

## **Beyond the Mantra of 'Stomach Infrastructure': Ekiti Politics and the Sociology of Voting in the 2015 Elections**

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### **Abstract**

The uniqueness of the 2015 election in Ekiti State lies not only in the professional conduct of the electoral umpire especially its innovations, which facilitated a free and fair process, and acceptable outcomes, but also in the emergent sociology of voting behaviour exhibited by the people of the state. Results of the elections in Ekiti State, hitherto reputed as the hub of progressive politics the Southwest is known for, constituted a radical departure from the conventional disposition. The APC, in spite of its progressive slogan, was trounced by the PDP in all the elections. Even, the much-anticipated bandwagon effect of the APC success at the presidential poll did not materialise as the PDP won all the National and State Assembly seats. Although this exceptional feat was consistent with the behaviour exhibited in the 2014 gubernatorial election when the PDP defeated the incumbent APC Governor, yet this pattern of voting contradicted previous behaviour in the history of electioneering in the state; for, no single party has ever recorded consistent absolute electoral victory in all general elections conducted in the state. Using primary and secondary data sourced from interviews, personal observations and texts, this paper seeks to interrogate the emergent sociology of voting behaviour in Ekiti State. Meanwhile, the popularity of the catchphrase 'stomach infrastructure', seems to overshadow the main issues shaping the outcomes of the elections in the state. This paper engages in a critical examination of the main issues that influenced the voting behavior of Ekiti people in the 2015 general elections.

**Key Words:** Ekiti State, Election, Emergent Sociology, Voting Behaviour and Stomach-Infrastructure.

### **Introduction**

Elections are fundamental to democracy and it is often said that whereas it is possible to have elections without democracy, it is virtually impossible to have democracy without elections. Elections are central to democracy and the robustness and depth of any democracy are often measured by the quality of elections successfully conducted. As the only acceptable mechanism for determining who pilots the affairs of a state, elections are subject of intense struggle by political actors as well as the electorates. Election is so important to the whole idea of nation building that Okwesilieze Nwodo sees it as "the birth of the future; and not the glories of the past" (cited in Okechukwu, 2014:79). Elections are therefore very important and must be studied not only for understanding the peculiarities

associated with each election, but also as a means to improving the democratic process.

The 2015 general elections marked the ninth in the series of general elections in post-independence Nigeria. Of these, six - 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 - were conducted by the civilian political elite; while the remaining three – 1979, 1993 and 1999 - were conducted under military suzerainties. Again, out of the six conducted under civilian rule, three (1964, 1983 and 2011) were marred with violence of great proportions, with heavy tolls on human lives and properties. Out of the three conducted by the military, only one – 1993 – ended in a fiasco. The results were annulled on the verge of final announcement by the electoral body. However, of all the elections conducted since the return of democracy in 1999, the 2015 elections remain in a class of its own and the most unique, for a number of reasons.

First, it coincided with the year of externally-predicted unravelling of the Nigerian state as a corporate entity and, to a large extent, such an apocalyptic foreboding was believed by sizeable number of the people, particularly large segments of the elites. Two, it was the first time in the history of the country that a strong opposition would emerge and prove better placed to successfully wrestle power from a ruling government that has hitherto made sixty-year reign its primary target. Three, it was an election “whose approach is so fearsomely loaded with so much certainty of death and doom” (Gbogun, 2015), championed by ethnic warlords, militants and regional irredentists. Four, the election ranked as one of the most bitterly contested polls in the history of the country.

The campaigns had been run on ethno-religious and regional lines, making it a very divisive contest. However, in spite of the fears and apprehensions, Nigeria was able to pull off the election and proved the negative predictions wrong. In spite of some hitches recorded, the elections were generally regarded as free and fair by a large number of people. In the history of post-colonial Nigeria, it was the first time an opposition party successfully defeated a ruling party at the presidential level; and the defeated candidate promptly conceded defeat. The election therefore signposts a new dawn in Nigeria’s post-colonial electoral engineering.

But the uniqueness of the elections lies not only in the exceptional conduct of the electoral umpire, the use of card reader technology for accreditation, freeness and fairness of the polls and the generally acceptable outcomes; but also in emergent issues brought forth. One of the issues is the emergent sociology of voting behaviour exhibited by Ekiti people, where the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), against predictions, won elections in all the sixteen local government areas and equally cleared all the available seats in the National and State Assemblies. This was the first time since the return of democracy in 1999 that a single party will achieve such a total victory in all elections in the state.

Although, the pattern of voting behaviour exhibited in 2015 actually started in the 2014 governorship election when PDP won in the entire sixteen local government areas of the state, yet, the repetition of the same pattern in 2015 raises some pertinent questions such as the following: what accounts for the new pattern of voting behaviour? Why the consistency in the voting pattern since 2014? Given the fact that the prelude to the election had witnessed some loss of popularity of the

PDP in the southwestern region, what accounts for the preference of Ekiti people for the party? Given the fact that Ekiti is generally regarded as the hub of progressivism the southwest is known for, what accounts for preference for PDP that has been given the toga of conservatism? Why did Ekiti refuse to be swayed by the mantra of "change" upon which APC rode to power? Using primary and secondary data sourced from interviews, personal observations and texts, this paper interrogates the foregoing questions.

