

**Beyond Stomach Infrastructure: Party Membership and Political Ideology in Nigeria's
Fourth Republic**

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

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Beyond Stomach Infrastructure: Party Membership and Political Ideology in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Sa'eed A. Husaini

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Abstract

This thesis explores political ideology in contemporary Nigeria through tracing the origins of two mass membership parties: The All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Mainstream scholars of African democracy explain mass political mobilisation through “ethno-clientelism,” that is, through a combination of primal ties and gift-giving. However, ethno-clientelistic explanations are susceptible to two significant explanatory weaknesses. These explanations prevent scholars from considering the domain of political “affect”, that is to say the role of utopian desires and fantasies in propelling wide-scale political mobilisation, including mass party membership. Secondly these perspectives offer us an elitist gaze of non-Western democracies. This is because these explanations are used to promote a “common good” defined not by the citizenry, but by elevated, often non-local, analysts — those thought best equipped to assess the quality of a government's management of a capitalist economy under conditions of fiscal austerity. In place of these explanations, I offer a de-exoticized, left-populist conception of mass mobilization grounded in Chantal Mouffe's agonistic definition of ideology. I argue that in Nigeria's current democratic republic, the two parties of government, the APC and the PDP are *both* centre-right populist parties and, thus, that Nigeria's main parties are ideological, even if they are ideologically *convergent* rather than opposed.

To empirically assess these claims, I examine the testimonies and practices of APC and PDP party loyalists throughout an election and post-election period. Nine months of fieldwork — including attending scores of party meetings and interviewing numerous party members — was conducted in Ekiti

state (a Yoruba majority, south-west state) and in Kaduna state (a Hausa-Fulani majority, north-western state). These states were selected for their accessibility as well as to allow me to inductively examine what differences and similarities would emerge by contrasting two historically and ethno-culturally distinct states. Across both locations, both the APC and the PDP are centre-right populist parties in social composition, practice, and economic policy. I find that a mixture of cultural norms, populist and liberal institutional rules, and centrist economic policies govern political practice and thought in these parties. I also find that the character of political parties is best seen not in the words of political speech-writers, but in the practices of democratic citizens on the public calendar of party activities known as the electoral cycle. Through the study of ideology in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, my thesis makes an empirical contribution to left-populist theory and a conceptual contribution by reintroducing the left/right ideological spectrum into the comparative study of African democracy.

Map of Nigeria



Abbreviations

Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)
Action Group (AG)
Ahmadu Bello University (ABU)
Alliance for Democracy (AD)
All Progressives Congress (APC)
All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)
All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP)
All People's Party (APP)
Board of Trustees (BoT)
Centre for Democratic Development, Research and Training (CEDDERT)
Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)
Federal Capital Territory (FCT)
Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
Local Government Area (LGA)
National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS)
National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC)
National Executive Committee (NEC)
Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)
Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC)
Nigerian Labour Party (NLP)
Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP)
Northern People's Congress (NPC)
National Republican Convention (NRC)
National Working Committees (NWC)
Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM)
Other People's Money (O.P.M)
Populist Radical Right (PRR)
Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)
State Executive Committee (SEC)
Social Democratic Party (SDP)
Socialist Workers and Farmer Party (SWAFP)
Teacher's Development Needs Assessment Test (TDNA)
Zonal Executive Committees (ZEC)

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1.

Introduction

This is why democratic theory is so badly prepared to grasp the nature of “mass” political movements... Democratic politics cannot be limited to establishing compromises among interests and values or to deliberation about the common good; it needs to have a real purchase on people’s desires and fantasies.

- Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*

Abubakar says the only way Nigeria can reduce poverty and tackle rampant corruption is by giving the private sector a bigger role. The politician, who has 26 children and four wives, describes himself as a centrist. Tellingly, however, he’s a big fan of former Conservative U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and says he “strongly believes” in her push to privatize industries.

- Paul Wallace and Dulue Mbachu, *Bloomberg*

The Golden Age of Mass Party Membership

The historical development of political parties is often narrated from a unilinear, evolutionist perspective, a narrative arc which presumes that liberal democracy “matured” in the West and that the rest of the world exists in earlier developmental stages. This “common sense” perspective holds that “the state of economic-political development”, that “Western Societies” have now reached, “constitutes a great progress in the evolution of humanity, and that we should celebrate the possibilities that it opens” (Mouffe, 2000; 1). According to this Euro-centric perspective, mass party membership, wherein crowds of passionate party loyalists regularly gather in their local political party branch, climaxed in the middle

of the twentieth century (Katz, et al. 1992). By the end of the 1990s, mass parties largely dissipated, giving way to “concrete and consistent evidence of widespread disengagement from party politics” (Mair & Van Biezen 2001).¹ At this juncture, political scientists began to echo a sociological anxiety over the “Tocqueville problem” (Skocpol 1997): the withering away of civic life even in America, which earned Tocqueville’s praise for its associational vibrancy. Given these trends in the most “established” countries, scholars said that the era of associationalism, political parties, and liberal democracy itself may be coming to an end (Mair 2006).²

Africa’s democratic experiments, however, radically trouble this dominant narrative of party birth and decline. Afrobarometer surveys in Nigeria, Africa’s largest liberal democracy, find that over 20 percent of voting age citizens claim to regularly attend party meetings or work to elect candidates.³ This degree of party mobilization greatly surpasses the highest levels of party engagement witnessed in mid-twentieth century Europe, the supposed golden-era of mass party membership. Through qualitative field research, I found that political gatherings in Nigeria remain vibrant. These gatherings are peopled by *party members* who proudly adorn party regalia, vehemently debate the decisions of their leaders, and

¹ In 20 European democracies, the population of party members declined precipitously from over 15 percent of the general electorate in the 1970s to about 3.9 per cent in 2001 (*ibid*, 28). In a particularly striking example, party membership stood at 0.8 percent in the United Kingdom, where committed party members had nearly gone extinct till the tide began to turn in 2018 (Audickas, et al. 2018). The figure for the UK rose to 1.6 percent in 2018, driven by a historical surge in the membership of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn.

² Studies of declining party membership have variously concluded that these changes have been occasioned by the successes of the welfare state in creating a middle-class in Europe and America and thereby loosening previous class alliances (Krouwel 2003); by the rise of the television (Putnam 2001) and later the internet (Milner 2002) which made mass gatherings redundant; by “state capture”, or excessive state regulation brought about by an ever-closer relationship between parties and the state (Whiteley 2011), or by the dynamic interaction of many of these factors (Katz & Mair 1995).

³ This claim rests upon the Afrobarometer’s round 6 and 7 survey results from Nigeria available online (and further discussed in Chapter 3): <http://afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online>

assiduously learn to sing party songs in their local languages. These activists, workers, and party cadres are generally known as *party loyalists*. The fervour and scale of the mobilization of Nigerian party loyalists suggests that the era of mass party democracy (Katz & Mair 1995) may have dawned — unheralded — in Africa. This mixed methods study investigates the composition, organisation, and ideals of Nigerian party loyalists, focusing on loyalists in the All Progressives Congress (APC) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria’s two parties of government.

An Ideological Explanation

As political party scholars (Mair & Van Biezen 2001) claim, the study of political parties and party members helps diagnose the legitimacy and health of liberal democracies. More specifically, these studies clarify whether and why citizens might either remain vibrant and engaged or grow apathetic and retreat from public life. This study is also relevant to broader questions of “development,” understood as the methods through which individuals and groups may pursue the requisite power for effecting social change through the state, markets, and/or other social organisations such as political parties (Ferguson 1990; Scott 1990; Sen 2001). Questions regarding civic participation are increasingly posed by powerful actors in international development, including the World Bank and major donor countries (Ake 1991). Despite this interest, how people participate in political organisations has yet to generate serious scholarly attention. This study intends to enrich discussions (Sen 2001, Roelofs 2019, Mohan & Hickey 2004) in development studies about how democratic societies might come to enable democratic citizens to shape their political communities. The study, therefore, bridges comparative political science and development

studies. These bodies of scholarship inform my analysis but are also challenged and extended in new ways. The study both joins these streams of scholarship and advances its own specific contributions through responding to the following question: *How is mass party membership mobilised in contemporary Nigeria?* Drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic theory of radical, left-populist democracy (Mouffe 2000, 2011, 2016), my study advances a simple, if controversial, claim. I propose that the extent and nature of mass party mobilization in Nigeria is a product of a fusion between far-right populism and centrist ideologies. Such an ideological fusion provides the clearest *explicans* for a number of important *explicanda*, namely: The extent and vibrancy of party membership, the social composition of party members, the organisational form that parties have adopted, the “floor-crossing” and fluidity of loyalties between the APC and the PDP, the policies these parties pursue and sell to their members and the electorate, and the role these parties play in the outbreaks of post-electoral violence. This ideological fusion is evidenced not only in the words of political speech writers (as in the second opening epigraph), but also in the political practices of a democratic citizenry on the recurring calendar of party activities, that is, the electoral cycle.

My study devotes a chapter to each crucial phase of the electoral cycle, the constituency building, party primaries, elections, and post-election phases of the political calendar. Across these phases, even in the ethno-communally divergent terrains of south-west and north-central Nigeria, the remarkable consistency in the organisational form and political content of party membership attests to the dominance of ideological centrism and far-right populism within Nigeria’s governing parties. These findings fundamentally question the influential pathologizing view that African political parties remain weak and clientelistic, “empty vessels,” devoid of members, ideology, and internal organisation (Basedau, et al. 2007). I find that local party branches sustain vibrant memberships; that party activists have both

formal and informal influence on party decisions; and that, rather than ideological vacuity, party membership embeds a near dogmatic ideological grip over loyalists. These factors, I argue, point not to ideological competition between the APC and the PDP, but to the historical *convergence* of centrism and far-right populism in *both* of Nigeria's governing parties. To demonstrate this claim, my study reintroduces the left/right ideological spectrum into comparative debates about contemporary African democracy.

This study also makes a contribution to mainstream political science and democratic theory. Until recently, the field has assumed that democracy could be "consolidated" through the broad societal acceptance of democratic institutions and practices over time. Yet, in the contemporary era, the very idea of democratic "institutionalization" has once again been drawn into question, as it was in the 1930s, in Western democracies. Ultimately, my study demonstrates that a radical theory of democracy, which considers liberal democracy as never consolidated but always an unfinished project, allows analysts to both take seriously and critically analyse the nature of democratic and liberal institutions and practices, both in the Nigerian context and across the world, without basing our analysis on exoticism and romanticized visions of Western democracy.

State of the Literature: Opportunism as Hegemony

The popularity and vibrancy of party membership in Nigerian politics has largely gone unnoticed in scholarship. The reliance on ethno-clientelism in studies of Nigerian politics has blinded scholars to this fact. Ethno-clientelism holds that political behaviour is always tied either to ethnic affiliations or to financial motivations. Moreover, ethno-clientelist accounts lead to a cynical conclusion that opportunism is the fundamental driver of Nigerian politics. This deep-rooted cynicism papers over the deeply felt beliefs of loyalists which, to quote Mouffe, “have a real purchase on people’s desires and fantasies.” The true extent and character of Nigeria’s mass membership parties have, therefore, gone unnoticed and unexplained.

In the ensuing section, I review two key bodies of literature dealing with Nigerian political parties. The first body of literature directly treats the development of political parties in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. Theories of ethno-clientelism have continued to inform this literature ever since Richard Joseph first introduced the term “prebendalism” to describe the link between political power, ethnicity, and material exchange in Nigeria. The second body of literature relates to the development of political parties in Africa’s “third-wave” democracies beginning in the 1990s. I show that this literature is also indebted to an Africa-wide theory of ethno-clientelism coined as “neopatrimonialism.” I then examine the twin accusations of Euro-centrism and exoticism that have rightfully arisen against ethno-clientelism in general and neopatrimonialism in particular. I also explain why these criticisms failed to dislodge the paradigm. Finally, I offer a criticism of elitism, which draws from the ideas of Raufu Mustapha (2002) and Chantal Mouffe (2000), points out scholar’s failure to pay attention to the central role of “fantasy” in the politics of mobilization. The inability of theories rooted in ethno-clientelism to account for

popular political agency calls for a de-exoticized and populist conception of political mobilization in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The Study of Nigerian & African Democracy

Scholarship on contemporary Nigerian political parties has reached a near unanimous consensus. The early years of Nigeria's Fourth Democratic Republic (1999 - 2011) were marked by deep pessimism about the longevity of the new democratic dispensation (Mustapha 1999). The political parties, championed by the former military leaders and political party bosses of the authoritarian era, were understandably greeted with cynicism (Chiemeké 2016). Furthermore, the founding elections of the Fourth Republic were marked by "monumental electoral shenanigans" (Suberu 2007). Political parties, for their role in shepherding the conduct of both electoral politics and government, were regarded with disdain (Omotola 2009; Omotola 2010).

The early condemnation of Nigeria's wider electoral politics has now crystalized into a more precise diagnosis of Nigeria's political parties. It is now most frequently argued — both by academics and popular analysts— that Nigerian political parties are dominated by wealthy and elderly men who trade state resources for the political loyalties of co-ethnics lower down on the socio-economic ladder (Albert 2005; Albin-Lackey & Rawlence 2007; Omotola 2007; Edigin 2010; Hoffmann 2010; Animasawun 2013). This theory goes by the name of "godfatherism." Comrade Ibrahim (2017), in a popular weekly newspaper column, states that the "political barons and Godfathers take decisions on behalf of party members who have no say in the running of party affairs," even concluding that "it is actually an

aberration to talk of party members in Nigeria.” Undergirding this analytical framework is an ethno-clientelist theory of politics. On this view, ethnic affiliation, fed by patronage resources, binds followers to leaders. Political barons offer poorer co-ethnics privileged access to state resources in exchange for the latter’s electoral support. This model evokes images of Chicago and New York’s machine politics at the turn of the twentieth century, as James Scott (1969) has long noted.

However, the leader-follower relationships in Nigerian politics are explained not by the twentieth century machine politics model, but by a longstanding analogy to the medieval Catholic Church. Richard Joseph (1983), who first articulated the theory of prebendalism, conjectured that, like the Church, Nigerian politics followed a pyramidal order of “prebends,” or officers, stretching up to the highest office. These prebends could manage finances attached to their offices as though it was their own personal funds. In Nigeria, the analogy goes, these prebends channel state resources to their ethnic kinfolk and create a class of ethno-nationalist “drone capitalists” (*ibid*, 26). These drone capitalists, in turn, acquire government contracts and funnel state patronage to co-ethnics lower down the social ladder. Joseph proposed that this ethno-clientelistic social logic was “shared by bourgeois, petit bourgeois, and plebeian alike” (*ibid*, 29). For Joseph, this logic explained the growing size of the Nigerian state and the prevalence of corruption scandals following Nigeria’s first oil boom in the 1970s. Since then, held Joseph, Nigerian politics has been spurred by the underlying principle that “the struggle for a share of public goods will be conducted along ethnic and other sectional lines” (*ibid*).

Joseph’s imprint endures (Adebanwi & Obadare 2013); contemporary Nigerian elections and political parties continue to be explained through prebendalism (Hoffmann 2010; Katsina 2016). Though the management of Nigerian elections has improved (Akhaine 2011), and despite a historic

opposition victory in 2015 which many thought unlikely (Lewis & Kew 2015; Owen & Usman 2015), scholars of electoral politics and political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic still contend that "political parties in Nigeria cannot be characterized as programmatic but as ethnic coalitions led by regional strongmen with firm financial backing" (Angerbrandt 2018: 149). The ethno-clientelist consensus holds despite evidence to the contrary.

Studies of political parties in Africa have also been shaped by the use of the theory of ethno-clientelism, developed as neopatrimonialism. Neopatrimonialism – both in its more (Médard 1982; Bayart 2006) or less (Bratton & Van de Walle 1994; Chabal & Daloz 1999) sophisticated articulations – holds that ethno-clientelism is the dominant form of politics in sub-Saharan Africa. For many influential scholars of political parties in Africa's third-wave democracies, it came to be widely assumed "that formal party organisations were all but non-existent, and that political mobilization was best explained via a focus on the personal ties of individual leaders to their ethno-regional communities", as Cheeseman & Hinfelaar (2009: 56) argue. Thus, Erdmann (1999: 386–387) could contend that the concept of the "neopatrimonial party" might be an appropriate area-specific typology for African political parties. Evidently, this trend also inspired the title of Lindberg's (2003) article: "It's Our Time to 'Chop': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?" Given this larger trend in scholarship, it is no surprise that these concepts have come to dominate the study of Nigerian political parties. While it has not achieved the level of consensus seen in Nigerian Studies, much of the scholarship on African democratization still holds that the dominant drivers of African political mobilization remain a strategic fusion of ethnic affinity and self-centred opportunism.

Critiques of ethno-clientelist concepts

The dominance of ethno-clientelist concepts — particularly the concept of neopatrimonialism — has faced severe criticism within recent scholarship, even from some of its original proponents (Erdmann & Engel 2007; Lindberg 2013). Neopatrimonialism has been criticized as too imprecise (Erdmann & Engel 2007); far too removed in its current use from its Weberian origins (Pitcher, et al. 2013); unable to account for the other useful ways of understanding the state in Africa, including the paradigm of the “failed state” and of “Africa’s illiberal state-builders” (Jones, et al. 2012); and, lacking in “predictive value with respect to economic policy and performance” (Mkandawire 2015).

Scholars of comparative politics have also criticized the term’s enduring use in scholarship on African political parties following the “third wave” of democratization. A range of scholars have argued that, though ethnicity and clientelism still play a role in African elections, some African political parties are also “programmatic” (Cheeseman, et al. 2014) since they advance concrete electoral promises anchored in economic or social policy. Bleck and van de Walle, in this vein, find that many African parties advance “valence” appeals, promising “development,” “good-governance,” and “growth”, policies which these authors view as universally desirable and, thus, uncontentious. Some of the literature has questioned the explanatory reach of ethnicity and clientelism, arguing that “ethno-populism” has, in certain cases, been a better description of party mobilization strategies in Senegal and in parts of Eastern and Southern Africa than has ethno-clientelism (Larmer & Fraser 2007; Resnick 2013; Cheeseman & Larmer 2015). Populism, in this scholarship, refers to the individual charisma of candidates and their appeal to the urban poor. Turning to how voters receive party appeals, Lisa Mueller (2018) has recently found that close-

ended Afro-barometer survey data, which purported to find clientelism among voters in Niger, is shown to be inaccurate when more open-ended questions are asked of respondents. Scholars of democratization in Southern and Eastern Africa have tended to consider an alternative dimension altogether. They favourably assess political parties in organisational terms — focusing on the “functions,” “bureaucratization,” and “strengths and weaknesses” of parties — rather than on the content or type of their linkage to party members and voters. Strong parties, in this literature, refer to anything from parties that keep an orderly membership list (Darracq 2008), to those that can punish disloyalty with death (LeBas 2013). By emphasizing the “strength” of Southern and Eastern African parties in this way, this literature has nonetheless undermined the idea that African political parties are organisationally bereft “empty shells,” an impression left by proponents of neopatrimonialism (Basedau, et al. 2007). Nigeria-specific literature has also begun to critique the ethno-clientelist paradigm, if both cautiously and sporadically. Bratton (2008) found that vote-buying was ineffective since Nigerian voters are likely to “defect,” that is, take the money and vote as they please. Using statistical evidence, LeVan et al. (2018) found that perceptions of the economy more consistently correlated with levels of support for the opposition in Nigeria’s 2015 election than did violence or patronage. Recent scholarship in comparative politics, thus, questions the value of ethno-clientelism as an explanatory model.

Normative critiques have been levelled against ethno-clientelism as well. Scholars of democratization have started to view the terminology as exoticist. Even Gero Erdmann (2004), an early proponent of this terminology, suggests that neopatrimonial descriptions might be a product of “Western-European bias.” Likewise, van de Walle (2007: 13) argued that “political clientelism is an essential and ubiquitous feature of all democracies” and then, in the same article, inconsistently argues

that “Africa is becoming less neopatrimonial and more democratic.” Radical Africanist scholars have more confidently denounced the Euro-centric and exoticist baggage the theory carries, pointing out how its concepts re-animate negative colonial stereotypes about African politics. Meagher critiques the work of Chabal and Daloz (1999) and calls it “a tabloid view of African political culture based on prejudice and stereotypes rather than anything approximating evidence” (Meagher 2011). From this critical perspective, neopatrimonialism is used to normalize Western exploitation of Africa. Mustapha (2002) observes that perspectives which view ethno-clientelism as the dominant form of African politics also easily lend themselves to justifications for international intervention be that of an economic, political, or even military nature. Wai (2012) masterfully conceptualizes this criticism of ethno-clientelism when he states that the neopatrimonialist literature on African politics espouses a “Eurocentric unilinear evolutionist logic,” whereby African democracies evolve towards European democracies.

Yet these critiques, however substantive and numerous, have not unseated this analytical paradigm. This problem persists in both the Nigerianist scholarship, wherein neopatrimonialist analysis and the more Nigeria-specific concept of prebendalism are still widely and interchangeably deployed in recent publications (Hoffmann 2010; Iwilade 2014; cf: Angerbrandt 2018), and the broader comparative scholarship on African democracy. The latter scholarship still commonly claims that the participation of poor African voters encourages clientelism and patronage politics (Paller 2014; Nathan 2016) and that “the provision of material rewards during campaigns [are] seen as the standard way politicians secure votes” in “patronage democracies” (Gadjanova 2017). How can this explanatory paradigm persist despite its glaring flaws shown in the ubiquity of criticisms against it?

Ethno-clientelism still dominates our understanding of Nigerian and African democracies (Bob-Milliar 2012; Nathan 2016) due to a flawed conception of liberal democracy itself. In the common definition, liberal democracy concerns “establishing compromises among interests and values” as well as “deliberation about the common good.” Democracy, in this conception, is incompatible and even opposed to ethno-clientelism since the latter substitutes rational deliberation and the common good for material exchanges and ethnic ties. However, this conception of democracy rests on two problematic assumptions.

Firstly, it envisions politics as a “marketplace” (de Waal 2016), a domain of detached and rational calculation wherein political actors are singly propelled by their material interests, rather than by normative and ideational concerns. As such, this is a mode of political analysis which ignores the politics of “affect”, the domain of “fantasy” and of citizens’ utopian “desires” about how resources should be allocated in society (Mouffe, 2000; Lacau and Mouffe 2001).

Secondly, the ethno-clientelist conception of democracy implicitly holds that, in contrast to (often foreign) scholars, Africa’s democratic citizenry remains ensnared in the normatively inferior domain of opportunism, moral ethnicity, and political tribalism (Lonsdale 1994). In this view, ethno-clientelism is opposed to a superior form of social rationality, one construed as that which can bring about “development,” understood as the prudent management of a capitalist economy and the attainment of economic growth amidst conditions of fiscal austerity. Empirically, such theories lead us to expect a citizenry that views politics as simply a material pursuit, in contrast to their peers in more mature democracies who can aspire to the cognitive plane of holding what might be called ideology; those who have replaced “the politics of the belly” for the “politics of the head”: a domain that unites analysts and

Western voters but excludes African citizens. To view ethno-clientelism in this manner as the key pathology that cripples democracy in Africa is to hold an elitist stance on liberal democracy.

The empirical, theoretical, and political failures of ethno-clientelist theories, such as prebendalism, ultimately deny agency to African democratic citizenry and miss their democratic ingenuity, derived from the interplay between citizen's material concerns and their political desires and fantasies. However, political mobilization is a unity of material and ideational drives. To borrow from G. K. Chesterton, the will which propels political action emerges from the "chest", the meeting point of concerns which drive both the "head" and the "stomach". The elitism constitutive of the reigning prebendalist consensus in Nigerianist scholarship blinds scholars to the ideational factors which compel large-scale political mobilization including labour unionism (Houeland, 2017) and the rise of mass party membership in Nigeria. Empirically, the extent of Nigerian party engagement has gone unnoticed. This suggests that grasping mass party membership requires an alternative theoretical frame, and one fine-tuned enough to account for the affective dimensions constitutive of citizens' utopian desires and fantasies. The inability of ethno-clientelist explanations to account for the normative content of popular political participation in African democracies calls for a de-exoticized and non-elitist conception of democracy and political mobilization in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The Argument: Centre-Right Populism & Mass Party Membership

Radical, left-populist theories of democracy help explain mass political mobilization in Nigeria. These theories, moreover, hold that liberal democracy is never “consolidated,” it is always an “unfinished project” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). My argument, based on radical theories of democracy, makes two moves. Firstly, I argue that the relative vibrancy of political participation is a by-product of the ideological status-quo in liberal democratic societies. This is because the prevailing ideologies at any given moment inform the character and strength of the “linkages” between a democratic citizenry and its political leadership. Thus, the prevailing political ideology begets the extent and nature of popular political mobilization. I then will argue that centre-right populism spawned the two vibrant mass membership political parties in Nigeria’s current and fourth democratic republic. Both the APC and the PDP share the same ideological heritage, which shows a remarkable convergence of centre-right populism in Nigeria’s governing parties. Focusing on the key activities and phases within the electoral cycle reveals the link between centre-right populism and mass party membership in these parties.

The ensuing section, grounded in Chantal Mouffe’s conception of democracy, follows a tripartite structure. In the first part, I offer an explanation of the left/right ideological spectrum. In the second part, I advance a populist theory of mass party membership. Finally, I explain my conception of centre-right populist ideology, which I argue best characterizes the APC and PDP.

My argument rests on a specific definition of left/right political ideology. Following Mouffe, I see left/right ideology as an inherent feature of liberal democracy. In fact, the left/right divide is spawned by the two competing philosophical traditions of liberalism and democracy. For Mouffe, “liberals” stress individual rights and the rule of law, while “democrats” stress equality and popular sovereignty. Liberals developed rules and institutions that protect individual rights and freedom from despotism, while

democrats enshrined the supreme value of equality expressed in the vote. These two distinct traditions in tension have become the twin cornerstones of the always “unfinished” system of liberal democracy (Mouffe 2000: 117). In a liberal democracy, Mouffe further argues, the “left” refers to parties who place equality above all else, while the “right” point to those who privilege individual liberty or ethno-communal identity. The priority of the principle of equality over alternative principles — such as individuality or community — divide the two wings (*ibid*). The political spectrum in any given society falls somewhere between total liberalism and total democracy, both undesirable and impossible extremes. Democratic politics should provide room for passionate and even bitter — but always unsettled — electoral confrontation between parties on either end of the spectrum. This is a model of liberal democracy that Mouffe calls “agonistic” (2005: 30), denoting a competition between adversaries rather than an antagonistic battle between enemies. Where one stands on this spectrum defines one’s ideology. This is how ideology, specifically the left/right spectrum, is construed in the remainder of the thesis.

Political ideology and mass participation, thought and action, must be coordinated for a compelling explanation. Along with Mouffe, French Political Sociologist Maurice Duverger offers a theoretical link between left/right ideology and mass political participation. Mouffe draws on Freudian psychoanalytic theory for this link, while Duverger looks to the historical development of mass membership parties in Western European democracies. My populist theory of mass party membership draws on both explanations. For Mouffe, the Freudian instinct for aggression is at the root of the “ever-present us/them construct,” her terms for the inevitability of divisions within society. Populist strategists mobilize these Freudian divisions but define “us” versus “them” as the “the people” versus “the establishment.” When “the people” and their political “passions” are awakened, mass participation is

born. For Mouffe, populists discursively “construct the divide” between the “underdog” and “those in power,” triggering mass political participation. Duverger’s historical sociology of mass party membership offers a crucial addendum. Duverger shows that, in Western European Democracies, “elitist” parties were replaced by “mass” parties through a competitive evolutionary process. Left-wing parties first evolved the idea of bridging the class divide in order to fight for the extension of the franchise. The first mass parties emerged in this struggle. Over time, right-wing parties also learned to bridge this divide in order to survive the electoral onslaught waged by mass left parties. Duverger’s history of the elite/mass division contextualizes Mouffe’s discussions about populism. During the development of liberal democracy, says Duverger, populism first evolved in the left. Thereafter, populism spread like a virus from left to right, infecting the entire political spectrum, a “contagion from the left.” Ultimately, this contagion created a succession of political parties with mass memberships.

Following these authors, I see a reflection of ideology in the manner and extent to which a citizenry is mobilized. My conceptualization of the link between ideology and mass party membership unites Mouffe’s psychoanalytical definition of populism and Duverger’s vision of its historical origins. Populism, as I see it, is as much about constructing the divide between “the mass” and “elite” as it is about bridging it; it is about both the divide and the bridge. The theoretical link between ideology and political participation is evident in the historical link between populism and mass party organisations — a dual heritage that grows from the political left (Duverger 1962). Populism, in the context of democracy, discursively constructs the “mass” and organisationally constructs the party. In short, *populist organisation begets mass participation*. In bridging Mouffe and Duverger, my thesis advances a populist theory of mass party membership.

Mouffe further provides a way to define the political centre. Following Mouffe, I view the political centre as the political ideologies which not only sit between both ends of the left/right divide, but also deny the importance of the ideological spectrum altogether. Mouffe identifies the self-described “third-way” — Britain’s New Labour Party under Tony Blair and the U.S.’ Democratic Party under Bill Clinton — as the paradigmatic case of centrist ideology. Political leaders and strategists of “the third-way” claim to transcend “left and right,” having discovered a final universal solution to political conflict. Mouffe calls this position “a politics without adversary.” Following this rubric, the “third-way” mobilized citizens based on “good governance,” “technocratic management,” and “development” — the same “de-politicized” constructs James Ferguson identified with the “anti-politics machine” in his critique of the rule of experts that governs the field of International Development. The “third-way,” as a distinct strand of centrism, unites political centrism with neoliberalism economics, which defines the key goals of government as the efficient management of a capitalist economy under conditions of fiscal austerity. Drawing on Mouffe’s construal of the third-way, I understand the political centre as the political strategists and leaders who associate with uncontentious “valence” politics (Bleck & Van de Walle 2013) while advancing a fundamentally conservative economic outlook.

Bleck and van de Walle define valence politics as a mobilization strategy which draws upon uncontentious issues such as “good-governance” and “infrastructural development” while avoiding divisive policy positions. These authors observe the ubiquity of valence politics in party competition in African democracies but paradoxically attribute this to the absence of ideology. Rather, they tie valence politics to the “newness” of African democracies. In so doing, they reveal a unilinear evolutionary instinct often seen in comparative studies which believe that through the forward passage of time, democracies

become “consolidated”. They also reveal a neglect in African Studies of debates within the critical development studies literature regarding the links between policy-making in Africa and the ideological commitments of donors. The concept of valence politics, properly re-situated in an ideological frame, is nonetheless a useful synonym for political centrism.

I also draw on Mouffe’s definition of the populist radical right. I define the far-right as those ideologues who privilege identification with an essentialist community over equality. Far-right logics are, for instance, at play in Lonsdale’s famous concepts of moral ethnicity and political tribalism. In his study of Kikuyu society in pre-independence Kenya, Lonsdale finds that moral ethnicity is “the common human instinct to create out of the daily habits of social intercourse and material labour a system of moral meaning and ethical reputation within a more or less imagined community.” Moral ethnicity is a shared understanding of public virtue grounded in a specific “more or less imagined” ethnic or national community. These shared virtues work to make inequalities within the community “reputable” (ibid., 138 – 9) rather than lessening or surmounting them. For Lonsdale, moral ethnicity is a normatively desirable form of human social organisation. What troubles the serenity of moral ethnicity, however, is when various ethnic groups are forced to share in common political institutions or spaces. Diversity, for Lonsdale, is the origin and inevitable precursor of “political tribalism,” a form of identification that is competitive and antagonistic. Following Roelofs (2018), I views Lonsdale’s theory as far-right insofar as it both contends that political frontiers in society should be based in “moral ethnicity,” an essentialist form of identification, and maintains a radical scepticism towards multiculturalism, the possibility that forms of liberal democratic pluralism might succeed at curtailing “political tribalism.” Political arrangements that bridge ethno-national divides will only result in conflict for Lonsdale. Furthermore,

as Roelofs (2011) also notes, Lonsdale's moral politics easily lends itself to arguments in favour of the preservation of existing social relations within the ethnic community, as evident, for instance, in Richard Werbner's (2002) use of moral ethnicity "to argue for the value of patriarchy and gerontocracy based on his experience with Kalanga elites in Botswana." Mouffe also draws a connection between far-right ideologies and conflict. Far-right forms of populism threaten to shatter the liberal democratic framework by envisioning politics in essentialist and antagonistic "us" verses "them" terms. However, unlike Lonsdale, Mouffe sees this state of affairs not as the necessary outcome of diversity, but as the outcome of the moment when liberal democracy fails to provide legitimate left/right divisions capable of infusing agonistic passion into electoral confrontations. When the left/right divide collapses, the us/them divide emerges to take its place and, in the presence of populism, engenders mass far-right political participation. Both moral ethnicity and political tribalism, forms of political association premised on an essentialist, us/them divide, are, thus, what I construe as far-right political ideologies. Working with these definitions, I define Nigeria's political governing parties as centrist and right-wing populist parties, an ideological combination which has had a long history in Nigeria (Coleman 1965, Falola and Heaton 2008), and has been a driver of political violence and economic conservatism.

What forms of political mobilization should we expect to witness if these claims are to be empirically verified? We should find parties agnostic about the left/right divide and pursuing a valence politics without an adversary — a politics of "development," "anti-corruption," "technocratic management," and "good governance." We might also observe political leaders and strategists who discursively build and organisationally bridge the domain of the "masses". This party vanguard should then mobilize a mass following through appeals to "valence" policies (Bleck and Van de Walle 2013) and

to both positive moral ethnicity and violent political tribalism. The cultural and ethno-communal vibrancy of party activities may reinforce the popularity of these parties and encourages mass party participation. But this vibrancy will also fan the flames of social antagonism, possibly leading to violent outbursts. Based on these criteria, the following chapters show that the APC and the PDP, Nigeria's governing parties, conform to centrist, far-right, and populist patterns of political party mobilization.

The remainder of the thesis pursues this empirical claim through painting a sociological portrait of Nigerian political mobilization across the key moments of a single election cycle. This is because the most compelling evidence of the link between centre-right populism and mass party membership in Nigeria's parties of government is seen, not simply in the words and actions of the political elite, but in the practices of a democratic citizenry on the recurring calendar of party activities — namely, the electoral cycle. Ultimately, this methodological approach and analytical framework offers a better understanding of political parties in Africa's largest democracy, not as exotic or vacuous, but mass participation spurred on by a fusion of far-right populist and centrist ideologies.

Methodology

This thesis is interdisciplinary in approach. I draw liberally from the social sciences and most heavily from qualitative political science inspired by anthropology's ethno-graphic approach. This means that, as far as possible, I abide by the rules of gathering, verifying, and presenting evidence as established in qualitative political science. This section examines the steps I took to conduct a mixed-methods social science research project.

How do we assess the extent and nature of party membership in Nigeria? To tackle this two-pronged question, I opted for a mixed-methods design grounded in a pragmatic methodological framework. Pragmatic social science methodology views sociological phenomena as multifaceted and, thus, best apprehended through bridging positivist and interpretivist methodological paradigms (Morgan 2007). Positivist social science searches for the precise link between causes and effects, while interpretivist social science seeks to shed light on unknown or misunderstood social phenomena (Schaffer 2015). Rather than viewing the two as locked in a “paradigm war” (Flyvbjerg 2006), pragmatists envision the difference between interpretivism and positivism as an iterative division of labour. Theories can be generated interpretively, through methods such as observation, but they can also then be tested and verified through positivist tools of inquiry, including quantitative analyses of survey data. Conversely, hypotheses first tested in positivist quantitative research can also then be verified through historically grounded interpretivist work. Such a pragmatic methodology proved best suited for understanding what mobilizes both the extent and character of mass party membership in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.

Methodologically, the size and demographic composition of party membership in Nigeria was a more straightforward question to answer. To assess the numbers of party members in Nigeria, my thesis relied upon a nationally representative survey of voting age citizens gathered in Nigeria by Afrobarometer, a pan-African non-partisan research centre, and its local partner, Practical Sampling International. I relied on the most recent Afrobarometer round 6 and 7 data to assess the extent and demographic composition of party workers and activists. This quantitative data served descriptive and comparative purposes, as seen in the first paragraphs of this introduction. In Chapter 3, the

Afrobarometer perspective on the extent of Nigeria party membership is further explored and elaborated upon.

The character of Nigerian party membership, which is a more fundamental concern and forms the bulk of my thesis, proved a more difficult question to tackle. Interpretivist theory correctly contends that one cannot comprehend the character of a given social phenomenon, without first grasping the meaning that it holds for its participants and authors (Taylor 1971). Thus, beyond the top down and simplified picture survey data can paint, I sought to gather further insights into what party membership means for the individuals and groups whose ideas and practices give the membership its meaning in Nigeria. I pursued this agenda relying on the two case-study locations of Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, two unassuming mayoral districts — or Local Government Areas (LGAs) — in the north-central state of Kaduna and the south-western state of Ekiti respectively. The case studies helped me investigate the specificities of the practices and ideas I encountered in the two research sites. Conversely, the juxtaposition of the two locations helped me draw out fundamental similarities between politics in both places, pointing to a shared political repertoire among south-west and north-central Nigeria, regions historically thought of as politically dissimilar (Falola & Heaton 2008).

There is a need to explain the choice of these locations. Ado Ekiti was the cite of previous research I had conducted, which focused on the surprising loss of a well-respected incumbent Governor Fayemi in the June 2014 state governorship election. I was initially attracted to Ekiti state simply because I was struck by this unusual electoral episode. The party activists who participated in that election and many of my interviewees during my initial fieldwork were the first to expose me to the world of Nigerian party membership. Ekiti State and, in particular Ado Ekiti, its administrative capital, became one of the case

studies in my thesis due both to its initial variance from the norm and to its familiarity to me as the researcher. Initial contact with party activists in Ado Ekiti was made through meetings booked at PDP and APC party secretariats, both on Ajilosun Road. Having seen the nature of party organisation in the majority Yoruba Ado Ekiti, I selected an additional case study in another region of the country to reflect Nigeria's internal diversity. Kaduna state and Zaria City LGA in the majority Hausa northcentral zone of Nigeria were selected as my second case study primarily for reasons of feasibility. The academic community in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) located near Zaria City LGA helped broker my initial access to members of both political parties and provided me with housing during my stay in Kaduna. I was introduced to Kaduna APC loyalists through the APC-aligned Centre for Democratic Development, Research and Training (CEDDERT) at ABU. PDP loyalists were introduced to me by APC loyalists, which is only seemingly contradictory, since many social and familial networks overlap.

