 11.

Those who share the view that winning an election does not automatically confer popularity on a particular politician hinge their argument on the fact that in Nigeria's political climate, factors determining the success or victory of politicians defer. For example, some analysts argue that instances abound where elections are manipulated in favour of preferred candidates who are not necessarily popular but are in the good books of the 'powers-that-be'. The political process is usually skewed in favour of these elements, who ordinarily could not have won in a free and fair contest. This often generated a lot of dust within the party with attendant defections. It is believed that some politicians often ride on the crest of party's popularity as against theirs to win elections (Popoola, 2015).

For Mr. Ayodele Fayose, the outcome of the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the state actually vindicated his stand that the outcome of the June 21, 2014 governorship election was not rigged as was being touted by the All Progressives Congress. The Special Assistant to the governor on Information, Mr. Lanre Ogunsuyi, said the 2015 election results proved the skeptics wrong that it was skewed in favour of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

It is now confirmed to whoever is still doubting that Fayose is indeed a super political champion that the man is more than that, he is also a rare breed. In the same token, the outcome of the National Assembly election which made the PDP candidates to defeat all the candidates of APC in both the Senate and House of Representatives, including all the incumbent ones, show that all negative claims about June 21, 2014 governorship poll, existed only in the imagination of those that faulted the outcomes (APC).

It should be noted however, that during the electioneering, one of the leading proponents of hate campaign in the country was Ayo Fayose. Fayose once bought the front pages of The Punch and The Sun Newspapers not only to pass a death sentence on Buhari because the man is 72, he used the same medium to mock dead leaders from a section of the country. His invective and acid sarcasms targeted at the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) General Muhammadu Buhari may have left some Nigerians in consternation nay, bewilderment, but to many others, the Ekiti

State Governor, Ayodele Fayose, was merely treading his familiar terrain of controversy. Ordinarily, this should have aroused resentment among the Ekiti people who are known for decency and integrity. According to Ayobolu (2015) “many analysts have, directly or indirectly, questioned the fidelity of the Ekiti people to those principles and values for which they were once so highly regarded. These include industry, discipline, an ascetic disposition, honour, dignity, courage and courteousness”

Three major factors could be adduced to the voting pattern of the electorate in the 2015 elections in Ekiti. One, the passion with which a majority of the electors voted against Dr. Kayode Fayemi eight months earlier had not waned. In spite of the non-visible improvement in their living standard or any development agenda by the incumbent, they still wanted to affirm their support for a man they see as a “friend of the masses”. Two, the idea of mainstream politics -to guarantee support from a PDP- led Federal government- was relentlessly emphasised by Fayose with a view to fulfilling his “electioneering promises”. It became the main issue in their house-to-house campaign. Three, many of the APC leaders could not been seen in the state during electioneering campaign but for the centrally-organised Presidential rally. This is in addition to their inability to make funds available to the party and its candidates for the national and state assembly elections. Hence, few candidates that came out were easily intimidated just as they had their political rallies regularly disrupted by political thugs believed to be state agents.

### **Irony of Good Performance and Mandate Rejection: The Place of *Stomach Infrastructure***

Much has been made of Governor Fayemi having been either unable or unwilling to satisfy the masses of Ekiti State on the matter of “stomach infrastructure”. By this phrase is meant that the people cared far less for spending the state’s meager handouts from Abuja on the development of physical and institutional infrastructures than giving out largesse to cronies and not keeping from workers, teachers and students what they can consume now in the name of sacrifices for the future (Jeyifo, 2014:17). It is contended that Nigerians will always make their choices; even if the choices seem to serve short term

purposes and that the Ekiti governorship election was won and lost on this aphorism. This politics of “stomach infrastructure” applies to the two major political parties in the election; that is, the All Progressive Congress and the People’s Democratic Party, taking advantage of the impoverished masses. In fact, those who were arrested on Election Day were caught with huge sums of money meant to buy votes only that the arrest was restricted to a political party. In his view, Gbadegesin (2014:64) avers that there must be something more than performance that is central to the voters’ idea of good governance than performance:

For them, it has to be “performance plus x”, where various items are substituted for X, depending on the preferences of individuals and groups. For contractors, it is performance plus contract awards. For teachers, it is performance plus payment of not only salaries but also allowances for training, in addition to not being held accountable for students’ performances through continuous certification tests. For students, it is performance plus free tuition at the Ekiti State University (EKSU). For the jobless, it is performance plus job opportunities. For the hungry, it is performance plus bags of rice and gallons of cooking oil. The list is inexhaustible because preferences are elastic.