Following this introduction, the study goes straight to present the data on the 2015 elections as a foundation to discussing the issues explaining the voting behaviour. The third segment focuses on preliminary discourse of basic issues emanating from the data. This is followed by a discourse on the Ekiti people and the nature of their politics. The fifth segment dwells on the review of existing perspectives, which led to the development of a theoretical framework useful for analysing and understanding the politics and behaviour of Ekiti people in the election. The last segment concludes.

### **The 2015 Elections in Ekiti State**

Three elections – Presidential, National and State Assembly elections - were conducted in the state. The elections generated much interests and apprehensions. Although, there were several moments of tension and spats between members of APC and PDP, yet, there were no major acts of physical violence before the elections. However, there were few instances of violence recorded on the Presidential Election Day. In spite of the pockets of mishaps recorded during the voting exercise, however, the elections were generally peaceful and well conducted in the state. There were no instances of repression or arrest of opposition figures as witnessed in the 2014 governorship polls. There was no massing of troops on the people and a lockdown of the state; a sharp contrast to what obtained in the 2014 polls where election was practically turned to warfare with the deployment of platoons of military and security forces to lock down the state and also arrest and detain APC leaders while leaving PDP leaders to move about freely. The election was generally regarded as peaceful and to a large extent, the voting outcome reflected the preferences of the majority of the people of the state.

### **The Presidential Election of March 28, 2015**

Ekiti state was regarded as one of the flashpoints for violence during the March 28 Presidential elections. This has to do with series of altercations between the PDP and APC party stalwarts as well as the campaign approach of Governor Ayo Fayose who had emerged as one of the major voices of the PDP in the campaign period. Apart from campaigning vigorously for former President Goodluck Jonathan, he was noted for acerbic comments and campaigns of calumny against the personality of Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidate of the APC.

Although there was no major pre-election violence, there were instances of violence and hitches on the voting day. As reported by Seun Akiyoye, there were reported cases of shooting in Ikere Ekiti where one person was injured. There were cases of election disruptions in Moba where hoodlums attacked electoral officers. Also, there were reported cases of over-voting in two wards in Oye and Emure as well as vote cancellation in five polling units in Gbonyin (Akiyoye, 2015:30-31). However, in spite of the hitches recorded, the election went well and convincingly reflects the wishes

of the majority of the people. At the end of the counting exercise, Muhammadu Buhari of APC scored 120, 331 (40.02%) and Goodluck Jonathan of PDP polled 176,466 (58.69%) (*The Nation*, 2015:1). PDP won in all the sixteen local government areas of the state as shown below.

**Table 1: Presidential Election Results in Ekiti State**

S/N	Local Government	Political Party	Votes	Remarks
1	Ado-Ekiti	APC PDP	14,414 25,411	Winner
2	Ekiti East	APC PDP	8,274 11,922	Winner
3	Ijero	APC PDP	9,498 13,420	Winner
4	Moba	APC PDP	7,492 8,687	Winner
5	Oye	APC PDP	8,574 11,262	Winner
6	Ekiti South West	APC PDP	7,195 10,220	Winner
7	Ilejemeje	APC PDP	3000 3,799	Winner
8	Ikere	APC PDP	7,990 14,091	Winner
9	Irepodun/Ifelodun	APC PDP	7,970 11,395	Winner
10	Emure	APC PDP	5,353 6,822	Winner
11	Ekiti West	APC PDP	8,001 10,003	Winner
12	Efon	APC PDP	3,103 5,699	Winner
13	Ido/Osi	APC PDP	7,433 12,479	Winner
14	Ise Orun	APC PDP	5,675 9,158	Winner
15	Ikole	APC PDP	10,026 13,306	Winner
16	Gboyin	APC PDP	6,334 8,792	Winner

Source: *The Nation*, March 29, 2015

As shown in Table 1, PDP won in all the local government areas with a pattern of results showing consistency and change. The consistency is that since 2003, Ekiti people have consistently voted for PDP at the presidential level. In 2003, the people voted overwhelmingly for PDP, quite unlike what obtained in the 1999 election when they voted for Alliance for Democracy (AD). Four major issues could be adduced as responsible for this.

The first would be the fact that former President Olusegun Obasanjo was seen as a fellow kinsman and the need to return him to power for the second time in 2003, even though they did not vote for him in the first term in 1999. The second has to do with the pact signed by the AD governors in South-western region to give their votes to Olusegun Obasanjo at the presidential level. The third would be the unpopularity and even near-absence of the ANPP, which was the major opposition party in the 2003 elections. The fourth is the rejection of the candidature of Muhammadu Buhari who contested on the platform of the ANPP

In 2007, the same pattern was repeated when they voted for Umaru Yar'Adua of the PDP. Both Muhammadu Buhari of ANPP and Atiku Abubakar of ACN could not muster appreciable votes. In 2011, even with an ACN governor in place, the people still voted for Goodluck Jonathan of PDP. The reasons for the voting pattern have to do with the south solidarity, the religious factor, the emotive message in the campaign slogan of Goodluck Jonathan (as a man of humble beginning) and the relative unpopularity of both Nuhu Ribadu of ACN and Muhammadu Buhari of CPC in the state. In 2015, they repeated the trend by voting for Goodluck Jonathan of PDP. This shows consistency in the voting behaviour since 2003.

The change in the voting pattern is that the 2015 outcome shows a deviation from the general trend in Yoruba politics. Since 1999, Ekiti people have always moved alongside their fellow Yoruba people in the choice of presidential candidates. In 1999, the Yoruba people overwhelmingly voted for Olu Falae against Olusegun Obasanjo and Ekiti people followed the trend. However, with the exception of Osun state that voted for the presidential candidate of the ACN in 2011, Yoruba people consistently voted overwhelmingly for the candidates presented by the PDP in the 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections.