In these locations, and abiding by the principles of grounded theory, I allowed my readings and preliminary findings to guide my research design in an iterative manner. Readings informed interviews and observations, which, in turn, inspired more focused literature reviews and field research. In the onset, I relied on secondary sources to feed my understanding of Nigerian political history and to inform my initial hypotheses. My first interviews in Ado Ekiti, where my fieldwork began, led me to realize that the organized networks of Nigeria's two main political parties extended not only from the Federal level to the 36 States and 774 LGAs, but also to the myriad electoral Wards which subdivide LGAs and even to the neighborhood polling-unit level. I also soon discovered that, while LGA level party offices were most active during elections and occasional rallies, the most likely venue for meeting, interacting with, and observing Nigerian party members was on the Ward-level general membership meetings which were held

weekly in Ado Ekiti and on an *ad hoc* bases in Zaria City. These meetings helped me gain access to the vibrant communities of APC and PDP party members at both research sites. In my first meetings, I introduced myself to the Ward Executive Officers in each party and emphasized that I was an academic researcher. This approach clarified my agenda and dispelled doubts that I was a spy sent by the opposing party. My regular attendance at these meetings, as well as at larger political rallies that brought multiple Wards in each local government together, filled a journal of field observations which I reference in various parts of the ensuing analysis.

While my field observations provide the context for the ensuing narrative, the testimonies of the party loyalists in both locations shaped my argument. In total, 105 individual and group interviews were conducted with 160 people. My primary set of individual and group interviews were with local party loyalists who provided information about the organisation of the local party organ, the schedules and rhythms of party activities, and their own personal biographies and political ideals. Interviews with party loyalists were conducted in a mix of English, Nigerian pidgin, and Yoruba (with the help of my friend and translator, Olufunsho Bamiduro) in Ado Ekiti, and in a mix of English, pidgin and basic Hausa in Zaria City. These interviews took place in both formal locations, such as party offices, and informal arenas, such as on bus trips, in social settings, or at loyalists' homes. The questions asked in interviews all correspond to the study's aim to understand the organisational form and political content of mass party membership in Nigeria. In relation to the structure of the study, the interview questions paid the most attention to those events on the election cycle, which I was unable to observe directly. This was, on one hand, because these events — most notably the 2014 and 2015 primaries and elections in Kaduna and Ekiti States, which are the subjects of Chapter 5, 6, and 7 — occurred before my fieldwork began. On the

other hand, I was also unable to observe many private political meetings and discussions. Drawing on the personal biographies of informants meant I needed to rely on the recollections of party members who attended those meetings. At certain points in the study, my presentation of such material may thus depend on recollections and experience of individual loyalists. Such testimonies, I argue, should be assessed based on the expertise of the informant — *i.e.*, their unique position to make good observations — rather than on quantitative methods of verification, which depend upon the quantum of corroborating testimonies. A second set of interviews were conducted with academics, experts, democracy promotion NGO staff, officials of Nigeria’s electoral management body, INEC, and national party officials (in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja). These interviews, conducted in English, provided insights into the structure and history of Nigerian democracy as well as the organisation of both major parties at the Federal level.⁴

To borrow from Roelofs (2016a), even though the fieldwork was not conducted through anthropologists’ traditional method of long-term participant observation, I sought to cultivate an ethnographic “sensibility” (Cerwonka & Malkki 2008) which entailed a general sympathy for interlocutors, prioritizing the meanings informants gave to their social and political reality, and attentiveness to non-verbal social cues. In the ambiguous world of party politics, where informal relationships often undergird formal processes and rhetoric does not always mirror reality, such

⁴ Stears Business: Don’t Blame INEC, it is designed to fail. Retrieved from: <https://www.stearsng.com/article/dont-blame-inec-it-is-designed-to-fail>

sensitivity allowed me to better assess the links and disjuncture between the verbal testimonies derived from interviews and the social practices they described. This ethnographic sensitivity to meaning allowed me to move beyond the bounds of rational-choice or institutionalist perspectives and to appreciate the ideals and rationales of the actual individuals who carry out partisan activism. Practically, this anthropological sensitivity also drew my attention to the shifting range of institutional practices that produce the temporalities of the election cycle, an important and increasingly recognized feature in ethnographic studies of democratic political mobilization (Banerjee 2011). This awareness of the seasonal rhythms of the democratic electoral cycle both helped contextualize the analysis of my data and, as described in the final section of the introduction, provide an organisational scheme for the core empirical chapters of the study.

Furthermore, the study relied upon an extensive range of documentary sources. These sources include domestic and international press reports, party constitutions, internal documents, and meeting minutes, INEC review reports, and NGO election and party strengthening reports, and newspaper articles. Supplementing the expert interviews, these sources provided insight into the history and official structure of Nigeria's main parties and the party system. I also drew upon Afrobarometer survey data gathered in 2015 and 2017 on levels of party engagement in Nigeria. This data served a primarily descriptive purpose — of illustrating what the study seeks to explain— rather than an analytical purpose of providing a substantive explanation. It served the purpose of highlighting general demographic trends amongst respondents who claim to have worked for a party or candidate.

In addition, I often took the opportunity to present and discuss my ongoing findings with interlocutors at various stages of the field research. This served the methodological function of helping

corroborate findings across various groups of participants and also fill in gaps during data collection. But, more importantly, I view this practice as reflective of the ethics and ideals of participatory research. This approach views knowledge production not simply as an extractive enterprise but also as a collaborative process wherein the original sources of the knowledge (like study participants) can also learn from it and participate in considering its wider social implications. This approach, to quote Amina Mama (2007: 21), is one that aims to be grounded in “the reflections and aspirations of the research participants.”

It is also worth making note of my positionality in conducting this research. All scientific discoveries, including those in the social sciences, serve profoundly political ends, despite recurrent claims to objectivity. Why we chose the topics — even the theories and disciplines — we pursue cannot be divorced from wider questions of sociological and political relevance. As a Nigerian, my political stake in this study is undeniable and, I hope, evident in all I have written. In a literature marked by a deep, even paralyzing, cynicism, I am not ashamed to admit that I also hope that my work might breathe new life into opportunities and prospects for political transformation in Nigeria. I hope that my commitment to valorising the lives and culture of African people also shines through my treatment of the theoretical and empirical material, even when the material covers practices that do not lead to progressive social transformation. These biases might be considered a limitation of the study from a radically empiricist standpoint. However, I hope that they can also be considered a strength to the extent that they suggest empathy for the people whose stories and forms of political self-expression have contributed to my work and furthered my professional advancement.

Along with ideology, my positionality must also touch upon questions of my ascriptive identity, highlighting the discernible ways in which this impacted upon my research. Being male prevented me

from accessing gender segregated women's meetings in Kaduna state. It also meant that I was a much less astute observer and interpreter of women's political practices and ideals. Being northern meant that I was viewed as an outsider in the south, which hindered my initial efforts to gain rapport in Ado Ekiti. In Zaria City, I was seen as a person from Jos, or from Benue, which cast me in a politically "neutral" light as my exact ethnic identity — and likely political affiliation — were hard to guess. Finally, my identity as an Oxford D.Phil, when it came up, generally aided my research, as it helped affirm my political "neutrality" in Zaria City, while in Ado Ekiti, perhaps due to the Yoruba valuing of education (Hoffmann & Nolte 2013), my educational attainment made both parties treat me as a long lost son. Cumulatively, despite its limitations, this study's design and mix of sources offers critical insights into party organisation and the factors which inspire the mass participation and loyalties of party members and activists in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Contents of the Study

This chapter explored the background, key question, justifications, theory, methodology, and main contributions of the study of centre-right populism and mass party membership in contemporary Nigeria. The chapter which follow presents key aspects of the six-decade-long process of political mobilization and institutional experimentation, change, and adaptation that shaped the emergence of Nigeria's centrist and right-wing populist mass of party members. It argues that the phenomenon of mass party membership in Nigeria's Fourth Democratic Republic is a product of evolving patterns of political mobilization and populist and liberal democratic institutional reforms that extend back to the late

colonial period. This political and institutional environment, further developed by military authoritarian initiatives, came to shape the bureaucratic structures and practices of the parties, which emerged in the transition period that culminated in the inauguration of the Fourth Republic. Following this transition, in the period between 1999 – 2015, political realignments at the Federal Level, including the merger that produced the APC, further deepened right populist and ideologically centrist patterns of political organisation and mobilization. The third chapter, entitled “Who Are Nigeria’s Party Loyalists?,” explores the social composition of those who claimed to be active partisans in recent Afrobarometer surveys from Nigeria. It also presents party members own perspectives on party loyalty, highlighting the mix of centrist and ethno-communally infused discourses and values that inspire grassroots participation. Having set up this historical and structural backdrop in the first part of the study, the remainder of the study turns to the organisational practices and political debates which mark party activities across the electoral cycle. These chapters present a series of bottom-up ethnographic snapshots of the mix between ideological centrism and far-right populism, which infuses the activities and ideals of Nigeria’s parties of government across the electoral cycle.

Chapter 4 considers the practicalities of how Nigeria’s centre-right populist parties build an active membership base in the early phase of the electoral cycle. Drawing primarily on material gathered at weekly Ward congress meetings and monthly LGA meetings in Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, I explore how the parties attract members. Having argued against a patrimonial framework, my argument takes a purposely ironic turn. I momentarily adopt both a “supply and demand” and a “rewards” framework to demonstrate that, even from a rational-choice perspective, the “rewards” that party loyalists receive through their participation far exceeds the category of “political patronage.” Rather, the constituency

building phase underscores how centrist and right-wing ideals infuse both the “supply” of party “rewards,” which attract loyalists, and the “demand” for such “rewards.” I then provide an organisational profile of the way in which both parties organize their local bureaucracies. Though parties attract mass membership, the allocation of party “rewards” within the APC and the PDP by-and-large reproduces the gendered, gerontocratic, and economic hierarchies present in wider society.

Chapter 5 focuses on the organisational format and political content of party primaries held in Ekiti and Kaduna in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The chapter highlights both the processes and rationales party members use to vet prospective candidates in primary contests. Candidates are vetted on a range of attributes which include but exceed their material contributions to the party. These include particular centrist policies as well as whether or not candidates offer gifts in an ethno-culturally appropriate manner to appear as “viable” contenders in the general election. At the centre of this process is a messy interaction between centrist “competence” politics and the mobilization of ethno-communal norms and values.

Chapter 6 is an exploration of the ways in which clientelism and ethnicity work in practice as mobilizing forces in Nigeria's elections. To probe not into the *extent* but into the *content* of clientelism and ethnicity as mobilizing forces, this chapter explores two governorship elections in which clientelism, and ethnicity took centre stage. Based on testimonies gathered in Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, I assess the reasons why party loyalists chose to either “comply” with or “defect” from the party strategy at governorship elections held in Ekiti and Kaduna states. I find that culturally nationalist assessments of public virtue — or “moral competence” — underlie loyalists’ levels of compliance or non-compliance to the party strategy as Election Day approaches. Moral competence took on different meanings in the divergent cultural contexts such of Zaria City and Ado Ekiti. In both cases, however, and for the

successful candidate in both elections, moral competence entailed personal charisma, ethno-communal authenticity, and a commitment to slightly more popular centrist policies. Moral competence is analogous to what Cheeseman and Larmer (2015) call “ethno-populism.” However, unlike their construal of ethno-populism, it is an apt description only if populism is properly defined and ethno-nationalism is situated in a right-wing ideological frame. My use of moral competence builds on Schaffer and Schedler’s (2007) contention that electoral gifts can be variously understood as “signs of virtue” or “signs of vice.” By pointing to the power of centre-right populism, even in political patronage practices, this chapter challenges established distinctions in comparative politics and between personality, patronage, and programmatic strategies of mobilization in multi-party democracies (Cheeseman 2014).

Finally, concluding the empirical core of the study, chapter 7 argues that the ideological convergence of both the APC and PDP as centre-right populist parties best explains why fluid and fickle political loyalties nonetheless result in outbursts of post-electoral violence in Nigeria. Drawing on the testimonies of loyalists who witnessed or participated in violence in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City, I advance two arguments. Firstly, the evidence suggests the relative rarity of violent post-election outbreaks, countering cynical takes on Nigerian electoral politics. Ethno-federalism reduces the frequency of mass violence. However, centre-right populist mobilization also infuses politics with a sense of constant threat because ethno-culturally infused assessments of election results deploy morally laden vocabulary — terms like “traitor,” “cheat,” “hypocrite,” “infidel,” and “enemy” — which threaten the shattering of the liberal democratic frame to permit the resurgence of Mouffian antagonisms. My arguments depart from purely instrumentalist or identitarian accounts of electoral violence, while still acknowledging the importance of communal political mobilization in electoral violence.

The concluding chapter, “Your boys remain loyal!,” begins with a synthesis of the key points of the study, redrawing the links between each chapter’s main contentions by reflecting on Mkandawire’s notion of “choice-less democracy.” Party membership attracts a diversity of individuals united only by the “choice-less” ideal that democratic politics should lead to “development and governance.” Members also tend toward the position that a mixture of “grassroots” socio-cultural and religious norms and institutional rules, rather than democratic egalitarianism, should govern the conduct of parties. These observations serve to show that it is ideological centrism and right-wing populism that drive the key activities of parties along the electoral cycle and define Nigeria’s two parties of government more fundamentally. In conclusion, I restate the contributions of the study, propose new streams of scholarship potentially opened up by the study’s line of inquiry, and reflect upon normative concerns unearthed by a study of centrist ideology and far-right populist parties in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.

2.

The Origins of a Mass Party Republic

Introduction

Mass party membership has no precise numerical definition. Rather, qualitatively, Susan Scarrow argues that the concept refers to “member-hungry” parties which aspire and act to mobilize “large” memberships (2014; 2017). As argued in the introduction (and further explored in Chapter 3), the most vibrant period of European mass party membership is proportionally surpassed by Nigeria’s contemporary mass of party members. This chapter explores the history of how this came to be.

Mass party membership in Nigeria’s Fourth Democratic Republic developed from evolving patterns of political mobilization, liberal democratic institutional reforms, and populist manoeuvres, beginning in the late colonial period. This environment, also influenced by military-led authoritarian initiatives, shaped the bureaucratic structures and practices of the parties which emerged in the transition period (1998 – 1999) that culminated in the inauguration of the Fourth Republic. Following this transition (1999 – 2015), political realignments at the Federal Level, including the merger that produced the APC, further deepened right-wing, populist, and ideologically centrist patterns of political organisation and mobilization. A comprehensive account of six decades of political mobilization and

institutional experimentation, change, and adaptation is beyond the scope of the study. Nevertheless, this chapter presents three key aspects of this process, reviewed chronologically, that contributed to the contemporary flowering of mass party politics.

Party development in Nigeria parallels 19th and early-20th century European democracies with some significant differences. In Europe, urbanization and industrialization led to extending the franchise and widening the bases from which parties derived their membership, broadly transforming “cadre parties” — or, put directly, elite men’s clubs — into mass parties (Katz & Mair 1995). The catalyst that transformed European political parties into more populist mass-membership organisations was what Maurice Duverger (1962) termed the “contagion from the left,” “whereby parties representing other interests/segments in society would be obliged to adopt the basic features and strategy of the socialist/mass-party model or they would otherwise perish” (Katz & Mair 1995: 7). In Nigeria, however, this party transformation was mediated by an important set of factors belied in the classic narrative of party development in Europe. These factors include colonial state policies towards political parties and native authorities, military authoritarian populism, changing liberal constitutional and electoral rules, and the strategies parties adopted to navigate these dynamic processes. A brief historical exploration of these changes sheds light on the ways in which these factors foreshadow the ideologically centrist and right-wing populist character of Nigeria’s contemporary mass parties.

This chapter examines each of these factors in chronological order. Firstly, it explores how colonial policies and the decisions of political leaders in the late-colonial and early independence periods marginalized radical leftists and formed elitist coalition parties that united centrist and ethno-nationalist leaders. Secondly, I explore how populist manoeuvres, aimed at legitimizing the flawed transitions to

democracy under the Babangida and Abacha regimes, led to the institutionalization of mass membership politics in Nigeria. Thirdly, turning to the transition period that brought about the Fourth Republic, I describe the ways in which the institutional rules for contesting the transitional election set patterns in place that encouraged the fusion of centrist and right-wing populist politics in Nigeria. Finally, I paint a portrait of the current partisan map of Nigeria, beginning with the party structures at the Federal and State Levels and then using the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ado Ekiti and Zaria City as examples of how local, "grassroots" party branches are organized.

Party development in early Nigeria, 1908 – 1967

Lagos was the birthplace of Nigeria's earliest political parties. Lagos Island was the seat of colonial power, the capital of soon-to-be amalgamated Nigeria, and the focal point for Nigeria's emergent Anglophone bourgeois intelligentsia (Coleman 1965, Sklar 1963). There had already been numerous anti-colonial resistance movements in other parts of the fledgling country, including the series of uprisings staged by Ekumeku movements near the present-day Delta State between 1883 and 1914 and the revolt of Brass-men near the river Benin in 1894 — in fact, note Falola and Heaton (2008: 108), "heavy resistance met British incursions at almost every turn." The first protests movements and political organizing in Lagos were led by literate Nigerians, beginning with the 1908 protests over the Lagos water tax rate, which was "fuelled by the reporting of Nigerian journalists such as Herbert Macaulay, often dubbed the 'father of Nigerian nationalism'" (ibid, xv). Such early nationalist rumblings resulted in the adoption of the Clifford Constitution in 1923 (Dudley, 1968). The constitution allowed for the elected representation

of Nigerians in the newly formed Legislative Council domiciled in Lagos. The first political party, Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), brought together various interest groups of educated men and attained three of the four elected seats on the 46-member Legislative Council in the 1923 election. The fourth seat was reserved for a representative from the administrative outpost of Calabar. The 1923 election marked the genesis of democratic representation in Nigeria, despite a limited franchise — namely, adult men of British Nationality and Lagos Residency with an income of £100. The NNDP, the only Nigerian party at the time, was an elitist party insofar as it aimed to provide educated Nigerian men seats at the table rather than to democratize decision-making or seek wider representation for other segments of society (Coleman 1965).

By 1930, a second generation of Western-educated Nigerians had become leaders in the anti-colonial movements. These new leaders started to form pan-Nigerian nationalist organisations, frequently with their nucleus in Lagos. For instance, in 1934, the Lagos Youth Movement was formed primarily to demand improvements in higher education. It became "the most powerful nationalist organisation in Nigeria" within the space of four years (Falola and Heaton 2008, 141) and changed its name in 1936 to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) to reflect its pan-Nigerian aspirations. The NYM became powerful enough to defeat Herbert Macaulay's NNDP by the 1938 Legislative Council election. "By 1938," note Falola and Heaton (*ibid*), "the movement had spread beyond Lagos, establishing branches in Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Warri, and Benin City in the south-west, Aba, Enugu, Port Harcourt, and Calabar in the south-east, and Jos, Kaduna, Zaria City, and Kano in the north, with a combined membership of over 10,000." The NYM was a more progressive and democratic party than its predecessor; party "members pushed for greater indigenization of the civil service, better wages and

working conditions for Nigerians, and more elected representation in government; in short a Nigeria for Nigerians" (*ibid*). In 1941, the NYM suffered a devastating split with the rise of two opposing factions. One group led by the rising star and young journalist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and another led by his rival, Earnest Ikoli, fought over who should occupy a vacant seat on the Legislative Council. The Azikiwe faction claimed the election was marred by ethnic favouritism on the part of Ikoli towards his fellow Lagos native Yoruba candidates, passing over Azikiwe's favoured Ijebu Yoruba candidate, Samuel Akinsanya (Sklar 1963).

While this split marked the end of the NYM, the split also gave rise to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), a broad "conglomeration of many ethnic and social unions, with constituencies throughout Nigeria, that aligned under its banner, although its greatest support was in the south and its centre of activity was Lagos" (Falola & Heaton 2008: 145). Though not formally a political party, the NCNC became a voice for the concerns of various segments of Nigerian society. Famously, Azikiwe helped fan the flames of growing agitation within the nascent Worker's movement over the hardships occasioned by the wartime economy using NCNC run newspapers. Azikiwe soon earned the name "Zik the Great" for his strident support of the General Strike of 1945, which saw 30,000 members of seventeen major unions shut down postal, railway, and telegraph services until the colonial government was forced to meet demands for increased wages. The NCNC became a pan-Nigerian and decidedly pro-worker alliance, which accelerated and infused new energy into struggles for the broader democratization of the Nigerian state.

An alleged attempt on Azikiwe's life by colonial authorities midwifed a younger, more militant wing of the NCNC, known as the Zikist Movement, in 1946. The Zikists called for overthrowing the

colonial state by any means necessary, broadening the franchise, immediately implementing self-government, and transitioning to a socialist society. The Zikists helped inject communist and socialist impulses into Nigeria's nationalist movement, fomenting various ideological debates about anti-imperialism, Black-nationalism, and proletarian empowerment. Zikist freedom fighters even amassed hand grenades, firearms, and bullets in preparation for the struggle to come (Mayer 2016). However, the radical insurrectionist ambitions of the Zikists backfired: Their actions awakened the repressive apparatus of the colonial state. Moreover, they were ultimately betrayed by other leading nationalists. The Zikists were outlawed in 1950 and their leaders and members, including Anthony Enahoro, Mokwugo Okeye, Osita Agwuna, and countless others were tried for sedition and imprisoned. Zik himself ultimately also denounced the Zikists, correctly anticipating that distancing himself from his radical supporters would increase his chances to succeed the colonial administrators when self-rule materialized (Mayer 2016). The repression of the Zikists and other communist and radical anti-colonial movements (including the early Communist Party of Nigeria and the Cameroons, who were banned in 1955) marked a watershed moment in Nigeria's political history whose ramifications are still under-appreciated (Mayer 2016). As the more ideologically pragmatic leaders, like Azikiwe, had anticipated, this colonial policy, which Mayer (2016, 60) equates to American-style "McCarthyism," began the process of marginalizing the Nigerian Left (Abdulraheem & Olukoshi 1986). The colonial transfer of power would now go to centrist and ethno-nationalist leaders during Nigeria's independence.

Colonial policy further impacted the development of political parties in Nigeria in two important ways, both of which were enshrined in Nigeria's initial constitutions. Firstly, Nigeria's earliest constitution (named after its author, colonial governor Sir Arthur Richards) both increased the number

of seats available to Nigerians on the Legislative Council and formalized the role of the native authorities in the emerging state. The Richards Constitution accorded traditional rulers the power to appoint unelected "councillors who represented their own interest and not necessarily those of the people as a whole" (Falola & Heaton 2008: 149). Secondly, the Richards Constitution, in creating regional legislative councils, laid the foundation for Nigerian ethno-federalism and infused new vitality into emerging regionally based ethno-cultural organisations founded in the 1940 and 1950s. As Falola and Heaton (151) observe:

From the perspective of these regionally based and/or ethnically motivated organisations the regionalization of Nigeria was a good, and even a necessary, thing. The regional houses of assembly created by the Richards Constitution therefore reinforced the attitudes and methods of these organisations by giving them something specific to fight for on a regional level.

The creation of regional houses, thus, ensured that traditional authorities and ethno-nationalist organisations became a central part of the political institutions of the modern state.

Indeed, these processes were further entrenched in the updated Mcpherson Constitution of 1951, which, *inter alia*, expanded the regional assemblies, including a House of Chiefs in the assemblies of the Northern and Western Regions. These changes encouraged the formation of alliances between the emergent political parties, ethno-cultural organisations, and traditional authorities. Such an alliance was most clearly embodied in the politics of Obafemi Awolowo, an early member of the NYM and an ethno-nationalist visionary. Awolowo espoused Fabian welfarist ideals and founded the Egbe Omo Oduduwa

(literally, Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa, Oduduwa being the mythical founder of the Yoruba people), inaugurating the Yoruba welfarist "progressive" political tradition and the Action Group (AG) political party. Unable to compete in Lagos amidst the growing Yoruba consciousness sparked by Awolowo, Azikiwe's NCNC also retreated to regional politics in his home region of the East. He formed an alliance with the ethno-cultural Igbo State Union of which Azikiwe later became president. Similarly, the Bauchi General Improvement Union became the bedrock of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) party which dominated regional politics in Northern Nigeria.

Meanwhile, at the regional level, emerging leftist parties continued to be marginalized. These parties included the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), the Socialist Workers and Farmer Party (SWAFP), and the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP). Instead, sectional parties gained the upper-hand electorally. Summarizing these developments, Falola and Heaton note (2008; 152 - 4):

By the early 1950s it was becoming clear that Nigeria was congealing into three zones based on the regional divisions of the country: a Yoruba-dominated Western Region, an Igbo-dominated Eastern Region, and a Hausa/Fulani-dominated Northern Region. The constitutional reforms of 1951 changed these previously cultural distinctions into full-fledged political battle lines... The most important contribution of the Macpherson Constitution, however, was that it provided for the first general election in Nigerian history. The advent of the general election process galvanized regional and ethnic identifications, as cultural associations organized as proper political parties to campaign for control of the various regional assemblies... General elections in 1954, 1956, and 1959 cemented the regionalization of political consciousness in Nigeria, as the AG, NCNC, and NPC continued to dominate their respective regions in both the regional and central legislatures.

Party development in early Nigeria was shaped by two forces: The marginalization of the Nigerian Left and the entrenchment of ethno-cultural and traditional institutions in the colonial state's politics. These developments coupled with strategic alliances forged between emerging independence leaders and ethno-nationalists helped bring about the institutionalization of ethno-regional political mobilization. By Nigeria's independence in 1960, ethno-regional rivalries had become the driving force behind Federal politics, setting the stage for the collapse of the First Republic and the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War.

Authoritarianism Populism, 1970 - 79, 1984 – 1999

The military dictatorships left a profound yet largely unacknowledged imprint on the character of Nigeria's political parties. Paradoxically, it is in this authoritarian period that mass membership, "grassroots" parties, as such, were born. Four distinct factors, all of which were designed to shore up legitimacy for the troubled military dictatorships, laid the foundations for the rise of mass membership parties. The first factor was the creation of seven new states (and LGAs within those states) under the Murtala Muhammed/Olusegun Obasanjo dictatorship (1975 - 1979). This move was a response to the demands of ethnic minorities seeking better representation, adding to the Federal Republic's existing twelve states. This addition had two impacts. It set a precedent for justifying new states and local governments, which ultimately led to the establishment of the current 36 states and 774 LGAs. Furthermore, the creation of new states and LGAs also increased the electoral and administrative units and multiplied the prizes for which parties would eventually come to compete once democracy returned.

This redistricting and reforms, therefore, indirectly encouraged the multiplication of the geographical spread and organisational reach of political parties once they were legalized.

A second major factor was the development of the Federal Character, which was woven into military-directed liberal constitutional reforms that launched the Second Republic in 1979. This factor more directly contributed to the emergence of mass parties in Nigeria. Put in place to avoid the ethnicization of politics and prevent another civil war, the Federal Character's provisions required that both political parties and state organs be nationally representative by maintaining a cross-ethnic and multi-regional character. For parties, this practically meant that to be eligible to receive registration (once the military ban on political parties was lifted in 1978), they were required to open up their memberships to all Nigerians, remove all ethnic and religious symbolism from their party logos, and maintain party branches in at least two-thirds of the states. This geographic requirement, as well as the political imperative to coordinate voter mobilization across the country, triggered the move by parties to formulate new official and bureaucratic networks at the state and local, and even neighbourhood levels. Of the fifty parties that sought registration at the start of the Second Republic, only five were able to meet the new "Federal Character" requirements. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which best managed to construct a nation-wide organisation, also decisively won the two national elections that were held in the Second Republic. This development set in place patterns of nation-wide political organisation and mobilization that survived even after the military seized power once again in 1983.

The Babangida and Abacha juntas left a third and decidedly populist imprint on party development. The Babangida regime (1985 - 93) pioneered a strategy, later adopted by the Abacha junta (1993 - 8), of utilizing repeated and drawn-out transitions to democracy. This move gave the impression

that the dictatorship was only temporary, while the military entrenched its power. As a central pillar of this self-negating transition process, Babangida decreed the creation of two political parties: The Social Democratic Party (SDP), with an officially sanctioned "left-of-centre" ideology, and the National Republican Convention (NRC), which the junta designated as the "right-leaning" party. Though fabricated by an authoritarian junta, these parties were not illegitimate empty shells. Firstly, government subvention to these parties meant the construction of party infrastructure — from offices to meeting spaces — on the state and local levels, many of which serve the same functions today. Secondly, the Babangida government banned notable politicians of the first two democratic republics from participating in the new parties, claiming that their corruption was a major cause of the collapse of previous democratic projects. Falola and Heaton (2008, 225) correctly note that "the fabrication of two parties with strong links to the federal government ensured on the one hand that 'corrupt' — or, at the very least, banned — politicians could not manipulate the parties, but on the other hand it meant that the military regime could exert a strong influence on the actions of the parties." Designating all other political parties and popular politicians as "corrupt" and "tribalist" had two more consequences. It meant that these two parties provided the only legitimate channel for legal political participation. Thus, they absorbed an influx of local activists and aspirants from across the country. More fundamentally, these reforms also provided an institutional form for the opposition between "ordinary people" and civilian politicians, which had been the source of popular support and political legitimacy for military rule. The military helped cultivate the enduring hostility — that is, the Mouffian discursive divide — between ordinary voters and the civilian political elite.

Along with the construction of local party infrastructure and bureaucratic networks, the explicit requirement that these parties carry out nation-wide mass membership drives further reinforced the military's purposeful creation of populist organisations and a culture of "grassroots" party politics. The SDP and NRC were permitted to freely compete for state assembly, governorship, and national assembly seats in elections held in 1992 to shore up the regime's legitimacy. In contrast to the lower level elections, the 12 June 1993 presidential election was extremely controversial, fomenting a national crisis and what still remains perhaps the most commented upon moment in Nigeria's political history. The Abacha regime, which emerged from the crisis, created a democratic transition process that mirrored many of the same strategies pursued by Babangida. Again, the political parties of the previous era were abolished, and, in this case, five new political parties were created through mass membership drives. All of the parties — popularly remembered as the "five leprous hands" of Abacha — were allowed to pursue lower level seats but had to adopt Abacha as their sole presidential candidate until his mysterious death in 1998. After these upheavals, physical infrastructure and masses of mobilized citizens remained (Salihu 2004).

In addition to their populist character, this era left a fourth major imprint on the character of Nigerian political party organisation. As in the colonial era, the authoritarian period saw the subjugation of the Nigerian Left and Labour unions. The Labour movement, students, and radical academics were banned by the 1978 Muhammad/Obasanjo decree from participating in the 1979 election, the first election held after the Nigerian Civil War. Protests led by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the umbrella group of labour movements, against IMF and World Bank Inspired Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) movements, were violently crushed by the Babangida regime in 1989. In June of that year, a dozen protests were killed in Lagos and

Ibadan and radical lecturers were sacked notably including Yusuf Bala Usman of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU). The Babangida junta (and Abacha after him) combined a strategy of co-optation and violent suppression to weaken the most radical aspects of the Left. Aside from overt persecution, the multiplication of administrative centres through the creation of new states and local governments and the strict rules for party registration under the Federal Character provisions also increased the costs of electoral participation. This rising cost further diminished the prospects of political radicals successfully competing in Nigerian politics. These trends also meant that transitions to democratic rule favoured political parties led by the wealthy. These parties pursued ethno-regional representation over democratic egalitarianism. Furthermore, rooted in — rather than seeking to transform — the political-economic status quo, these parties adopted a centrist ideological orientation. In summation, while opposing “tribalism”, promoting liberal constitutionalism, and experimenting with democratic and populist institution-building, successive juntas also entrenched ethno-regionalism in Nigerian political institutions and promoted hostility towards the Left and labour movements. In these ways, the authoritarian era set in place important patterns of both right-wing populist mobilization and centrist economic commitments which were further entrenched in the early years of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.

Transition Rules and Political Alignments in the Fourth Republic, 1999 – Present

The Fourth Republic has also profoundly reshaped the nature of mass party membership in Nigeria. While replicating the form and content of early Nigerian and Authoritarian era political parties, it also

added new dimensions to party membership. Three historical factors stand out: The birth of the PDP amidst the founding election of the Fourth Republic, the travails of opposition parties that came to be restricted to northern and south-western state-governorship politics, and the rise of the APC.

The transition to the Fourth Republic replicated many of the patterns which had marked previous military handovers to political parties and elected officials in Nigeria. As in the past, pre-existing parties were proscribed, and the founding election rules required new political parties to demonstrate strict compliance with the liberal logic of Federal Character. A first round of local council elections was held in 1998. Every contesting party was required to win above 10% of the vote-share in at least 24 states in order to be eligible to compete in subsequent elections. These requirements greatly favoured well-heeled, centrist members of the political establishment, many of whom were retired military officers or had been allied with previous dictatorships. These figures could more easily marshal the resources needed to establish a national presence. The Left, however, sceptical of the transition and lacking the organisation, hesitated to participate (Chiemeké 2016). Of the twenty-six political associations that sought to contest the elections under the transition, only nine were given provisional permission to compete in the first in the series of elections (Mustapha 1999). Ultimately, only three parties, which were able to garner the required vote share, received permanent registration: The People's Democratic Party (PDP); the All People's Party (APP), which later became the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP); and the Alliance for Democracy (AD), which later became the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Katsina (2016) summarizes:

To avoid cluttering the political space with redundant parties, participation by any of these parties in the subsequent rounds of election was made dependent on its winning at least 10% of

the total votes in the council elections of 1998 in at least two thirds of the states in the federation.

The outcome of the council election showed AD as having won 100 local councils, APP won 182, and PDP won 389 out of 774 local councils in the federation.

Of these parties, the PDP, which incorporated the pre-existing bureaucratic networks and party infrastructure established by the military across the breadth of Nigeria's regions, also went on to prevail in the 1999 Federal and State elections. They also secured 21 of 36 state governorships, a clear majority in both houses of the National Assembly, and the presidency under Olusegun Obasanjo (Katsina 2016). The PDP was, thus, the direct successor of the military in much more than chronology. Along with this inheritance, the PDP also attracted heirs to the conservative political traditions of the First Republic such as the northern NPC.

In contrast, the AD and APP together won minorities in the National Assembly and 12 of 36 governorship races. The APP won 9 governorship seats in the North, and the AD won 6 seats in the Southwest. The new opposition parties drew a measure of mass support by tapping into largely pre-military era fusions of centrist and ethno-nationalist political legacies and patterns of mobilization. In the Southwest, the AD incorporated the "Awoist" Fabian and Yoruba nationalist tradition that had been associated with Awolowo, as Hoffmann and Nolte (2013) observe, although they also point out that this legacy was later successfully appropriated by the PDP. In fact, competition over who could best represent this legacy at least partially accounts for the reduction of the AD's electoral foothold from the 6 Southwestern states to only the "Jagaban" Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led Lagos State, after the party lost its five other Southwestern states to the PDP in 2003 and 2007. While the electoral competition that

produced these outcomes was neither always free nor fair (Omotola 2010), the popularity of the victorious PDP candidates and the frequent unwillingness of the citizenry to protest election results, as had previously happened on occasions when unpopular candidates were declared victorious (Apter 1987), suggest both the importance of popular legitimacy and the success of the PDP in gaining this level of mass support during these years (Hoffmann & Nolte 2013). After rebranding itself as the ACN and seizing back the Awo legacy —now arguably embodied by Jagaban— the party was able to regain the majority of Southwestern Governorships by 2011. Roelofs (2016a) perceptively notes that, at this stage, the party also began to adopt a technocratic “Lagos model” of politics, grounded in the centrist prescriptions of donor agencies. In Jagaban’s hands, Awo progressivism, initially Fabian in its tenor, came to speak the World Bank’s dialect of good governance and technocratic management.

In the north, the APP/ANPP and later its regional challenger, the CPC, also drew on a mix of new centrist discourses and pre-military era identitarian and ideological legacies, eventually coming to be associated with the popular agitation for the implementation of Sharia Law in many northern states. As in the colonial and early independence eras, Islamic piety (Last 2005), Sarauta, the northern aristocratic and imperial tradition (Umar 2013), and Talakawa, the northern populist tradition (Paden 2016), were the central pillars of political mobilization —only this time, the main contending ideological forces of the First Republic were combined in the opposition parties. However, as with Awoism in the Southwest, mobilization on the basis of moral identitarian and centrist “good governance” politics in the North were liable to appropriation by the PDP. PDP leaders in northern politics also adopted and successfully advanced Sharia politics, good-governance appeals, technocratic ideals (See Thurston 2018 on PDP version of technocracy), and Arewa (Hausa for northern) nationalism (Thurston 2014).

In the early electoral cycles of the Fourth Republic, the opposition parties sought, with mixed success, to position themselves in their respective regions as the legitimate (Hoffmann & Nolte 2013) and later technocratic (Roelofs 2016a) alternative to the PDP, a party which they framed in moral and centrist terms — as defined only by its corruption and poor governance record. These strategies ensured popular electoral and party participation in the North. The Southwest tended to favour opposition parties, while the other regions were dominated by the PDP. Replicating the military established populist format, all the major parties also invested in the maintenance and deepening of grassroots party and bureaucratic networks. They sustained party executives from the Federal to the polling unit-level and sought to expand local memberships across each electoral cycle. Thus, despite the strategic differences, the core content of political mobilization for both the PDP and opposition parties remained a mix of centrist and far-right populist appeals. This pronounced articulation between the ideological bases of both the PDP and the opposition parties produced the frequent phenomenon of party switching, which has been observed and lamented by scholars of Fourth Republic politics. This interesting ideological consensus has also paradoxically been misidentified as evidence for the absence of ideological politics (cf: Omilusi 2015).