In its analysis on the Ekiti election with regards to government reforms and people’s voting behaviour, *The Economist* (2014) posits that: In dismissing a forward-thinker, the voters sent out a loud message. After coming to power in 2010, Fayemi laid new roads, improved the university system, presented a plan to get more young people into jobs, created a social-security scheme for the elderly, and cut corrupt wage payments to government workers. But such reforms upset people with a vested interest in the old political system. Unqualified teachers who have been told to take tests as part of Mr. Fayemi’s education reforms probably voted against him. So did civil servants upset by his more meritocratic hiring practices. Such people plainly prefer the old “politics of the belly”, which keeps them comfortably on the state payroll and hands out cash in return for their votes. In fact, to convince people that he knew what they wanted, Fayose during his acceptance speech, declared that his priority was not to industrialise the state now, but to “take good care of the people by awarding contracts to them” (*The Guardian*, 2014).

It is instructive that this may not be a peculiar feature of Ekiti political behaviour when viewed within the context of the Nigerian state and its people. Omatseye (2014:64) submits that those who spun the story of a disconnected Fayemi worked on a number of

factors: One, Fayemi's belief that when you do your work, you will get the praise. This did not work because they knew Nigeria has changed progressively over a generation of alienated leadership. Honour has been redefined in the culture of the people. Infrastructure is important in government to inspire dignity of labour. When government provides them, individuals work for their own profit, and so earn their own pride. But before their eyes, lazy men become billionaires and smart men work for them. Success no longer depends on the assiduity or the acumen but on indolence. They see the political elite buy all the lands, hold parties in Dubai and New York, and their labours lead nowhere.

It is expected that the basis of government's or preferably, a leader's 'connectedness' with the people should be primarily evident in government policies and physical projects that could better the lots of the populace. However, personal social-relations of the vote-seeker has become a significant contributing factor to the voting pattern of Ekiti people- a trend that is also observable in other parts of the country. With regards to this, the two major contestants in the 2014 election were assessed thus:

The major contrast between Fayemi and Fayose that actually defined the voting pattern was the issue of relating personally with the common man. While Fayemi does not believe in tokenism, that is the strength of \$Fayose. While Fayemi is not the social party type, Fayose loves *owanbe* and is ever ready to dance with the common man. While Fayemi will wake up by 4 am and read till 8 am, Fayose wakes up to start political meetings with his supporters (The Guardian, 2014:50).

Being "out of touch" in the Nigerian political lexicon, however, defines the politician who is not grounded in grassroots politicking characterized by dispensing government largesse in cash and kind directly to the people who, out of poverty, only understand the language of instant gratification. Rather than building enduring infrastructure, politicians of this school of thought believe their electability or popularity will be enhanced by the amount of patronage they can dispense. In doing this, they create a cult-like figure in the eyes of the critical mass of the working poor. In a country where poverty stalks the citizens like a shadow, this has proved very effective (Olupohunda, 2014:26).

This can be further explained with Richard Joseph's concept of prebendalism. Prebendalism is the disbursing of public offices and state rents to one's ethnic-based clients, and is inherently rooted in state corruption. The concept was applied specifically to the context of Nigerian politics. It is an extreme form of clientelism where state resources are corruptly allocated in order to mobilize cultural and political identities. Clientelism is defined as transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favors are offered in return for political support at the polls. It is an established pattern of political behavior that justifies pursuit of and use of public office for personal benefit of the officeholder and his clients. Under prebendalism the position in public office becomes secondary to personal pursuits. Forest (2012:33) submits therefore, that:

Because of this system of patronage and personal largesse, a political culture has developed in which the government is not seen as a means to serve the people and the state, but rather, the means to wealth. Any member of a family or clan who can get a government job becomes the centerpiece of an extended support system, a type of relational social security built exclusively on who you know or who knows you. It is a system in which anyone who holds a position within the government—even at the lowest levels of authority—is expected by their family and friends to supplement their meager income with alternative sources, stealing money, and sharing the wealth.