In 2015, APC was the most popular party in the region and expectedly, majority of Yoruba people voted overwhelmingly for Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate presented by the APC. However, for the first time since 1999, Ekiti people refused to join the Yoruba train in the voting preference. They voted for President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. Even though Muhammadu Buhari got the constitutionally recognised percentage, Ekiti state remains the only state in south-western Nigeria that APC did not make an outright win. The party did not even win in a single local government. However, the closeness of the results between PDP and APC shows that Muhammadu Buhari made a better showing than previous attempts. This suggests that more people voted for him in Ekiti than his previous three contests. But the fact still remains that he did not win a single local government.

**National Assembly Elections**

Official results show the overwhelming victory of PDP in all the elections as shown below.

**Table 2: Senate results for 2015 elections**

S/N	CONSTITUENCY	POLITICAL PARTY	RESULT	REMARKS
1	EKITI NORTH	P.D.P	50,023	WINNER
		A.P.C	35,376	
		L.P	2,316	
		A.C.P.N	257	
2	EKITI CENTRAL	P.D.P	54,459	WINNER
		A.P.C	41,607	
		L.P	4,626	
		A.C.P.N	388	
		S.D.P	153	
3	EKITI SOUTH	P.D.P	62,344	WINNER
		A.P.C	37,932	
		L.P	3,315	
		A.C.P.N	315	

Source: INEC Office, Ado Ekiti

**Table 3: House of Representatives results for 2015 elections**

S/N	CONSTITUENCY	POLITICAL PARTY	RESULT	REMARKS
1	IKOLE / OYE	P.D.P	24,129	WINNER
		A.P.C	17,768	
		L.P	443	
		AD	84	
		A.C.P.N	64	
2	IDO-OSI / MOBA / ILEJEMEJE	P.D.P	23,585	WINNER
		A.P.C	15,834	
		L.P	2,574	
3	ADO-EKITI / IREPODUN-IFELODUN	P.D.P	35,494	WINNER
		A.P.C	19,412	
		L.P	3,161	
		A.C.P.N	111	
		A.P.A	097	
		C.P.P	034	
		P.D.C	019	

*Beyond the Mantra of 'Stomach Infrastructure': Ekiti Politics and the Sociology of Voting in the 2015 Elections*

4	IJERO / EKITI WEST / EFON	P.D.P	27,658	WINNER
		A.P.C	20,083	
		L.P	717	
5	EKITI SOUTH-WEST / IKERE / ISE-ORUN	P.D.P	33,288	WINNER
		A.P.C	19,432	
6	EMURE GBONYIN / EKITI EAST	P.D.P	25,648	WINNER
		A.P.C	17,473	
		L.P	3,392	

**Source:** INEC Office, Ado Ekiti

Ekiti state has three seats in the Senate, just like any other states in the country. It has six seats in the House of Representatives. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, PDP cleared all the seats of both chambers in the 2015 elections. In comparison with previous elections however, the results show a situation that can be described as a mixed grill. This is because the voting patterns show both consistency and slight deviations. In 1999, AD won 2 seats and APP won the remaining 1 for the senate. The APP candidate later defected to PDP.

In the House of Representatives, AD cleared all the 6 seats. In 2003, it was almost a reverse order as AD won 1 seat and PDP won 2 seats at the Senate while PDP won 5 seats and AD won 1 seat at the House of Reps. In 2007, PDP cleared all the seats in the two chambers. However, ACN was able to reclaim the Ekiti Central Senatorial seat through the tribunal. In 2011, ACN cleared all the seats in both chambers. In 2015, it was the turn of PDP to clear all the seats. However, there was never a time a single party cleared all the seats at the State and National Assemblies at the same time, as it happened in the 2015 elections.

**State Assembly Elections**

The State House of Assembly is made up of 26 members. Official results show an overwhelming victory for the PDP in all the twenty-six local government areas and constituencies as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: State Assembly results for 2015 elections**

S/N	Name of Constituency	Name of Political Party	Votes	Remarks
1	Ado 1	APC	3,189	Winner
		LP	1,110	
		PDP	10,065	
2	Ado 11	APC	4,660	Winner
		LP	301	
		PDP	11,770	
3	Efon	APC	1,320	Winner
		LP	135	
		PDP	5,637	

4	Ekiti East I	APC PDP	3,230 5,289	<b>Winner</b>
5	Ekiti East II	APC LP PDP	4,302 283 6,601	<b>Winner</b>
6	Ekiti West I	APC LP PDP	3,601 1,272 6,531	<b>Winner</b>
7	Ekiti West II	APC PDP	2,505 2,844	<b>Winner</b>
8	Ekiti South West I	APC LP PDP	2,835 1,121 4,413	<b>Winner</b>
9	Ekiti South West II	APC LP PDP	1,538 1,231 4,118	<b>Winner</b>
10	Emure	APC LP PDP	3,230 2,674 5,664	<b>Winner</b>
11	Gbonyin	APC LP PDP	5,627 169 8,140	<b>Winner</b>
12	Ido/Osi I	APC LP PDP	2,928 461 7,365	<b>Winner</b>
13	Ido/Osi II	APC LP PDP	2,269 216 4,362	<b>Winner</b>
14	Ijero	APC LP PDP	6,759 965 11,867	<b>Winner</b>
15	Ikere I	APC LP PDP	3,091 7 7,244	<b>Winner</b>
16	Ikere II	APC LP PDP	3,401 12 6,570	<b>Winner</b>
17	Ikole I	APC LP PDP	4,421 133 7,886	<b>Winner</b>