While ideological continuities exist from the previous eras, the merger of the major opposition parties in 2013 produced a novel dimension to mass party politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. At this time, the leaders of the ACN, the ANPP, the CPC, and a breakaway faction of the PDP announced that they had successfully negotiated a merger and named the entity the All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC set out to challenge the PDP in the 2015 election, mainly on an anticorruption platform. This merger brought about the unprecedented success of electing the APC candidate, Muhammadu Buhari,

in the 2015 presidential election and securing clear majorities in governorship seats and in the National Assembly. This success shattered the 17-year-old partisan balance in the Fourth Republic, in which the PDP controlled the Federal Government while various opposition parties fought for regional dominance over the states (Owen & Usman 2015). The 2015 election also heralded a new liberal institutional turn. Nigeria's electoral umpire INEC had attained a new measure of credibility and respect (Lewis & Kew 2015). INEC has begun to show signs of true independence following a well-regarded election in 2011 (Akhaine 2011) and a widely lauded election in 2015 (Owen & Usman 2015). Though the 2019 election was postponed on the day of the election, observer groups acknowledged that INEC "operated in a difficult environment and made a number of improvements since 2015, including the introduction of continuous accreditation and voting".⁵ INEC's evolution has introduced a measure of steadiness, though not flawlessness, to the conduct of Nigerian elections. There is also an increasing recognition of the growing confidence and professionalism of the organisation, run by senior Nigerian political scientists,

⁵ EU Observer Mission, 2019. "European Union Election Observer Mission Nigeria 2019 General Elections". Retrieved from: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/02_eu_election_observation_mission_to_nigeria_assessment_of_the_23_february_elections_25_february_final.pdf: June, 2019.

despite the tremendous operational, security, economic, and political obstacles it must surmount with every election it holds.⁶

Along with the changing institutional context, the APC's merger and Buhari's victory in 2015 were historic in a manner that has largely gone unnoticed: the founding of the APC reconstructed grassroots politics. For the first time in Nigerian history, the dominant parties in virtually all of Nigeria's 774 LGAs wave the banners of the same two political parties.⁷ This is an evolution of momentous ideological and organisation significance, as was a "hotly debated" issue during the drafting of the APC's manifesto, during which disagreements broke out over whether the ACN broom, the ANPP's maize, or the CPC's pen should be at the centre of the APC party logo.

The ACN broom was ultimately adopted and, correspondingly, the Awo and Jagaban tailored progressivism has been transported into the politics of northern states such as Kaduna. Since 2015, the APC governor, El-Rufai, has attempted to pursue a version of the "Lagos Model" or the ACN and Jagabanist progressive template cherished by donors (see Chapter 5). APC sponsored think-tanks, such as the Abuja-based Progressive Governor's Forum, have been set up to facilitate "knowledge sharing" across regions, an achievement which previously only the PDP and dominant parties in earlier Republics had been able to manage.⁸ Similarly, the PDP has developed a portable version of the Yoruba ethno-

⁶ Stears Business: Don't Blame INEC, it is designed to fail. Retrieved from: <https://www.stearsng.com/article/dont-blame-inec-it-is-designed-to-fail>

⁷ Perhaps the only exceptions are some of the LGAs in the two states controlled by the Labour Party and the All Progressives Grand Alliance, APGA — both of which have often been described as local surrogates of the two parties of government.

⁸ Progressive Governor's Forum, "About Us". Retrieved from <http://pgfnigeria.org>

cultural idiom of *buje budanu* (literally, you eat and I eat) and called it stomach infrastructure, a term that travels more easily in multi-cultural Nigeria but one which also captures the balance of traditionally infused political programs, mobilization styles, and even personas that PDP "populist" candidates adopt to challenge APC "technocrats" (see Chapter 6). The merger has, thus, greatly facilitated the cross-pollination of previously regionally based right-wing populist and centrist political philosophies into the politics of other regions. Organisationally, this change has also reinvigorated grassroots political participation and appears to account for the ever-increasing levels of Nigerian party engagement witnessed in recent Afrobarometer surveys (see Chapter 3). The change has furthermore led to the unification of what were once plural formats of party organisation both across the two main parties and across the regions of the country, even in the divergent contexts of Ekiti and Kaduna states, where fieldwork for this study was conducted. While this narration of Nigerian political may yield a perspective from "above", the voices of contemporary party members sheds light on the social depth of centre-right populism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Party Loyalty at the "grassroots" level

This organisational standardization and ideological convergence of both main parties in the Fourth Republic is best reflected in the subjective accounts of local party members. When asked about the bases of their loyalties to both parties, party members in both locations in which fieldwork was conducted attested to the contemporary ideological and organisational character of the APC and PDP. Some recorded observations from an APC constituency building rally I attended during the first phase of my

fieldwork in Ekiti State provide a window into political ideals at the local branch level. As one of the items on its agenda, the rally included a brief welcoming ceremony for a local political chieftain who had defected from the PDP along with a few friends and followers. As I note in an entry dated, November 3, 2016:

Talking with Olumide [an APC youth leader who had invited me to the rally] after the event I ask what he thinks of people who defected into the party. 'We welcome them with open arms!' was, I think, his exact response. He went on to tell me that some of the defectors had even been party members before: they had "gone and come back"... "But [he later added] those ones will not get very much respect or anything in the party. Those who decamp all the time, you know they are just hypocrites... Everybody knows they are just looking for what they can get.

The first part of this entry reveals the nearly mundane acceptance of party switching as a basic, and at times even welcomed, fact of Nigerian political life. Omilusi (2015) argues in an essay dedicated to the subject, that decamping has become a norm of political behaviour in Nigeria, wherein party leaders, officials and even loyalists — despite what their name might suggest— are by no means assumed to be perpetually loyal to any party as much as they are to patrimonial access and personal ambition. Yet Olumide's caveat about hypocrites reveals a second side to the coin regarding the way in which party (dis)loyalty is construed in Nigerian partisan politics. When examined at closer quarters, this normative ambiguity in loyalists' ideas about party loyalty — an ambiguity which is obscured in accounts such as Omilusi's which see disloyalty as an unquestionably accepted feature in Nigerian politics — yields an

interesting window into the normative content which permeates party membership in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Amidst conversations during the course of my fieldwork, loyalists' responses to the question 'if your party leader in the state was to change parties - to the other major party in the state - would you go along with him/her?' were instructive in this regard. To many loyalists with whom I spoke in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City, switching parties in such a case seemed a distinctly sensible alternative, seemingly reflecting Omilusi's (2015) assessment about the strategic and clientelistic nature of party membership in Nigeria. From this perspective, it was not surprising to encounter such responses as that of Rafiu Anifowoshe (2016, int.) of Ado PDP who said, "I will follow him because he is the one that is feeding me." Interesting to note, however was the fact that some loyalists justified their commitment to individual party leaders, not based on a patron-client relationship, but based on a shared ideological or normative outlook. A former student union leader who wished to be identified as Martin Luther of Africa (2016, int.) explained his loyalty this way:

I respect my leader because we believe in the same philosophy. He is an Awoist like myself — we are both progressives. He is someone that put his life on the line to fight for Nigeria's democracy as a young man and that inspires me. And we both used to be socialist in our student union days.

Consider also the response I received from Hamza Aliyu (2017, int.), a PDP loyalist in Zaria City, who explained:

I joined this party because of Obasanjo. He is somebody that I love as a person... Because he is a Yoruba man does not mean I cannot have affection for him... Because he brought good governance to Nigeria – yes. If you go to his state, Ogun state, even to his own village, the road might be *gbagam gbagam* [shaky or unsteady], but he tried to implement one thing or the other [regions of the country] ... This is what I mean by good governance -- in Nigeria generally and not only in somebody's home.

Note in the above two narratives references to “progressivism” and “good governance” as well as to “affection” and “respect”. These framings suggest that loyalty to party leaders is also understood and justified in normative terms and thus on grounds which resist the restrictive label of patron-clientelism. However, though rooted, in both of these cases, in affective and ideological agreement between loyalists and their leaders, such linkages also seemed to confirm the view that, ultimately tied to the political patron (or at least the individual leader) rather than the party, party loyalty is perpetually a misnomer in Nigeria.

However, more interesting for their defiance of this received wisdom were the group of respondents who vehemently insisted that they would stick with their party even if their leaders did not. For instance, Abejide Gbenga (2016, int.)', of Ado Ekiti PDP put it simply saying “

No, I will stay, because I believe in the party not the individual. I will do what is good for the party. This is a party that pursues good governance. I cannot [leave]. If it's not [our] progressive

party, I will say bye-bye to him [the leader]. If he goes [to another party] that means he has betrayed us.

Likewise responded Ado Ekiti APC loyalist Tunde Owolabi (2016, int.), who said “the party is greater than any individual. I was here before many of the people who you consider leaders today... Why would I sell my birth right?” This outlook was widespread among party members in Ado Ekiti and, as these examples suggests, were not restricted to members of either party. The same obstinate commitment to the party was similarly recorded amongst members of both parties in Zaria City. Aishatu Ibrahim (2017, int.) of the APC said “God forbid. The leader can go and come back. We will wait for him. I believe in anti-corruption and so I am in this party to stay.” Umar Ishak Dikko (2017, int.) of the PDP was even more adamant saying, “APC benefitted from Boko Haram. I cannot go to that party that raised sympathy from people’s blood.”

When asked the question “what are the attributes of a good political leader?”, loyalist also offered similarly normative views, casting a clearer light on the ideological currents which united members of both political parties across both field sites. Responses to this question generally touched upon very similar themes regardless of whether the interviewee was of the PDP or the APC. Loyalists almost unanimously spoke in terms of “competence”, “good governance”, and “progressiveness” as well as moral attributes such as good conduct, anti-corruption, and respect for culture. Offering a paradigmatic example, Azeez Olaseni (2016, int.), the PDP Chairman of Ward 4 in Ado-Ekiti responded as follows:

Ok, when you say 'who is a good leader', let us take a governor for example... A good governor is not hard to recognize. He must be someone that has the interest of the masses [at heart]. Someone that will encourage the youths and entrepreneurs... What we need is good roads, schools, light [electricity]. We need healthcare... Maybe some loans so that people can start one business or the other. The kind of governor who people will cherish... Let me just summarize it; someone who will bring good governance. This is not a matter of party. If you are a genuine person, you know that whether it is PDP oh, or it is APC, if someone is competent, not arrogant, not corrupt, everybody in the state will benefit.

Olaseni remarks were also echoed in many of my conversations in Zaria City. For instance, Sani Abdulrahman (2017 int.), the APC youth leader in Kwarbai B Ward, Zaria City remarked as follows:

That is all about performance... Nowadays the standard is so low that some so-called leaders will not even develop the road to their village. If you cannot perform, you cannot deliver, then why are you there? Not to say it is an easy job; leadership can never be easy. But if many people can feel your impact, different kind[s] of people, you will see that they will support you and say that you have done well.

An obvious limitation of these testimonies lies in the fact that party loyalty is viewed as socially desirable, and thus there is the apparent risk that interlocuters might simply have told me what they felt I wanted to hear. However, beyond the passion of their words and through several months of attending party

meetings and events, I was able to observe the social practices of many of these loyalists, practices which appeared to affirm the commitments of party members to the perspectives they had shared with me in interviews. Firstly, at political gatherings, such as weekly Ward meetings, “progressive” party members would sit with other like minds; they would challenge the party proceedings and voice disagreement at the same issues; they would also organize separate social events specifically for members of “progressive”, “hometown”, “youth” or various denotive factions within both parties. Loyalists who felt tied to the party or to particularly leaders also frequently criticized those who they identified as opportunistic or “only out for what they can get” (Olumide 2017 int.). Secondly, various political tendencies also intersected with social networks. Similarly oriented loyalists were more likely to belong to the same social groups and would often meet outside of party meetings, including visiting each other’s homes. As a researcher, viewed by loyalists to be an obvious “progressive”, I personally received social invitations in several cases from both APC and PDP members in both Zaria City and Ado-Ekiti. Finally, even those loyalists who were widely thought to participate in the party as a means of gaining resources often expressed in normatively laden terms their views about patronage and direct redistribution. While “performance” and “competence” featured constantly in conversations about good political leadership, so also did remarks about culturally and communally appropriate forms of redistribution. For instance, Hajjiya Jummai, a Zaria City APC women’s leader offered this perspective:

Me, the women support me, so I can say I am a good leader. It is not easy... One thing is that if you get something from above, you have to know how to share it well. You cannot give only the older ones [women], you have to bring the young ones and say that ‘this is what they give [*sic*]

me, and this is what I can give you' like that, like that... Me, as a widow, I will always start with the ones [without a] husband. Even according to Islam, you are required to first give to the ones that don't have anything.

Thus, *how* leaders offer “patronage” to their followers was not immune from normative considerations [this is further discussed in Chapter 6]. What these responses and observations cumulatively illustrate is the continued salience of normative commitments to the party as an organisation, to ethno-culturally infused assessments of party leaders, and to centrist ideological legacies encoded in the vocabulary of “progressivism”, “competence”, and “good-governance”. These realities challenge the dominant construals of political life and party loyalty in Nigeria. Allowing for the possibility of normative and ideological commitments thus helps us better understand the historical and contemporary drivers of political behavior in Nigeria than does a restrictive focus on power politics and opportunism.

In the more specific scholarship on Nigerian politics, the dominant conceptions of how parties are able to secure the allegiances of citizens remain rooted in the paradigms of violence, identity politics, and clientelistic ties to individual patrons, derived from construals of the political economy of the Nigerian state (Omotola 2009, Hoffmann 2010, Kendhammer 2010, Ibrahim 2017). The contention which the above testimonies support, however, is that allegiances to Nigeria's contemporary political parties, even at the level of the local party branch, are also a product of lingering vestiges of normative ideals and ideological legacies. We therefore witness in these practices and discourses not so much the absence of ideological and normative contestation in African partisan politics, as has been frequently argued (Bleck and Van de Walle 2013), but rather their plurality. The coexistence of ideologically and

normatively informed party loyalty with more strategic approaches to activism enliven the frictions (Tsing 2011), which shape the interaction between liberal democratic institutional norms and grassroots political party culture. The remarkable consistency of both the ideological character and the organisational format of the two main parties across regions marks a critical juncture in the convergence of right-wing populist and ideological centrist politics in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The history of Nigeria's mass parties progressed along a path that distinguishes itself from the path travelled by 20th century European parties. Like their European counterparts, Nigeria's parties advanced from an elitist phase to a mass phase. However, the rise of the mass membership parties of the APC and the PDP occurred not through a "contagion from the left," but through a much more complicated set of factors — paradoxically, including the marginalization of the left from the late colonial era through the early years of the Fourth Republic. Along with this historical divergence, colonial policies and the decisions of First Republic leaders, both of which encouraged the formation of coalitions between centrist and ethno-nationalists, left an ideological imprint that still marks the logic of contemporary politics. The era of authoritarian military rule also left liberal and populist institutional innovations, including the creation of new states, the Federal Character provisions, and the construction of national and grassroots party organs, which still mark mass politics amongst Nigeria's parties of government. These legacies, influenced both by the rules of the founding elections that ushered in the Fourth Republic

and the alliances that produced the APC, have marked the convergence of a singular organizational format uniting both of the dominant parties of Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The subjective accounts of party members at the local constituency level also attest to this convergence. Party members' through their reflections on party loyalty and the meanings of good leadership reveal their commitments to "progressivism", "competence", and "good governance, as well as to communal and ethno-culturally appropriate forms of conduct and distribution. However, though their testimonies and practices reveal the infusion of a plurality of normative ideals, the commitments of APC and PDP party members do not exceed the bounds of centrist political logics and ethno-cultural norms and values, though various alternative ways of framing politics have existed in Nigeria's political history and continue to exist today (Mayer 2016). The subjective accounts of APC and PDP party members therefore attest to the historical convergence of centrist ideology and right-wing populist mobilization that accounts for the contemporary fervour of mass party membership in Nigeria.

The APC and the PDP should, however, be thought of as fraternal, not identical, twins. The APC has drawn its legitimacy from pre-military era legacies and symbols, while the influence (and presence) of past military leadership in the PDP is more apparent. Correspondingly, more of the leadership of the PDP is drawn from amongst the old military and bureaucratic establishment, while the APC is the party of leaders of the business world, intelligentsia, and professional classes. Further demographic differences between the members of both parties are explored in the chapter which follows. However, despite such differences, both parties are ideologically so closely adjacent that it becomes politically possible for both members and leaders to cross over from one party to the other, almost without notice. "Cross-carpeting," a phenomenon much lamented in Nigeria's democracy is evidence not

of the absence of ideology, but of the historic convergence of right-wing populism and ideological centrism amongst Nigeria's two main parties of government.

3.

The Extent & Composition of Nigerian Party Membership

Introduction

Scholarship has largely ignored the party members, who they are and what motivates them, of Nigeria's mass member parties. A fairly basic set of questions about these members remain unanswered: How age, gender, class, and occupation affect political affiliation and voting. The captivity of the study of political parties to ethno-clientelism has stifled interest in deeper forms of political identification and party-voter linkage (such as right-wing populism), variants of centrism (such as the Lagos model), or the relative extents to which these forces impact voters from various backgrounds. This chapter probes the extent and demographic composition of party members and activists, more commonly referenced as party loyalists in Nigeria. I draw upon the Afrobarometer round 6 and 7 results on the demographics of political participation in Africa. I then situate and compare Nigerian party engagement with continental and global contexts. Despite important limitations, this data sheds new light on the social composition of those who become party loyalists. I supplement this survey data with my field observations and the loyalists' own voices, perspectives shared with me during interviews that focused on the influence of gender, youth, socio-economic status, and ethnicity in their political participation.

Africa's new democracies exhibit the highest levels of party engagement — defined as the numbers of citizens who “work for a party or candidate” or “attend a campaign meeting” — in the world. Nigerian party activism surpasses the continental average — exceeding Ghana, South Africa, and Botswana, countries known for their strong and organisationally dense political parties. These international opinion surveys, however, are not without their problems. These surveys, including Afrobarometer, are plagued by the issue of non-comparability across countries (Mustapha 2015), which may result in misunderstandings over key terms such as what it means to have worked for a party. Despite such imperfections and even if these surveys are seen as only a general indication of party engagement, this data paints a dramatic picture: The golden era of mass party membership might be in Africa's present, not Europe's past.

Yet the demographic composition of democratic participation in Nigeria has received virtually no attention. The political salience of social and demographic categories such as gender, age set, class, occupation, and rural-urban habitation are widely recognized. Nevertheless, the impact of these categories have only been explored in the “informal” contexts of youth groups, vigilantes, and urban and rural oil militias (Pratten 2013; Iwilade 2014). The precise influence of these categories on various formal democratic institutions and political processes within Nigeria remains unexplored.

This analytical myopia becomes particularly clear when considering women's political participation. Mama's (1995) pioneering study of Nigerian “Femocracy,” the elite women's political participation in the context of military dictatorship, has not generated similar interest in women's political representation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Instead, the fixation with “godfatherism” in

Nigeria's Fourth Republic has painted a portrait of Nigerian politics that gives little consideration to the participation of women and youth. Hoffmann (2010: 292) explains:

The terms “godfather” and “godfatherism” have gained widespread currency among Nigerians and their usage has become common in academic literature...The phenomenon of godfatherism can be defined as a system of influence whereby certain individuals or groups of individuals possess the political, economic or social capacity to decide political party nominations, and to also ensure that these nominees gain political office for the chief purpose of servicing private interests.

Godfathers, in this sense, refer to wealthy and powerful men, often former politicians themselves, who finance the campaigns of ambitious aspirants for political office in exchange for preferential access to state resources and control should their “godsons” attain electoral victory. Godfatherism, an advanced form of ethno-clientelistic prebendal politics, downplays the political participation of other social groups since godfathers “take decisions on behalf of party members who have no say in the running of party affairs... it is actually an aberration to talk of party members in Nigeria” (Ibrahim 2017). “The holder of the political position becomes a stooge to his godfather,” summarizes Edigin (2010), “because he that pays the piper dictates the tune.” In a rare study of women’s representation in Nigeria's National Assembly, Aluko (2015) rightly observes that the leadership of Nigeria’s main parties derives from a narrow subset of elite men. This picture also appears to echo the conclusions of comparative studies of gender and right-wing populist parties in Latin America and Northern Europe which find that Populist Radical Right

(PRR) parties tend to perform well below their counterparts in terms of women's representation in party leadership (Mudde & Katlwasser, 2015).

Moving beyond the obsession with party leaders, this chapter will present demographic data on party followers, the members of Nigeria's parties of government. Survey data suggests that the APC and PDP share similar demographic compositions. Furthermore, the data suggest that active party loyalists, both women and youth, come from varying class backgrounds. Furthermore, affirming anthropological perspectives on popular politics in Nigeria (Last 2005, Pratten 2013, Von-Hellerman 2013), my interviews and observations suggest that loyalists do not conceive of themselves as hapless victims or pliant tools — contrary to the suggestions of analyses predicated on godfatherism. Rather, these party members deploy liberal and ethno-culturally infused discourses and practices to challenge gerontocratic and patriarchal norms. However, operating within centrist and right-wing populist frames, loyalist challenges to the dominance of party leaders and godfathers ultimately reinforce, rather than radically transform, the centrist and right-wing populist character of Nigeria's parties of government, though the extent, diversity, and influence of party members contradicts depictions of all-powerful Nigerian godfatherism. These mass member parties are best thought of as populist, centre-right parties when analysing their members.

The first section considers how the types and extents of party engagement indicated in the Afrobarometer surveys in Nigeria compare to African and global figures. I then present the demographic characteristics of partisan Afrobarometer respondents in Nigeria, highlighting the important demographic factors of gender, age, class, and ethnicity. I present the perspectives of various party

loyalists, interviewed in Kaduna and Ekiti States, focusing on how ascriptive social identities shape their experiences of party membership.

Nigerian party membership in comparative perspective

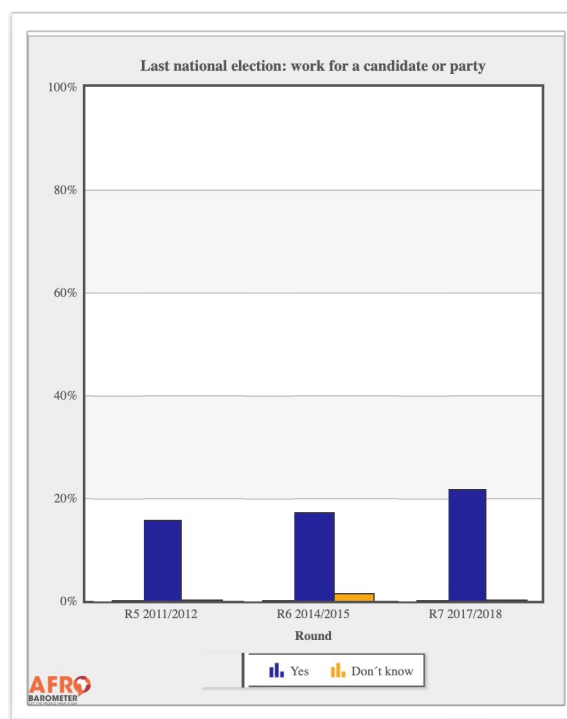


Table 1. Nigerian party workers over time, as a proportion of entire voting age population.

The proclivity of parties to inflate their popularity makes it difficult to accurately ascertain party membership. For instance, in 2018, the APC claimed to have registered 15.6 million members—that is, over half of the entire turnout of voters in the 2015 election. While such a claim is not impossible, it is highly implausible. Yet this problem is not uniquely African *contra* Africanist scholarship. Cross

continental comparative work suggests that self-reported party membership is almost universally unreliable. Parties tend to define membership quite generously, sometimes including individuals who only carry a membership card (Scarrow 1994; Norris 2007; Audickas, et al. 2018). Self-reporting, then, must be bracketed.

The Afrobarometer survey, conducted annually and based on representative samples of national voting populations, provide an alternative snapshot of party engagement in Nigeria. The survey does not directly ask respondents if they are party members — such a question fails to clarify engagement. Rather, two questions posed in the survey, under the category of civic participation, provide better proxies for active party engagement if taken together. The first question also factors in an important temporal dimension by asking respondents to consider their participation in light of the last national election. The survey separately asks, “thinking about the last national election, did you: work for a party or candidate?” and “do you feel close to a party?” Table 1 illustrates that the respondents who claimed to have worked for a party or candidate increased steadily from 16 percent of the voting population in 2011/2012 to about 22 percent in 2017/2018. This data means that Nigerian party workers may now number around a staggering 20 million people.

However, having worked for a party or candidate might not be synonymous with an affective affiliation to a party since one can conceivably work for a party as a hired political consultant or member of a paid crowd. To account for these possibilities, **Table 2** shows the proportion of Nigerian party workers according to the 2017 survey who “felt close” to a specific party and the breakdown of party workers who felt an affinity for their party. As the graph indicates, 75% of those who claimed to work for a party — about 15 million voting age citizens — also felt close to a party. This data suggests that the vast

majority of party workers support a particular party, ruling out transactional workers like hired crowds or “political consultants.”

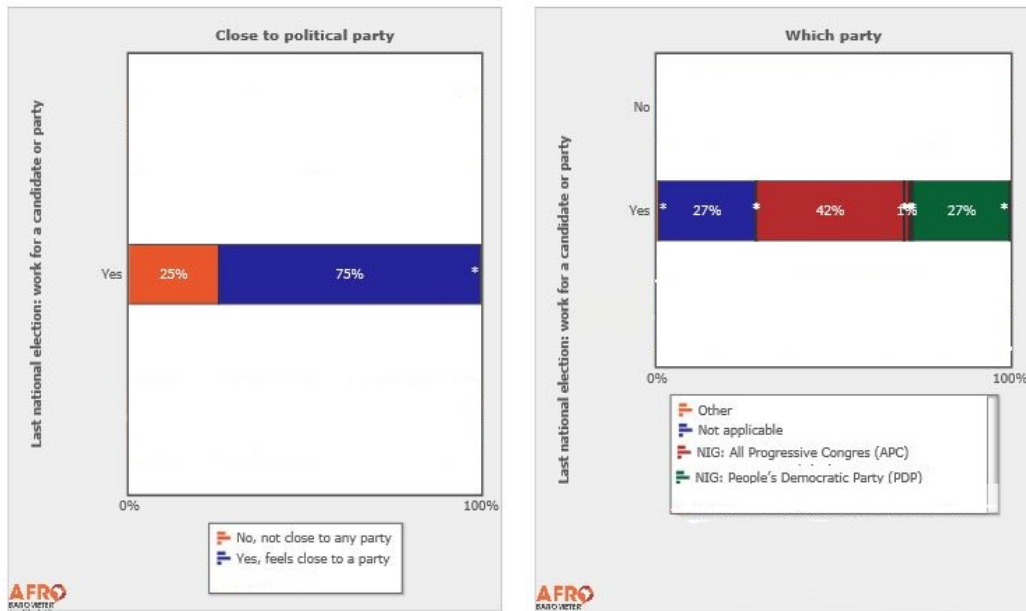


Table 2. Closeness to a party (left)? Which party (right)?

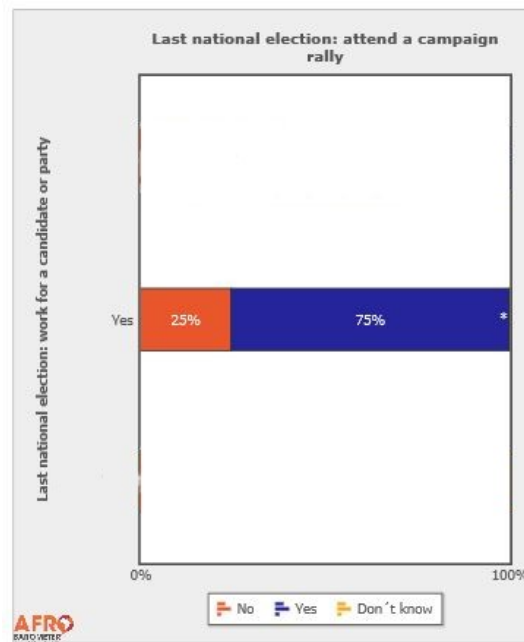


Table 3. Party workers who attended a campaign rally between 2016 and 2018

Similarly, and identical to those who claim to be close to a party, **Table 3** shows that 75% of party workers also said that they had attended a party rally before the 2015 election. Taken together, these

responses suggest that “party loyalists,” those who feel party affinity and previously attended party meetings, may number up to 15 million people or over 16 percent of the entire voting population. Table 2 also shows that the APC commands the plurality of these party loyalists, boasting 42% compared to the PDP’s 27%.⁹

How do the levels of party engagement in Nigeria compare to those in other African contexts? **Table 4** shows that Nigeria’s 22% surpasses the continental average of 21%.¹⁰ Interestingly, Nigeria’s proportion of party workers surpassed Ghana’s with 18% and matched Botswana’s with 21.7% — both countries thought to be Africa’s most “consolidated” democracies. Nigeria’s proportion of party workers also surpassed South Africa where, though round 7 results have yet to be released, the round 6 (2013/2014) survey recorded a 7% higher proportion in Nigeria. Benin, Senegal, and Guinea, where party participation surpass 35%, feature the highest proportions of party workers in Africa.¹¹ Countries with the lowest proportion of party workers are 9% in Zimbabwe, 8% in Mauritius, 6% in Namibia, and 5% in Tunisia. **Table 5** shows the proportions of voting age citizens in 25 African countries who claimed to have attended a campaign meeting in the round 6 Afrobarometer survey, the last survey to have asked this question. As with the continental average of party workers, more than a fourth of voting age citizens

⁹ The APC’s advantage amongst respondents may owe much to that fact that it was the national ruling party when the survey was conducted.

¹⁰ This data compares participation among the 25 countries where Afrobarometer’s round 7 survey tracked the proportion of party workers within the general electorate.

¹¹ Benin, the continental leader, boasts a remarkable 45 % —nearly half—of all voting age citizens who claim to have worked for a party or candidate in the most recent election. Why these countries command such dramatic levels of party engagement remain unexplored and beckon future research.

claim to attend party meetings with the continental average for party meeting attendance hovering around 26% and attendance in Nigeria at 19%.

These figures suggest that the levels of party membership in Africa dramatically surpass those of contemporary Europe. In an essay comparing party membership figures in 20 European democracies, Mair and Van Biezen (2001) find that party members represent a mean of 4.3% of European electorates. This number is comparable to some of the lowest participation figures recorded amongst African countries and barely a fifth of the continental averages for African party workers and party meeting

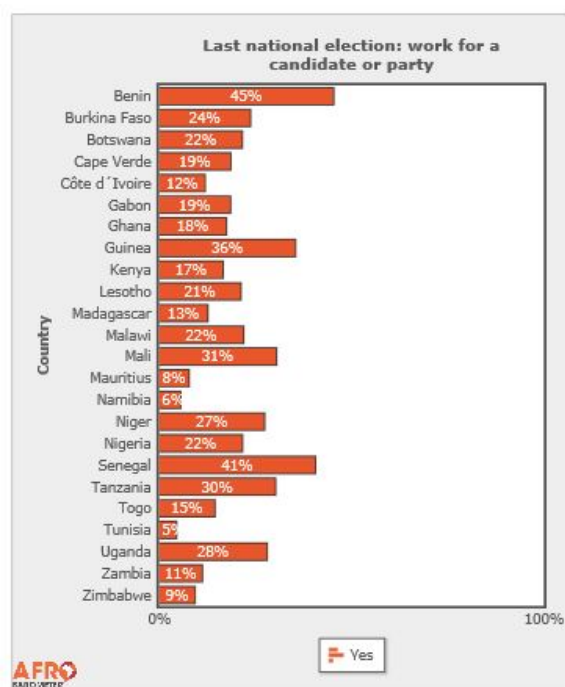


Table 4. Last national election, did you work for a candidate or party?

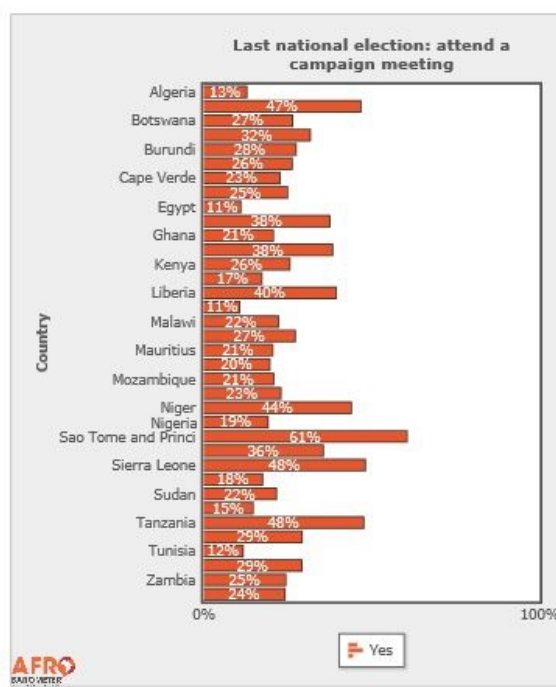


Table 5. Last national election, did you attend a meeting with a candidate or campaign staff?

attendance. This comparison may even overestimate European party membership, given that Mair and Van Biezen assess the levels of party membership in Europe as a proportion of only registered voters rather than as a share of the wider populace of voting age citizens from which the Afrobarometer draws its

sample population. Moreover, Mair and Van Biezen draw exclusively on self-reported membership data. These factors mean that the estimates they provide for European party memberships might be doubly inflated when compared to the Afrobarometer figures. Indeed, even the historical mean of 15%, which they provide from the 1960s (considered the high-point of European party membership), falls short of Africa's contemporary average of 21%. It is evident that European party memberships, even at its height, pale in comparison to even conservative survey assessments of party engagement in Nigeria and Africa. Cumulatively, the comparative evidence suggests that the golden era of mass membership parties might lie not in Europe's past, but in Africa's present. In Nigeria, the strong appetite for members is rooted in the populist character of its mass membership parties. The demographic composition of this membership, which the remainder of the chapter explores, also reveals aspects of the centre-right orientation of these parties.

The Demographics of Party Membership in Nigeria

The literature on Nigerian politics has shown an enduring interest in the intersection of class, ethnicity, gender, generational identity and power since the precolonial era. This interest inspired studies of student activism (Odion-Akhaine 2009), women's nationalist unions (Nolte 2008), market women's political associations (Johnson 1982, Denzer 1994), masculinity and militancy in the Niger-delta (Iwilade 2014), and the political history of youth in northern Nigeria (Last 2005). Apart from ethno-communal identities, the influence of social identity on electoral politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic remains largely unexplored. Little is known about what differences might exist in the political affiliations or

voting patterns across gender, class, and generation — key factors studied in all other contexts. The lack of interest in these identities reveals the legacies of elitist, gerontocratic, ethno-communal, and patriarchal forms of bureaucratic hierarchy and political order. This myopia reinforces the social advantage of older men (often former military generals) in Nigeria’s contemporary society and politics. These legacies have shaped the trajectory of research on the politics of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, mostly resulting in political biographies and studies focused on male party leaders and political godfathers. The Afrobarometer survey data, in contrast, provides a richer account of those who undergird these powerful parties. In particular, the data lays bare their generation, gender, ethnicities, and levels of educational attainment, a proxy for social status. These factors intersect with political power within parties.

Party workers are overwhelmingly young according to the Afrobarometer data shown in **Table 6**. Most party workers, about 65%, are “millennials” — that is, those under the age of 35 — with the largest share of party workers falling between the ages of 26 and 35. The data also indicates that the generational breakdown of party workers largely mirrors the general population. However, amongst the two sub-segments of millennials identified by Afrobarometer, the proportion of party workers between the ages of 26 and 35 exceeds that of non-party workers by 5%. The proportion of younger party workers aged 18 – 25 is 9% less than the proportion of non-party workers of the same age bracket. Taken together, this suggests *that millennials between the ages of 26 and 35 may be the most active partisans in Nigeria*. The fact that millennials constitute the bulk of party workers suggests that party membership may lack the generational skew towards the older population that is associated with party leadership. This discrepancy is largely unsurprising since young people tend to be over-represented in the more high-intensity (Whiteley & Seyd 2002) forms of political participation, such as party membership, even if this

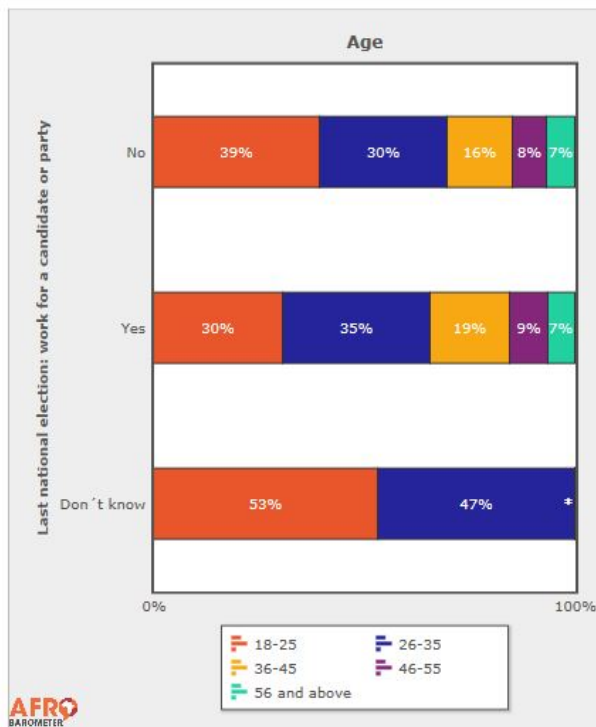


Table 6. Party Workers by Age.