As noted by Wantchekon (2003:399), a large body of the comparative politics literature has investigated the nature of patron-client relationships, the inefficiency of various forms of clientelist redistribution, and conditions for its decay. The common conclusion is that clientelist politics is most attractive in conditions of low productivity, high inequality, and starkly hierarchical social relations. Others stress the importance of culture, historical factors, levels of economic development, and the size of the public sector economy. In Africa, comparative politics scholars have long considered electoral politics to be systematically and inherently clientelist. African rulers, whether self-appointed or democratically elected, rely on the distribution of personal favors to selected members of the electorate in exchange for ongoing political support. This observation relies on the implicit assumption that African voters invariably have a much stronger preference for private transfers than for public goods or projects of national interest.

The politics of “stomach infrastructure” and its now feared consequences, that is, if not applied, began to have ripple effects on governance philosophy in the country, particularly in states being controlled by the then opposition party to avoid protest votes at the poll. For instance, over nine hundred teachers, suspended by the Edo State government on charges of certificate and age forgery, who ordinarily should be prosecuted by a competent court, were recalled while their allowances/ salary arrears are being agitated for. Such policy reversal took place in Lagos state in respect of tuition fee. Akinlotan (2014) expresses concern that the south west zone has “begun to roll back their principled and well-considered stand on education, infrastructure and other policies....enact mass surrender to the short-sighted and even whimsical needs of the electorate”. This trend is surely a worrisome template for governance, not only in the region, but in Nigeria.

The idea of a specified single-term tenure for elected governors and president would have been an applicable antidote to compromising lofty policies on the basis of *next election*, but the obvious fact is if the candidate is not seeking a second term in office, his/her party desires it, even more passionately as other party members are also waiting for their turn. In this situation, that is, if the office holder refuses to apply “stomach infrastructure” to appeal to the sometimes superficial demands of the voters, the pressure will come more from within than without. In a country where voters are often swayed by frivolities rather than substance, opposition parties easily catch in on this.

One observable phenomenon among the populace in Ekiti is that many people depend on the government and political appointees for daily survival. Politics, rather than the much-talked about education, has now become the major industry in Ekiti state especially for the teeming youths- both the unemployed certificated ones and the unemployable. To many of them, it is more desirable to pursue a career in politics- which they pride as their chosen profession- so as to access free money in lieu of a career job or skill acquisition in entrepreneurship.

## **The Ekiti Electorate and Right of Reasons for Choice**

The decision of the people to vote out the incumbent governor has been partly attributed to politics of spite particularly in respect of the political appointees from different communities of the state; those who alienate themselves from their constituencies. For a party that controls all the 16 local government areas through appointed caretaker committees, 25 out of the 26 members of the State House of Assembly, five of the six House of Representative members and the three senatorial seats, in addition to numerous appointees, commissioners, special advisers and special assistants, losing the governorship election surely serves as an indictment on the political value or relevance of these appointees. Ado Ekiti (the State Capital) alone has over one hundred appointees, yet none of the wards was delivered for the ruling party.

The argument has been that these people, ordinarily, should be doing the grassroots interaction, socialization and intimacy on behalf of the governor. Suffice it to say many of those holding sensitive positions among them do not reside in their communities and spend their weekends in other cosmopolitan states. This sentiment (of neglect) is also expressed by the local contractors who, in their private interactions, campaigned against the Governor's re-election bid on the basis of non-patronage; what could have aided capital circulation within their various communities.