*Beyond the Mantra of 'Stomach Infrastructure': Ekiti Politics and the Sociology of Voting in the 2015 Elections*

18	Ikole II	APC LP PDP	3,110 831 4,927	<b>Winner</b>
19	Ilejemeje	APC LP PDP	2,715 48 3,449	<b>Winner</b>
20	Irepodun/Ifelodun I	APC LP PDP	2,708 1,246 4,869	<b>Winner</b>
21	Irepodun/Ifelodun II	APC LP PDP	2,582 158 6,652	<b>Winner</b>
22	Ise/Orun	APC LP PDP	4,235 765 9,123	<b>Winner</b>
23	Moba I	APC LP PDP	3,246 379 4,975	<b>Winner</b>
24	Moba II	APC LP PDP	2,373 2,202 3,165	<b>Winner</b>
25	Oye I	APC LP PDP	4,334 21 4,635	<b>Winner</b>
26	Oye II	APC LP PDP	4,505 4 5,330	<b>Winner</b>

**Source:** INEC Office, Ado Ekiti

As shown above, the results show that PDP cleared all the 26 seats. This is against the trend since the return of democracy in 1999. In the first State Assembly, 1999-2003, AD, the ruling party, had 22 members, PDP had 3 and APP had 1. The second State Assembly that was inaugurated on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2003 had PDP 24, AD 1 and NCP 1. The third Assembly of 2007-2011 was composed of 13 members each to PDP and ACN (Adetoye, 2014:300-305).

The fourth Assembly that was inaugurated on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011 was made up of 24 ACN and 2 PDP members. However, before the expiration of the tenure, five APC members decamped to PDP, making it 19 to 7. Therefore, the 2015 was the first time a party will have a total victory. Given the fact that most of the PDP candidates for the state and national assembly were imposed by Governor Ayo Fayose, and that most of the candidates for the state assembly were less educated than their

counterparts in the other parties, nobody gave the chance of total victory for the PDP. The imposition has caused a lot of disaffection within the PDP. Yet, the party recorded total victory. The question then is what accounts for this?

### **Ekiti People, Politics and the 2015 Elections**

The outcomes of the 2015 elections in Ekiti are intertwined with the politics of 2014 governorship election in the state. Therefore, a framework for analysing the voting pattern will have to be situated within the context of the nature of Ekiti people, the 2014 elections and the style and policies of Kayode Fayemi as governor of the state between 2010 and 2014. Ekiti people are a homogenous sub-ethnic group of a larger Yoruba ethnic group that are domiciled in the south-western part of Nigeria. They inhabit what is regarded as the hinterland of the Yoruba region, hence the word *Ara Oke*, a derisive appellation given to them by their kinsmen living off the coast or very close to the coast. In return, Ekiti people often hold them with suspicions.

Ekiti people are traditionally agrarian and have been known to be fiercely independent, proud, stubborn, impatient, rigid and single-minded (Bamigboye, 2015). They took to western education as a way of ending the domination of their environment by such sub-ethnic groups like Ijebu, Ijesha and Oyo, and with the advantage offered by the free education policy of the western region in the 1950s, emerged far ahead of other sub-ethnic groups in the region in respect of educational attainment (Akintoye, 2006). They are also regarded as principled and highly impervious to domination as witnessed in the historical wars of liberation they fought with Ibadan in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Akintoye, 2006).

The Ekiti land is regarded as the hub of progressive politics in the southwest. Perhaps an evidence of this was the 1983 governorship election in the old Ondo state where Ekiti people aligned with Adekunle Ajasin from Owo, against Akin Omoboriwo from Ijero Ekiti. Majority of Omoboriwo supporters in Ekiti state were killed and chased out of town by Ekiti people, in protest against the rigging of the election for Omoboriwo. The major reason behind the mayhem was the rigging of election for Omoboriwo and the need to resist such electoral robbery. The messages here are twofold: One, Ekiti people would readily fight injustice and sharp practices, even if their kinsmen are the direct beneficiary. Second, UPN was considered a progressive party and NPN, the party Omoboriwo belonged to, a conservative party that true Ekiti people should never associate with. For a long time, these traits and nature continue to influence their socio-political behaviour and, perhaps, a manifestation of this influence is evident in the politics of their agitation for a separate state.

Prior to the creation of a separate state in 1996, the Ekiti people were under the administration of Ondo state. But for several years, they fought for and got a separate state in 1996, after two decades of living under the banner of Ondo state. To a large extent, the creation of Ekiti state in October 1996 signals the finalization of an agitation that dates back to the 1970s (Falegan, 2009, Adetoye, 2010). It was basically an elitist idea that the masses were made to buy into it. But the

conceptualization and eventual creation of the state present some paradoxes which, to a large extent, explain the nature and politics of the people (Adetoye, 2010).

In the first instance, the old Ondo State consisted of about nine sub-ethnic groups namely Akoko, Akure, Apoi/Arogbo, Ekiti, Ijaw, Ikale, Ilaje, Ondo and Owo. The Ekiti constituted a simple majority in that state as they accounted for about 52% of the general population and 56% of the landmass of the former Ondo State (Adetoye and Olaniyan, 2014:315). Secondly, out of the 26 local government areas in the former state, 12 of them were in Ekiti while 14 were shared among the rest.