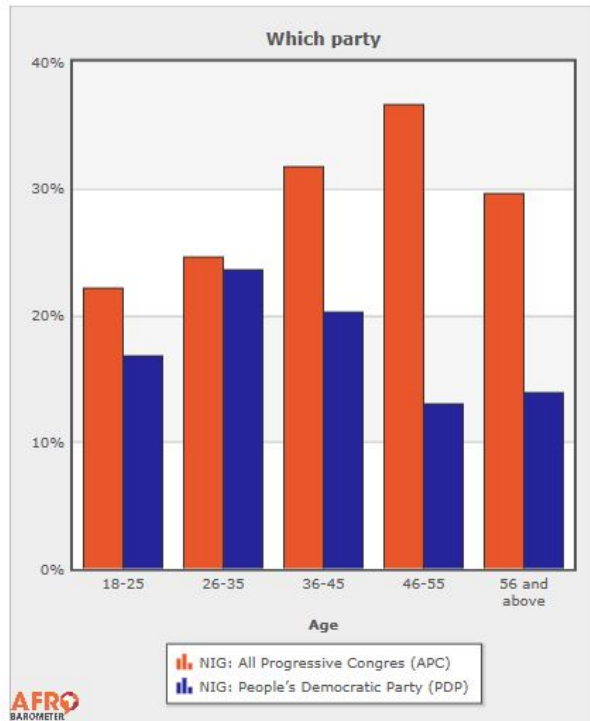


Table 7. APC/PDP Party Loyalists by Age.

participation is frequently not rewarded through leadership positions. **Table 7**, which shows the generational breakdown of those who claimed to be close to the APC or PDP, also reveals a demographic advantage favouring millennials. Of the two, the PDP is the younger party, with 72% of its loyalists falling under the age of 35 and with almost 40% falling between the ages of 26 and 35.

Table 8, which tracks gender among party workers, shows that 64% are male while 36% are female. Unsurprisingly, the survey highlights that more men feel close to a particular party. Between the two main parties, 42% of women felt close to the PDP, while only 38% of women felt close to the APC. Party membership, therefore, skews male, appears to reflect the global trend for Populist Radical Right (PRR) parties (Mudde 2013), and seems to give credence to the godfatherism lamented by analysts. But it is noteworthy that women constitute well over a third of party workers and loyalists captured in the

survey. Given how little attention is given to women's political participation in Nigeria, this level of participation should surprise. This data illustrates the liberal legacy of gender quotas and the influence of women-led initiatives for gender inclusive political participation in the Fourth Republic. The extent of party participation among women varies across northern and southern regions. These differences reflect different forms and understandings of what it means to be a party loyalist, a point developed in the qualitative research.

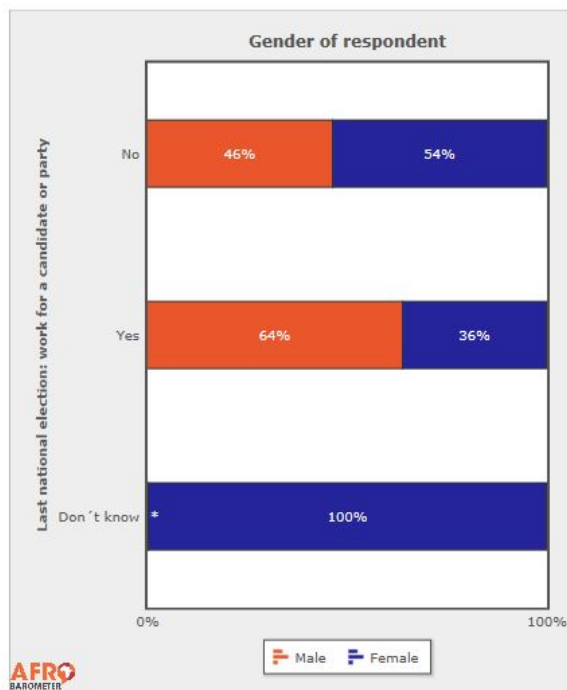


Table 8. Party Workers by Gender.

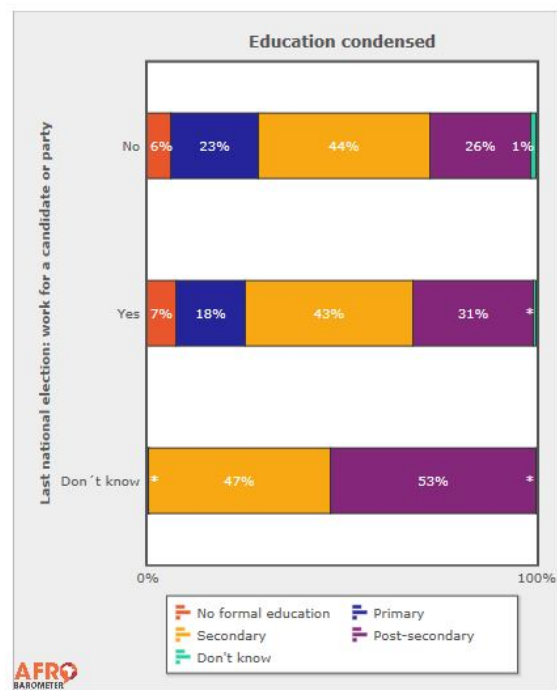


Table 9. Party Workers by Education.

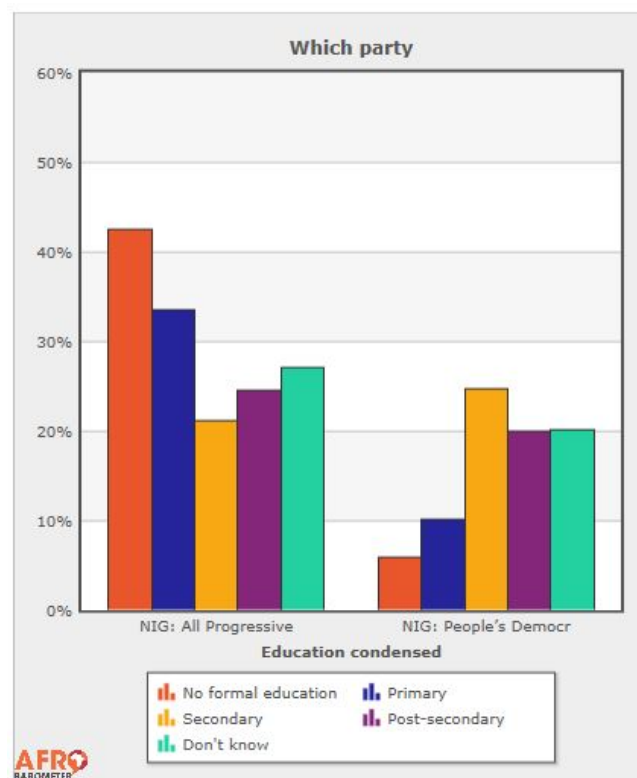


Table 10. APC/PDP Party Loyalists by Education.

Before turning to this qualitative data, it is also worth considering two further dimensions of party activism captured in the survey, namely the socio-economic class of party workers and their ethnic composition. I use the Afrobarometer's data on the educational attainment of party workers as a proxy for socio-economic status. While not a perfect indicator of social status, my observations and interviews suggest that educational attainment is the most common marker of one's social standing and political prospects. **Table 9** shows that the party workers' educational attainment closely mirrors the general population; in both cases, most have only completed secondary education. However, party workers are slightly more educated — 31% had completed post-secondary education. The differences in educational levels are more noticeable between parties, as shown in **Table 10**. Respondents who claimed to be close to the PDP had a higher level of educational attainment. 85% of these respondents claimed to have completed secondary and post-secondary degrees. In contrast, nearly 40% of those closest to the APC had not attained more than a primary-level of education.

Table 11 displays the ethnic composition of party workers from the round 7 Afrobarometer survey. Most notably, members from ethnic minorities appear to participate in party activities at higher proportions than do members of the three majority ethnic groups: Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. In the round 6 question, which tracked party meeting attendance, all the ethnic groups whose active members exceeded the 25% threshold were minority ethnic groups: The Kalabari, Nwagavul, Gwari, Egon, and Idoma had the highest proportion of meeting attendees at 70, 56, 50, 44, and 42% respectively. It is difficult to draw a firm conclusion from these figures given the small numbers of interviewed minority

ethnic group members.¹² Nevertheless, the survey suggests that ethnic minorities are the most politically active groups. This finding potentially points to a positive outcome of the Federal Character, which require parties to maintain an ethnically diverse membership (see chapter 2).

Furthermore, based on **Table 12**, we can see that the ethnic composition of party workers broadly reflects the ethnic composition of all of those surveyed. Amongst the majority ethnic groups, however, the Igbo appear to be underrepresented. Though almost 20% of all the survey respondents were Igbo, only 10% of party workers appear to be. In contrast, Hausa and Yoruba citizens comprised 25 and 22% of survey respondents, respectively, and 22 and 26% of party workers, revealing a slight overrepresentation of Yorubas amongst party workers. Finally, when respondents “closeness to a party” is disaggregated by ethnicity in **Table 13**, nearly 40% of APC partisans are Hausa, 19% are Yoruba, and only 4% are Igbo. In contrast, PDP loyalists are 31% Igbo, 10% Hausa, and 9% Yoruba.

¹² Indeed, though an astounding 100% of the Shuwa Arabs and Itsekiris interviewed in the round 7 survey claimed to have worked for a party or candidate, this is more likely coincidental given that, since the surveys are not representative at the ethnic group level, only one Shuwa Arab and two Itsekiris were interviewed.

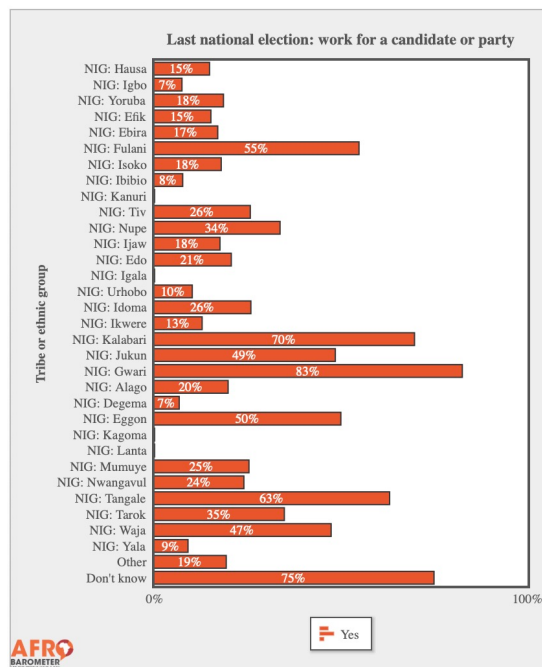


Table 11. Party Workers by Ethnicity.

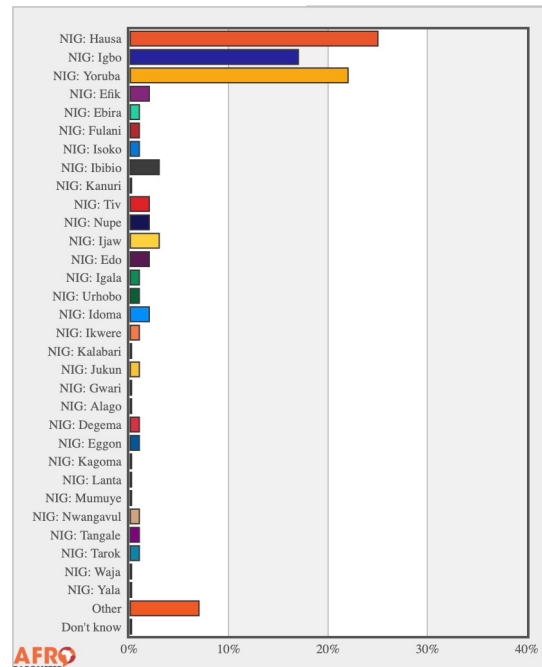


Table 12. Survey Respondents by Ethnicity.

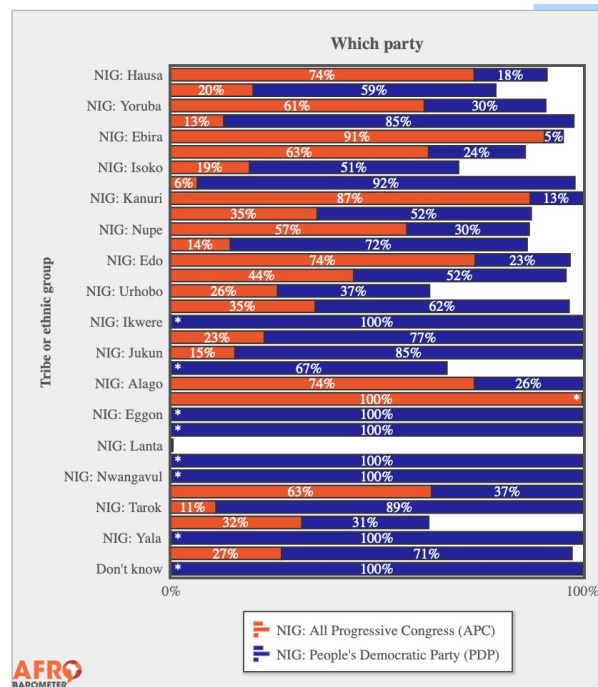


Table 13. APC/PDP Party Loyalists by Ethnicity.

Cumulatively, the PDP appears to be younger and more gender-inclusive — a counter-intuitive finding given the fact that the PDP tends to be thought of as the architect of godfather politics in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic (Albert 2005, Albin-Lackey and Rawlence 2007). The APC’s slightly older, less educated loyalists is a product of two factors. Firstly, the parties that merged to create the APC were themselves older than the PDP, which was founded at the start of the Fourth Republic. Many APC members have aged with their longer-running legacy parties, as affirmed in my field observations. Secondly, the APC’s (and particularly President Buhari’s) embodiment of the Hausa-Fulani *talakawa* populist tradition (see chapter 2) has meant that its following, particularly in northern Nigeria, draws from a larger share of the socio-economically precarious citizenry, as Levan *et al.* (2018) argue. Finally, the ethnic composition of the parties — particularly the fact that the PDP skews more Igbo while the APC skews more Hausa and Yoruba — affirms the historical fact that the APC was created through a merger of primarily Hausa and Yoruba based regional parties, leaving the majority Igbo southeast to the PDP.

Nigerian Party membership and social identity at the Local Level

For a more granular perspective than the quantitative data, my qualitative interviews and observations at APC and PDP party branches in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City further clarify the social-composition of party memberships. This data sheds light on how people of different sub-groups *experience* membership in these parties. While living and conducting field research in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City between the 2016

harmattan and the 2017 rainy seasons, I was struck by a number of factors related to the ways social identities intersected with political power amongst local party members. Before discussing the social identities of party members, I briefly sketch out the bureaucratic structures of Nigeria's parties of government. Aside from the fact that it has been virtually ignored in the scholarship on Nigeria's Fourth Republic, a portrait of the key organs of the APC and the PDP will also help contextualize where and how local party branches and their members fit into the wider structures of both parties.

Party Branches

The bureaucratic organs of the PDP and the APC were established with nearly identical constitutions. At the top of the party hierarchy, in both cases, is the National Convention, which has the power to amend the constitution, to elect or remove national officers of the party, and to elect a presidential candidate. The National Convention is made up of elected party delegates from each LGA as well as both elected officials and party Executive Committee members at the LGA, State, and National levels. The convention meets, at a minimum, every 4 years, where it elects a presidential candidate. Though the National Convention is considered the highest decision-making body of the party, the National Executive Committee (NEC) is the chief executive arm of the party. The NEC has within its membership the Party Chairman, the President, Vice-President, State Governors, senior members of the National Assembly, and all the remaining senior elected officials that are party members. The NEC also, *inter alia*, convenes the National Convention and supervises and directs the work of all organs of the party from the National to the LGA level. While the National offices of the PDP and APC also maintain a Board of

Trustees (BoT) and National Working Committees (NWC), these organs serve an advisory role in the case of the BoT or assist carrying out the instructions of the NEC in the case of the NWC. The NEC is, thus, the nucleus of party power for both the APC and the PDP, though that power does not go without contest. These National party organs are also replicated at the State and Local levels. State and LGA Executive Committees mirror the NEC, and State and LGA Congresses mirror the National Convention. State and Local-level party organs also include Stakeholders Forums and Elders Committees, which serve the same advisory function as the National BoTs. Finally, the subnational party organs of both parties include Zonal Executive Committees (ZECs), which sit above the State-level party organs in each of Nigeria's six geo-political zones, and Senatorial District Committees, which are a level below the State Executive Committee (SEC) but sit above the LGA Executive Committee.

Existing a level below the LGA Congress, the most basic formal unit of the party, and the organ to which every member of the party is tied, is the Ward secretariat. The Ward is where each party member is first registered and given a membership slip or card as well as where the general membership of each party meets. As with the National, State, and Local organs, each Ward maintains an Executive Committee, or *ExCo*, including a Chairman, Secretary, Legal Adviser, Auditor, and Youth and Women's leaders, among other executive positions. In similar vein to the other subnational organs, the Ward-level branch elects delegates who vote in party congresses at the organ one level above (in this case, the LGA Congress) to choose prospective candidates seeking elective posts at that level.

In both parties, the Ward-level branch also maintains alternative organs through which members participate. These include the Polling-Unit Committee, a party organ at the neighbourhood-level maintained by both parties. This committee is not mentioned in the PDP constitution and only thinly

described in the APC constitution. In practice, the Polling-Unit Committee is a crucial party organ as it spearheads each party's neighbourhood-level mobilization efforts. They oversee door-to-door messaging and manage daily voter contact. They also serve as party agents, poll-watchers, and last-minute mobilizers on election day. The Ward-level branch differs from other party organs in that it handles both membership registration and the mobilization the electoral cycle. As such, given my broader interest in understanding the nature and extent of party membership — as well this chapter's more specific interest in the socio-demographics of party membership — the LGA level branches in Zaria City City and Ado Ekiti LGA's, with each of the two LGA's containing 13 electoral Wards, were the primary focus of my research.

Party People

For context, it is worth introducing the structure and key positions within the LGA level constituency party before describing the influence of socio-demographic identity on party membership. The following observations of the structures and key positions within local party branches of the APC and PDP in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City LGAs serves this purpose. At the most basic organizational level were the “ordinary members” who were registered and received an official certification of membership (a membership slip or card) at a party's Ward level branch, or “secretariat”. These were the partisans who were expected to support the party in general elections. They were, in a smaller proportion, also the “floor members” who attended and organized Ward congress meetings wherein party updates and communiques were shared, government policy was discussed and debated, and opportunities for “empowerment” were made known.

Such meetings were held weekly at the Ward level and monthly at the LGA level by both of the two parties and in both sites under investigation and were attended by an average of 40 members. In both locations, members also participated in standing party forums and caucuses, notably wings for women, youth, and people with disabilities as well as groups for “non-indigenes” (see Fourchard 2015). In addition to these roles were *ad hoc* issue, protest, or planning groups which were convened and disbanded according to need.

A level above the general membership, were the party officials and executive committee members—locally called *ExCos* — in all of the main tiers of the party organization. These (in ascending order of scale) are organized at the Polling Unit, Ward, the LGAs, the State, and the National levels. Executive (though unsalaried) roles in these tiers include Chairmen, Deputies, Treasurers, Organizing Secretaries, Women’s Leaders, Youth Leaders, Legal Advisors, Publicity Secretaries, and Chairs of *ad hoc* committees. Formally, these members were required to see to the day to day running of their parties, and to steer party meetings and congresses, as well as entitled to serve as delegates in LGA, State, and National party congresses and executive committees. Informally, they also directly interfaced with elected officials and the party leadership, served as brokers between floor members the upper echelon and state institutions, and resolved party and communal disputes. These members were, as such, the organizational backbone of Nigeria’s political party structure.

Outside of the main structures of the party, loyalists also had an existence in a number of forms with more or less explicit political import. Firstly, and perhaps most significantly, they were selected to join campaign teams near the election season. Campaign secondments offered a heightened degree of ‘exposure’, and ‘relevance’ in the form of proximity to influential candidates and, as such, were much

coveted. Campaign teams were frequently in communication with the party structure at all of its main tiers but nonetheless existed as somewhat independent institutions. The exact roles loyalists were called to fill in campaigns seemed to vary substantially but depended on what candidates viewed as priorities or deemed to be suitable uses for the skill sets and background of particular loyalists. Among such roles, the loyalists who I encountered in the course of fieldwork had variously been called to be anything from student organizers and social media strategists to porters of 'election money', and 'political thugs'. Secondly, as Prasad (1983) observes of grassroots party activists in India, loyalist also joined and organized protests against governments in office—even, on occasion, when such governments were comprised of members of their own party. They also participated in a range of activities of a much less explicitly political character. For instance, during fieldwork in both Ado Ekiti and Zaria City, I had the opportunity to accompany loyalists to social and communal events—weddings, naming ceremonies and funerals of notable individuals or party members—where they had been invited as delegates, and where they would often visually represent their party branch by donning special purpose regalia (see Figure 3). Though external to the party organization, special delegations, protest movements, and campaign teams were important ways in which loyalists participate in party activities and make their presence felt in their communities. The energy of these activities stands in sharp contrast to the strands of Africanist scholarship on multiparty politics which sees political parties in Africa as merely electoral machines with 'very little party activity between elections' (Basedau et al. 2007: 25). Rather, this portrait accords with Osei's (2012: 140) perspective, informed by an empirical study of political parties in Ghana, in which she concludes that, "activities take place throughout the year, even if they are not as intense as in the

campaigning season... Whether in the strongholds or in the weak areas, most party branches are functioning.”

With this organizational structure in mind, the influence of identity on political participation comes into clearer view. The most evident way in which socio-demographic identity shaped the experience of party membership at the Ward-level was the locations in which Ward congress meetings were held. Ado Ekiti and Zaria City had prominent differences in this respect. In Zaria City, in keeping with the cultural and Islamic practice of *purdah*, or gender segregation, women usually met separately from men, often in the home of the “Women’s leader” rather than in public spaces or party offices. In this way, party activities both affirmed Hausa-Fulani and Islamic values and reflected a culturally specific understanding of gender relations. In Zaria City, Ward-congress meetings were also held on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than on a regular schedule. In Ado Ekiti, party meetings were either held in the home of the party chairman or the palace courtyard of a traditional Yoruba aristocrat, such as the *Akodi* (palace) of the *Edemo* of Ado Ekiti [Figure 1]. Interestingly, both parties in those Wards held weekly general Ward congress meetings at *Akodi-Edemo*, but an arrangement had been made whereby the APC used the room on Wednesdays and the PDP on Fridays. Though non-Yoruba speakers were not excluded from meeting in *Akodi-Edemo*, meeting in the palace of a traditional Yoruba ruler and generally conducting meetings the Yoruba language served to affirm the link between participation and Yoruba ethno-cultural heritage. Practically, this characteristic meant that very few members of minority communities, such as the Igbiras in Ado Ekiti, were present in local party functions. The few Igbiras I met at party meetings were those who were able to spoke fluent Yoruba with an Ado Ekiti accent. Similarly, in Zaria City, though Christians and

non-Hausa Nigerians were not explicitly excluded from political gatherings, they were in the minority or complete absent at all the meetings I attended.

Aside from the frequency of Ward meetings in Ado Ekiti relative to Zaria City, cultural institutions and religious practices also differentiated party conduct. Zaria City revealed Islamic and Hausa norms around public gatherings, while in Ado Ekiti various Ward meetings took place according to Yoruba custom. Though meetings reflected cultural particularities, this divergence between regions ultimately pointed to a deeper convergence in the ideological underpinnings of Nigerian party politics: In both locations, even Ward meeting venues were shaped by ethno-cultural and religious identity. Although the Afrobarometer data revealed ethnic diversity in both parties at the national level, local branches still remain largely ethnically homogenous since most Nigerians live in their state of “indigeneship” (see Fourchard 2015).



Figure 1. *Akodi* (palace) of the *Edemo* of Ado Ekiti. Source: Author's own.

Other practices reflected the varying flavours of political life as experienced by various social groups among the Ward-level party membership. For instance, the women, the youth, and the educated participated in distinct manners while attending local meetings. In Ado Ekiti, women were always the most “visible” members of the local branch. They were, by some margin, always the majority of the audience at party events. Ado women were also more visible than men in the sense that they often wore the party colours, often in brighter shades, and frequently led prayers, dances, song, and other forms of political performance at local events. As excerpts from interviews with party members reveal, the vibrancy of women’s participation in meetings was not lost on either the women or the men. For instance, when asked what social groups participate most actively in local politics, Chief Mrs Olanikpekun, the Chairwoman of the Ado Ekiti APC Women’s leaders, had this to say (2016, int.):

It is women of course — plenty women! You can see that in the general meeting we went to yesterday women were so many. They are the architects of the party. They are the role models of the party. They take a great role. Women are so many in each ward.

Though I was unable to attend a women's meeting in Zaria City, due to prevailing cultural norms, interview transcripts from conversations with APC and PDP Women's leaders across the Wards affirmed Mrs. Olanikpekun's perspective. Women's Leader of Jama'a Ward, Hajiya Fatima Ibrahim, puts the matter this way (2017, int.):

Women are the ones who vote the most. They are the ones who mobilize the most. They are doing their things quietly, but they are the heart of politics here and everybody knows it.

Women's leaders were keen to emphasize the vibrancy of their constituency within the party, given that this liveliness would reflect positively on their skills as mobilizers. However, their perspective was affirmed by men in both communities as well, often with pride, confusion, or, sometimes, annoyance. For instance, Mr. Femi Ogundare, the male APC State Youth Leader based in Ado Ekiti, expressed the following view:

I am a Youth Leader... so if I want to play it like the typical Nigerian politicians would play it, I would defend my own side... But me I don't do things like that... So, you see women [are] more active. Not only in politics; in every aspect of life. If you move from this place now you go to any

church now, or you go to any vigil, or you go to any mountain— anywhere you see women, you know their commitment is very high right? But on the day of the election... in terms of people that are very active on the day of the election: you will see the youth — [and generally young men] though you still get some young ladies who contribute. So, the youth on the day of election you will see them very active. But when we are talking about political activities before the election you will see women. When you see 200 women you will see maybe 50, 70 youths...

Despite the vibrancy of women's participation, Mr. Femi, Mrs. Olanikpekin, Hajiya Fatima Ibrahim, and many others I spoke with about gender and meeting practices, all affirmed this observation, which I also made through my attendance at party meetings. Though numerically dominant in the audience, women were always less in number at the "high-table" where the meeting chairpersons, notables, and dignitaries sat. In both Ado Ekiti and Zaria City, women occupied less positions in the local party *ExCo* than men. In fact, in Zaria City, they were often restricted to holding only the "Women's Leader" position, the minimum constitutionally required quota for women on the party *ExCo* at any level. In Ado Ekiti, an affirmative action quota had been introduced into the State APC party organs shortly before my fieldwork. This quota guarantees women 35% of the leadership positions in the party. Interestingly, the introduction of a liberal representational quota by the former First Lady of Ekiti State, Mrs. Bisi Fayemi, earned her the traditional Yoruba title of *Erelu*, or noblewoman, illustrating once again the intimate link between ethno-cultural identification and participation. Though the quota had visibly improved the representation of women in the local APC party organs by the time of my fieldwork, it did not appear that the 35% quota in party leadership had been reached based on my observations at these

meetings. Neither did the local PDP branches strive to offer women much more access to local party leadership beyond the Women's Leader position. Though she does not intend it, there is some irony in Mrs. Olanikpekun's boasts about women's participation, when she says that:

Women participate more. Out of 100 percent, women are 70 percent or even 80 percent...

Between 70 and 80 percent. And the reason why we have one Women Leader in each ward is to be the head of women, because the women are the mobilizers of the party.

A paradox emerges. Women make up the majority of the visible follower-ship "in political activities before the election." But women's representation was restricted to one Women's Leader in each ward on the *ExCo*. This discrepancy puzzled many loyalists, several of whom offered unflattering theories about women's capacity to lead, revealing the cultural and gendered biases that perpetuated women's exclusion from leadership. Mr. Femi's ensuing elaboration, aimed at resolving this puzzle, captured such cultural biases plainly. As he explained:

Like I told you, in Nigerian politics... it depends on what you can do. Like I said, the women are very active in all these processes. Take for example, let's assume we have a political gathering now. Then you have about 200 women there. And you discover that in that 200 women, about, 190 of them, practically, they will turn themselves to singers. You know... causing a lot of [commotion]. So, anybody who comes in will just see them as if [makes disdainful sound] they are like that... You see, let me use the word packaging. You know men know how to brand

themselves. It is nature. When women see me taking the high-table, women will not take it as anything. But if they see a woman of my age, sitting in that place, they will say, ‘look at her’ she can’t sing with us, she’s proud. You understand? So that is why it is so difficult for them to support each other.

Mr. Femi’s perspective, blaming women for their lack of representation in the Ward and LGA party *ExCo*, was echoed by nearly all of my male and female interviewees in Ado Ekiti.

In Zaria City, interviewees offered cultural and religious rationales for the supposed impropriety of the idea of women holding public office and local leadership positions. These practices affirm Amina Salihu’s (2004) observations regarding the “headscarf among the turbans,” referring to Habiba Sabo Gabarin, the first woman elected to State House of Assembly in Bauchi, a state which shares its Islamic and Hausa-Fulani cultural heritage with Kaduna state. Lukman recounts that in exchange for her husband’s permission to pursue an elected position and, thus, “abdicate” her traditional wifely duties, Habiba Sabo Gabarin was obliged to allow her husband to take other wives and to agree to use the financial resources accrued from her political position to support any children resulting from her husband’s other marriages. In Zaria City, as well as in Ado Ekiti, the nature of women’s participation in meetings and in the party, organ was constrained by strict communal and ethno-cultural boundaries. Though women were more “visible” in local politics — particularly in Ado Ekiti — than was evident in the Afrobarometer survey results, my observations from APC and PDP branches in both local contexts largely aligned with the Afrobarometer suggestions that men control Nigerian political parties.

Socio-economic class and education also intersected with local political practice in both observable and implicit ways. An immediate observation at party meetings, confirmed by interviews with party members, was that the more educated members tended to speak out more frequently at party meetings, to be more respected in the party organ, and to take up more leadership positions in the local *ExCo*. In fact, education seemed to be the key determinant of social status and political prospects within the party organ. In Ado APC loyalist Toyin Adepeju's words, "if you are not educated, they will treat you like shit in this party." This was true to a lesser extent in the PDP branches in both Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, where members of various educational and social backgrounds felt they could more easily access political leadership positions than if they had been in the APC. "One thing about our party [PDP]," said Zaria City Youth Leader Umar Ishak Dikko, "is that we accept everybody. We do not say, no, this one, because you did not finish school, you cannot participate." This was also affirmed in Ado Ekiti by PDP's Ward 13 Chairman Azeez Owolabi who said, "In [the] PDP, anybody can hold any position. You don't have to be the most educated. Even our governor does not need to be PhD holder like you (laughter) and like the APC person there [referring to the former APC Governor Dr. Kayode Fayemi]." Even Mr. Olumide, an APC member in Ado Ekiti agreed to the characterisation, saying that "someone like you will fit very well in APC... you know APC is for the learned. It is an *ajebo* [bourgeoisie] party (laughter)." This is in some ways a paradoxical finding given that the Afrobarometer data suggested that the PDP had a slight educational advantage at the national level. However, as stated earlier, this points to the *talakawa* appeal of the APC — or the fact that the APC maintains a large base among the socio-economically underprivileged and educationally disadvantaged population, particularly in northern Nigeria — leaving the PDP as the more educated party. The contradiction between this national data and my local

observations, wherein PDP was deemed as more inclusive by less educated members, only appears so on the surface — it may be that PDP is striving to create its own *talakawa* appeal.

Socio-economic class also had an influence on local party practices in a less observable manner. Even though Ward meetings were, by default, not held too far away from the homes of party members, interviews with local party leaders in both locations revealed that the cost of transportation to the meeting venue or of leaving work in order to attend inhibited party members from attending. The lived experience of being a party member was, thus, shaped by socio-economic status in a variety of ways (see chapter 4).

Finally, generational identity also plays a prominent role in party practices and in the experiences of local party members. As with women, younger party members were generally restricted to a single position within the local *ExCo*: the Youth Leader. This was true across parties and in both Ado Ekiti and Zaria City. Younger party members were also often courted to serve in front-line positions as poll-watchers, party agents, or “political thugs” during elections, as Mr. Femi implied. In party meetings, younger party members often also stood in the back of the venue, spoke less frequently, and, as I witnessed on multiple occasions, were more likely to be silenced by the older chairpersons. Yet such marginalisation did not go unchallenged. Indeed, young people almost seemed to maintain a constant state of opposition towards the authority of older party leaders, and, perhaps paradoxically, this opposition was occasionally rewarded. An anecdote of such a confrontation, recounted by Toyin Adepeju in an interview in Ado Ekiti, sheds an interesting light on this dynamic:

In one of these party events, a wealthy man brought rice [to share] ... Everybody now studied and saw that the rice will not go [a]round. So, someone now said: 'let's start [serving the older] men first.' Then the youths said 'Ah! Which men?' And then one [young] guy just went out, picked stones, and poured it inside that rice. Th[at] rice; they wasted the whole thing... The guy used his own common sense. All the youth hailed him that 'Oh! God bless you, oh!' Through that, the boy is now rising every day because he picked stones and poured inside that rice. You see, you may have your money but [if you do not] have the [right] idea to disrupt some things... it can't work.

Toyin's anecdote can be read from multiple angles. On one hand, the stones provide a comical illustration of what Pratten (2013) calls the "precariousness of prebendalism," or, in other words, the ever-present possibility that godfathers' attempts to win the loyalty of citizens through patronage might collapse or even backfire (see chapter 6). The anecdote also displays an interesting paradox of gerontocratic culture, which is that a well-timed act of symbolic defiance against elders, such as the rejection of a gift particularly in the face of need, can also be interpreted as a sign of honour, valour, and good character. More fundamentally, this anecdote displays the infusion of cultural values into the liberal democratic institution of political parties, once again revealing the interplay of ethno-cultural identity with liberal political currents in Nigeria.

Conclusions

This chapter makes three key contributions. Firstly, the chapter highlights data on the scale y of Nigerian (and African) party membership, showing that contemporary levels of party engagement in Africa far exceed those of twentieth-century Europe. Secondly, it traced the national-level socio-demographic composition of this membership, unpacking the impact of socio-economic class, gender, and generational identities on party engagement. Thirdly, it shows how loyalists in two local party branches affirm the role, not of prebendal godfatherism, but of centre-right populism in shaping their experience of participating in party activities. The contests between tradition and meritocracy observed in these parties displays the politics of liberal norms, populist organization building, and ethno-cultural conservatism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

It does not go without irony that studies of *godfatherism* have generally failed to point out the fact that Nigeria's political leadership is very *fatherly* —it is almost entirely comprised of wealthy and educated men over 45 and who espouse a mix of ethno-nationalist and valence appeals. Party membership, in contrast, features more diversity even if this diversity remains shaped by the ideological imprints that birthed it. Not only is the imprecision and exoticist baggage of the concept of “godfatherism” alleviated, but we are also better able to comprehend the extent and composition of Nigerian political participation when we grasp the right-wing populist and centrist nature of its parties of government. The mixed-methods analysis used to demonstrate the remarkable fervour of party membership, both by delving into the wider demographic composition of Nigerian political participation

and by re-drawing the links between socio-demographics and political ideology, opens up room for further comparative work focused on the socio-demographics of centre-right populist parties.

4.

On Constituency Building

*Some people just vote, but it's better to belong to a party where you can contribute more. And through that,
you can help and also be helped.*

—Ago Aduloju, 2016, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti

As a leader in politics, the last thing you want to be is lonely.

—Deji Ogunsakin, 2016, LGA Chairman, Ado Ekiti

Introduction

Scholarly interest in the internal dynamics of democratic African political parties has recently bloomed (Basedau, et al. 2007). This scholarship focuses on understanding how a party's strategies and organisational forms affect important democratic qualities, such as accountability, participation, and representation. In particular, most of these studies focus on assessing the relative effectiveness of various campaign strategies, or forms of "party voter linkage" (Kitschelt 2000), to mobilize voters (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar 2009; Bleck & Van de Walle 2013; Resnick 2013; Weghorst & Lindberg 2013; Kuenzi & Lambricht 2015). This literature has also turned to the wider issue of party organisation. It has shed light on how decisions taken by party elites in the face of longer running structural factors affect party strength (Arriola 2012; LeBas 2013) and on how the internal organisations of parties affect important political outcomes, such as the selection of candidates and party leaders or parties' choices of public policies (Darracq 2008; Giollabhuí 2013; Ichino & Nathan 2016a; Osei 2016).

While these studies shed light on *what* parties do, these institutionalist perspectives rarely examine *why* individuals choose to participate in party activism— perhaps the most intense form of voluntary political participation available to ordinary citizens (Whiteley & Seyd 2002). The few studies that do examine this political motivations often resort to some account of clientelism (Ichino 2006; Bob-Milliar 2012). These studies focus on the “demand side” of political relations — what membership *bestows*. Yet, in practice, very few activists reap the benefits of patronage in these strapped new democracies (Van de Walle 2007). Considering the broader “supply side” of what parties actually *provide* to activists, instead, sheds more light on the motivations for party activism, particularly *sustained* activism, in contexts where patronage resources are scarce.

This chapter weighs into these debates by considering Nigerian party loyalists who participate in party activities at the low-points of the electoral cycle. To further demonstrate the weakness of the patrimonial framework, my argument assesses party membership from a rational choice perspective. I momentarily adopt both a “supply and demand” and a “rewards” framework to demonstrate that, even from a rational-choice perspective, the “rewards” that party loyalists receive through their participation far exceeds the prebendalist category of “political patronage.” Rather, the constituency building phase underscores how centrist and right-wing ideals infuse both the “supply” of party “rewards,” which attract loyalists, and the “demand” for such “rewards.” I then provide an organisational profile of the way in which both parties organize their local bureaucracies. Though parties attract mass membership, the allocation of party “rewards” within the APC and the PDP by-and-large reproduces the gendered, gerontocratic, and economic hierarchies present in wider society. During campaigns and elections, most activists can expect small rewards, such as bars of soap or a bag of rice (cf. chapter 6), a norm between

candidates and their campaigners (Bratton 2008). But why do some party activists *continue* to participate during the long lull between campaigns, when no such gifts are in the offing? Appreciating the loyalists' participation in this phase can clarify what drives party activism beyond the episodic drama of elections. In presenting data gathered from the constituency building phase, the period that begins a new electoral cycle, the chapter follows the electoral calendar's structure and considers why citizens might become highly active party members — or party loyalists— in the first place.