Another factor that explains the voting pattern of the Ekiti people is located in their sociological trait of impatience, such that they are always in a hurry with any government that fails to satisfy their immediate needs- usually regarded as an element of performance. This may have accounted for the rapid regime turn-over in the eighteen-year old state. For instance, between 1996 and 2014, Ekiti has produced 12 administrators, governors and acting governors. This factor also partly explains why the people, at every critical moment, move from certainty to uncertainty. Adetoye (2010) cites an instance when Ekiti wanted to pull out of the oil-rich old Ondo State despite the benefits accruable from remaining in that union.

A table showing the rapid regime turn-over in Ekiti State, 1996-2015

1.	Col. Inuwa Bawa	1 <sup>st</sup> October 1996 – 1998
2.	Navy Captain Atanda Yusuf-	July 1998 – May 28 1999
3.	Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo -	May 29 1999 – May 28 2003
4.	Dr Ayodele Fayose -	May 29. 2003 – Oct. 16 2006
5.	Chief Friday Aderemi -	Oct 17 – 19, 2006
6.	Major General Tunji Idowu Olurin-	Oct 19, 2006 – April, 2007
7.	Mr Tope Ademiluyi -	April – May 2007
8.	Chief Segun Oni -	May 2007- Feb. 2009
9.	Chief Tunji Odeyemi -	Feb 07 – May 2009
10.	Chief Segun Oni -	May 5 – Oct, 15 2010
11.	Dr. Kayode Fayemi	Oct 16 – Oct 16 2014
12.	Mr Ayodele Fayose	October 2014-

In his analysis, Akinnaso (2014:64) submits that what most people thought was Fayemi's main voting bloc – Ekiti intellectuals, political appointees, and the educated workforce (teachers and civil servants) – was really never completely with him. This situation was worsened by the decision by his friend, Opeyemi Bamidele, to leave the All Progressive Congress and contest the governorship as a Labour Party candidate, largely because he was prevented by the leadership of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria from contesting the primary election against Fayemi. By so doing, he drew some supporters from Fayemi.

A comparative analysis of the 2003 and 2014 governorship elections in the state contested by Mr. Ayo Fayose against the two incumbent governors may have reinforced the ruling party's allegation of scientific rigging - *the use of photochromic technology used*

*in printing the ballot paper and the quality of the indelible ink during the latter election.* Surely, this variant of alleged rigging is alien to the country's electoral democracy and its authenticity has been questioned by curious observers. However, all those factors that usually work in favour of politicians in Nigeria; that is, incumbency factor, performance, party's traditional stronghold, spread of political appointments, financial inducement, party big wigs' influence in their communities among others did not guarantee victory for the incumbent governor as he lost in all the 16 local government areas.

From the two elections, it is clear that in 2003, the incumbent governor, Mr. Niyi Adebayo of Alliance of Democracy (AD) - a precursor to the present All Progressive Congress (APC) - won in nine out of the sixteen local government areas in spite of his relatively low performance while the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won in seven local governments. The outcome of the 2003 election partly justified the above stated factors that work for politicians in this clime.

### **Other Observable Issues: Security and Stakeholders' Conduct**

The role of the security during the 2014 election has been subjected to public scrutiny. Compared to other state governorship elections, the one held in Ekiti state was different. The country's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission, and security agencies deployed extra number of personnel and equipment. Security operatives were present in strategic locations across the state. There were roadblocks where security checks were conducted on motorists and pedestrians, especially at the entry points to the state (Baiyewu, 2014:11). But such massive deployment of security agencies has been variously described as militarisation of the state by the federal government.

Falana (2014) argues that "militarisation of Ekiti State, harassment by security forces, disenfranchisement of some people by the military forces, and the fact that the place was invaded with 30,790 policemen, soldiers and members of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, you cannot say that was a free and fair election". The concern,

however, remains that if this is the only workable antidote for a violence-free election in Nigeria, as applied in these staggered elections, how can the federal government afford such huge number of security agents in a general election that will involve 36 states.

The reason for this, as advanced by the federal government, was to prevent violence and rigging that used to characterize previous elections in the country. Indeed, the exercise was regarded peaceful essentially on the Election Day. In spite of the fear struck by the massive presence of security operatives, many young men and women, who normally are apathetic to voting, reported at the polling stations, some even before the scheduled accreditation time. They endured the scorching sun to check their names and numbers, queued for accreditation, waited to vote and witnessed the collation and counting of the results, which they counted along with the election officials.