Thirdly, they dominated the administrative segment of the Ondo state in the sense that Ekiti people accounted for about 50% of the workforce of the entire civil service of the state. At the same time, they dominated the top echelon of the civil service in the sense that 50% of the Directors-General (Permanent Secretaries) and about 75% of the Directors were of Ekiti origin (Ondo State Government 1997, Adetoye and Olaniyan, 2014). Third, in addition to the demographic advantage and administrative domination they had, Ondo state had just been classified an oil producing state by the time they were angling to leave. Lastly, as at the time of the state creation, there was only one industry, a printing press.

No major infrastructure, very little government presence and the number of cottage industries very few. In spite of these advantages and prospects, they complained of marginalization, oppression and neglect and struggled until they got their state. Even, the minority voice of opposition to the whole idea of state creation by such people as General Adeyinka Adebayo and Governor Bamidele Olumilua were overwhelmingly rejected. Based on the homogeneity of the people, their nature of doggedness and the strength of purpose exhibited in the course of the struggle for the state creation, the expectation was that the state creation would bring about instant development to the long-suffering people.

As argued by Dele Adetoye (2010), the intense struggle for Ekiti state creation presented some paradoxes, which further depicted the nature and characteristics of Ekiti people. First, Ekiti people complained of marginalization in a place where they were the one marginalizing others, because they had the demographic advantage and also dominated all the administrative and political positions in the old Ondo state. Second, they willingly left economic certainty for uncertainty as reflected in their moving out of Ondo state when the state has just been classified an oil producing state, with all the attendant benefits. Lastly, they did not deploy their control of political power to pursue industrialization and infrastructural upgrading of their land before the creation of the state.

Thus, as at the time of creating the state, there was virtually no infrastructure on ground. What would be regarded as the second level of paradox is that no sooner than the state was created that they started in-fighting as witnessed in the acrimonious nature of politics in the land. Thus, the much-anticipated quick development did not materialize. The expectation was that the return of democracy will make things better. But this was not to be. Factors responsible for this have

largely been attributed to lack of industrial base, dearth of economic activities, poor resource generation, low federal allocation and most importantly, instability at the political leadership level.

Since the return of democracy in 1999 (a spate of 16 years), the state has recorded 9 Governors: Niyi Adebayo (1999-2003), Ayo Fayose (2003-2006); Friday Aderemi (One Day); General Adetunji Olurin (6 months); Tope Ademiluyi (1 months); Segun Oni (2007-2009); Tunji Odeyemi (3 months); Segun Oni (2009-2010); Kayode Fayemi (2010-2014) and Ayo Fayose (2014-Date). Only Niyi Adebayo and Kayode Fayemi successfully completed single term tenures. No PDP Governor has ever completed his tenure in the state. Most of the administrations have been very turbulent and laced with acrimonious politicking. Major consequences of this level of instability have been policy inconsistency and gross underdevelopment.

Kayode Fayemi, upon arrival as Governor met a state in dire straits in virtually all areas of governance – education, health, road, urban renewal, waste disposal and others. For example all roads leading to the state, as well as township ones, were in very bad shape. It had no industries and the rate of unemployment was very high. Hence, the state was very poor. It generated a total sum of 109 million naira in Internally Generated Revenue and received 2.5 billion naira monthly allocation from the federation's account out of which 2 billion was expended on salaries and allowances (Jamiu, 2013). To address the poor state of affairs of the state, the Fayemi government set out reforms in virtually all sectors of governance.

In the educational sector, which was seen as the backbone of the state's economy and society, he introduced competency tests for teachers, including principals and head-teachers in primary and secondary schools. He started with the principals and head-teachers. Those that failed the tests were either downgraded or retired. Efforts to extend to other teachers were thereafter resisted. He made promotion in the civil service contingent on passing of competitive tests. At the economic front, he set about improving the financial base and through his efforts, the Internally Generated Revenue of the state jumped from 109 million naira to 600 million naira per month (Jamiu, 2013).

But this increase was through the stringent policies of implementation of Federal Tax Law, which resulted in sharp increase in personal income tax of workers and blocking of leakages in the Board of Internal Revenue through strengthening of the e-transaction system introduced by Governor Segun Oni. Considering the fact that the Board of Internal Revenue used to be a gold mine for civil servants, this was an example of corruption eradication. He also introduced electronic payment system for workers' salaries and allowances, which to a large extent, stopped loading of salary vouchers by civil servants (Personal interview, 2015).

Similarly, he introduced several reforms in the civil service that resulted in the reduction of powers, nomenclature and position of the hitherto powerful Administrative Officers in the Civil Service. In the local government system, he redeployed the largely redundant local government staffers with education

certificates to public schools for teaching. He introduced competency tests for the hitherto powerful and untouchable Directors of Administration and Treasurers of Local Governments; and those who couldn't pass were either retired or downgraded. The reforms in the education sector included the closure of 'miracle centres' (where WAEC exams are conducted by unscrupulous people) and sale of handouts in tertiary institutions in the state.

Included also was the relocation of popular market and the ban of road side trading at the market places, which became quite unpopular in the estimation of the people. In other to address the problem of infrastructure and urban renewal, he took a bond of N25 Billion from the capital market. Even though, he explained to have used the money for infrastructural development such as construction of roads across the nooks and crannies of the state and construction, renovation and upgrading of hospitals and public schools in all the local governments as well as building of new Government House among others, yet, this step became a major issue against his government, because he was accused of turning Ekiti state into a debtor state.