Drawing on ethnographic and interview material gathered at weekly Ward congress meetings and monthly LGA meetings of both the APC and the PDP in Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, I advance three related responses to the motivational question. I argue that local participation offers party loyalists formal and informal rewards, even in the electoral off-season. Informal and associational benefits range from building social capital to gaining a political education. Formal benefits include the right to influence party decisions, seek coveted leadership positions as a delegate or a party *ExCo*, or run for elected office. I also argue that loyalists fully understand the scarcity of the most coveted rewards the party can offer. Remaining active in the lull creates access to these rewards. Finally, I point out that, while not completely meritocratic, the goods a loyalist can access are determined by the quality and length of her participation in the local branch. This reward structure advantages older, better educated male loyalists and disadvantages women and the youth, weakening the representational function of party democracy. Despite variations in cultural contexts and prevailing political alignments, these factors held constant in both Ado Ekiti and Zaria City. This consistency underscores the influence of a shared national political culture of constituency building amongst Nigeria's two main political parties. Ultimately, the sheer

diversity of political goods parties supply exceeds the frequently deployed but rarely specified category of “patronage.”

The remainder of the chapter is divided into four parts. I situate the chapter’s analysis in broader debates about what factors motivate membership in African political parties. I also present testimonies and observations from Ado Ekiti and Zaria City LGAs to illustrate the plurality of rewards which local party activism provides. Finally, I discuss reward allocation and highlight the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that result from it.

The Demand for Party Rewards

The scholarship on Africa’s contemporary multi-party democracies pay scant attention to what motivates citizens to become active party members. In contrast, how parties influence voting, a comparatively less intense form of political participation (Whiteley & Seyd 2002), has been the subject of sustained interest. A partial explanation for this lacuna might lie in the accessibility of data. Collecting data on elections, episodic and highly visible events, is easier than gathering data on party activism, a more continuous and mundane phenomenon. Erdmann (2007: 34 - 35) provides both a more compelling explanation for — and demonstration of — this neglect. In his view, scholars use a “mass membership party model” that reflects an idealized, twentieth-century (and often leftist) European party to analyse African parties. Scholars calibrated to find the qualities of European mass parties — characterized by strong ideological leanings, and a large population of organized, and influential members — have typically viewed African parties as immature and undeserving of detailed examination. Ironically, Erdmann nevertheless compares

African parties with the mass party model and eschews empirical verification of such a comparison. Noting the “typical characteristics” of African parties, he observes that: “there is either no formal membership or in many cases multi-memberships (card-holding of several parties), thus “membership” is weak apart from a small group of staunch party cadres” (36). This endemic “western European bias,” found even in its critics, must also partially account for the general neglect of party activism in African democracies.

More recent scholarship examining the internal workings of African political parties beyond idealized comparisons and generalized dismissals proves more useful (Darracq 2008; Bob-Milliar 2012; Ichino & Nathan 2016a; Osei 2016). Within this fold, Nahomi Ichino (2006) and George Bob-Milliar (2012) offer tentative suggestions for why citizens in African democracies might actively participate in political parties. Bob-Milliar (2012), focusing on Ghana’s two major political parties, deals most directly with the motivations that activate loyalists. He argues that, although Ghanaian “foot-soldiers” may *join* specific parties due to “political traditions and ideological leanings, programmes of parties and socio-cultural norms,” (*ibid.*, 683) these activists *remain* active because they expect to receive patronage. “Fundamentally,” Bob-Milliar argues, (*ibid.*, 680) “selective incentives are at the heart of party activism in Ghana.” Bob-Milliar also makes an interesting and perhaps contradictory observation. Ghanaian foot-soldiers often complain that political leaders frequently “neglect” their patronage demands. Bob-Milliar observes that (677), “the NDC and NPP as mass organisations are in many instances unable to provide selective incentives for their hordes of activists.” Yet a question remains: Why do these “neglected” foot-soldiers still *remain* active within their parties? Even if we accept that activists might join parties because of an expectation of “selective incentives,” it is not clear why they might *remain* active after such demands

are “neglected.” Ichino (2006: 17) attempts to address this lacuna by examining why local Nigerian politicians sometimes opt to mobilize “thugs” over “voters.” She posits that local politicians in some Nigerian states, many who will never attain their desired patronage positions, might remain highly active within the party to gain followers. These followers are useful to such politicians in bargaining for other/secondary benefits from party leaders after an election. Crucially, this argument suggests that the awareness of the limited opportunities for patronage positions might prompt local political activists to aim lower, moderating their patronage demands.

Both Bob-Milliar and Ichino’s observations accord with Van de Walle’s (2007) important, if under-acknowledged, contention. The severe fiscal constraints of many new democracies, particularly those in Africa, make patronage resources scarce. As he fairly intuitively argues (*ibid.*, 4), “patronage is more likely in rich states overseeing substantial and diversified economies, which are more likely to be able to afford a large and expensive state.” Since most patronage demands go unmet, activists’ *demand* for patronage cannot fully explain their sustained political participation. Ichino’s observation regarding bargaining only partially resolves this problem. Ultimately, the political positions which savvy local politicians might successfully access are also extremely limited, meaning that even this level of reward is not immune to the problem of scarcity. As she ultimately (*ibid.*, 8) hints, ‘it is more likely that what determines present patterns of clientelism is the management of its supply, rather than demand that is unlikely to be satisfied. This explanatory gap can be addressed through a more systematic assessment of the broader *supply* of goods that parties provide to activists. To shed light on this “supply side,” the following section assesses the allure of local party loyalty during the lull of electoral constituency building in two Nigerian constituencies.

The Supply of Party Rewards

The first and most basic reward for party activism in local contexts in Nigeria is, in a sense, hidden in plain sight: Political spectacle. Yet this theatrical aspect of political party gatherings is easily overlooked given both its ubiquity and assumed instrumentality. Highlighting only one of the most recognizable forms of such a spectacle, Lisa Gilman (2011: 11), in a fascinating study on the uses of dancing in Malawian politics, observes that “the performative presence of women wearing fabric decorated with party or state symbols who liven up political occasions by dancing and singing songs that promote politicians and political bodies is common across the African continent.” As she also rightly points out (*ibid.*, 23), political dance “serves the purposes of political power wielders in its capacity to attract people, disseminate messages, display symbols, and reinforce hierarchies.” Besides these implicit political purposes, political dance, as well as the array of other more or less striking forms of political performance, are also meant as entertainment. This feature needs to be seen as an end in its own right.

The theatrics of local political gatherings take many forms. The gatherings I attended included everything from the hammer wielding *Sango* worshiper eating shards of glass in front of a cheering audience at an LGA rally in Ado Ekiti [Figure 2] to the more subtle turns of rhetorical flourish that interspersed routine administrative updates amidst Ward meetings in Zaria City. More choreographed performances, such as the former, were rarer. The drama of weekly Ward meetings was typically limited to impassioned speeches where party leaders verbally jostled or party members displayed creative uses of local proverbs to the delight of cheering audiences. The monthly LGA meetings were more likely to

feature hired performers that ranged from male and female dance troupes to fire eaters, mythical figures from Yoruba folklore in Ado Ekiti to the mainly male drummers, singers, and acrobats in Zaria City. Across parties and regions, electoral Wards organized LGA rallies and each Ward took a turn hosting. The event's style and quality varied according to each Ward's *ExCos'* level of commitment. The most elaborate LGA meetings I witnessed, the one that featured the glass eating *Sango* worshipper, was organized on 7 November 2016 by APC Ward 9 in Ado Ekiti. As I observe in a field-note entry made later that day:

Ward 9 Chairman, who says he was an actor in a past life, really put on quite a show. Probably about 350 attendees from all the Wards, so lots of familiar faces. All [thirteen] Wards sent members, each group in a different uniform which made the event all the more colorful... There were rented canopies; loud speakers; catering (though not the best jollof); musicians; fire-eaters; and, oh, the guy who walks across a fire-pit, smashes a green bottle on the table, picks up a handful of the glass (while Funsho and I are thinking no way he's going to do it) and then, of course, tosses it all in his mouth and appears to chew and swallow... The crowd was ecstatic. Maybe they were sugar crystals? It looked very glass -y. Couldn't have been a very satisfying meal...

The political value of such events was apparent. The local party used these events to attract new members and affirm its presence and relevance in the community. Party leaders, who usually sat in front of the crowd on a "high table" or at some other position of prominence, used these events to reinforce hierarchies and inspire ordinary members for upcoming election campaigns. Members used these events

to display their commitment to the party and loyalty to its leaders. In this way, LGA constituency rallies mirrored the general format of the less elaborate Ward meetings, in which party communiques were passed across by local *ExCo*, who chaired meetings from the front of the room, while members listened, applauded, and debated.

The drama of these events underscores how local participation provides a supply of entertainment; a reward not lost on party loyalists. As an APC loyalist in Zaria City, reflecting on Ward meetings, further elaborated:

We are active at the Ward because we get to see our leaders. You get to hear what is going on. You can also tell others what you think. But our people are very funny here... If they want to say something about politics, they will say it in a funny way so that everyone will laugh or sometimes they speak very seriously... Some people are intelligent, other people will fumble. You will see youths will be shouting; then a women leader may say ‘sit down and keep quiet, for God’s sake’. So, you can see it, for yourself it is like watching a film, *wanlahi*. (Shehu 2017, int.)

This view was more widely affirmed in a comment I frequently received from loyalists in both Zaria City and Ado Ekiti who, when asked why they stayed active at the Ward-level, often responded saying, “I do politics for the love of it” or “politics is a hobby.” What these vignettes clearly illustrate is that political spectacle is, in itself, a meaningful reward of local party activism. It is also a democratic reward — perhaps

the most democratic of rewards for party activism — insofar as its supply is not denied to any participant who arrives at a local party gathering, even if that be a visiting researcher.



Figure 2. *Sango* worshiper eating glass at an LGA constituency meeting, Ado Ekiti, 2016. Source: Authors own.

Secondly, local party activism also educates and includes activists in the political conversations. “Get[ting] to hear what is going on,” cited in the testimony quoted above, exemplifies this reward. This sentiment was also expressed more explicitly by several party members, including Zaria City APC loyalist, who wished to be identified as Adamu Electronics (2017, int.) and observed:

If you are not a member or you do not attend [meetings] regularly, you will be clueless. Nobody will explain information to you, to tell you the way it is from up [the leadership]. So, you will only be following bad rumours on WhatsApp. We will be ignorant!

The quantitative data backs up the qualitative: Respondents who claimed to work for a party or candidate in the most recent Afrobarometer survey in Nigeria were twice as likely to respond that they frequently discussed politics (see Table 1). More substantially, the link between discussion and awareness was also easily observed at the Ward meetings I either attended or heard about. As Danladi Jama'a, the PDP chairman of Dutsen Abba Ward in Zaria City observed:

When we have any information even from the state or national [party], we will call our members together so that we can inform them. We don't hide anything from them... Of course, if there is something to share, we call them to share it. Even if there is [a] problem in the party. It is better to discuss among ourselves and answer any question[s] our people have. It is better so that they can also uphold the name of our party in the community (2017, int.).

My observations at meetings corroborated this perspective. These meetings prioritized sharing relevant information from Federal, State or LGA level party leadership. Consider the weekly meetings in Ado Ekiti. After the minutes of the previous meeting were read, the first item on the agenda was frequently an update and open discussion about recent happenings in the country or in the local party. In fact, it was in conversation with party loyalists that I often first learned of important rumours or "gossip." This information ranged from disagreements between party leaders to factions developing within the national party to government policies at the state or local level. Much of this information was only later covered in national or local news. For instance, the Kaduna state government's plan to ban *Okada* motorcycle

taxis was being debated and considered at Zaria City's Wards months before the ban was officially announced.¹³

Similarly, I often found that loyalists were the most informed about local development projects. For instance, clarifying — in the same interview cited above — why workers had stopped showing up to complete a drainage construction project that was ongoing at the time of my fieldwork in Zaria City, Danladi Jama'a explained:

Like this issue of culvert. If you go around town now, you will see that the work has stopped. So, our people [members] are coming to me to ask me what happened that the work has stopped. I was able to meet our House of Assembly member and fortunately he is on the House Committee on Works and Housing, so I made the inquiry from him why the work is not going on now. He told me that at the 2017 budget, 600 million was earmarked for the work. But when the award [was given] to contractors they already exceeded such amount, they have awarded a contract of about 2 billion. So government has to stop the work to make valuation to see how they can source the funds to settle them. And at this level, if they tell them to abandon the project, there will be many complaints because already they have made the digging. In some area its just the trench [that has been dug]. So that's what they said they should wait to evaluate all the work that has been giving. So they [members] are coming to me but at times I also used to go to them to tell

¹³ <http://dailypost.ng/2017/03/07/remove-okada-street-beggars-kaduna-cl-rufai-orders-security-agents/>

them what is happening. My work is to serve as a link between the people of the Ward and the elected government officials.

These observations underscore a crucial aspect of grassroots party activism, namely, communication between government and citizens. More broadly, they also illustrate the educative value of party activism, which, conditioned by the extent of one's participation, is also available to most local party activists.

Thirdly, local party activism also generates social capital. Active and visible party loyalists could draw on communal resources in a number of important ways. On the most basic level, the recognition of belonging itself is the reward. Bose Adelokin (2016, int.), a PDP loyalist in Ado Ekiti and a ten year veteran of her Ward, communicated this associational value in following way: "I love this party and I love to participate because we are very close. We are one family. My children are not here anymore because they have left to work in Lagos. That is why I say that the youths here [in the ward] they are my children." This perspective was also echoed on numerous occasions in Zaria City where, for instance, Umar Ishak Dikko (2017, int.), a PDP member, observed that "our members are people you can laugh with, people you can play with. There is a lot of love among us... Some of us, it is like we are brothers.' To borrow Putnam's (2001) classic, if culturally out-of-place, metaphor for social capital, loyalists are not "bowling alone".

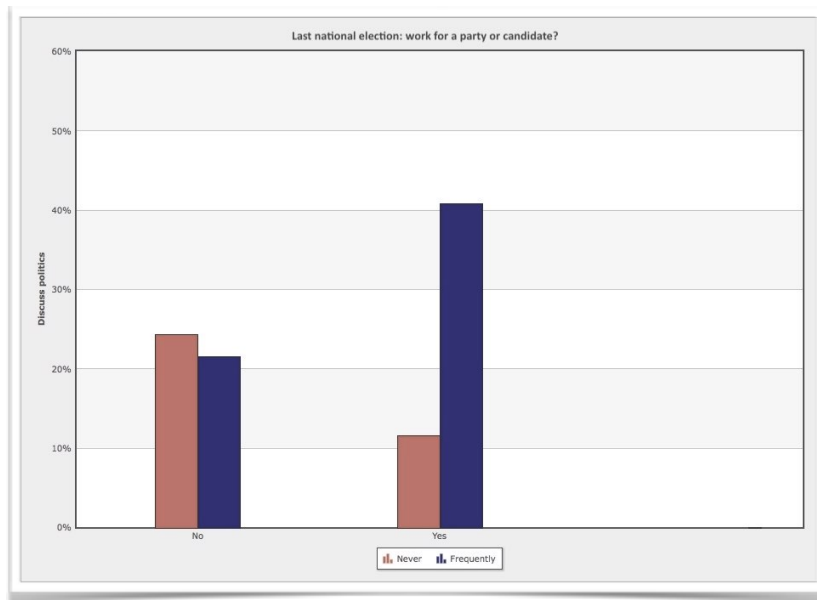


Table 14. Afrobarometer R7 (2016/2018) Nigerian respondents who did or did not work for a candidate or political party in the previous national election by how frequently they discuss politics with friends or neighbors.

In times of need, well-known Ward members could also expect support from other loyalists in forms ranging from the associational to the financial. To name but a few examples, the former includes attendance at funerals and birthdays (discussed in chapter 3) and the latter includes contributions towards hospital bills and school fees. As Ado Ekiti APC loyalist Olumide (2016, int.) observed,

I have something doing [formal employment] so it means I can be helpful to some of my members, even those older than me. They say there is no joy in eating alone. I can offer something small that can be of aid to people. When it's my own time, other members will also be of aid to me.

In contrast to the scholarly focus on vertical, patron-client ties, these “horizontal” ties of mutual support were more ubiquitous. Loyalists more frequently interacted among their peers and only infrequently

interacted with party leaders and patrons. This observation accords with Pratten's (2013: 255) conclusion that, in the Nigerian context, "social relationships and the practice of being "social" (burials, meals, marriages), most notably political distribution, are also investments in forms of insurance and protection and of forming relationships with people on whom one may rely." Membership provides support amidst life's vicissitudes.

Party activism can also provide social capital beyond the party. Numerous party members celebrated their increased status among neighbours and friends who, in the words of Ado Ekiti APC loyalist, Olumide (2016, int.), "see me as somebody who knows what I am talking about when it comes to politics." This social recognition, of being "seen" by neighbours, was often easy to observe directly: During interviews and ethnographic hangouts in public areas, loyalists were frequently recognized and loudly "hailed," either by name or by honorific nicknames such as "*honorable!*" or "*mai-gida* [Hausa for head of the household]!" by a passerby from the community.¹⁴ "When the youth see you, they will praise you. Even though you are a young person...", answered Zaria City PDP member Umar Ishak Dikko (2017, int.) when asked about the hailing he received from a passerby. He continued, "they will want to associate with you and listen to you, particularly if you are good to them." As Ado Ekiti PDP loyalist, Azeez Olaseni, similarly observed: "People in my community see me as a leader. If they have disputes, sometimes they will come to me to resolve. That is why I have my phone on 24/7." Aishatu Ibrahim

¹⁴ However, such 'hailing' in the Nigerian context often contains a thinly masked layer of irony, wherein terms like 'honorable' are actually intended to mock local political activists who have no formal title or position but given their activism might be perceived as self-important.

(2017, int.), an APC-loyalist in Zaria City, expressed a longer-term view on this same dynamic, observing that: “When you are active and you are good, in the future, when people see your children they will know who they are. You never know tomorrow... Your children can be something because of you.” These accounts reveal how party activism can bolster both the activist and activist’s family’s present and future social capital.

Fourthly, political influence is another reward for local party activism. The extent and modes of loyalists influence varies across the key moments of the electoral cycle — the primary process, election campaigns, and election’s aftermath. The constituency building phase of the electoral cycle presents party loyalists with various means of exercising political influence. The relationship between floor members and the leadership and elected officials of the party as well as how this relationship was mediated by party *ExCos* provides an interesting window into the ways in which party members may exercise influence. However, important to bear in mind is the distinction also observed in Osei’s (2012: 140) study of party organisation in Ghana wherein the ‘informal fashion’ by which party decisions were often made did not always correspond to the formal procedures which are set out by party constitutions.

Among their key functions formally established by the constitutions of both major parties, loyalists at the general membership level are eligible to contribute to the formation of local party policies; to voice their perspectives on party management and strategy; to vote in primaries; to freely join party committees; to contest and be nominated for party executive positions; and to seek elective posts on the party platform. In practice, however, how floor members did actually participate in the local party decision making did not always perfectly conform to these constitutional ideals. Decision making processes at all levels of the party hierarchy were not impervious to the influence of elected officeholders

and other powerful outsiders, some of whom were indeed identified as godfathers. The floor members with whom I spoke with in both locations often complained about this phenomenon.

For instance, as Toyin Adepeju (2016, int.) an APC loyalist in Ado Ekiti acknowledged: “That thing where a godfather will try to use his financial muscles to impose a candidate or to say who will fill this or that position still happens and that is what sometimes causes serious fight[ing] in the party.” Loyalists in Zaria City were also able to cite examples of instances in which important decisions had been ‘imposed from above’ by influential leaders or by party ExCos acting in their stead. “It still happens like that,” said Aliyu Goje (2017, int.) (PDP) in Zaria City, “where a leader will come and say ‘let us have consensus not election because election in the party will cause fight...”

However, also interesting to note were the ways in which loyalists qualified these responses to questions about imposition. “Sometimes, if the leader is very popular already,” continued Aliyu in our interview, “it can work and people will go with the consensus. But if it is a leader that is not very popular, I don’t think the members will accept that.” Toyin, in the same interview cited above, put her qualification in more dramatic terms. As she exclaimed when asked whether money was all one needed in local politics. “No! Skill matters. It really matters most. If you are a wealthy person and you don’t know how to make use of your wealth: oh my god... Me, I don’t have wealth [but] I will stand on that your wealth and climb my ladder!” Both Toyin’s and Aliyu’s views, like those of many other loyalists in both field sites, suggest that floor members did not consider themselves to be at the mercy of wealthy party members or shut out of the important decision-making procedures of the party. Instead, they viewed the party organisation as providing much more opportunity for ordinary members to assert their own political visions and personal ambitions.

Party *ExCos* had an interesting perspective on the question of the extent to which general members could contribute to influencing important decisions taken by the local party. In agreement with the above views expressed by floor members, party *ExCos* consistently affirmed not only that floor members had a say in the affairs of the party, but that to go against their wishes, particularly in the areas of deciding how party resources, positions, and rewards were allocated, was to court conflict and discord. As a PDP Ward Chairman (Awolabi 2016, int.) in Ado Ekiti summarized, ‘we have a saying that if you are the one frying corn for Ado people, you better make sure you are whistling while doing so, otherwise they will insult you and say that you are eating some of the corn... People here are easily dissatisfied.’

Like this Ward Chairman, many other *ExCos* affirmed that being able to placate aggrieved members and to be stoic in the face of insults were some of the most important qualities that a party executive could have. Indeed, party *ExCos* frequently expressed that balancing the interests of both elected party leaders and the general membership left them feeling trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea. For instance, a former PDP Ward Chairman in Zaria City, Danladi Jama’a (2017, int.), responded this way when asked if he had found his role as chairman to be challenging:

‘Kai! (exclamation of amazement). It was difficult, gaskia Allah (as God is true). Young boys come to abuse you, old men come to abuse you, women come to abuse you in the house... Because of small things. That is the reason why I said, kai, I cannot continue to do it.’

Similarly, an APC Youth Leader of Dutsen Abba Ward, Mallam Jibrin Shehu (2017, int.), with whom I spoke in Zaria City had the following to say about party members responses to a policy which had recently been put in place by the state government to ban the operation of Okada motorcycle taxis.

Okada work is very important for the youth and this has given us many challenges... Our own people [in the party] they are crying, they don't have money, they are saying 'how are we going to do?' We have written petitions and sent to House of Assembly members but the governor, he is stubborn... That is why you will see a small boy abusing [insulting] the governor and even coming to abuse some us to our faces. The youth in our party will easily organize a protest vote [in favor of the opposition party in the next election] because of this issue...

It is apparent that, to these party ExCo members, like to many others with whom I spoke, a lot was at stake if the grievances of ordinary members, both on issues of party procedure and public policy, failed to be taken into account by the party leadership. Yet, despite the tenor of these accounts, relationships between party loyalists, ExCo members and elected officials were not always antagonistic in nature. Olumide (2016, int.) summarized this issue quite clearly, saying:

One thing about playing politics is that you must have a leader; a mentor; someone that likes your face that you like his face... You must have someone that will be fighting for your case when you are not there. Someone that can give you advice and say go this way or that way. And at times a

subordinate can even advise his boss and the boss can take to that advise... Of course, not all the time, but sometimes it works. It's about being diplomatic.

Importantly, given the above-mentioned influence of party leaders and godfathers over party decision making, many loyalists, if presented the opportunity, looked favourably upon the prospect of being “noticed” by or connected to such leaders. But these reflections, both from Olumide and the party ExCos above also suggest that, despite deviations from the de jure provisions of party constitutions, the ways in which party members did practically participate in both Zaria City and Ado Ekiti entailed a significant degree of feedback between the general membership, party executives, and elected officials. In light of these realities, it is difficult to uphold a strictly pessimistic view such as that articulated in Ibrahim (2011: 69) that, 'political party decision-making structures and processes do not provide opportunities for individual citizens to influence the choices that parties offer,' or Omotola's (2007: 149) claim that, 'as a result of godfatherism the participation of the people in politics [...] is severely restricted. Decisions are never allowed to flow from the grassroots to the top but do the reverse.’ Though often through ‘informal’ channels, the varied influences of members through party norms and practices at the basic levels of membership appear to contest such stances.

Encapsulating many of the forgoing observations, consider Ado Ekiti PDP loyalist Azeez Olaseni Owolabi's recounting of his Ward Chairmanship election (2016, int.):

Personally, I don't cherish positions because they come with a lot of intricacies that you won't like... But shortly after I started to attend meetings eight years ago, I was under pressure from

members of my Ward because they saw me as somebody who is committed, somebody who is sound academically and otherwise. They went to the deputy governor, the former deputy governor, to ask for support for my chairmanship... Because the deputy governor was my colleague from school and I really campaigned for him, so they knew he would listen. They thought that with his influence, I would definitely emerge. Initially, I turned it down... But at a stage there was crisis in our Ward. In fact, we had crisis in the Wards all over the town, because people who wanted to run for positions were coming to mobilize factions, because you know that it is from the Wards that delegates are selected... So, to preserve the unity in our Ward, since people saw me as a leader, I decided to contest. The moment people heard that I was contesting, those who don't come regularly for party gatherings; I mean they came in droves [to the convention] (laughter). In fact, I understand some people [other Ward chairmen] spent money, spent a lot of money! But this thing was given to me on a platter of gold. When we got to the convention, in a very big hall in Afao, it was the governor himself that was officiating. Since the thing had been zoned to my own axis of the Ward, there were only two of us contesting the position that day. The governor looked at me and the other guy that was contesting and he said, "ah but it is only two of you contesting, why don't one of you step down for the other." That guy now said, "Ah daddy, is older than me so he is supposed to step down for me." I said, "Yes you have spoken well. I am older than you." I said, "Eight years ago I was asked to contest for this position, but I rejected it. But you people have messed up the Ward. That is why I have only now decided to offer myself..." So, there was no consensus. Since I didn't step down and the other guy didn't step down, we had to hold open primaries. Open... We were there till 1:30 am! But so

many people supported me, people that I didn't even know... I think the guy had only 7 votes. But by the time they counted 82 votes [for me], the governor stopped and asked me, who is the winner (laughter)? So that is how I emerged.

I quote this narrative at length because it displays the complexities of a loyalist's political influence on important party activities, such as the selection of party leaders. Note how the Chairman speaks about how he faced "pressure" from fellow members in his Ward to contest for his position. Of course the rhetorical trope of "pressure from followers" can function as a discursive ploy to mask political ambitions. Nevertheless, this possibility does not negate the fact that followers — or fellow party members in the narrative — can and often do exert an influence on who might decide to seek leadership positions in the first place. Other interviews and observations at gatherings in Ward 13 and other Wards in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City corroborate this conclusion: Influential, experienced, and committed members were explicitly nominated to contests for positions or tacitly encouraged to run — often outside of formal party gatherings, such as through "courtesy visits" to promising a member's homes or offices.

Note also the Chairman's description of how his party members planned to secure the backing of the former deputy governor. While the influence of officials, former political office holders, and party godfathers on nominations in Nigerian political parties has been widely acknowledged (Ololade 2007; Hoffmann 2010), the foregoing narrative also evinces how endorsements from such leaders are not competitive with popular support for a given candidate. In fact, as is the case above, the former can be inspired by the latter. Activists can, thus, exert informal pressure on the decisions of the local party by appealing for support from favourable party leaders and officials.

The latter part of the narrative underscores a formal influence party loyalist hold in local conventions: Their votes. They can vote for party leadership at the Ward, LGA, and State levels and for delegates to state and national conventions.¹⁵ This formal influence, however, is not immune to intrigue and ambiguity. Several loyalists recounted episodes of fraud, intimidation, and attempts to buy their votes — particularly in higher-stakes elections. “Governors, former party chairmen, and some godfathers they do play a role in nominations,” affirmed Danladi Jama’a of Dutsen Abba Ward in Zaria City. He continued:

Some will be supporting this candidate, while other ones will be supporting this candidate. So, there is a lot of interference. But if somebody is already popular with the people, it will be hard to impose another person. It happens. But that is when you will see fight in the party. So, imposition is very difficult when you have a popular candidate.

An “imposition” from party leaders not only often pits such leaders against each other, but also does not entirely eclipse the emergence of “popular” candidates. Other interviews in Zaria City and Ado Ekiti bear out this state of affairs. Despite the need for loyalists to sometimes “fight,” voting provides material political influence and, thus, a meaningful reward for local party activism. This influence also extends to

¹⁵ The constitutions of both major parties also endorse consensus decisions as a mode of selecting party leaders and delegates, provided party members agree to this. In such cases, after party leaders and members have picked a candidate by consensus, party members are able to either assent to or disagree with consensus candidates.

policy. The episodes about the *Okada* ban and stalled public works projects showcase that activists' complaints about policy issues got the elected officials' attention, which I observed during my fieldwork. To be clear, loyalists did not actively participate in the initial formulation of such policies and most complaints did not elicit immediate responses from state officials. Nevertheless, loyalists could point to instances in which elected officials positively responded to their pressure, including amended policies and public goods.

Despite the failure of much recent Nigeria-specific literature to reflect this, these institutional and extra institutional roles also bear crucial political import which has long been acknowledged by comparative scholars of party membership such as Susan Scarrow (1994). Examples of the ramifications of the political participation of party members serve to highlight loyalists' centrality to the success of the most important ambitions parties and their elite hold, and thereby serve to further complicate the extremes of the Godfatherist thesis. For one, party loyalists, in accordance with their generally heightened state of political participation, are often a stable and reliable source of voting turnouts, as Scarrow (1994: 47) says of party members. Likewise, from the electoral standpoint, party loyalists, are 'vote-multipliers' to the extent that they are responsible for taking the party's appeal to the wider electorate. Given these considerations, the fact that Nigerian loyalists do not always vote for or campaign in favour of their parties— instead sometimes opting to engage in 'protest votes' as referenced earlier— only further underscores the electoral import for parties of not losing loyalists' allegiances. Thirdly, and perhaps more fundamentally, party loyalists by their very presence or absence served to legitimize or delegitimize the party and its leadership.

This again accords with an observation made by Scarrow (1994: 46) who notes that, by both their numerical weight and demographic make-up, “members improve membership statistics”. As she explains (ibid), “popular accounts often predict the future electoral fortunes of parties — particularly fledgling ones — in terms of increasing or declining memberships... [additionally] a diverse membership is viewed as a tool to enhance the credibility of party claims to have a broad electoral appeal.” These factors are vital to our understanding of loyalists’ influence in Nigerian political life, wherein projecting the popularity and breadth of their appeals and meeting legal requirements to observe federal character by reflecting ethnic diversity in their memberships have been a central priority of political parties in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic (Kendhammer 2010). This is undoubtedly part of why launching membership drives and projecting the image of having an active membership is a perennial concern for Nigerian Political parties. These factors also best shed light on the chapter’s opening epigraph by PDP party leader and self declared “Mayor” of Ado Ekiti Deji Ogunsakin, who when asked why loyalists matter observed that: “as a leader in politics, the last thing you want to be is lonely.” Their roles and political influence indicate that party loyalists are vital even indispensable actors in Nigerian party politics. By revealing the centrality of party loyalists in Nigerian party organisation, these roles and their important political ramifications also illuminate a key limitation of the construals of Nigeria party politics that portray godfathers and party leaders as self-sufficient almost even omnipotent, actors on Nigeria’s political stage. In counterpoint, their organisational existence has indicated that if godfather financiers and political candidates matter in Nigeria’s political parties, then — insofar as these figures do not wish to be politically “lonely” —so too does the party organisation and, at its centre, party members.

The influence of party loyalists explored in the preceding paragraphs offer two challenges to the dominant paradigm of viewing ordinary citizens as hapless victims or pliant tools in violent competition between godfathers (Albin-Lackey & Rawlence 2007; Animasawun 2013), or as clients who sell their loyalties to the highest bidder (Omobowale & Olutayo 2010). Toyin's (2016, int.) earlier repudiation of the notion that money is all one might need in order to succeed in local politics questions the overwhelmingly materialist supposition implicit in frameworks which treat political loyalty as a market commodity. More fundamentally, however, the above testimonies also question the portrayal— implicit in a view that privileges co-optation— of political subjects as passive clients drawn into stable relationships of patronage. Omobowale and Olutayo (2010: 467) hint at this complexity in a field interview with a 'political patron' cited in their work in which the patron complains that followers frequently: “do what I do not want... You cannot predict human beings . . . it is part of politics. A friend of today can be an enemy tomorrow.” Yet, in light of these interesting observations, Omobowale and Olutayo (ibid) still insist upon the conclusion that: “in spite of the seemingly unstable nature of the exchange relations as described by the political patron, equilibrium is maintained.” Here is where Toyin's (2016, int.) vivid portrayal of “standing on [someone else's] wealth” becomes relevant; in contrast to the above view, these sharp displays of agency and, at time, even disloyalty to political leaders and godfathers underscore that there is more at play here than is neatly captured in a patrimonial framework in which “equilibrium is maintained”.

It may be illuminating to briefly consider a perspective from Mbembe (1992) who, in analysing power-relations in the post-colonial context contends that:

the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterized as illicit cohabitation... It is precisely this logic—the necessary familiarity and domesticity in the relationship— that explains why there has not been (as might otherwise have been expected from those so dominated) the resistance or the accommodation, the disengagement or the 'refusal to be captured'...

The relevance of this perspective here is its emphasis on the mutuality of the entanglement between rulers and the ruled; foregrounding an active and engaged partnership in a politics of cohabitation rather than the passive client-ship entailed in the patrimonial framework. Nevertheless, Mbembe's notion of cohabitation is lacking in certain respects. Cohabitation implies a relationship existing on much more equal footing than the observations and testimonies referenced above about the interactions between loyalists and party leaders seem to sustain. Moreover, the term still seems to entail a relationship that is stable and sustained —perhaps a reflection of the authoritarian political contexts of Cameroon from which his work draws its empirical material—rather than the mercurial loyalties which characterize relationships in Nigerian political parties wherein, in the words of Ọmọbọwale and Olutayo's (ibid) informant "a friend of today can be an enemy tomorrow."

As scholars like Pratten (2013) and Von Hellerman (2010) likewise contend, these contexts feature much more precariousness and vulnerability for both followers and leaders—despite the material and social advantages of the latter position— fostering specific forms of political subjectivity as a result. The concept of *coalition* from political science perhaps reflects the contingency of these relationships without necessarily presupposing that the parties to such agreements need be on equal footing.

Fifthly and finally, party activism does also provide the much-emphasized direct material rewards to individual activists. Some of these rewards are small: A plate of *Jollof* rice at rallies and LGA meetings, a party or candidate's promotional tee-shirt or face-cap, or transportation money after a Ward meeting. Occasionally, some rewards are more substantial: Money for burials, school fees, or other large expenses. "They paid 250 thousand [£530] for my children in school just because I always attend meeting[s]," said Ado Ekiti PDP loyalist, Bose Aladelokin (2016, int.), interestingly adding that, "the person [who paid the bill] said I should not mention his name. But I'm eternally grateful." Active loyalists might secure small contracts — or what is locally referred to as *empowerment* — to provide catering at a party gathering or supply campaign t-shirts, posters, bracelets, printed manifestos, and other materials — all at a profit. A small proportion of members are also *empowered* through jobs on campaign teams or positions in local government or civil service. For the select few, party activism may also provide individuals with the opportunity to become political leaders, be this to the local party hierarchy as an *ExCo*, as described in the Chairman's narrative above, or even to elected office. As observed by the LGA chairman of Ado Ekiti, Deji Ogunsakin (2016, int.): "If I had not started [participating] from the Ward, nobody would have known my name, and I would not be where I am today."

The vignettes and testimonies presented above suggest a number of important lessons. Political gatherings, even in the lulls of the electoral cycle, are critical for local party leaders and members to pursue their political goals. Attending and participating at political gatherings can be thought of as the central feature of a party loyalist's identity in Nigeria. These snapshots into local party activism also shed light on the multiplicity of rewards. "Patronage," then, is a descriptively and analytically insufficient category.

The foregoing discussion also hints at a number of important factors that condition the allocation of rewards. These factors are more closely examined in the ensuing section.

The Distribution of Party Rewards

The supply of local party rewards is conditioned by scarcity and uneven distribution. The former is important to underscore given the backdrop of Nigeria's petro-state, wherein the abundance of natural resources and their influence on politics have more traditionally been highlighted (Apter 1999). The notable absence of this material is accentuated during constituency building periods. Managing sparse resources becomes critical for parties attempting to shore up their base before elections. This resource management, then, results in the uneven distribution of rewards.

A couple of factors stood out as important determinants of reward distribution in the course of my research. As both activists and party leaders agreed, the most basic and necessary condition for accessing party rewards is one's attendance at local party gatherings. Ado Ekiti APC Loyalist Toyin Adepeju (2016, int.) summarized this point succinctly, observing that, "if you are not there [in attendance at political gatherings] regularly, surely you cannot vote [on party decisions] or express your own voice, you won't know what is going on, and when there is something being shared you will also not benefit." Showing up leads to all the more widely accessible rewards: Political entertainment, political education, petty goods, social capital, and political influence. Regular attendance alone opens up the important, if basic, rewards of party activism. That attendance alone can provide access to the basic rewards is noteworthy in a political context where "having someone there" (Owen 2013) in the form of a patron

in the corridors of power who can “speak for you” has long been recognized as the primary condition for access to political goods (Joseph 1983).

Yet even this condition creates structural impediments for political participation. Transportation (both the availability and cost) and accessibility (especially for the elderly and disabled) limit who can attend. That meetings are conducted in the regional *lingua franca* — of Yoruba in the case of Ado Ekiti and Hausa in Zaria City—also sets linguistic conditions for participation. This condition practically excludes those who do not use those languages, particularly non-indigenes.¹⁶

To access scarcer rewards, loyalist frequently emphasized a combination of factors. These factors include both the “quantity” of gatherings a local activist attended, comprising both the regularity of attendance and the length of time a loyalist had belonged to a given Ward, as well as the “quality” of participation. A loyalist must also have a “mentor”, “leader”, or “godfather” in the state or local party who could “give you advice and speak for you” (Olumide, 2016 int.). The key aspects of the Ward 13 Chairman’s narrative from above are once again relevant. His age, education, friendship with a former deputy governor, and eight years of participation in the Ward helped him bargain for his position. This state of affairs underscores the importance of these factors for accessing scarce party rewards. These factors, along with gender and wealth, were also affirmed by Zaria City interviewees. Take for example

¹⁶ Generally perceived as “foreigners” outside of their ‘states of origin’ (Fourchard 2015), non-indigenes are already less likely to participate in party politics.