The important issue about the election was that INEC's performance was very good. The logistics were well planned and there was timely arrival of electoral materials in most of the polling units. The process of accreditation of voters started in most polling units between 08.00 and 08.30 am (Ibrahim, 2014). In almost all the 177 electoral wards in the state, materials were promptly deployed and voting commenced on schedule.

## **Conclusion**

The Ekiti election shows that a cynical citizenry has been bred because there also exists a cynical political class. They want to be receptacles, and that is what infrastructure of the stomach means (Omatseye, 2014:64). The thinking in some quarters, therefore, is that government's effort that addresses the immediate needs of the citizens seems to gain more popularity than one that is targeted at achieving clean environment, safety of lives and property as well as infrastructural development. But as rightly noted by Gbadegesin (2014:64), elections are the only means of choosing leaders in a democracy, and elections are about people's preferences. Preferences, on their part, could be rational or irrational, self-regarding or other-regarding. It does not really matter because in a democracy, the voters are the kingmakers.

*The Economist* (2014) affirms that the election was a clash between appeals to good governance on the one hand and the lure of old-school clientelism and populism on the other. Despite Ekiti having a relatively well-educated electorate, the old ways prevailed. Usukuma (2014:47) in his piece on political marketing in relation to the Ekiti election, further explains this phenomenon: Most Nigerian politicians need to assimilate today's reality in Nigeria that politics is more about emotions than intellect. The savviest marketer on this turf must understand that if he wants his brand to succeed, it must appeal to the heart, more than the mind. To win, he must go beyond the visible, swim beyond assumption, and must never underestimate his competitors. Yet, Thomas (2014:24) argues that a voter's power should be exercised with some degree of sanity and logical discretion and should not, under any normal circumstances be used to encourage the enthronement of tyranny and to celebrate mediocrity.

It is imperative that electoral administration should not be subject to direction or manipulation by the incumbent officials or ruling party. The electoral administration consists of a daunting range of tasks which include registering voters; publishing and distributing voter lists; registering and qualifying parties and candidates; establishing and enforcing rules on campaigning and campaign finance; ensuring the security of campaigners, voters, and the polling stations; administering the polls during voting; counting the ballots; reporting, collating, and “announcing the results; investigating and adjudicating complaints; and certifying the results”(Robert A. Pastor, cited in Diamond, 2007:15). The range of tasks, many of them ongoing, requires a significant, professional, and permanent administration that is able to administer competently and regulate impartially all of these aspects of political competition and electoral participation.

Empowerment of the people, who have over the years, been disenchanted and disillusioned by government's obnoxious policies and insensitivity, is also very germane. Empowerment, as noted by the World Bank (2002), involves the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. Therefore, the state should not abdicate its responsibilities of providing basic services to the people, involving the citizenry in

governance, creating pro-poor economic policies and increasing access to justice and legal aid. This becomes imperative because the continuing force of patron-client ties is often attributed to the persistence of insecurity and uncertainty in people's everyday lives (Gellner and Waterbury 1977 cited in Beekers and van Gool, 2012:7). When people become more affluent and their opportunities increase, their need for patronage decreases. Patronage politics thus offer an apt illustration of Samuel Hays' statement that 'politics is necessary for those below the poverty line and an item of luxury consumption for those above it' (quoted by Lemarchand and Legg 1972: 169).

In the final analysis, the *developmental state* approach can be adopted in addressing Ekiti State's development challenges by focusing on rebuilding and strengthening State capacity, with a view to raising its ability to expand human capabilities and promote an equitable and efficient allocation of resources. This, in turn, should generate appropriate incentives for economic diversification and transformation. The approach should also prioritize the building and strengthening of economic and socio-political institutions and their effective coordination to produce the desired socio-economic development outcomes. The outcomes, therefore, are human capacity building, strong economic base with job opportunities for the teeming youths such that "stomach infrastructure" will no longer be a determining factor for the electorate in voting for a candidate of their choice in an election.

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