Again, the reforms, in the eyes of the people, were too sweeping, harsh and punitive and all entreaties by several segments of the society to abandon or alter the policies were rejected by the government. This became a major yardstick for capturing his government as insensitive and disconnected with the people. Again, Kayode Fayemi caught an image of an elitist governor who was hardly seen in the public except for official purpose. He was regarded as too reserved, too quiet and not a 'proper' politician in the Nigerian sense of it. He therefore cut the figure of a rigid, aloof and an administrator who was hell-bent on implementing his policies and programmes he considered best for the people, not minding the complaints of the people.

His main challenger, Ayo Fayose, has personality traits that are diametrically opposed to his. He would readily walk in the street on foot or hike motorcycle to display close connection with the masses. He patronises food vendors by the roadside and eats in public places to the admiration of his teeming supporters who are mostly artisans, commercial motorcyclists, motorcyclists and teachers. Undoubtedly, this gave him the outlook of a grassroots politician who identified with the interests of the common man.

This created more support for him in the campaign period which ultimately led to his landslide victory against the incumbent governor despite the fact his campaign promises were not founded on any substantial manifesto. A number of commentators have attributed the victory of Fayose to the militarization of the state, particularly the arrest and detention of APC stalwarts on the eve of the election because the process could not be regarded as free and fair. While it is true that the Jonathan administration deployed massive security personnel to lock down the state and also detain APC members, yet, facts on ground showed that PDP could have still won even without the excessive militarization. In essence, such extensive security deployment was more of a panicky measure on the part of the PDP government. To a large extent, the outcomes generally reflected the wishes of majority of the people.

In other words, the Ekiti people deliberately voted for a candidate that neither made any serious campaign promise nor presented any manifesto. The question then is why?

### **The Perspective of Stomach Infrastructure**

A number of perspectives have emerged on the voting behaviour of Ekiti people. The most popular is the stomach infrastructure, which was popularised by Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos state. Specifically, the concept of stomach entered the Nigerian political lexicon in the wake of the 2014 governorship elections in Ekiti state and has since become not only “the official economic/development agenda of the Ayo Fayose’s administration in Ekiti State” (Adigun, 2015), but also the lens through which Ekiti people and politics are viewed. Governor Fashola attributed the victory of PDP in Ekiti state to the functions of monetary inducement and patronage instituted by the PDP because it controlled the national treasury. To him, the outcome of the elections defied rational logic based on the general observation of good performance by the APC government as led by Kayode Fayemi, and thus, there could not have been any major factor accounting for the defeat than the politics of the stomach that the people embraced.

In other words, Ekiti people voted for PDP basically because of the distribution of food items and money embarked upon by the party. The popularity of the concept has been further enhanced by the appointment of Special Assistance on Stomach Infrastructure by Governor Ayo Fayose. Indeed, advocates of stomach infrastructure believe that government cannot be investing heavily on infrastructure when the stomach is empty and that electoral fortunes depend largely on satisfying the physiological needs of the people as a matter of priority (Gabriel, 2015). The centrality of food to the whole concept of stomach infrastructure is well-established in the definition offered by Ayo Fayose when he averred that:

The concept of my stomach infrastructure which has given me fame and acceptability with the people of Ekiti State remains an integral part of this administration. Physical infrastructure and urban renewal will continue to play its own role in the development of any nation. It is only the livings who are hale and hearty that can enjoy such Infrastructure. Every policy of any administration that cannot put food on the table of the people is irrelevant (emphasis added), (cited in Balogun, 2015).

But the food-centric interpretation of the stomach infrastructure is essentially a narrow understanding of the concept. As explained by Innocent Macebong, stomach infrastructure, in its broader meaning is simply a euphemism for describing the

system by which political patronage is dispensed to various groups in a particular society.

This patronage can take many forms such as distribution of money, food items and drinks. It could also mean giving out contracts to political leaders and, as expected, turning blind eye when they fail to execute them (Macebong, 2015). In other words, the people expect the person holding political power to dispense government funds as patronage. The relevance of the perspective is that it brought to the fore the place of patronage in Nigerian politics. In his theory of two publics, Peter Ekeh (1975) has identified the bifurcation of Nigerian person to two realms of civic and primordial in which the major dichotomising element is the presence of morality in the primordial and the absence of same in the civic. The people expect office holders to take from the civic realm to service the primordial realm. To a large extent, the stomach infrastructure is empirical validation of Ekeh's theoretical postulation.

However, the stomach infrastructure perspective suffers multiple problems. In the first instance, it is a simplistic explanation of the Ekiti case and to reduce the electoral behaviour of the people to the influence of food is to, on the one hand, neglect the major factor explaining their voting behaviour and on the other, heap an insult on the people as a hungry lot. At any rate, distribution of food and money during election time is neither state-bound nor region-specific. Even if we admit the claim of the centrality of food to the electoral outcomes, then we can say that the practice of food distribution was not peculiar to PDP alone. Research findings show that APC even distributed raw food more than what Fayose did. Even, member of APC induced electorates with money more than Fayose (Fieldwork, 2015).