PDP loyalist, Umar Ishak Dikko (2017, int.), who, when asked how to gain positions in the local party, noted that:

Success in politics requires two things: Money and influence. If you have one or the other, it might still be possible, but both is the best. I helped to mobilize voters in my community here. Yes, I was mobilizing by convincing people. And I also using little things like gifts or money to persuade. I also own a football club, I'm a patron of many youth organisations, Zaria City Youth Council and others. Money is important, to tell you the truth. But if you can inspire people and mobilize people it is still possible. There are some [party leaders] that are not rich... But they are in the minority. Women, they are very few. As far as [party leaders], that is usually a men's affair in this area. You know, people say if a woman is too involved with politics she will have to be with men, particularly a married woman, and people here don't think that's proper. It might be a matter of culture or religion, but that's the way it is here. And, for example, since many of our political meetings are at night — you know, in terms of the propriety people will see it as bad.

An interview with Hajjiya Jummai, a Zaria City APC Women's Leader, echoed many of the same issues, particularly those of gender, education, and wealth. Asked how she gained access to her position of leadership, she responded in the following way:

It is hard to participate in politics as a woman. Especially if you don't have money. As me, I like politics, but I did not go to school. I did not finish my secondary school. If you want to get into

politics but you don't go school, you are just disturbing yourself, though I like politics, but in Nigeria now, if you want to go into politics you have to go to school. Go to school, have your everything, then get money. So, it will not be difficult for you. [Even though] I don't have money, because I am a tailor, I have a shop, now I have like 18 trainees in the shop, and they are working there... So, I go to my shop, sew fine cloth[es], say to some of my members, "Chairman said I should give you." *Gaskiya* [sincerely], Chairman did not send me oh! I say you don't have cloth, leave it to me. I will sew it for you free. But I tell them, "It is that chairman that has asked me to give you." But just by doing that, I will gain their mind [support]. That is how we do it.

It may also be instructive to once again quote Toyin Adepaju (2016, int.). The Ado Ekiti APC loyalist's response to my question — about whether or not regular and longstanding attendance is how one might access local party leadership positions — provides a comprehensive and nuanced summary of the factors that determine reward distribution. As she observed:

You may [have attended] Ward meetings for 20 years, even 100 years and still remain an ordinary member... But look at it very well. You may join politics and within three months you've become one of the leaders. But you can also join politics and for 100 years your name will not be written on the list of leaders. It is either of the two. But it depends on the way you present yourself. It depends on your contribution to the success of that Ward. Let's say you, maybe you want to join Ward 4 now. The first day you are coming, you come around with 10 bags of rice, two bags of salt, one carton of soap. You drop it at the first meeting. In the next three months, you pick some

Ankara at the market, you give it to the women. After that, maybe six months after, you make your way to Fayose market, you pick some *small small* things, *three three* thousand, you take ten and take it to Ward 4, give it to the elderly men; my brother, calculate the time, its not up to a year, but if they want to write the list of leaders you are going to be there. Because you are contributing to the success of that Ward. It is your contribution that will take you to the ladder of leader.

When I followed up with a question about whether people with neither money, age, nor the “right” gender could gain party positions, she responded in the following way:

No — you might also have brilliance. If they are doing any meeting now, and you contribute brilliantly in any meeting, the following meeting you contribute again; the next one, and in the fourth meeting; if your ideas are genuine, you have good innovations, my brother, before you know it, if they want to select any committee they will say “go and pick that boy...” that is all... Skill matters. Your skill — it really matters most. Me for instance, I am young. I am a woman. But am a delegate from my ward to the local government and from the local government I’m a delegate to the state level. If you look at the number of years I’m not qualified to be there. If you follow the normal procedure, I shouldn’t be here... If the leaders see you, you are brilliant, they might say let me mentor you. I mean, you will hear people say “ah, a young woman like you said this thing? That is very good. Let us help you.” They will get to know you. That is how it happened in my case... So, a wealthy man needs a skillful man. Both can work *pari passu* and

achieve their aim at the same time. If you need my knowledge, I need your money. I will give you the idea, you give me the money. It's a simple matter. As for women, we used to have it tough in this party... We have it tough. Before, if they need ten people in Abuja, you can assume that ten men will come and fill those positions... But now, thank God for *Erelu*.¹⁷ Since then, if you look at ten positions, you will see that four men, three women, and two youths are there. But before, where? The ten cannot even circulate. It is also difficult for youths. You see some youths after joining politics they will just turn themselves to thugs. You cannot imagine, a boy, you were not even a cultist before joining politics, you were not in any group before. But because they join politics, you just see them carry guns; they don't even know how to do it oh. But they carry guns, carry cutlass, [saying] "I will break your head!" When you are carrying cutlass, carry[in] guns, broken bottles: they will never appoint you to any post. This is whether you like it nor not. They will just shortlist your name today, tomorrow they will remove it. They will say "we have some other places to make use of you..." When they are ready to do elections, they will invite you. When they want to go for rally; when there is a little crisis between PDP and APC they will invite you. "I will give you 50 thousand naira, just go there and shoot"... And some people believe in that. Which is really given them problem now... They don't have their own mind. These youths just copy others. I want to be like so, so, and so. I was "Lanre" before — but they will say— "please

¹⁷ *Erelu*, a traditional Yoruba title for a noble-woman, refers here to Bisi Fayemi, who, as former First Lady of Ekiti State, was credited for encouraging a quota system in government and political parties in order to improve the representation of women.

don't call me Lanre, I am Larry now." Or Obe will say no, now I'm Obi. So, they change their name. They don't know their correct language. Some are called "Battery." Some are called "Dog."
[Laughter].

A few themes in Toyin's response, echoed among other loyalists, should be unpacked. Reward distribution breaks down along the following factors: Age, skill, education, popularity, gender, resources, and an influential "mentor's" support. These factors, particularly gender and age, interact in a dynamic manner. Sometimes these factors operate symbiotically, but in other times these factors reinforce existing barriers. Particularly instructive in this regard is Toyin's own story. Her eventual "mentor" noticed her because her "brilliance," youth, and gender pulled in her favor. Her story contrasts with her example of the young men who, lacking brilliance and "their own mind," ultimately "turn themselves to thugs" and are, thus, never "appointed to any post." Nahomi Ichino (2006) conflates this difference between 'thugs' and regular party loyalists in her essay. This is a very important distinction given the different roles these actors fulfil, not to mention the moral and practical weight the distinction holds for party members and leaders themselves. Most loyalists affirmed that "influence," "popularity," and "skill" can sometimes trump money as a means to access party rewards. Yet such influence might need to be purchased through empowering other members. Since women and youth are least likely to have such resources, their social location can work as a mutually reinforcing impediment. Similarly, in this context, "brilliance" can often mean having either certain skills, command over language, and/or confidence gained through formal education. There are some exceptions. Toyin and Hajjiya Jummai both manifestly demonstrated these traits despite not having completed secondary school. One's formal education might also function as a

bargaining tool, as it did in the Ward 13 Chairman narrative. Formal education can, therefore, restrict access to party rewards since most party loyalists are unlikely to have attained education above the secondary school level [Table 2].

Zoning, an additional factor referenced in the Chairman's narrative, deserves further comment. This informal political practice restricts eligibility to candidates from a specific sub-division (or "zone") of a given constituency. This practice applies to most elective positions, both within and outside of the party, and rotates from zone to zone. As in the Chairman's case, zoning can work in an activist's favour by limiting the competition. However, the patchy application of this practice and the need to wait one's turn if the position has been "zoned" elsewhere in the constituency functionally excludes the youth, given that either outcome may mean several four-year terms of waiting. Taken together (and bracketing exceptions), these factors result in a system of uneven distribution in which the young and women are less likely to enjoy the most coveted rewards. In addition to Ichino and Nathan's (Ichino & Nathan) suggestion that social norms may be the central impediment to women's participation in party organs in Ghana, my research suggests that structural factors also work against women and the young. Ultimately, despite the heterogeneity of political rewards that can inspire the active participation of loyalists, the factors determining reward distribution practically exclude many from the scarcest party goods — particularly that of holding leadership positions. This distribution structure undermines the representational ideal of party politics.

Conclusions

Nigeria's local political party branches, at the beginning of each new electoral cycle, are faced with a set of important tasks. They must, at minimum, select the new leadership at all levels of the party, attract and retain active members, and make their presence felt in the community — all factors that bolster the competitiveness of a party's platform in election season. This level of activism, even in the lulls of the electoral cycle, suggests that a prevailing perspective, which holds that African parties carry out 'very little party activity between elections' (Basedau, et al. 2007: 25), are misguided. What I have sought to show is that, much like studies of voting and elections, an understanding of why party activists participate in this down-tempo phase of the election cycle can shed light on the political practices of ordinary people and the way in which they pursue collective goals through political parties.

This chapter advanced three interrelated arguments to explain the motivations that retain active loyalists. Firstly, considering the "supply side" of political goods that parties may offer to activists, I point to a plurality of party rewards that inspire and retain party loyalists in the lulls of the electoral off season. The commonly used categories of patronage and clientelism fail to adequately account for these wide-ranging rewards — from the formal to the informal, material to experiential. Secondly, I argued that resources scarcity leads to reward management. Coveted rewards, such as leadership positions and substantial material benefits, are accessible to but a few activists. Practically, parties distribute these scarce resources in an uneven manner. Finally, I argued that the quality and length of a loyalist's participation in their local branch roughly determines the goods an individual loyalist can access. However, I also noted

how reward distribution depends on social factors that structurally advantage older, able, wealthier, and better educated male loyalists. This structure weakens the representational function of party democracy by structurally disadvantaging others. This is a weakness not of African democracy, but of liberal democracy more generally. Despite variations in the cultural context and political traditions, these factors held constant in both Ado Ekiti and Zaria City. This consistency underscores the influence of a shared national political culture of constituency building amongst Nigeria's two main political parties.

These case studies also demonstrate the utility of empirical party research that considers the routines of party activity beyond the episodic moments of the electoral cycle. Ultimately, in both parties and locations, the allocation of party rewards in the constituency building phase reflects enduring ties and establishes new coalitions between the young and the old, men and women, ordinary members and party leaders, and various factions. That is, reward distribution in the constituency building phase connects people who enter party activism for substantially different ends. In this way, the constituency building phase forges the loyalties which are wielded to far-reaching effect by both party loyalists and leaders in the ensuing primary and election periods.

5.

On Party Primaries

If you are not a Ward Chairman, you are not a delegate, you can't vote, then who are you? You are not the real party people. You will see them oh, looking local — but those are the people who decide. Those are the real field-commanders here.

-Tunde “Ghaddafi” Williams, Ado Ekiti, 2016

Introduction

The leading political parties of Nigeria's Fourth Republic developed procedures for mediating disagreements among centrist, right-wing populist party members and leaders. These procedures have proven crucial for perpetuating and expanding the APC and PDP nationally. The seasonal observance of party primaries is the most important party procedure. In both parties, primaries consist in multi-stage contests. They begin in the constituency building phase of the election cycle when local party executives and party delegates are selected. These contests generate a politics of accommodation: Winners “carry along” the perspectives and the interests of a wide array of party leaders and members. However, as with primaries in many parts of the world, this accommodation process privileges “the interest of the party,” often understood as the perceived electoral “viability” of the most familiar candidates. This procedural character excludes those who seek to challenge the political status quo, an example of Michel's (1915)

iron law of oligarchy at play. Centre-right populist party primaries function to legitimize the party as an institution and reinforce the unequal distribution of power in the party and society.

Party primaries and other modes of candidate selection are a crucial institution in many democracies. Where they exist, particularly in parties of government, these procedures serve to constrain the options the wider electorate can choose from in general elections. The competitive fairness of a primary reveals the degree to which parties permit participation and reflect the aspirations of a wide array of citizens. As Seeborg et al. (2018: 960) argue, “when nomination procedures fail to meet acceptable democratic standards, the democratic chain of electoral politics is broken even before the onset of inter-party competition.” The question over acceptable standards is not a neutral question, contrary to much of the scholarship on the consolidation of new democracies. Rather, the standards by which we measure success in party primaries, as in democracy more widely, also reflect the fundamental starting points and dominant normative ends that undergird our research.

Academic convention of the past several decades considers political parties in Africa’s new democracies as notable for the absence of procedures and ideals theorized to be important elsewhere — particularly in Western Europe. This convention fails to stand up in light of inductive research and empirical data. Instead, I opt to assess parties based on how they operate in practice and on what ideas shape these practices. This approach better accounts for their character and explains why they inspire political participation. In this chapter, I outline the centre-right populist character of Nigerian party primaries.

This chapter takes four steps to develop this claim. I first define the politics of accommodation, a concept that helps me understand centre-right populist primaries. I draw on the 2014 and 2015

governorship primaries respectively held in Ekiti and Kaduna states as examples of this process. The chapter focuses on the contests which help determine the format of primaries and how these reflect a series of interests including but not limited to those of the leading candidate. The second part of the chapter discusses the ways in which this process works to empower those candidates closest to the political status quo. The third section considers how looking at the primaries as an arena of accommodation relates to the recently emergent flowering of research on party primaries in Africa's new democracies. Finally, the fourth section offers a synthesis and conclusion, highlighting the role of cultural identity, ideologically "neutral" economics, and populist organisation building which I refer to as centre-right populism.

The Politics of Accommodation in Party Primaries

The APC and PDP's 2014/2015 governorship primaries held in Ekiti and Kaduna featured a set of comparable patterns. It is notable that primaries were held at all given that scholars have depicted candidate selection, albeit exaggeratedly, as wholly dominated by the whims of godfathers (Hoffmann 2010; Animasawun 2013). Several empirical problems emerge from these primaries for conventional analyses of Nigerian politics. Primaries are expensive and laborious. To undertake them suggests there are some reasons that outweigh the expense. More concretely, both parties elected to allow party members to vote for their flag-bearers. This vote took place despite the constitutional provisions in both parties that allow for their flag-bearers to be chosen by "consensus," that is, by an agreement between the front-running candidates. The PDP and APC primaries in Kaduna and the PDP primary in Ekiti all involved

voting by pre-selected delegates. In contrast, the APC in Ekiti held a direct primary in which all card-carrying party members were eligible to vote. More strikingly, these primaries generate electoral paradoxes. Like many governorship primaries, the final vote tally in all four primary contests resulted in landslide victories. Mr. Fayose of Ekiti PDP garnered 462 delegates, while his next closest opponent gained 3; Mallam Yero of Kaduna PDP took 970 of the 972 delegates; Mallam El Rufai of Kaduna APC, in the closest race, had a 400 delegate lead over the runner-up; and, Dr. Kayode of the Ekiti APC ran uncontested. Seemingly inclusive candidate selection and fierce campaigning still resulted in near unanimous polls to select the candidates that would represent both parties in both locations. Explaining this paradox requires a better grasp of the candidate selection process in local party primaries.

Contests growing out of the constituency building phase shape party primaries. During this phase, the general membership of parties are constituted, a cadre of activists emerge, and the party *ExCos* — who would later become delegates in primaries — are elected. Ideological factions emerge in this phase as well — be they the “Awoists” and “recovering socialists” like APC loyalists, Yomi Oluide and Martin Luther of Africa; “progressives” like Aminu of the Kaduna APC; those motivated by the “plight of the common man,” such as PDP loyalists Azeez Olaseni in Ekiti and Danladi Jama’a in Kaduna; or those who view their participation as a means to “climb the ladder,” such as Toyin Adepeju of the Ekiti State APC. As previously discussed, *ExCos* and delegates emerge from the interplay between their general popularity, their skills, their interests, and their connection to senior party leadership. The seeds of primary victories — either through getting favourable members elected as delegates or through winning over influential delegates — are sown at this stage. While the influence of party leaders, prospective candidates, and godfathers was one factor for success, this influence is not impervious to the input of the various camps.

The local elections of *ExCos* and delegates did not exclude community leaders, “brilliant” contributors in local party meetings, or a savvy operator who, in the right moment, “has the idea to disrupt some things” (Adepeju 2016 int.). Informal bargains, such as visits organized by party members to appeal to a local leader on behalf of popular candidates, led to endorsements and ballots to elect delegates. The process of selecting *ExCos* and delegates in the constituency building phase was, therefore, the first stage of contestation, negotiation, and accommodation among various centres of influence to shape the primaries.

The next stage of contestation began — and the politics of accommodation were even more evident — when candidates began to make their interest in the party nomination explicit. Interestingly, the variety of ways in which these prospective candidates pursued their outreach to party organs signaled each constituency’s imprimatur for the candidate. As activists recollected in interviews in Ekiti and Kaduna, most candidates held meetings with general members and activists in hundreds of Wards across the local governments in each state. In fact, it was common for a candidate’s campaign material to feature the number of Wards they visited and meetings they held. These numbers bolstered their grassroots credentials and suggested that they were “in touch” with the local party structure. In these meetings, some candidates emphasized “populist” or charismatic performances, including choice insults hurled at the opposition party, playful recitations of local proverbs, and performances of party chants and dances.

Other candidates emphasized the more “programmatic” dimensions of their campaigns. They discussed their policy platform and discussed how these policies would meet the needs of the various social groups represented within the party — including women, youth, the elderly, and non-indigenes. It was also not uncommon for some candidates to give gifts including manila envelopes of cash to the

various caucuses within the party — particularly the women, the youth, and the elders. Additionally, along with Ward-level rallies, candidates in both locations also met separately with various interest groups within their respective parties, notably the “stakeholders forum” of elders, former political officeholders, and party leaders in order to secure their endorsements. In practice, however, most candidates opted for a combination of these approaches, mixing personalistic, programmatic, and clientelistic appeals to the party faithful and the leadership. Thus, it is difficult to neatly associate individual candidates with discreet styles of appeal derived from Weberian ideal types of authority, as has been a recent vogue in the comparative politics scholarship (Kitschelt 2000, Resnick 2013).

Crucially, these public hustings were often accompanied by private meetings, first amongst and then across various constituencies within each party. This process made space for debate and deliberation over each candidate’s viability. For instance, in a conversation about the APC primaries in his state, Kaduna APC loyalist Aminu KC shared his recollections of one such discussion:

After El-Rufai came and did his campaign in Zaria City, some of the progressive youths in Zaria City Wards, many of my friends, we met separately to discuss it. That is how we used to do. Some of them said El Rufai is perfect — that, as somebody who is well known, somebody who modernized FCT, he had the right credentials and experience in terms of bringing development to Kaduna State. Me, I said I don’t like El Rufai, that he is arrogant, and that he was demolishing many houses and driving poor people out of FCT — that is what he means by [being] progressive. But our people, they really liked El Rufai because he is intelligent, and he spoke very well to us. I think I was the only one who object[ed]. They also said he had the resources to win, and I also

agreed to that point. You know, democracy is about majority, so they won and I lost and the progressives in Zaria City said they [would] support him. So we went back to our Wards and told our members that Zaria City progressives will support El Rufai.

The decision to support one candidate was made collectively, even against Aminu's own wishes, contrasting with a conventional "one person one vote" understanding of democratic procedure, related to both communal and democratic practices which Jean and John Comaroff (1997) have witnessed in Botswana. Note also the reasons why El Rufai was preferred by the group: His perceived "intelligence," his experience as minister, and his role in "modernizing" the FCT. Aminu's ultimately unsuccessful arguments against El Rufai combined an assessment of his personal attributes (El Rufai's perceived "arrogance") with an unfavourable evaluation of El Rufai's brand of progressivism and modernization, which, for Aminu, boiled down to the demolition of properties owned by the poor. This forum for discussion, as well as its substantive content, evoke Lonsdale's (1994: 140) influential argument that ethnicity provides a "cockpit of debate" where co-ethnics can articulate "disagreements over how best ethnic virtue can be expressed in governance." This discussion amongst the progressive youth within the Zaria City APC, an explicitly partisan gathering, also exceeds Lonsdale's categories insofar as it illustrates that public debates about the link between virtue and governance can and do take place outside of explicitly ethnic fora. It is also worth highlighting from the narrative that El Rufai's perceived viability in the primaries factored into their support for his candidacy. Finally, the progressives' decision to tell other Ward members about their choice shows how these micro-deliberations might impact the wider party organisation.

An interview conducted in Ekiti illustrates that these discussions occur elsewhere. Crucially, it more clearly reveals the ways in which such discussions might influence primary contests. PDP Ward 13 Chairman, Azeez Oluseni, explains:

When Fayose came out to contest many of the older ones in the party had to reason together to see if we can support him. Of course, you know how he is, very controversial... So there was a lot of disagreement. But among the people who came out that time, he was the most popular as a former governor. I advocated for him because he had the best chance of winning. Everybody know[s] him. He is also somebody who has a good mind and can connect with ordinary people... Eventually we agreed to give him our support as elders and also work for him to convince members so that he can control the party structures.

Like in Aminu's recollection, the Chairman's testimony provides a window into a political culture of collective decision-making. A candidate's perceived viability, personality, and background all factor into this collective decision. The Chairman's testimony captures the impact of these deliberations on the primary race. His statement about having worked for Fayose to "convince other members" and secure "control of the party structure" suggests that these processes of accommodation, which took place in smaller groups were then scaled up to include the wider membership, enabled candidates to seize the "party structure".

Yet this structure ought not be romanticized. Political disagreements are not always amicably resolved as the reporting on intra-party violence suggests. That said, contestation can take alternate

forms. One of my interviews with Ekiti APC loyalist Olumide began just a few minutes after he and the other Ward-level Youth Leaders from across Ado Ekiti met with a prospective candidate: A nurse from the U.K. who recently returned to her home state to express her interest in being the party's flag bearer in the next election. Given the favourable context, I posed a number of questions about primaries which elicited the following response:

It's like a case — it happened in our Ward. There is one leader that we had in our Ward and his family member was contesting. And most of us felt that this guy was not good enough. The guy was a primary six certificate holder, a school leaver... the guy was not good enough for us, but our leader just said this is the person we should go for. But he [our leader] is someone that you can't just sit down and talk to and make him see reason why we should not go for this particular guy. And we came together and said that, "we can't just tell Mr. A that we are not voting for his candidate oh. It is gonna have consequence oh. But on that particular day, you know the person that you are voting for." And we went into the primary and, at the end of the day, the other guy emerged. But at the end of the day, he was very very mad at every one of us. And he said, oh we are not going to have peace in this Ward and all of that... But after the tension had calmed down, we went back to him and said "we are very sorry sir. But we couldn't just tell you that we are not voting for your candidate" (laughter). So, we reconciled with him.

The vignette illustrates how nominees could be indirectly vetoed in factional discussions. Indeed, while this narrative presents a confrontation that was ultimately resolved amicably, not all intra-party disagreements work out this way. (I will return to the topic of partisan violence in Chapter 7.)

This section has highlighted two tiers of contestations that shape party primaries. Selecting delegates in the constituency building phase brings about a first set of contests amongst the various constituent groups within parties. Primary campaigns trigger a second set of deliberations within and across party caucuses that — as in the cases of Fayose and the Ekiti PDP and of El Rufai and the Kaduna APC — ultimately leads to some form of accommodation. A third set of deliberations follows after these contests, namely, what format the party primaries will take. This third contest most substantively shapes a primary's final outcome.

Securing support in the first two tiers of contestation enables candidates to shape the party primary's format. Indeed, the four leading candidates in the Ekiti and Kaduna primaries were able to determine the format of their primaries due, in large part, to the support they secured in the two previous tiers of contestation. Consider the case of Fayose. Fayose's opponents insisted that the candidates vote for a candidate from within the existing pool of candidates. This move would have diluted his vote and kept him from winning the nomination. Instead, through negotiations with local and national party leaders, he secured a delegate system — a system which virtually guaranteed his nomination given his high level of good-will with party activists. Similarly, in Kaduna, El Rufai's opponents proposed selecting a candidate from within the candidate pool. This process would eschew excessive party divisions, argued these proponents. Consider the statements from Alhaji Salihu Lukman, a leading opponent of El Rufai, who said in a 2014 interview:

I don't see politics as a do or die affair, am offering myself to serve the people of the state and I won't be opposed to any form of consensus if the party decided that will be the best for the party. I however know that the consensus, should there be any, will favour me because I have all it takes to fly the party's flag and defeat the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Let me also state categorically that should it end up at primaries, whatever becomes the outcome of the primaries, I will abide by it and still remain an APC member and work for its success in the election.

Once again, as in Ekiti, the candidate with the greatest access to the party structure succeeded in structuring the nomination process in their favour. This effect was pronounced with Dr. Fayemi, the Ekiti APC candidate, for two reasons. First, he was the incumbent governor running for his party's nomination and, as Olumide (2016. int.) succinctly put it, "nobody is going to [beat] a seating governor in a primary race. The party structure is theirs." The tendency of party members to seek the most viable candidate reinforces this dynamic. This is a factor which also applied in the case of Governor Yari, the PDP candidate in Kaduna. The second reason for Fayemi's exceptional control over the APC party structure in Ekiti requires more context. Fayemi helped negotiate the merger of regional opposition parties (including the now defunct Action Congress of Nigeria party to which he formerly belonged) that gave birth to the APC. On the state level, this involvement meant that Fayemi led the reformulation of the local party organisation and a new membership drive. Naturally, he ran unopposed and an open primary election did not pose a threat to his nomination. Despite the idiosyncrasies, Fayemi's race aligned with the larger pattern in Nigerian state party primaries: A negotiated control over the local party

structures can allow a candidate to successfully shape a favourable nomination format and, thereby, increase the chances of a land-slide victory.

Though seemingly intuitive, this structural feature contradicts a cardinal assumption often made in media reports and policy activism around reforming party primaries. It is frequently asserted that delegates are “bought” the night before primary contests, a prototypical “a case of he who pays the piper dictates the tune.” The forgoing discussion suggests that this assumption hides a much more complicated, institutional process of negotiation and accommodation rooted in the process of delegate selection.

Describing this process as a politics of accommodation is appropriate for two reasons. Candidates and activists must allow for a degree of malleability for such a diverse body to broadly support a single nominee. Relatedly, activists frequently referenced the need to “maintain the unity of the party” (Olumide, int. 2016) or settle on a decision that eschews disagreements which might “lead to fighting” (Dikko, int. 2017). These ideas suggest an explicit recognition of the need for a pragmatic outlook amongst activists, candidates, and party leaders with radically different orientations. This wariness highlights the value of unanimity in leadership and underscores the recognized fragility of these coalitions. That both party constitutions permit a variety of modes for conducting party primaries shows the value placed on accommodating a wide-variety of political preferences and scenarios. The politics of accommodation fundamentally shapes the structure of primaries and perpetuates the recycling of a similar cast of characters, maintaining the ideological status-quo.

Viability Politics

Jean and John Comaroff (1997) make a provocative argument in a relatively under-acknowledged essay on “vernacular” democratic practice in Botswana. Writing about public forums known as *kgotla*, where the performance of leaders — from local chiefs to national electoral candidates — are discussed and evaluated, they argue that African forms of public association, even in one-party-dominant contexts, might provide a more meaningful exercise of popular democracy than does the procedural “Western-model of democracy.” The latter, they argue, has been reduced to the “mere exercise of choice” in occasionally held elections with the consequence of “erasing all real government accountability between elections... thereby alienating the citizenry at large from the everyday functioning of the state” (128). In contrast, they find a much more robust exercise of democracy in African public spheres like the *kgotla*. They write: “...underlying [such] public spheres is a civic culture that specifies the means of producing a certain kind of participatory politics, a politics grounded in an articulate, populist ideology of good government” (139).

The foregoing examples of the APC and PDP party primaries reflect the Comaroff’s characterization of Botswanan public spheres but also differ from it in a number of important respects. On the one hand, the *kgotla* system they describe does appear to embody important democratic ideals — namely, free association and public deliberation — as do Nigeria’s intra-party caucuses for evaluating

candidates in party primaries.¹⁸ However, it is important to note a key limitation evident in the cases from Nigeria and even in the *kgotla* system (a limitation untouched by the Comaroffs). These fora often serve to sustain and reproduce the political status quo by recycling a small cast of culturally-nationalist, wealthy, well-known, and older men. Call these political phenomenon viability politics. This viability politics bars a vast majority of citizens from the possibility of political leadership and undercuts the participatory and representative ideals of democratic politics. An undercurrent within party primaries in the PDP and APC, the viability politics helps reproduce the political status quo.

The interviews in the foregoing section feature many of the factors which contribute to the perceived viability of contestants in party primaries. My interviewees often stressed a candidate's relative recognition and fame as the foremost indication of one's viability. The import of name recognition is manifest in justifications and explanations such as "everybody knows him," as the Chairman described Fayose, or "he is well known," in Aminu's reference to El Rufai. This factor was even more apparent for the two other candidates, Governors Fayemi and Yero, a widely acknowledged benefit of incumbency. Furthermore, the perception that a candidate's popularity can have wider electoral impact also factors into this perceived viability. Consider cases in which party members expect candidates to "connect with ordinary people," as the Ward 13 Chairman expressed of Fayose. As the blurry line between celebrity

¹⁸ This observation holds even if one takes issue with the Comaroff's homogenous construal of "Western models of democracy" and their binary opposition between this and "indigenous" African forms of democracy.

status and political office in many of the world's leading democracies suggest, popular recognition is an important source of electoral success.

Relevant experience also bolsters a candidate's viability as was the case for the two incumbents, for Fayose, who had been a previous governor, and El Rufai, who had held an analogous position as FCT minister. Having "been there before" can contribute to popularity and recognition. Previous office holders often have a financial advantage. In a petro-state, public officeholders can easily divert public resources to initial campaign funds. Favours and networks acquired in office can increase the likelihood of access to what is locally termed "O.P.M" — that is, other people's money (Bafem int. 2016). A previous role in government can also mean that a candidate can more easily interface with the party hierarchy in the state and at the national level, a factor which is particularly important for negotiating a favourable nomination process.

Viability is also tied to wealth. Failing to meet the expenses of primary campaigns, for example, can preclude one's chances for nomination. As Umar Ishak Dikko (2017, int.) remarked in a conversation about primary campaigns:

You need money for media. You need money for refreshments — you know, you have to provide them during meetings. You also need money to maybe help some of the people with transportation. If you don't have money, how do you even start?

Wealth plays a slightly less direct role in viability politics as well. A significant war chest serves to assure party members that, if victorious in the primaries, a candidate can mount a potentially successful race

against the other party's invariably wealthy opponent in the general elections. Some of Olumide's reflections illumine this latter claim. During the same interview that took place immediately after a campaign meeting with an aspiring front-runner for governor, he offered the following remarks:

Someone came. She is a woman and I think she has an ambition of maybe going for governor of the state, maybe come 2019. What she was trying to do is to relate to the structure of the party. So she came, and she spoke very well. After the meeting she also gave us 20 thousand Naira with two bags of rice...What she brought today— that is good. If she continues like that it will be good. It is also good that she came early, because maybe some of us might decide to pitch our tent with her and not sway down the line. But someone might come after her who has more financial muscles and if that is the case, that person will appear more realistic... I don't think [running for] Governor will work for her without more funds. And a woman governor will be difficult. We have not had a woman governor in this end before.

Note the connection between financial muscles and being "realistic." The returnee nurse's gifts measured not only of her generosity, but also of her financial muscle, which on its own was deemed to be "good." Yet, as his comment about the possible emergence of a financially stronger candidate suggests, a more affluent candidate tends to be viewed as more "realistic." It is not surprising, then, that all four party nominees in Kaduna and Ekiti were also the wealthiest contestants.

Olumide's comments bring up other important factors for viability as well. That the candidate's gender affected her viability illustrates the gendered exclusion in Nigerian political parties.¹⁹ His remark that there "never had a woman governor in this end" also signals how loyalists anticipate how voters might react to a candidate in a general election. Less evident in his remarks is the self-fulfilling nature of this gender-based exclusion. The fact that women are considered less viable in at the primary stage is precisely why a female governorship candidate has and is not likely to emerge. Though not mentioned in my interviews, other issues of identity also serve to condition a candidate's viability. In particular, viability politics works against the young and those belonging to ethno-religious minorities. Unsurprisingly, the winners of the Ekiti and Kaduna primaries were all men from majoritarian ethno-linguistic groups.

The *contents* of a candidate's message can also condition their viability. In this respect, variety and breadth appear to be more valued than consistency. "You need somebody who has something to offer to youth, to women, and to the elders also," noted Olumide. He added: "For our party that person has to be somebody that is a progressive, that believes in free education and all of that. That person also has to be relatable." In the context of broad-umbrella or ideological catch-all parties, candidates are expected to advance a mix of appeals. Indeed, this was the case among the winning candidates in the 2014/2015 Ekiti

¹⁹ In Ekiti, as in all other states in Nigeria, a female governor has yet to emerge in Nigeria's history as a democracy.

and Kaduna primaries. They offered gifts and promised patronage. They made appeals to workers, businesses, the international community, and local ethnonationalists. They appealed to religious leaders and to progressives alike. In some cases, this led to contradictory claims. For instance, recall El Rufai's race. Candidates in that race had to appeal to both those who value the sort of "modernization" that demolishes the properties of the poor and those who oppose it. A viable candidate needed a communication strategy that threaded these conflicting demands.²⁰ Though a plurality of preferences are articulated by aspirants and demanded by activists, this factor can also serve to reinforce the status quo. As was the case in Ekiti and Kaduna, the candidates who emphasize ideological purity, pursue a singular policy message, or style of appeal are less likely to reach across the various political and social divides within the parties.

Forging a majority coalition across these big tent parties entails that candidates possess all of these factors: Wealth, popularity, experience, gender and a pluralistic message. In these primaries, successful candidates could appease the powerful: The national party hierarchy, local political leaders, godfathers. They could also appeal to opposing camps from idealists to opportunists. The need to bridge these divides, despite active and broad-based deliberation, created a politics of accommodation and viability that nominates familiar figures and reinforces the centre-right populist ideological status quo.

²⁰ Clearly, this sharply contradicts Ichino and Nathan's (2012: 430) assertion, based on a study of Ghana's main parties, that, "local party members also have little concern over aspirants' policy preferences when voting in primary elections."

Party Primaries in African Democracies

Party primaries, as with many other aspects and functions of contemporary political parties in Africa, are an understudied area. The handful of scholars who have recently taken an interest in the subject all agree on this point (Ichino & Nathan 2012, 2013, 2016b; Mac Giollabhui 2018; Seeberg, et al. 2018). A 2018 special issue of *Democratization* sought to address this lacuna by bringing to together scholars working on candidate nomination and intra-party violence in Africa. These scholars set out some important empirical and theoretical roadmaps to orient future scholarship on African party primaries. In one of the contributions to this special issue, Mac Giollabhui (2018), provides an explanation for the dearth of scholarship on African party primaries, raising a series of compelling points and provocative questions in the process:

There is a fundamental reluctance to study party organisation in Africa, which can be traced to a stubborn tendency to dismiss African political parties as *sui generis*. If researchers do look inside individual cases, the emphasis is often on ethnicity rather than organisation. The prevailing narrative, then, raises a standard lament that African political parties, as a rule, are little more than “political cabals or clubs,” dominated by the charismatic personalities of their leaders. But if this orthodox view of African parties is accurate, how can we explain such intense and at times violent competition between rival candidates for selection as a party candidate? If the competition involves a stable cast of protagonists, unfolds on a party stage, and becomes in timing and conduct an almost ritualistic part of the election cycle, does it not follow that it is organized?

This observation clarifies the curious disjunction between the highly consequential and intensely dynamic party primaries in Africa's democracies and scholarly disinterest. Moreover, Mac Giollabhuaí points to another disjunction between perception and reality: Most scholarship assumes that parties are dominated by individual leaders, but in reality party primaries exist and are fiercely competitive affairs. His observations are also useful from the perspective of characterizing the literature on African party primaries that has emerged.

Two schools appear to mark this literature. The first school maintains this explicitly *sui generis* view of African party primaries and has tended to study the *effects* of primaries. The second school has tended to observe patterns in African party primaries which, though informed by particular contexts, speak more fundamentally to the nature of party primaries and multi-party democracy in general. Ichino and Nathan, who have conducted an interesting series of studies into party primaries in Ghana (2012; 2013; 2016) fall squarely and self-consciously into the first camp. These authors consistently take for granted the assumption that "in new democracies vote buying and patronage are more important than policy positions in determining the electoral success of candidates." Since they posit clientelism as constitutive of these new democracies, they unsurprisingly find that clientelism explains the dynamics and effects they observe. Consider this example: To explain why party leaders might initially allow party members to democratically elect candidates in primary races in competitive constituencies, Ichino and Nathan (2012: 790) discover that "party leaders democratize the nomination process selectively in response to demands for rents from their local party members, acting in anticipation of a costly reaction to denying them these rents." Primaries in competitive constituencies, they (2013) later find, hurt the electoral performance of ruling parties because ruling party aspirants invest more in patronage and,

having more to lose, they are more likely to trigger electorally damaging disputes. In contrast, party primaries help the electoral performance of opposition parties because, as they argue (Ichino & Nathan, 2013; 431), “although local party members of the opposition party receive more benefits than if there were no primary, the patronage relationships between aspirants and local party members that develop during the primary are weaker than in the ruling party.” Given these “weaker patronage relationships” within opposition parties — i.e., since opposition members are cheaper for aspirants to bribe — Ichino and Nathan (*ibid*) conclude that “the opposition party is more likely to benefit from aspirant spending in primary elections without suffering the negative consequences of severe intra-party conflicts.” Their most recent study (Ichino & Nathan 2016b: 5) more hopefully finds that, when parties expand the franchise in the primaries, this expansion reduces the effectiveness of vote-buying as a strategy because “when the primary electorate is sufficiently large... securing support through private benefits can become prohibitively expensive.” Across these studies, their transactional view of social relations within parties also lends itself to statistical analyses that in turn invariably affirm their initial starting points. To borrow Mustapha’s (2002: 8) rightfully sardonic critique of Englebert’s construal of the state in Congo: “Obviously, if it is Africa, it has to be predation and rent seeking!” Implicitly or explicitly, most of the contributions to the aforementioned special issue on violence in party primaries in Democratization seem to adopt this approach — with the notable exception of van de Walle’s response.

Shane Mac Giollabhuí has single-handedly developed the second school. Though clientelism features in Mac Giollabhuí’s work, it is treated as just one of a range of dynamics and strategies that leaders may pursue and to which party members may, under certain conditions, accede. Drawing on case studies of specific primary contests in southern Africa, Mac Giollabhuí is able to discuss an array of issues that

might go into determining the conduct and outcome of primaries, thereby advancing theories which, tied to specific institutional rather than social or cultural contexts, can be applicable across Africa and beyond. For instance, drawing on the examples of parliamentary primaries in Namibia and South Africa (Mac Giollabhuí 2013), he identifies an interesting dynamic. He finds that party cohesion is a product of inclusivity, the degree to which “the role of ordinary members and their delegates” is prioritized, rather than the extent of party centralization — which is often seen as a determining factor in Western parliamentary systems. He concludes that in dominant parties of government, which absorb a wide array of competing social groups, “inclusive candidate selection mechanisms can stabilize factional competition, while exclusive mechanisms, conversely, can presage elite rupture within the dominant party.” In a study (2017) of the surprising defeat of Thabo Mbeki, then a sitting president, as leader of the ANC, he finds that Mbeki’s centralization of policy-making in the party — as well as the marginalization of the left-wing base of the party — led influential factions of the party to turn against Mbeki. Centralization coupled with Jacob Zuma’s successful clientelistic strategy resulted in Mbeki’s defeat. Mac Giollabhuí situates clientelistic politics within a contingent context, rather than assuming that African politics must necessarily be clientelistic. His description of factional politics can help explain how party primaries are contested across the world, controlling for the institutional contexts.

In a response essay to the aforementioned special issue of *Democratization*, Nicolas van de Walle (2018) offers a provocative perspective that may also fit within the second school. In contrast to Mac Giollabhuí, van de Walle finds that, in most cases, rather than inclusivity, party centralization better correlates with the absence of intra-party violence. He even suggests that this framework could extend as far as explaining the nomination of Donald Trump in the 2016 US elections, arguing that: “...a less

fractured party that was less decentralized and tolerant of independent political entrepreneurship than the main American political parties would not have selected a candidate like Donald Trump” (1058). Van de Walle argues that political parties might work best in the *absence* of internal transparency and popular participation like other distinctly “non-majoritarian” institutions such as the judiciary or central banks. As he provocatively concludes, “whether parties make their decisions in smoky back rooms or in inclusive primaries will ultimately prove less important to building democracy.”

This chapter shares Mac Gioullabhuí and van de Walle’s approach, though it arrives at different conclusions. Like these authors, it does not begin with the assumption that African politics are fundamentally clientelistic in nature. Rather, it adopts a more inductive approach to assess the factors and dynamics that influence particular instances of party primaries such as those held in Ekiti and Kaduna states in 2014 and 2015. However, unlike the above authors, I have focused on influential governorship primaries in Nigeria, contributing subnational case studies to an as of yet nationally oriented literature. More fundamentally, the chapter’s contentions regarding the politics of accommodation and viability suggests, *contra* van de Walle, that inclusivity and decentralization do not necessarily lead to intra-party violence. Rather, like Mac Gioullabhuí’s observations in the South African context, it appears that inclusive candidate selection mechanisms in Nigeria, even if informal, can contribute to the strengthening of coalitions through a politics of accommodation. This process characterized the Ekiti and Kaduna primaries, and may shed light on Nigerian party primaries more generally.

Conclusions

While emphasizing the politics of accommodation and viability in Nigerian party primaries, it is important to once again acknowledge that this process does not always go without rancour and intrigue. Nigerian party primaries have produced numerous instances of violence and contested outcomes. But these episodes of sharp disagreement fail to explain — and, in fact, render even more puzzling — the endurance and even expansion of the nationwide organs and networks that characterize Nigeria's parties of government. Moreover, there have not been clear explanations for how governorship aspirants are often able to win party primaries with substantial land-slides, as in the Ekiti and Kaduna primaries. These puzzles animated the chapter's analysis.

To explain these factors, I turned to the 2014/2015 party primaries in Ekiti and Kaduna. In all four primaries a process of deliberation, consultation, and accommodation — rooted in the constituency building phase of the election cycle — resulted in the nomination of the most “realistic” candidates and strengthened the coalitions that constitute the local party organs. When the primary season arrived, this process of accommodation was also premised on party loyalists' assessments of the viability of aspirants. Viability is assessed based on factors such as wealth, popularity, and experience. Notably, these factors structurally excluded women, the young, and aspirants who might have upended the political status quo. Such assessments of viability contributed to loyalists “delivering” the party structure, or convincing party delegates to support particular candidates, allowing those candidates to successfully negotiate a favourable primary format within the options allowed by each party's constitution. Paradoxically, the possibility of violence resulting from the potential for sharp disagreements contributed to the willingness

of party activists and leaders to arrive at a consensus on which aspirants deserved to control the party structure. These factors made it more likely that, across both parties and locations, the final vote tally revealed landslide victories.

More broadly, these observations from Nigerian governorship primaries affirm wider theories that, under certain conditions, party primaries may reconcile factions within a party and select popular nominees with local appeal (MacGiollabhuí 2013). Simultaneously, the exclusionary nature of viability politics led to the selection of candidates that reproduce the socio-political status quo. Of course, while landslide primaries might be a particular feature of Nigeria's parties of government, the fact that factors such as popularity, wealth, and past political experience might influence the votes of party delegates is not. Indeed, the permeability between political office and celebrity status, the direct and indirect influence of wealth, and the exclusion of women, ethnic minorities, and the young characterize nomination practices within most parties of government worldwide. The dominance of *sui generis* assumptions about and characterizations of African political behaviour, which insist on premising social analyses on the figure of the Big Man and his retinue of clients, blinds us to the ways in which African political phenomena may shed light on the fundamental dynamics which limit the representational ideals of liberal democracy (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). It is these fundamental dynamics, evident in the process by which aspirants win the loyalties of party members in Nigeria's party primaries, that this chapter has sought to portray, keeping at its heart the centre right populist character of the APC and the PDP.

6.

On “stomach infrastructure” and Elections

...recent scholarship has tended to sophisticate and quantify evidence which is only imperfectly understood.

—E.P. Thompson, *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd*, 1971

Introduction

The previous chapter argues that, in the context of APC and PDP party primaries, centre-right populism through the politics of viability and accommodation shed more light on Nigerian primary contests than does prebendalism and Godfatherism. In making this argument, though, I am not denying that material exchange and ethnic identity play a role in Nigerian party politics. Rather, my claim is that a left/right ideological prism which can travel across contexts within and outside Nigeria better frames these deeply political practices and instincts than does an exoticist prism. This chapter explores how clientelism and ethnicity mobilise party members in Nigeria's elections. Analysing two governorship elections, in which clientelism and ethnicity took centre stage refocuses our analysis not simply on the numerical extent or on the descriptive features of ethnic and clientelistic practices, but on the content ethno-clientelism as a mobilising force in African democracy.

The increasingly competitive nature of elections in Africa's multi-party democracies (Lindberg 2009) has drawn scholarly attention to what motivates voting behaviour in African electorates. Earlier scholarship concluded that ethnic affiliation (Erdmann 2004; Posner 2005) or clientelism (Van de Walle 2003; Wantchekon 2003) mobilised voters. But recent scholarship has challenged these conclusions. These scholars argue that a complex set of factors interact to motivate African voters. A candidate's economic performance, developmental competences, and relative charisma (Resnick 2013) compete with both clientelism and ethnic affiliations (Bratton, et al. 2012; Lindberg 2013). Cumulatively, this scholarship has furthered the field by breaking with an earlier preoccupation with elite-level politics and taking the perspectives of ordinary voters seriously (Mustapha 2002). A shared limitation of these approaches has been their tendency to draw mutually exclusive analytical distinctions between voting decisions, based on either ethnicity, patronage, or economic policy (Cheeseman, et al. 2014), while neglecting the ways in which these considerations may overlap in practice. How these distinctions are drawn matters since it leads to very different conclusions regarding the normative content of political preferences held by African voters.²¹ Reflecting upon the role of electoral clientelism — or vote buying — in competitive electoral contests in Africa can enrich this debate.

To this end, I will examine the recollections of two sets of party activists who campaigned in two governorship elections in Nigeria. Cash and other electoral gifts — known as stomach infrastructure in

²¹ For example, whether or not we are to adjudge such preferences as having either a positive or a negative influence on democratic accountability

local parlance — were openly exchanged in both elections, seeming to point to clientelism, rather than programmatic policies, as the decisive force in increasingly competitive elections. However, party activists presented a much more complicated perspective on stomach infrastructure. These loyalists view such gifts in moral terms. In certain contexts, these transfers were seen as disrespectful and hypocritical but, in others, a sign of the responsiveness and accessibility of candidates. Vote-buying in some circumstances can cut against a candidate, but, in others, it can represent a store of information regarding what voters can expect of a candidate when they assume an office. This complex grammar suggests that vote-buying does not silence voters from expressing their preferences on how society should be ordered. What is often called “vote-buying” is rarely ever a simple economic transaction, reaffirming Schedler and Schedler’s crucial insight (2002). This perspective also complicates the hard distinctions between clientelistic, charismatic, and programmatic forms of electoral appeals and party-voter linkages (Kitschelt 2000; Resnick 2013). This chapter empirically contributes to this scholarship by examining important but oft neglected subnational elections and the party activists and “middle-men” who run the electoral campaigns.

This chapter proceeds in five steps. I will first present the context of two Nigerian subnational elections which the chapter takes as case studies. I then situate this study in the wider literature on electoral allegiances in Africa. This step clarifies the conceptual framework of moral competence, which I will develop. After clarifying the roles of party activists in the case studies, I turn to the testimonies of party loyalists presenting their reasons for complying or refusing to hold the party line in the heat of the electoral campaign season. Finally, after synthesizing the key claims, I present normative and methodological implications of thinking about electoral allegiances in terms of moral competence. The

term moral competence helps me better understand the particular mixture of ethno-religious mores and centrist economic commitments which played an evident role in linking leaders to followers in the two elections under investigation.

A Tale of Two Elections

Ekiti Decides 2014

The June 2014 governorship election held in the southwest Nigerian state of Ekiti produced a startling result. The challenger, Mr. Ayodele Fayose of the PDP, a previously impeached governor, decisively defeated the sitting governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi of the APC, despite the latter's advantage as an incumbent and his reputation as a reformer. Popular explanations of the results emphasized the unprecedented degree of vote-buying (Bratton 2008). Stomach infrastructure, a term that emerged from these explanations, refers to the pressing needs of a poor electorate such as food and cash. It was used to explain how Fayose, through giving out such gifts during his campaign, better understood these needs than Fayemi. According to this view, Fayemi's reputation for being more concerned with policy and good-governance (such as the construction of real infrastructure) rather than stomach infrastructure cost him his seat. These accounts, moreover, fit with scholarly depictions of vote-buying as indispensable for winning elections and convincing African electorates.

The Ekiti election in 2014 presented the APC both with its first electoral challenge after the merger that birthed it, and with a potential prelude to the 2015 presidential showdown against PDP. The

schedule of the Ekiti polls as a lone mid-term election also meant that it was the centre of attention across the nation, drawing significant interest from partisans in traditional and social media, where it earned the hashtag #EkitiDecides, but also from observers interested in a foretaste of INEC's performance in the 2015 presidential elections. Relatedly, given the usual importance of governors "delivering" the majority of votes from their states in presidential elections, the Ekiti election also presented an opportunity for the new APC party to gain a critical foothold in the southwest in the lead up to 2015. But crucially, the growing confidence in the capacity of INEC raised hopes that the process and outcome of the Ekiti polls would reflect voters' freely expressed preferences. All of these factors served to amplify the energy with which the major parties engaged in efforts to win the support of voters across various constituencies.

The campaign was framed as a referendum on the policy of the Fayemi administration for both parties. The Fayemi camp was eager to celebrate its flagship initiatives, most notably its infrastructural projects—which occupied 87 out of 100 pages of one of its main promotional material—but also various youth employment programs, its civil service reform agenda, and its urban renewal efforts. These were framed in the rhetoric of "progressive" southwest governance—in reference to the legacy of Awolowo's politics, but also to a larger extent, to Fayemi's association with the policies of Lagos state governors Tinubu and Fashola, and the newly minted APC which had adopted the "progressive tag" (Aborisade 215 int.) in its name. The PDP's strategy from the early days of the Fayemi administration was concerned with emphasizing the Fayemi administrations association with southwestern progressive elite networks and in Lagos. But presented by the Fayose camp, this association framed the Fayemi administration as run by "outsiders" aloof to the real concerns of Ekiti people.

A central issue, which dominated the campaign and reflected this key aspect of Fayose's appeals, was a policy the Fayemi administration called the Teacher's Development Needs Assessment Test (TDNA). The TDNA was announced by the Fayemi administration in its first year of office, with the aims of gauging the competency of state employed teacher in order to target policy inputs that would improve education outcomes in the state. To accomplish this, all 16,000 teachers across the state were required to sit for exams. Although the State Teacher's Union led opposition to this policy from the early days of its announcement, the PDP contributed considerably to the Union's highly public conflict with the administration. Through a text message campaign and recurrent media statements, PDP stoked fears that the policy was intended by the administration as a measure to fire teachers with whom it disagreed (Adeize, 2014). The administration's attempt to administer the test on three occasions was greeted by successive boycotts led by the Union and strongly encouraged by PDP. Likewise, the administration's decision to withdraw the TDNA a few months to the election was greeted by Fayose as 'a voodoo, gimmick,' and 'the deceit of the century' (*Punch*, 05.13.2014). Many teachers were convinced by this view that the Fayemi administration only wished to revive its mandate in order to administer the test again in its second term unhindered by electoral considerations (Taiwo 2014 int.)

In this regards, Fayose's campaign contributed to casting doubt on Fayemi's intentions by framing the association between the administration and its APC reformist counterparts running the Lagos government (Durotoye 2015 int.). Fashola's ban of *okada* riders in Lagos became a central aspect of the narrative in Ekiti—promoted and refuted throughout the campaign period—that the Fayemi administration, like its Lagos counterpart, would ban *okada* and push forward other reforms adverse to "ordinary people" if re-elected.

Relatedly, an aspect of the *stomach infrastructure* narrative that seemed partially validated in the campaign was the sense in which the administration's celebrated infrastructure projects ironically became liabilities. Fayose both popularized the claim that the administration awarded its major projects to contractors from Lagos and portrayed the administration's major projects as white elephants only of benefit to a narrow elite (Durotoye 2015 int.). By propagating such claims, Fayose was able to forge an appeal that cut across class sentiments, patronage interests and the latent sense of Ekiti autonomy.

The reliance on broad clientelistic appeals is one area of convergence between both campaigns which relates to the idea of *stomach infrastructure* but differs importantly from the way in which the narrative was popularly presented. By their own accounts, both campaigns, rather than just Fayose, made decided attempts to mobilize both the broader electorate and more specific networks through patronage. Some of the Fayemi's campaigns key initiatives specifically framed with reference to *stomach infrastructure* include the administration's *Owo Arugbo* [money for the elderly] scheme, which reportedly distributed 5000 in cash to nearly 20,000 qualified senior citizens in the state (Adeniyi 2015 int.). Influential organized networks also received contributions from the administration in the lead up to the election. *okada* riders were gifted with reflective jackets and helmets and traditional rulers from across the state were reportedly also awarded over 120 "Fords and SUVs" (*ThisDay*, 09.17.2013). APC officials and local experts also acknowledged that APC members were "earmarked 5000 thousand naira" as encouragement to vote at the election, though they also explained that some of this money was seized by federal police during raids on the APC on the eve of the election (Aborisde 2015 int.).

Similarly, Fayose made direct clientelistic appeals both to organized groups —such as student unions, the market women's union, and *okada riders* —and to broader constituencies. Ever adept at

courting media attention, Fayose was frequently pictured personally delivering rice, petty cash, and other *stomach infrastructure* himself, relaying on what was referred to as an ‘extra-systematic ad-hoc’ approach (Rotimi 2014). PDP party members also claim to have been given 2000 naira to turnout, confirming the general view that APC members received more ‘settlement’ from their party close to the election (Komolafe 2015 int.). Integrating this with personalistic appeals, Fayose was also often pictured at local sporting events, market places, and low-cost bars and canteens interacting with street vendors and frequently overpaying for inexpensive street food.

Thus, for both candidates, the campaign period featured a mix of appeals, from policy related debates regarding the TDNA and other reforms, to appeals on the basis of clientelism and personality—indicating the increasing necessity for candidates to mobilize a variety of constituencies in order to win support. The relatively orderliness of the election underscored this and also highlighted the important trend of INEC’s improving status.



Figure 4: Fayose riding *okada*. Source: Vanguard Newspaper, 2014.

Kaduna Decides 2015

The April 2015 governorship election held in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna produced a less dramatic and surprising outcome than Ekiti's. Though the incumbent governor, Mallam Mukhtar Yero of the PDP, was defeated, his path to re-election never seemed secure during the campaign. Yero, the then Deputy Governor, assumed the governorship when the sitting Governor died mid-way through his term — becoming a governor without a mandate. Facing an APC candidate proved a greater problem for Yero. Barely a month before the state election, the APC made national history by securing the first

ever opposition party victory in a presidential election. Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the APC governorship candidate in Kaduna, had previously served as the minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), a position that is equivalent to that of a state governor but is an appointive position in Nigeria's capital city. As FCT minister, El Rufai cultivated the public persona of being a no-nonsense reformist and technocrat (El Rufai 2013). He was also remembered for having helped "modernize" the FCT, notably through approving the demolition of residential homes which did not align with the modernist masterplan of the capital city (Lukman, 2016 int.). El Rufai's campaign focused on these credentials and his affiliation with the Buhari legacy, while Yero's campaign, similar to that of Fayose, pursued a much more personality and patronage driven campaign highlighting a record of having "touched the lives of the people ... with bags of rice, containers of groundnut oil, bags of millet and other sundry items being distributed to all" (Daily Independent, 2015a). Yet despite the efforts of both candidates, the popular narrative attributed El-Rufai's victory to the reverberations of the election of President Muhammadu Buhari. As the *Daily Independent* (2015b) reported:

Although Mukhtar Ramalan Yero, the Dallatun Zazzau, had in his own way provided quality and transparent leadership to his people, the "Buhari Tsunami" was already taking its toll on the majority of the populace, especially in the northern states, who had been clamouring for a change in the nation's leadership.

Buhari's reputation for personal integrity was also, in these accounts of the Kaduna governorship results, seen as bolstering El Rufai's legitimacy through his connection with Buhari. These popular narratives

echoed a scholarly interest in the salience of personality and populism over policy or programmatic appeals in African elections (Resnick 2013, Cheeseman et al. 2014).

More fundamentally, both elections were a window into a number of other important issues. Nigeria's 36 states now roughly map onto ethnic — sometimes even sub-ethnic — divisions due to policies for granting states to ethnic minorities (Kraxberger 2004). One implication of this legacy is that Nigerian subnational elections typically feature co-ethnic candidates competing in single or majority ethnic constituencies, true in both the Ekiti and Kaduna elections. These elections, therefore, play out in cases where ethnic (including religious or regional) difference is absent or substantially minimized as an axis of political competition. Additionally, governorship seats have almost always proven to be an intermediary stage in the further political advancement of the individuals who have held such seats. Most of the Nigeria's upper legislative house, and through out of four Vice Presidents —and two Presidents— since Nigeria's 1999 return to democracy have been former Governors. Governorship elections also feature a more proximate competition from the perspective of the average voter than national elections, given the fact that they feature more local issues. This feature touches on questions of decentralization and democracy. These reasons make sub-national elections an important test case for electoral theories. Given the nascence of the scholarship on subnational elections in Africa (Riedl & Dickovick 2016), it is from the wider literature on political allegiance in Africa's competitive multi-party elections that this chapter draws its insights.

Party Loyalties in Africa's Multi-Party Elections

While my argument builds on the literature on political allegiance in Africa, it also departs from it in important ways. This scholarship emerged to better understand the competitive multi-party electoral landscape in a number of African countries, including Nigeria, between the 1990s and early 2000s. Within this scholarship, the subfields focused on African voting-behaviour (Lindberg 2003; Wantchekon 2003), political party campaigning, and electoral mobilization strategies (Resnick 2013) to provide important insights into the present discussion.

This scholarship broke with an earlier analytical tradition, particularly evident in analyses of party politics in Nigeria through the mid-2000s. This earlier tradition singularly focused on elite-level politics and the deficiencies evident therein. It bears brief mention given its continued influence. In the Nigerian context, this tendency brought to the fore influential concepts, notably of “godfatherism” (Onwudiwe, et al. 2006; Hoffmann 2010) and the return of “prebendalism” (Adebanwi & Obadare 2013) to characterize “what was wrong” with party and electoral politics at the elite level. This Nigeria-specific literature also added to an earlier Africanist preoccupation with “big-man” politics “predation” and “neopatrimonialism” (Chabal & Daloz 1999). Mustapha (2002: 6) critically observes that the Africanist literature of this ilk “is a reductionist perspective on African politics which robs non-elite groups of political agency for good or for ill.” Efforts to move beyond this elite-centred analytical convention, evident in the emerging scholarship on African voting-behaviour and political mobilization, is laudable. While I agree with them about what and who merits attention in African politics, I take issue

with a number of the specific contentions proffered by two prevailing perspectives on how political loyalties are won and lost in African elections.

Electoral Clientelism and Strategic Populism

Call the first of these perspectives the electoral clientelism thesis. This perspective dominates the Nigeria-specific literature and discourses on this subject. It is also reflected in early work on multiparty elections by scholars such as Wantchekon (2003) and Lindberg (Lindberg 2003). These scholars — drawing on survey data from Ghana in the case of Lindberg and a randomized field experiment in Benin conducted by Wantchekon — make a simple but enduring argument. Their arguments, though slightly different, both agree that elections in African multi-party contexts are very frequently nothing more than auctions for political loyalty. On this view, voters act like “clients” who sell their votes for short-term favours rather than “citizens” who vote in favour of particular policy positions.

In Wantchekon’s experiment, voters were divided into three sub-groups in eight electoral districts and exposed to different kinds of electoral messages or “treatments.” Some groups were exposed to “purely” clientelistic messages, while others were exposed to “purely” public policy messages. The results — in which the parties receiving the “clientelistic treatment” won — suggested that clientelism is generally more appealing than public policy appeals, though he also finds that these appeals tend to work in favour of incumbents and against opposition parties. Lindberg’s research relies on a survey amongst Ghanaian MPs who respond to questions about how they maintain the loyalty of their supporters. He finds (*ibid*, 124) that these MPs affirm that supporters’ loyalties are secured through handing out “chop-

money” during electoral campaigns as well as through “attending to individuals” schools fees, electricity and water bills, funeral and wedding expenses; or distributing cutlasses and other tools for agriculture...” “The function of such giving and taking,” argues Lindberg (*ibid*), “is to establish and reproduce pacts of mutual loyalty. The clients are (re-)assured that the “big man” (or “big woman” for that matter) will attend to their needs in times of hardship in exchange for political loyalty transferred into votes in democratic elections.” Like Wantchkon, Lindberg also concludes that electoral clientelism tends to favour incumbent MPs who have state resources at their disposal and can effectively offer a higher bid for votes. Lindberg (*ibid*; 123) further argues, quoting Clapham (1993), “when there is no money, there is no patronage and no loyalty in this kind of system.” This literature has been critiqued by a more recent body of work on voting intentions in African elections. Bratton et al.’s survey data (2008) and Lindberg’s more recent work (2013) have shown that partisan and economic considerations also condition voting decisions among African voters. When it comes to clientelism “rational voters” prefer to “have their cake and eat it too.”

Resnick’s (2013) case for what might be called “strategic populism” provides a particularly sophisticated approach within this scholarship. This study comparatively assesses the relative successes of various party strategies in winning the loyalties of urban poor voters across both Lusaka and Dakar. Resnick counters a number of influential hypotheses about electoral behaviour and party mobilization in Africa including the clientelism thesis as well as the idea that elections are “ethnic head-counts.” She proposes that populism is the most successful strategy to garner the loyalties of excluded urban populations. “Populism” is construed as a mix of Kitschelt’s (2000) three categories of “linkages” which voters and parties may share: The charismatic/personality driven linkage, the clientelistic linkage, and the

programmatic (or policy-centric) linkage. Resnick rightfully emphasizes that parties do offer (and supporters demand) much more than one-off gifts in exchange for political loyalty.

The Kaduna and Ekiti elections, however, pose some problems for Resnick's argument. Her operational definition of populism fails to clearly distinguish the main candidates running in the Kaduna and Ekiti State elections and — as Roelofs (2016b) argues — many other contexts in Nigeria. Citing her own work in the southwestern Nigerian state of Oyo, Roelofs observes that popular political values and cultural expectations require politicians to engage in some degree of personalized, unmediated contact with their supporters, the sort of contact which might be labelled populist in other contexts. It is also standard for politicians to offer various small gifts to voters in the pre-election period (Bratton 2008). These examples illustrate the difficulty for Resnick's definition for populism to distinguish between populism proper and political norms in certain contexts. If the political norms are such that most politicians tend to campaign in "populist" ways, then candidates would have exceedingly few ways to differentiate themselves. It is not clear how opposition parties can beat similarly "populist" incumbents given this inability to differentiate between candidates.

Anthropological research on gift-giving provide insights into the ways loyalists understand electoral strategies — including "vote-buying." Schedler and Schaffer (2002) propose that vote-buying can, in certain contexts, be read as either a "sign of virtue" or a "sign of vice." This multivalence of gift-giving, historically and socially conditioned, determines the effectiveness of political mobilization. Furthermore, Schedler and Schaffer (*ibid*, 16) assert that "indeed, money interpreted by external observers as constituting a binding payment may be understood by voters themselves in manifold ways. They may view it, for instance, as a non-binding gift, a show of virtue, a veiled threat, or a sign of

corruption, to name just a few possibilities.” Elaborating further on the idea of electoral “gift-giving” as a sign of virtue or vice, they (ibid, 17) observe that:

Not all payments are part of a *quid pro quo*. Citizens may understand material offers less in instrumental than in expressive terms. The practical utility of goods and services are less important than their informational value. Citizens may take them as pieces of information that reveal the positive personal qualities of the giver, such as generosity, politeness, responsiveness, and respect... The dispensation of gifts may thus lead citizens to believe that the candidate is good or worthy... If voters, by contrast, dislike the gesture of giving out cash and goodies, they may take electoral largesse as a sign not of virtue but of personal defect on the part of the giver, such as arrogance and disrespect. The offer (which may or may not have been accepted) may send a signal to voters that the candidate is morally wrong, politically dumb, or the like.

These observations underscore the descriptive and analytical thinness of clientelism. They also challenge the accuracy of strategic clientelism: How politicians employ various electoral strategies matter just as much as what strategies they employ. Moreover, these ideas also reveal a moral grammar that shape how political party supporters interpret electoral gifts.

Successful candidates must speak to their constituents using the appropriate political syntax. Political patrons are, like their clients, also caught in a tricky and uncertain web of both patronage and accountability with dire consequences when the wrong action or interpretation prevails (Adebanwi & Obadare 2013). As Pratten (ibid, 254) puts it, “prebendal officeholding is precarious indeed.” This

electoral context privileges attention, social embeddedness, and skill. The idea of moral competence captures the savviness and vigilance required for politicians to successfully navigate the dynamic moral semiotics of their constituents. The next section examines how moral competence can clarify why party loyalists in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City opted to hold or abandon their political loyalties in an electoral contest.

Understanding Stomach Infrastructure

Testimonies from two sets of loyalists from Ado Ekiti and Zaria City illuminate the norms driving political allegiances in Nigeria's subnational election. Though hardly representative of the more general electorate, three aspects of party activists make them analytically interesting. Firstly, activists are generally presumed to be a party's most reliable source of votes — their zeal and consistency can make up what they lack in numbers. Secondly, party loyalists are “vote multipliers” insofar as they may serve as ambassadors to the community — an observation corroborated in my own data. Conversely, losing the loyalists' support could damage a party's electoral performance. Loyalists may also serve to communicate the preferences of the general electorate back to the party hierarchy, ensuring that the party hears its base. Such contributions by party activists which are generally recognized in the comparative study of party membership (notably Scarrow 1994) are also increasingly being acknowledged in Africanist scholarship (Bob-Milliar 2012) which has for too long thought of parties as merely the “playthings of their leaders”(Cheeseman & Hinfelaar 2009). In short, party activists' matter when analyzing party politics.

I connected to party loyalists through the official contacts I made at LGA party headquarters in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City between April 2015 and March 2017. Multiple interviewees all recommended these loyalists as important individuals for truly understanding electoral mobilization in both of these contexts. These loyalists turned out to be well-known local figures who had played important roles in their respective party's campaigns. They also all still remain politically active in their constituencies. These activists have been given pseudonyms given their credible fear of retaliation. Bratton (2008) introduced a schema that could serve an expedient approach for thinking about how party loyalists in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City responded to instruction passed down from the party hierarchy in their respective state elections held in 2014 and 2015. These testimonies are grouped according to their decisions to, borrowing Bratton's schema, either comply or refuse. These responses reflect a variety of themes and motivations but also clearly reveal the significance of assessments of moral competence in loyalists' decisions about whether or not they toed the party line.

Compliance

In April 2015, I visited the Ado Ekiti PDP headquarters to speak with party executives about how their candidate appealed to the electorate in the 2014 governorship election. While waiting for a meeting postponed several times by the PDP state chairman, I got into conversation with a fellow visitor at the state party headquarters who turned out to be a party loyalist from Ado Ekiti. This loyalist, Lady B, was a ward-level organizing secretary and women's leader in her thirties. After a brief introduction, we discussed the Ekiti State election campaign in general terms and the reasons why the PDP Governor,

Ayodele Fayose, triumphed at the polls. Just weeks before my conversation with Lady B, an incriminating recording had been leaked to the national media allegedly containing the voices of Fayose and a number of highly placed officials in the military and Federal security agencies talking about disbursing huge sums of money and discussing plans to "settle the matter" on the eve of the elections. Shortly after we began speaking, I brought these reports up to Lady B to see how this might have affected her party's current leader. Her response to this question was instructive and a good starting point for our broader conversation about her reasons to remain a committed party loyalist.

It is just how APC are trying to disturb! Let me tell you... They don't want to leave the man [Fayose] alone and that is why it has been difficult for him to start working for the benefit of the people... Which politician in this country does not do what they can do to win election? Didn't APC bring money and thugs during the election? Without that security, Ekiti state could have been upside down because of thugs. Let me tell you... People are in love with Fayose and that is why he won... If it was rigging like they are saying, you think Ekiti people will take it?

After a while, I broached the subject of stomach infrastructure, or the gifts of money and food which were supposed to have buoyed Fayose's campaign according to the popular narrative. I quote this conversation at length to maintain the integrity of Lady B's comments:

Yes — we used to bring rice, and cooking oil. We used to carry it along and give to them. Each person, one, one bag. Not [a] big bag, just [a] small nylon bag. So we will tell them, take 2000

Naira for soup. That's how we [usually] do... But for this man that is there [Fayose], if he [does not] give anybody one naira, nobody will bother. Some people did not even collect anything... They say 'That name alone is enough.' Not because we have distribute[d] a lot [of stomach infrastructure] during election time. Because he is a good man. People know that he will take care of the common man when he enters government house [when he becomes governor]... that he will make sure he pay workers [civil servants] salary. He is a down-to-earth man, and that is what makes people to like him. Even me, his number is in my phone now! If I call him even if he [does] not pick [up], he will send [a] text and say: 'Sorry I can't pick your call. Who are you? Reply and let me know what is happening' [...] I have been in the party for ten years. Sometimes, before, if [a] governor send[s] something to our ward, to say he is grateful for our work, before it can reach us, they have already shared everything. But now, they can't try that. They know that he is a no-nonsense man. That is why [party] workers love him.

The conversation, in many ways, speaks for itself. Yet several important ideas deserve further discussion since these ideas highlight the connection between loyalty and moral competence. Her reference to the people's "love" for Fayose and her complete assurance that he would be "working for the benefit of the people," if not for the "Ekitigate" scandal, clearly communicated Lady B's confidence in Fayose's popularity with and goodwill towards the Ekiti citizenry. Her remarks about people who rejected the party "goodie-bag" and were mobilized simply by hearing Fayose's name also highlight her conviction that Fayose's appeal was rooted in something deeper than his use of clientelism. Her claim that Fayose

was merely a phone-call away and that he made a personal matter of ensuring that party loyalists were rewarded for their work further affirmed her certainty in his goodwill and accessibility.

Lady B's appeals to her oft repeated references to his character as a "no-nonsense man," a "down-to-earth man," and a "good man" to explain her loyalty. Many other pro-Fayose loyalists made similar appeals. It seems that these personal attributes were a store of information regarding everything from what policies Fayose would pursue in office to whether or not he would look after the well-being of his loyalists. His moral reputation warranted her loyalty to the PDP and to Fayose.

This issue featured centrally in most conversations with PDP members and were particularly crystalized in an in-depth interview with a loyalist and local executive of the *okada* rider's union who wished to be identified as "Thunder". In states in which *okada* riding is still legal, *okada* unions play a central role in electoral politics, as evidenced by frequent attempts by governorship candidates to court their endorsement. The influence of *okada* unions derives from their extensive grassroots networks comprised of able-bodied young men who are able to "penetrate the nooks and crannies" (Durutoye 2015 int.) of most urban and rural neighbourhoods. Both Fayose and Fayemi made public appeals for *okada* union backing in the 2014 election. Though the *okada* union claims to be apolitical and does not publicly endorse candidates, the union was widely acknowledged to have backed Fayose (Durutoye 2015 int., Atobaba 2015 int., Komolafe 2015 int.), particularly through gathering in large numbers and "escorting" Fayose's car down the streets of Ado Ekiti whenever the candidate held a rally in town. In turn, Fayose was pictured riding *okada* at several points during his campaign, a rare sighting for Nigerian state governorship candidates who more frequently seek to pose as respectable statesmen.

Given his membership of the PDP and seniority in an influential grassroots union, I was fortunate to have encountered Thunder through a coincidental meeting in *Okeyimi* market, Ado Ekiti. That day, I happened to have taken an *okada* ride to an interview. During the ride, the *okada* was suddenly accosted by a burly and gruff voiced man of about 35, who demanded that the ride be stopped and that the *okada* driver pay an immediate fine. After asking what the problem was, I shortly found out that Thunder was a union executive, and that, as part of his role, he was responsible for making sure that union members complied with a new directive from the police to replace their standard motorcycle handlebars with a safer alternative. As he explained, the motorcycle I was on happened to still have the old disapproved handlebars even though the directive had been in force for some time. Struck by his authority on the street and the coherence of his explanation for stopping my ride, I decided to befriend Thunder and only later found out that he was a member of the PDP.

I was able to reconnect with Thunder two weeks after the street encounter, but this time in the second-floor office of the *okada* rider's union in Ado-Ekiti. Given the official context, our conversation first touched upon the primary functions of the union. In particular, Thunder was keen to express the union's role in protecting *okada* riders from police harassment. Our conversation soon moved on to the 2014 election and to the *okada* unions support for Fayose. When asked why he and his followers had supported Fayose, Thunder offered the following response:

It's just their style of doing things. *Osokomole* [popular nickname for Fayose meaning dependable leader] is very visible to the common man. He will drive with his window down and when we hail him, 'Osoko!' he will stop to greet and share something. He moves very freely; he is not scared of

the masses. When he is in the market, he will ask people about their problems, both old women and young people. This is how he knows the things that are worrying we market people [...] There is no corner in this Ekiti that he cannot go. Even if you say there is a thief in your area... he might not come immediately but you will soon see him there... Fayemi was always traveling to Lagos. He won't stop on the road once. All the years he was governor, you cannot see him around the masses. They [the Fayemi campaign] say, 'see government house, see pavilion, we built this one we built that one...' He prefers to stay in the government house they have built on the mountain... But you see, you must always prefer somebody you know.

Captured in Thunder's reflections on Fayose are ideas similar to Kitschelt's (2000; 849) view of the "charismatic political linkage" as pertaining to: "an individual's unique personal skills and powers of persuasion that instil followers with faith in the leader's ability to end suffering and create a better future." But more concretely, Fayose's presence in the market and on the street also seemed to exemplify a virtue of personal *accessibility* perceived as key to his knowledge of "the things that are worrying market people". The comments about Fayose driving with his window down, stopping to greet "and share things" when hailed, and being able to go to any "corner" in Ekiti seemed both to speak to Resnick's (2014) observations regarding the centrality of 'anti-elitist' discourses in populist mobilization, and symbolize *authenticity* and a sense of place, rooted in his familiarity with the realities of Ekiti life.

On the other hand, Thunder's short reflection on Fayemi "always traveling to Lagos" was in many ways the antithesis of his description of Fayose. References to Lagos had been a constant feature of Fayose's appeals during the electoral campaign as a representation of Fashola-style reformism and

progressive politics. But, in addition, these references to Lagos in the market seemed to touch on a more basic impulse. Beyond its political connotations, Lagos, being a more urbanized and cosmopolitan area was often used as a surrogate for an identity discourse analogous to notions of autochthony and rural-urban suspicion (Geischer and Gugler, 1998). Juxtaposed with Fayose's perceived *accessibility* and *authenticity*, perceptions of Fayemi's travels to Lagos seemed to symbolize his distance from the realities of Ekiti life and his consequent disconnection from the priorities of ordinary people. As in Lady B's account accounts, Fayose's moral character and cultural "legitimacy" was central to the support he received from Thunder.

Several conversations I had with APC loyalists in Zaria City in 2017 struck similar chords. Of these, I briefly highlight comments made by an APC stalwart, Danladi. Danladi had no official title in the party besides "member," but he had been recommended by nearly every one of my APC interviewees. I met Danladi outside his family compound a few weeks after we had first been introduced over the phone. He was a soft-spoken but jovial man of about forty and, after brief greetings, he seemed quite eager to speak. When I asked him why his party had defeated the incumbent in the state he chuckled briefly before sharing his thoughts:

Mallam Sa'eed, I believe you are aware of the answer. I think most people know that APC was going to win Kaduna, come what may, with President Muhammadu Buhari at the top of the ticket [...] El Rufai too is good. And of course, we are the ones that campaigned for him. He is very serious like you! See he has already started demolishing houses and see: (pointing to an

ongoing project by his house) — this culvert is the handy-work of El Rufai... But, you know, it was the Buhari factor [that mattered] in that election!