As a fact, Fayose sold his campaign vests to the people to make more money, rather than give them free of charge. Specifically, distribution of food during election period is a national practice that continues to feature during election time in Nigeria. Second, if as argued by Fayose, that "stomach Infrastructure is not about food alone, it is also about the welfare of the people" (cited in Balogun, 2014), then perhaps nobody did it better than Fayemi through his monthly stipends to the elderly, setting up of unemployment relief package with monthly stipend and agricultural revolution policies. Therefore, the issue goes beyond stomach infrastructure. Third, the perspective did not explain the 2015 voting behaviour. This is in the sense that virtually all candidates in the state and national assembly elections distributed food and money to the people during the elections. Most of the candidates under the platform of APC did what is referred to as empowerment prior to the elections; yet they were all defeated. This shows that the issue goes beyond the mantra of stomach infrastructure.

### **The Perspective of Ideological Crisis**

Femi Falana advanced the notion of ideological crisis in APC as the major factor for the ascendancy of PDP in the state. To Falana, APC has no ideological direction and did not arm its governors with any programme agenda or code of ethics. Rather, the party that purports to be an offshoot of the Unity Party of Nigeria and the Peoples

Redemption Party of the Second Republic proved to be bereft of any scintilla of codes and ideology. According to him, APC controlled states that lay claim to progressivism introduced oppressive tax policies and also priced all social things – access to education, health and employment – out of the reach of the poor; whereas, under the former UPN and PRP progressive regime in the second republic, oppressive taxation was abolished and social amenities were subsidized for the benefits of the masses. He further cited the use of traffic control agencies in the APC-controlled states as avenue to extort money from motorists as a mark of anti-masses policies of the APC.

Lastly, he accused APC governors of pursuing a capitalist policy of market fundamentalism that believes in the commercialisation of education and health and the privatisation of public assets (Falana, 2015). The logic in Falana's position is that the APC controlled states have yet to behave differently from the PDP it condemned. Rather, they have inflicted untold hardship on the people through their policies that geared towards oppressive taxation and profit maximization. The Falana perspective has a lot of logic. The introduction of traffic warden as well as implementation of high taxation policy is quite true and draw serious complains from a large segment of the populace.

However, the perspective is fraught with inadequacies and contradictions. In the first instance, the perspective fails to see the place of the people in the social welfare scheme where old people were paid monthly stipends; the free education programme, the free health programmes, the unemployment relief schemes as well as the revolution in agriculture pursued by Fayemi led APC government in Ekiti state. It also did not account for the reason why APC governors won second term elections in Osun in 2014 as well as in Oyo and Ogun states in the 2015 elections. It also did not explain why the market fundamentalism failed to prevent the several candidates for state and national assembly seats from winning re-election bids in these states. Therefore, the Falana's perspective proves to be insufficient in capturing the Ekiti case in the 2015 elections. The implication then is that we have to look beyond the perspectives of stomach infrastructure and ideological deficiencies to explain the Ekiti electoral behaviour.

### **Politics of Spite**

With the benefit of the interviews conducted with the people, we will like to advance the concept of "politics of spite" as relevant to explaining the voting behaviour of Ekiti people. Politics of spite rides on the crest of anger and reinforced by damn-the-consequence disposition (Interview with Adetoye, 2015). The voting blocs in Ekiti belonged to two major groups we can call the *Salariats* and the *Informalists*. The first group comprises of the civil servants, teachers, local government workers and others that rely on salaries from the state government. The second are the non-salaried segment of the state as represented by the artisans, commercial motorcyclists, the commercial drivers and the market women. While the first group are the educated

segments, the second are generally less-educated, but very important and influential in politics.

Politically, these two groups, to a large extent, determine who becomes what and the logic is that at least one of them, particularly the second group, must be favourably disposed to your ambition before you can make a political headway. The fact is that the two groups became estranged from the government of Kayode Fayemi; with the first group despising the reforms initiated by the government and the second abhorring the aloofness and assumed disconnectedness with them. Several respondents within the first group attributed their anger in his introduction of competitive exams and tests, retirement or downgrading of officers that failed the exams; redeployment of local government staffers to schools; practical blockage of all avenues to get extra cash and the penchant to use consultants instead of the regular civil servants (Fieldwork, 2015).

Respondents in the second group regard Fayemi as a product of "Ekiti abroad" who does not speak the Ekiti dialect, does not understand the Ekiti political terrain and one with the penchant for giving out contracts meant for the local people to "Lagos people" (Fieldwork, 2015). By the time Fayemi started countering the narratives, it was rather too late and the people had made up their minds. Some of the policies were later suspended, but it was too late and the people regarded such move as election gimmicks (Salako, 2014, Fieldwork, 2015).

The anger became the foundation for the politics of spite that was displayed by the people in the 2014 elections. The lack of forgiveness and damn-the-consequence incorporated in the politics of spite explain the repetition of same behaviour in the 2015 elections. In fact, the 2015 elections presented the opportunity to repeat the spite. Thus, the voting was a protest vote done to spite the APC because of Fayemi. To a large extent, other contestants on the platform of APC suffered the fate of hatred for APC. In essence, the voting behaviour exhibited in the 2015 general elections would have to be situated within the context of politics of spite, triggered by anger and reinforced by damn-the-consequence trait. This aligns with the general nature of Ekiti people as stubborn and single minded people.

The politics of spite does not work alone. It has its logic reinforced by other forces. One of them is the fact that in Ekiti state, the population that normally vote are not the so called educated elite. There is always the assumption that Ekiti is a highly literate society and that almost everybody is a graduate. The fact is that a large section of the society is still largely uneducated. Among the educated ones, there is a high level of unemployment, which has turned several of the certificate-parading guys to Commercial motorcyclists, commercial drivers, artisans or traders.

Majority of the set of graduates that found themselves within this situation do not enjoy job satisfaction and thus naturally have a social axe to grind with the system. And they tend to see the better-placed ones as being responsible to their predicament. At any rate, just like in many other societies in the country, there are always suspicions between the two groups. This explains why Fayemi could be

accused of “speaking too much grammar” and behaving too elitist in the estimation of the people. Tatalo Alamu put this in a better perspective when he argues that:

This patriotic but paradoxically reactionary mind-set boosted by unemployed and unemployable graduates and other political wayfarers traversing the different parties in search of opportunities has brought political barbarians to the barricades in Ekiti. The tension is exacerbated by the fact that a naturally progressive and forward-looking people appear to have seen through the elite ruse. The stage is set for an explosive showdown (Alamu, 2009).

The argument captures the suspicion between the elites and the teeming mass of the people. To a large extent, the masses that are mostly within the *informalists* groups determine electoral outcomes in the state.

#### **Intra-party Crisis in APC**

Before the 2014 elections, cracks had emerged within the APC party. The fractionalization had prevented the party from presenting a common front. A number of reasons are responsible for this. First is the failure of the APC government to conduct local government elections. They resorted to the use of caretaker system which they kept changing after three months. This prevented a grassroots mobilization for the party. The second reason has to do with the politics of the re-election of Kayode Fayemi. Rather than conduct primary election, the party resorted to consensus arrangement and shut its door against all contestants. Opeyemi Bamidele, a member of the Federal House of Representatives, was forced to leave the party for Labour Party.

The fractionalization accounted for one of the reasons for the total loss of elections in 2015. For example, results coming from Ekiti West II, Emure, Ikole and Moba II obviously showed that if Labour party had not pulled out of APC structure, the APC candidate would have most likely won and PDP would not have gotten a total victory. However, the defection to Labour Party had the toga of spite because the bulk of LP members were chieftains of the defunct ACN who felt ostracized or neglected in the scheme of things within the APC. .

#### **Differential level of Understanding Development and Governance**

There is also what we can differentials in the understanding of what constitutes development between the government of Fayemi and a large section of Ekiti people. While Fayemi believes the reforms he introduced and pursued vigorously are what will push the much-expected development, the people had a contrary belief. A

number of respondents argue that the acquisition of 25 billion naira loan had plunged the state to debt. To them, rather than use the money for economic activities, it was expended on projects that are of little or no immediate bearing to their existence. To them, such edifices as the new government house, the pavilion, the roads network are not so central to development in their estimation. This further fuelled the anger that gave rise to spite (Fieldwork, 2015).

#### **Impeachment moves after the Presidential Election**

Upon the swearing in of Governor Ayo Fayose, five members of the APC decamped to PDP to make its members seven in the house. In what would amount to a legislative drama, the seven members impeached the Speaker and declared the seats of the 19 APC members vacant. The 'new speaker' was promptly recognized by Governor Ayo Fayose. Invariably, the 19 APC members were run out of town and all attempts to return to the Assembly Chamber were thwarted by a combination of Police and political thugs loyal to Governor Fayose.

However, immediately the APC Presidential candidate won the election, they served impeachment notice on Governor Fayose and his Deputy and made attempts to return to the state to carry out the impeachment. They were prevented from carrying out the threat by the Police and thugs stationed around the Assembly premises. The impeachment moves resulted in violence and loss of life. Initially, the impeachment move gave APC members some hope to mobilize their supporters. However, the two major blocs identified earlier saw this as an attempt to return APC to power and this led to massive mobilization against the candidates of APC in the subsequent House of Assembly election. The politics of spite was vigorously reinforced.

**Conclusion**

The paper focuses on the conduct and outcomes of the 2015 general elections. It argues that the elections were well conducted and the electoral umpire displayed competence, even though there were some cases of security breakdown in a pocket of areas. Generally, the outcomes show the wishes of the Ekiti people. This paper argues that the uniqueness of the elections was not only the peaceful conduct of the election. Rather, it also has to do with the emergent issues, one of which is the sociology of voting exhibited by the people of the state where they consistently voted for a particular party in deviation from their earlier electoral behaviour. Most commentators on the Ekiti electoral behaviour have often harped on the concept of stomach infrastructure. However, the concept of stomach infrastructure only offers a simplistic interpretation to a very complex situation.

This paper argues that Ekiti electoral behaviour was neither particularly influenced by stomach infrastructure nor party ideological deficiency as identified by Governor Babatunde Fashola and Femi Falana respectively. The electoral alchemy of Ekiti state is one in which the determinants of the outcomes are the interplay of forces between the *saliariats* and *informalists* groups. The case of Ekiti state in respect of the 2015 electoral outcomes has to do with the connivance of the two blocs. The anger felt by the reforms of Fayemi government led to anger against the APC, which bred spite. The 2015 election was principally a continuation of the protest vote, undergirded by spiteful behaviour, experienced in the course of the 2014 governorship poll. As argued in the work, the politics of spite had been reinforced by other factors such as impeachment moves by APC lawmakers, divisions in the APC party and the differential conception of development. The factor of stomach infrastructure is infinitesimal to the real reason behind the electoral behaviour of the people. In other words, the electoral behaviour exhibited by the Ekiti people in the 2015 elections owes largely to the politics of spite, and not the stomach infrastructure that has become the mantra of explanation.

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