When asked for the specifics of President Buhari's appeal he was again moved to laughter before responding:

My brother, this is the kind of man Nigerians have desired in their hearts. You know the issue that has been disturbing this country — the true cause of Boko Haram and economic recession — is it not corruption? Nobody is perfect oh [laughter]! Only God is perfect... But when it comes to corruption nobody can deny that the man [Buhari] nearly flawless wanlahi... You know what is the meaning of “mai gaskiya” [one who tells the truth]? (to which I respond yes) Ehen, toh! [roughly “well then!”]

As in the conversation with Lady B and Thunder, one can observe the connection between a candidate's policies and personality — with both qualities being rooted in his moral character. The term, mai gaskiya, which Danladi asked if I recognized, is a popular Hausa moniker for President Buhari which came up now and again when interlocutors wished to make a point about the integrity of Buhari's anti-corruption policy. Danladi's use of the term served the same function: It indicated that Buhari was worthy of loyalty, during and after the elections.

Refusal

One could argue that Lady B, Thunder and Danladi's perspectives simply reflect the views of good party activists who are eager to cast their party and its top candidate in a favourable light. Indeed, this possibility has to be entertained. Yet such a view would not completely account for why casting the party in a positive light required such moral appeals rather than, for instance, a celebration of the clientelistic or even "programmatic" (Cheeseman, et al. 2014) appeals of the party. Such a cynical view would also fail to fully explain the next set of testimonies drawn from candidates who had no desire to sell their party's top candidate, and yet still framed even their condemnations in terms of moral competence.

I met a group of dissenting APC loyalists — Ibro, Yaks, and Adamu — through the state party secretariat. Though the party members with official positions insisted I would learn all I needed regarding the manifesto and official programs at the secretariat, they obliged to link me with "ward-level staff" when I insisted this perspective would be of value to me. These men were extremely sensitive about the confidentiality of our conversation, and insisted on checking my phone, my watch, and even my pen to make sure that no recording device was concealed in any of these items. Their rationale for their misgivings, as I soon found out, were closely related both to my having been introduced by the party secretariat and to some of the reasons which impelled their political action in the 2014 elections. They all asserted that they had passionately (even violently, in the case of Adamu) supported Fayemi in his initial run at office in 2010. But, as they quickly informed me at the start of the conversation, they had taken the path of refusal deciding to mobilise against Fayemi during the 2014 election.

One of the key reasons for this defection cantered on the idea of “speaking grammar.” Loyalists frequently use this phrase to explain their initial support for Dr. Fayemi and their ultimate disaffection with the administration. Adamu’s reasons for his diminishing admiration over the course of Fayemi’s years in office illustrated some of the key motivations for his decision to defect during the 2014 poll:

We needed a change in Ekiti in [2010]. The government was performing so poorly before, even our party. When people were [at a party meeting] and Fayemi started speaking grammar, everybody was shouting that this is the man we want. Fayemi’s English was so good! The [PDP] governor then, Segun Oni, was even a stammerer. We had to chase that man out of government house... During that campaign I know what I did for Fayemi and for the party... That is why I am limping now, it was a real battle. We used to see him regular[ly] before. But they came to office it was a different matter, sincerely. They hired all these people, Commissioners, Aides from Lagos, or UK, US ... They were only interested in those ones that can speak their grammar... Like you [for example] you are somebody who has lived all his days abroad. We, home-based, we are different here oh...

“Those ones who speak grammar” designated individuals who, through higher education or having lived abroad and therefore gained “exposure,” were deemed out of touch with “the way things are done,” “the Nigerian system,” or other such claims to authenticity and familiarity. Interestingly, having introduced myself as a graduate student carrying out my research, I was often used as an example to illustrate this point. Initially, Fayemi’s “good English” had been a source of hope in the possibility that he would change

the poor performance of the government. But, from this perspective, their inability to “speak grammar” became the criterion for the exclusion of “home-based” party members as the administration progressed. Part of their disappointment seemed to grow from being passed over for the limited patronage positions given their contribution to the election bid. But the other aspect of this disappointment reflected an implicit dimension of being from a small town, such as Ado Ekiti, where “localized cultures of accountability...are shaped epistemologically by concepts of the person — especially the patron” (Pratten 2013: 252). Ibro’s elaboration of Adamu’s summary was instructive in this regard:

It doesn’t always have to be [an] Ekiti person [given positions]. After all many of them are from Ekiti anyway, but living abroad or in Lagos... But you see, how they do things there is different. Lagos or abroad it might be good to build [a] new government house, or the new pavilion [stadium] they built. A white man might tell you that is how they do it in their place [...] but [if you] ask any Ekiti person, they will tell you ‘is it pavilion that I will eat?’ What we need is a loan to start businesses.’ But those people that were running the show [...] Sincerely, they didn’t listen. Once it’s Friday every week, they have gone back to Lagos. That’s where they [would] go to spend their salary. Instead of you to build your house here, or buy food, or even go to car wash... That is employment for the people here. Like the Special Advisor who was staying in a hotel for all the years in office... She was from Ekiti, but did she know the road to her father’s house. Three months to the election, they brought money and said ‘take’. They said ‘ok, go and mobilize.’ They were really wasting so much money that time... Is that not hypocrisy? I collected 40 bags of rice. The members in this polling unit, I am telling you, they brought one-point-something million

Naira for them to collect. We said, 'Is that so? So you can share money they [right]?' It was too late by then... I am telling you we shared the money but we told everybody to vote for who they like... We are still [APC] members, but we supported Fayose and didn't even collect 500 Naira from him.

Two key points demand further elaboration. Firstly, their refusals were tied to their local identity and views on the distributive policy they expect. Secondly, given the alienation the mobilisers felt during the administration, the money "shared" toward the election time had actually become self-defeating. It not only failed to inspire their action in favour of the administration, but also communicated wastefulness and "hypocrisy," which only confirmed their feelings of distrust. Rather than a civil public, described by Ekeh (1975: 92) as a sphere that "is amoral and lacks the generalised moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public," these narratives seemed to highlight the idea that political loyalty is "conditioned not just by the structure of the state, but by attitudes and identities brought to the political arena by members of local communities" (Peel 1983: 7).

The final testimony I will highlight is that of Chike, a Zaria City PDP loyalist. The chairman of Chike's ward introduced us. Chike was a former youth leader in the ward and had, according to his ward chairman, been a member of Governor Yero's election campaign team. In this narrative, once again, refusal is framed in reference to a candidate's failure to exhibit moral competence. After some introductions, I asked him why his party had lost in the 2015 governorship election, to which he responded:

My brother, if you walk on water, they will say it is because you cannot swim. In politics, nobody can be perfect... But Buhari factor is not everything. Didn't you see Gombe State [where a PDP candidate beat a Buhari endorsed APC candidate]? It is just that the one we had here was not very functional... You see he did not really know politics in the first place. Somebody that did not contest any election... The way he handled the party primaries... I mean, F9 parallel [a failing mark on all counts].

Just as moral competence had represented a source of information regarding both policy and personality, “incompetence” in Yero’s responsibility to his political community of Zaria City earned him the description of being “not a good person.” Compliers and defectors do not exhaust the perspectives of all loyalists in their respective parties. Indeed, I encountered many loyalists who worked passionately for candidates that lost and others who, even in the victorious parties, were disgruntled. Rather, the motivations which drove key party loyalist to comply or defect give us a glimpse into a dimension of political ideals in Nigeria that is not often considered and, furthermore, that these ideals contradict dominant depictions of politics in these contexts as devoid of moral considerations.

A number of big themes emerge which respond to the chapter’s driving puzzle: Why did opposition parties win the compliance of their loyalists in both of these very different contexts, while the loyalties of ruling party loyalists floundered. In Ekiti, as was clearest in the testimonies of the Ekiti APC defectors, Fayose’s stomach infrastructure not only proved to be an effective campaign strategy, but also a strong indictment of the APC governments’ failure to listen and the governor’s character. Similarly, the idea of the “Buhari factor”, mai gaskiya, and its links to an anti-corruption policy agenda tell us much

about a world which the Kaduna APC discursively constructed as having been corrupted under the PDP governor who, in the words of APC party loyalists, “sat in government house eating money.” These discourses of virtue in order to secure loyalty reveal a politics of moral competence.

Conclusions

The moral virtues and vices of candidates are a critical factor in helping voters and party members decide which candidate to support in African elections. Portraying oneself as the more pious Muslim or as the more legitimate son of Ekiti State entails a performance of piety and cultural legitimacy; it requires a degree of competence. Moreover, these ethnic and religious codes and appeals have to be balanced with more generic centrist economic promises to tackle corruption, attract investment, reduce state debt, and increase public spending on infrastructure. As Bleck and van de Walle (2013) argue, West African political parties in competitive races increasingly seek to establish their “competence” in specific centrist policy areas, rather than “claiming ownership of ideological space”. In balancing both centrist and ethno-cultural appeals, African politicians are required to speak multiple languages, in more ways than one (Cheeseman & Larmer 2015). From the case study of Ekiti narrated above, one might conclude that the more right-populist PDP candidate defeated the more centrist APC candidate. The Kaduna election also displayed the power of a right-populist love and devotion to a former military general thought to be a pious Muslim over the specific economic appeals of the competing candidates. However, In conceiving of the horizons of politics as restricted within these frames of ethnic morality and valence policy competence both of Nigeria’s ruling parties display their centre-right populist orientation.

This chapter re-considered the influence of vote buying in multi-party elections in Africa. It did so through testimonies from two sets of party activists who campaigned in two governorship elections in Nigeria. Drawing on Schedler and Schaffer's (2007) characterisation of electoral gifts as "signs," the chapter identified the explanatory limits of distinguishing between clientelistic, charismatic, and programmatic forms of electoral appeals and party-voter linkages. If stomach infrastructure was a source of information about a candidate's policy and personality, then the programmatic, patronage, and personality paradigm (Kitschelt 2000; Resnick 2013; Cheeseman, et al. 2014) for mobilisation fails to account for mobilisation on the ground.

This conclusion holds both methodological and normative implications. If the exchange of electoral gifts fits within rather than short-circuits wider assessments of candidates, then the study of political motivations must probe the intersubjective understandings which undergird such assessments. Normatively, this also suggest that democratic accountability might not be completely sacrificed in the exchange of electoral gifts. However, as the literature on godfatherism (Hoffmann 2010) points out, the continued need for huge sums of electoral cash creates accountabilities to the financiers (often former politicians) and thereby erodes the egalitarian bases of democratic politics. Ultimately, this moral and economic calculus fails to transform but only reinforces the centre-right populist political status quo.

7.

On Post-election violence

Introduction

Any study of Nigerian party politics must account for election related violence and unrest given that several historical moments of turmoil and social upheaval — including Nigeria's first coup in 1966 — have accompanied elections (Falola & Heaton 2008). In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the analysis of party engagement particularly following the announcement of election results often focuses on understanding and remedying such mass violence (Bratton 2008; Kendhammer 2010; Alemika 2011; Collier & Vicente 2014; Cohen & Lefebvre 2015). Indeed, some of the deadliest episodes of post-election violence took place in this phase of Nigeria's democratic history (Angerbrandt 2018). Such outbursts seem to affirm rational choice arguments which maintain that, in new democracies, stiff electoral competition solidifies partisan allegiances, deepens polarisation, and increases the likelihood of mass violence (Collier & Vicente 2014). After the 2011 presidential election, a particularly dismal example, protests and riots ruptured largely along religious and ethnic lines, resulting in 1,000 deaths mostly in Kaduna (Angerbrandt 2018). However, the deadliness of post-election violence masks its episodic quality. In fact, mass violence did not ensue in the vast majority of elections in the Fourth Republic (Cohen & Lefebvre 2015). Rather than organised violence and systematic polarisation, disagreement and fractionalisation characterise parties in post-election periods, even amongst loyal party members. Moreover, as elsewhere

in the world, loyalists often cannot agree about why their party lost a given election. This fissiparous tendency, brought about by the effects of liberal institutional reforms on party organisation (Chapter 2), has typically forestalled the formation of organised, factional violence — whether partisan, ethnic, regional, or religious. Contrary to Angerbrandt's (2018) depiction then, the violence witnessed in Kaduna around the 2011 election was the exception and not the rule.

My thesis has so far been that Nigeria two main political parties mobilize voters through a consistent set of centre-right populist appeals: to both ethno-national identity and centrist economic policies framed in “valence” (Bleck & Van de Walle 2013) terms of “good governance”, “growth” and “promoting foreign investment”. In Nigerian journalistic parlance, this recurrent ethno-nationalist mobilisation “heats up the polity”, by framing electoral competition as a battle between rival communities. Sociologist of large-scale violence including Kalyvas (2003), explain that at minimum, alliances between local and national actors forged around shared narratives are required for widespread conflict to ensue. Yet Nigerian elections in the Fourth Republic have tended to be characterised by the relative absence of such “narrative alliances” between local and national political actors. The fracturing of the ethno-geographical map through the multiplication of states, as well as the political practice of “zoning” employed by political parties act as limiting factors against mass violence. As Kendhammer acknowledges, these liberal institutional reforms have led to a paradoxical outcome in which political parties have to balance pluralism with ethno-nationalism by “talking ethnic but hearing multi-ethnic” (2010). The worse effects of right-wing populist mobilisation are thus partially constrained by institutional reforms in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

However, the rarity of mass violence does not preclude an examination of the factors which drive it in the particular moments when such outbreaks do occur. By death toll, the post-election violence which followed the Kaduna 2011 election was the worse episode of election related violence in Nigerian history (Falola & Heaton 2008; Cohen & Lefebvre 2015). Drawing on the testimonies of loyalists who witnessed or participated in violence in Kaduna in 2011, I show that ethno-culturally infused assessments of election results deployed moral language such as "traitor," "cheat," "hypocrite," "infidel," and "enemy" — language which heralded the return of Mouffian antagonisms, and displayed the limits of liberal institutional reforms that have made such large-scale violence exceptional.

I will first situate this chapter in wider discussions about post-election periods in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. This section underscores the danger of narrative consensus' around moral injury and enmity. In Kalyvas' (2003) terms, "alliances" between supra-local and local actors, driven by a variety of aims but unified by a shared narrative of grievance, enable widespread violence. I will then examine loyalist testimonies in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City to highlight the internally fraught and contradictory explanations for the 2014/2015 election results. These contradictory narratives illustrate the practical difficulty of forging a unifying consensus around a single narrative, particularly that of usurpation, often associated with violent episodes of post-election polarisation. The third part of the chapter turns to the "low-intensity" forms of violence which did follow the electoral announcement in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City and are the more common form of post-election violence. These more mundane instances of violence reveal the habitually fissiparous nature of coalition politics in contemporary Nigeria, given the effect of liberal institutional reforms. However, even if episodic, moments of mass violence require explanation. Why do seemingly fluid political loyalties result in dramatic outbursts of electoral violence?

Drawing on the testimonies of loyalists who witnessed or participated in violence in Kaduna the fourth section of the chapter argues that ethno-culturally infused assessments of election results deploy moral language such as "traitor," "cheat," "hypocrite," "infidel," and "enemy" — terms which herald the return of Mouffian antagonisms. By way of conclusion, I suggest that an ideological account of liberal institutional reform and right-wing populist mobilisation better captures both the episodic moments of communal violence and the regular, more general atmosphere of latent threat which characterises the end of the electoral cycle.

Violence and Nigerian party allegiances

How political parties and their activists navigate the aftermath of elections matters for at least two reasons. Scholars of democratic consolidation such as Lindberg (2009) rightly argue that how parties and citizens respond to election results — whether or not they accept, question, or even violently contest them — indicates a democracy's health and its institutions' legitimacy. Furthermore, a party's reaction to loss lays bare their own internal state of development. Do they immediately dissolve into a bitter fight over the spoils in the event of a victory? Do they meekly accept defeat and begin to rebuild in advance of the next electoral outing? Do they mobilise their activists and supporters to take to the streets in protest? Or do they collapse under the weight of defeat and disappear? Responses to political loss reveal a party's character.

Few studies examine Nigeria's post-election period. The existing work typically analyzes what popular responses to election results reveal about the state of Nigeria's wider democratic consolidation.

Two major strands emerged in this literature. Both strands tend to view violence as *the* integral feature of post-electoral politics. The first strand, often drawing methodologically from a larger number of cases, tends to explain post-election violence as part of the wider phenomenon of political violence and to emphasize the role of political party leaders in strategically instigating such violence. For instance, in a pre-election Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2007, Bratton (2008: 631) shows that “71% [of respondents] said that competition between political parties ‘often’ or ‘always’ leads to violent clashes,” (624) a fact which he argues, “diminish[es] the legitimacy of electoral outcomes by giving ‘losers,’ usually opposition parties, reason to think that the vote was fraudulent” (631). In a historically informed essay on post-election violence throughout Nigeria’s democratic history, Alemika (2011: 4) argues that political candidates largely instigate political violence. They recognize the “profitability of power,” according to Alemika, and encourage their party members to “see ... election[s] as a do or die affair.” Collier and Vicente’s (2014) experimental study, conducted during Nigeria’s 2007 election, found that pre-election anti-violence campaigns appear to reduce the incidence of post-electoral violence. They conclude that, “the anti-violence campaign we studied decreased the intensity of real violent events, implying that the behaviour of politicians who use intimidation as an electoral strategy was influenced” (353).

The second strand, drawing on more detailed case studies, explores the causes and dynamics of specific episodes of post-election violence. Though written before the Fourth Republic, Apter’s (1987) ethnographic study on the 1983 post-election violent protests in Ekiti-Yoruba towns in Ondo State (now part of Ekiti State) exemplifies this strand’s research. These elections were widely perceived to have been “rigged in favor of a National Party of Nigeria (NPN) candidate in an overwhelmingly Unity Party of

Nigeria (UPN) State” (389), barely a week after the Shagari-led UPN had defeated the NPN leader and pre-eminent Yoruba politician, Obafemi Awolowo, at the Federal level. Apter notes the conflict’s deeply communal nature and draws an analogy to ritual practices of “collective purification” (502). Crucially, the series of dubious electoral defeats produced a superimposition of grievances amongst UPN loyalists in Ondo State as “the conventional distinction between nation, state, and town collapsed” (490). Angerbrandt’s (2018) recent analysis of the post-2011 election violence arrives at a strikingly similar conclusion. As she points out, a combination of factors came together in the location that experienced the most severe violence: Stiff electoral competition and the emergence of distinctly polarized identities, fueled by narratives of exclusion. As she explains (155):

The election became particularly fractious as competition was framed in regional and religious terms, aggravating notions of northern and southern Nigeria as distinct political entities represented by the two main candidates respectively ...the north/south division intersected sub-nationally in Kaduna State where a longstanding conflict between Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Christians of different ethnicities has resulted in recurrent clashes.

As in Ondo in 1983, violence erupted in Kaduna in 2011 when the dominant electoral narrative framed regional, local, ethnic, and religious differences as coterminous with national partisan divides. As Angerbrandt (147) emphasises, underscoring the crucial role of communal networks, “riots are not always connected to political instigation but can erupt with politicians being caught off guard.” Apter and Angerbrandt’s analyses on post-election violence share in common the centrality of a coherent

communal narrative of fraudulent exclusion and the highly specific co-occurrence of the ‘right’ local and national conditions. These claims contrast with the generalised, elite-centric, and instrumental picture of violence characteristic of the first strand. Despite these disagreements, both strands assume that violence defines post-election partisan allegiances. Quantitative scholarship leans into this assumption most heavily and largely fails to account for the conditions under which violence occurs. But even in the case studies, which are particularly suited to unearthing specificity, the scholarship fails to adequately contextualise violence and mass protest in the wider scheme of post-electoral responses — i.e., the rarity of this particular expression of partisan allegiances.

The vast majority of Nigerian elections do not trigger mass unrest and violent protest. As Cohen and Lefebvre (Cohen & Lefebvre 2015: 56) point out in a wide-ranging essay on political violence since the end of military rule in Nigeria in 1999, *only 5% of elections have led to violence*. The persistent failure of the major parties to forge a coherent post-electoral narrative across the various coalitions lead to episodic violence. This claim does not entail that failing to devise a narrative consensus is without any violence as I explain below. However, exploring the less cohesive and less understood expressions of post-election partisan allegiance both increases the specificity of post-election violence *and* reveals the ideological and normative content that gives meaning to extreme acts assault and retaliation. The expressions of party activists in the 2014 and 2015 Ekiti and Kaduna provide a helpful starting point.

Failed consensus

Narratives condition partisan responses to elections. Evident in the case studies on post-electoral violence, the unifying narratives of fraudulent exclusion begin the polarization that erupts in violence. The cases of the Ado Ekiti (2014) and Zaria City (2015) elections did not have this outcome. Indeed, interviews with activists from both the winning and losing sides illustrate the heterogeneity of narratives and the practical difficulty of forging a unifying narrative on post-election results in the context of Nigeria's coalition politics.

A top priority for the triumphant parties in the Ekiti and Kaduna state elections, like most victors, was to legitimise their victory. The APC governor-elect, Mallam Nasir El Rufai, in his first press statement on 12 April 2015 after the results were announced, cautioned his supporters against “excessive celebrations” and vowed that he would “...not give any preference to the issue of indigene... we want to make Kaduna State an example of how Nigerians can live together as equals in peace and unity.” The significance of El Rufai's comments become clearer in context. El Rufai's APC, led by then President-elect Muhammadu Buhari (a northern Muslim), had just won the presidential race against Goodluck Jonathan (a southern Christian) weeks before El Rufai's victory in Kaduna. Moreover, Kaduna suffered the worst violence — largely falling on religious/north-south lines — of any Nigerian state in Nigeria after the 2011 election (Angerbrandt 2018). Given this background, El Rufai's post-election victory speech, particularly his statement regarding “the issue of indigene,” must be partly seen as designed to counteract lingering perceptions that his election victory was scored through his affiliation with Buhari and a northern Muslim agenda premised on the marginalisation of the state's southern Christian

population. Similarly, the Governor-elect Ayo Fayose developed a “populist” narrative about his victory: “I may not have a PhD or Doctorate degree like most of my opponents, but I can tell you the names of every councillor in Ekiti State. I don't have a SAN, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, but the people of Ekiti gave me SAM, Senior Advocate of the Masses, because they see me as a man of the people.” Fayose and allied state PDP leaders undoubtedly thought these sentiments especially important to affirm in light of allegations, popularly termed #Ekitigate, that had begun to surface. The allegations were that federally controlled security forces had been deployed in large numbers to intimidate APC campaigners and voters days before the election, thereby depressing the APC turnout in favour of the PDP and Fayose. As in the Kaduna case, the winning party aimed to craft a narrative that would deflate possible doubts.

Yet these elite narratives did not always take root amongst grassroots party activists, even amongst the zealous campaigners. For instance, Mr. Azeez Oluseni, the Chairman of PDP Ward 13 in Ado Ekiti, made the following statement while reflecting on his assessment of his party's victory in the 2014 election:

Of course we made good use of our party being in the centre then. We made use of what they call Federal might. But, you know, (laughter) that is politics in Nigeria... The other party would have done the same, if not worse! To be sincere, we knew Fayose is of course not a perfect person. He is not always very sophisticated... He might be full of insults and drama and does his politics in a way that, sometimes, is not pleasant. Some of us in our party say that this is what people like—that this is why he won. But sincerely, this kind of politics does not bring respect to our state. Even if that is what ordinary people want, a leader can elevate the common man rather than playing to the gallery.

This testimony sharply contrasts with the leadership's narrative in three ways. The Chairman affirms the idea that Fayose sought to negate: Their electoral victory was (at least in part) the result of the use of "Federal might," a euphemism for the illegal deployment of Federally controlled security forces to intimidate opposition party members in a state election. Note also the Chairman's description of Fayose's style of mobilisation. He does not describe it as an appropriate and authentic approach championed by "a man of the people." Rather, he describes it as "not always very sophisticated," "not pleasant," failing to "elevate the common man," and "playing to the gallery." Finally, these sentiments were voiced by a Ward Chairman, an activist at the frontlines of grassroots mobilization. This fact cuts against Fayose's self-description as the "Senior Advocate of the Masses." Though expressed in different cadences, several other influential PDP activists echoed the Chairman's sentiments. For instance, Daniel "I.D" Komolafe, a former APC member who was a member of the PDP when I first spoke to him in April 2015 narrated Fayose's victory as:

Small *ojoro* [cheating] sha. In this clime you have to play the game... Fayose and senior military men met in Spotless Hotel the day before [the election]. That one is confirmed. For opposition to be meeting military men in the night means that you can see the power of the federal might... Everybody has to do their own *ojoro*

Later in the conversation, I asked I.D. if *ojoro* was really all that was involved in Fayose's victory, he elaborated, adding two other points which conflicted the grand PDP victory narrative. He responded:

You can't say that, man. We have discussed the personality factor, the way Fayose was able to manipulate sentiment[s]. This is somebody that is a comedian... If you hear him speaking, he will say something funny, something entertaining. He can be crying one moment; he can prostrate on the floor another time... If you are a member of the party, it can be embarrassing to watch him... But he is very good with media and that helped him a lot.

But you can also discuss the issue of zoning. Fayose is from Afao - that is Ekiti Central. This Isan [where Fayemi is from] is in Ekiti North. The people there [in Ekiti Central Senatorial District] said that it was their turn to produce a governor, and they are right. This is what also assisted Fayose in the PDP primaries... His own people of course were very passionate because they wanted their brother to win.

The dissonance between the leadership's narrative and activists' narrative is clear in I.D.'s analysis. For I.D. Fayose's popularity was only one part of a more complex story for I.D.. Fayose was popular in part because he was a "comedian", rather than an "intellectual", a reality which for I.D. was "embarrassing" rather than inspiring. Furthermore, Fayose's heritage, as a constituent from Ekiti Central Senatorial district, one of three Senatorial districts in the state, was an additional addendum to the official victory narrative. The zoning principle of rotating power between norther and southern candidates at the federal level is also replicated in governorship contests at the level of the Senatorial District, the largest subdivision within states (and further replicated at the LGA level in cases where two candidates are from the same senatorial district). This influence of zoning or "affirmative action" — to borrow Mustapha's

description of Federal Character (2007) — further complicates the master-narrative of Fayose’s all consuming “mass appeal”.

The classic dissonance between party leadership and party members was even clearer among APC loyalists in Kaduna. One striking example of this was Aminu KC, an APC youth leader from Kwarbai A Ward in Zaria City. Aminu voiced the following poignant and categorical perspective on why his party’s candidate, El Rufai, had won the election.

There is only one reason why El Rufai w[on] that election, why our party won. It is simply because of [the] Buhari factor. You see, many of our people here, they are too religious. They mix religion too much with politics. And you know Buhari, they see him as somebody that is very Islamic; that, as far as religion, he is almost without fault. I am telling you, there are people here that said they would even die for Buhari. So when he supported El Rufai, of course they will support El-Rufai. *Kuma* [additionally], El Rufai went around to meet the local Imams. This is because he knows our people are ignorant and this is how to deceive the people... I think most of us in the party, we are aware of the way they use religion. Some even supported it, but many people also complain. There are more of us in the party who are beginning to open our eyes. In fact, I think most people, even those that said they would die for Buhari the first time, have already decided that they will not allow religion to deceive them again.

A couple crucial details surface in this statement. Aminu’s emphasis on El Rufai’s religious appeals for electoral success sharply contrasts with El Rufai’s more pluralist claims. Note also his interpretation of

the Buhari factor, which he viewed as being rooted in a religious appeal rather than in a more religiously neutral reputation for probity, as others activists in his party (including Isa, cited in Chapter 6) argued. His characterisation of the divide within the party over using religion for mobilisation illustrates how important disagreements arise not only between party leaders and activists, but amongst loyalists themselves. Crucially, his testimony suggests how these fault lines — in the Kaduna APC's case, one of disagreement over the ethics of using religious symbolism in the campaign strategy — prevent the formation of a unifying, and potentially deadly, narrative consensus in the post-election period.

Interpretive disagreements do not neatly track electoral victories and losses. But, for the sake of argument, consider that narrative disagreements and electoral consequences were related. On this paradigm, winners, secure in their victory, would not need to find a unifying narrative. Activists among the victors, then, are free to dissent. The losers would be the ones in need of an explanation, a unified narrative. While this paradigm could explain the winners in the Kaduna and Ekiti elections, it could not account for the comparable (if not greater) degree of narrative disagreements among the loyalists in the losing party.

Consider the interpretive disagreements in the wake of Ado Ekiti APC's loss. One set of APC activists claimed that the PDP could only win using Federal might to rig the election. "Many of our senior people were rounded up the day before the election and not allowed freedom of movement," said Egghead (2015, int.), a senior APC activist and campaign veteran. He continued, "some of our party leaders from outside of the state were also blocked by the security on the road and not allowed to come in, others were captured and kept here, all in broad daylight... Tell me how the election was free and fair." Luther of Africa, an activist who led many of the campaigns initiatives targeting university students, claimed that:

“Fayemi, because of his background in civil society, pro-democracy struggle, and as one of the lefts (*sic.*) in the party could not use the same kind of tactics that this man Fayose used. He could not stoop so low and that is why we lost.” Going a step further, another set of activists blamed voters for their lack of sophistication. Otunba, an Ado APC activist and campaign veteran observed (perhaps hyperbolically) that, “we ran a campaign modelled on the Obama campaign. We ran on our accomplishments. But sincerely, that is not what people here understand... It is rice, and salt, and cooking oil [which is how PDP mobilized] that they understand. Have you read Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*? That is who black people are. We are truly wretched here.” Yet another group within the Ekiti State APC, some of whom were cited as ‘defectors’ in the previous chapter, insisted that their party lost because they failed to connect with voters. “Fayemi also brought rice and money to share. Don’t believe all of the noise...” said Yinka (2015, int., pseudonymized on request). Yinka is a disillusioned loyalist in Ado Ekiti, who served on the campaign security team. As he continued, “my brother, forget that talk that this one is a socialist, or this one is a respectable person... they are all the same! It is just that our own [candidate] thought he could snub voters and party members and still win.” Notice the explanatory range amongst these assessments and, more specifically, the deeply fractured consensus that this variance reveals.

The activists of the defeated PDP in Kaduna exhibited similar reactions. One set of activists cried fraud, alleging that the APC used large numbers of underaged voters to boost their lead in the polls (Jama’a, 2017 int.). Another set of activists decried the use of religion to mobilize voters. As an example, PDP loyalist, Umar Ishak Dikko (2017 int.), shared this fascinating perspective regarding how religion came to be a powerful mobilizing force in favour of the APC:

It was this religious bias. Their main belief was that Buhari was an angel. Buhari was seen to be far above a human being... But our main problem is the local Mallams, the middle-class Mallams. You know, they envy their superiors in Kaduna who have riches from being close to [the PDP led] government for many years. Meanwhile the middle-class Mallams—who do most of the work— have been here struggling. They are envious and also ignorant of how the government works. But these middle-class Mallams have the majority. They also train the married women who go to the female *islamiya* schools, telling them that PDP is evil. You know, women are the main voting block—the majority. So, when it comes to voting, they listen to their Mallams even more than their husbands, you know! This thing even comes into the household... Honestly, if we continue like this, we have a major problem.

Dikko's testimony highlights how religiosity can reinforce partisan divides when it intersects with class and gender at the local and household levels. Moreover, his testimony presents yet another shade of explanation regarding the reason—namely the exploitation of religion by their opponents—for his party's poor electoral fortunes.

A third camp blamed the national party leaders, particularly Vice President Namadi Sambo, a native of Kaduna state, for the party's loss. According to this camp, Sambo's failure to direct the "dividends of democracy," including Federal development projects, to Kaduna dampened morale amongst party members (Goje, 2017 int.). A fourth and final perspective, offered by several PDP loyalists—some of whom were cited among the 'defectors' in the previous chapter—blamed the party's leading candidate, Governor Mallam Mukhtar Yero, for its loss. They thought Yero was inexperienced, corrupt,

and inept (Musa, 2017 int.). These diverse and conflicting perspectives illustrate the extent of narrative non-concurrence about the electoral outcomes. This diversity precluded the formation of a post-electoral consensus even among loyalists of the losing parties.

That the losing parties conceded moments after the election results were announced must be noted. In Ekiti, Governor Fayemi conceded in a televised broadcast on a local news station; in Kaduna, Governor Yero made a congratulatory phone-call to his opponent. These conciliatory acts help explain the absence of large-scale violence in these elections. It is also important to point out that disputes over election results, a near norm in Nigerian governorship elections, are very infrequently preceded by bouts of electoral violence according to Cohen and Lefebvre (2015). Conversely, elections which do precede violent outbreaks do not always require the losers to reject the electoral results (Angerbrandt 2018). Rather than the losing candidate's response, the extent of polarization along partisan and other clear dividing lines better predicts violent outbursts. Such polarisation, moreover, requires a consensus story. This failure to generate a consensus helped preclude violence in the 2014/2015 elections. Elections always have the possibility of mobilising violent social cleavages. I argue that the fact that they by and large do not lead to such rupture is in part due to the fractured nature of post-election narratives, and the inability of political actors to unite around an identitarian narrative consensus.

Implicit Threat

Yet the absence of consensus does not entail the absence of violence. Indeed, targeted threats and violence against loyalists in Ado Ekiti and Zaria City were reported at the time. The failed consensus thesis can

nevertheless account for small-scale, episodic violence. Two instances exemplify how these threats and violence works.

Yinka, the disillusioned Ado Ekiti APC activist in his fifties, made the following comments in 2015 during a follow-on conversation about the electoral fortunes of his party the previous year. As he recollected:

Like I told you, I was in charge of securing the [Fayemi's] country home. Of course we could not get all of our funds out to our field-marshals during this point because, you know, Fayose had brought the security boys into town and in fact the whole state was on lockdown. So many of our funds were just with some of our people on the field. We also had 40 or 50 thousand here, kept in one of the rooms... I mean, in dollars. And some of these my boys, my lieutenants with me, they also knew that a lot of money was there, even if not the amount. So when our guy now went on TV to accept the results, you know, we had not even seen him yet... Sincerely, it was about to be chaos! I mean, he conceded to Fayose before we had even planned the next step. At this point, some of these boys came to me and said look, let us share the money and get out of here. Of course they knew that at that point nothing would happen. They must have suspected that something like ten thousand dollars was there. I could have shared that with them at that point, then held on to the rest, and I can assure you that nobody would have mentioned it again... But at that point I had to say, look, this is my family, I cannot do such a thing. It was about integrity. The way these guys looked at me... I think my life was dangling on a thread. Anything could really have happened... Eventually some of them left. Some of my lieutenants that have

been in the trenches with me for years; they left the house, and that was the last time I ever set eyes on them. Sometimes I regret my loyalty that day. Was I not stupid?

Before delving into Yinka's account, I wish to present another reflection by a Kaduna PDP activist regarding his direct experience of partisanship after the 2015 election. Umar Ishak Dikko, an activist in his fifties, narrated the following account amid a conversation in Zaria City about how the post-election period had been for him:

It was really difficult. Nobody thought that they wouldn't burn down this house [pointing backwards to his house] at the time. When I'm moving, around then, I have to move with a big armoury.. [On the day the results were to be announced] I [had to] bring some men that when you look in their eyes you know that they are not people to play with...I wouldn't call them thugs, but you can picture it. On that day in 2015, I had to gather some youth in from the party to stand here [outside his gate]. They stayed for two, three days... During the governorship election, we had to do the same thing... Since APC usually takes most of the Units in this ward, they thought that if PDP won, that means we would have rigged. If we had won that election, I cannot guarantee that we would be here today.

There are significant differences in these accounts. An obvious difference, and across both electoral contexts, is religion's role in politics. Religion plays a prominent role in Kaduna politics, whereas it plays a muted role in Ekiti. Another difference regards where conflict arises in Zaria City it is inter-party

conflict, while in Ado Ekiti it is intra-party conflict. Dikko's experience also stands out because he highlights the threat he feared from his fellow Muslims. This testimony complicates the classic accounts of post-election violence in Nigeria, including Angerbrandt's (2018), which tend to focus on interreligious violence.

Important similarities between these accounts also demand attention. Notice how gender and age play in post-election violence. Young men are often on the frontlines of violent encounters, either as security personnel or "thugs" or "vigilantes" for hire (as Ado Ekiti APC activists Toyin observes in Chapter 4). This age and gender-based division of political labour can lead to different experiences of the post-election period. Younger men stand guard or represent a threat, while the older loyalists issue commands. Most importantly, both accounts make explicit the deep fissures that become evident within Nigerian politics — not only among political parties, but also within religious communities — after elections. Even in the absence of mass or communal violence, these fissures may help generate the menacing threats to bloody violence. This post-election division evinces the nature of Nigeria's main political parties as coalitions between various groups holding competing commitments — be they ethno-cultural or economic— about how society should be ordered.

Mass Violence and Kaduna 2011

The rarity of mass post-election violence does not preclude its exploration. It is also important to better understand these incidents because of the indelible mark they leave in communities and in the memories of the democratic citizenry, as I heard described and recalled in emotional tones during fieldwork in Zaria

City. The 2011 election featured severe outbreaks of violence in Kaduna state resulting in over 1000 deaths. President Jonathan reportedly remarked that such violence had not occurred after an election since the 1983 episode which occurred in the part of Ondo state that is now Ekiti shortly before the collapse of the First Republic (After 1987). This section explores the Kaduna 2011 post-election violence from the perspective of loyalists in Zaria City, focusing on the ways in which the political context in Kaduna in 2011 differed from that of 2015 in both Ekiti and Kaduna states.

Kaduna revealed a pattern of violence which has occurred in a smaller scale in other states in Nigeria's ethnically and religiously plural middle belt. Christian/Muslim lines of identification in the north west and middle belt, also overlap with non-Hausa/Hausa cleavages. These super-imposed identities are often an axis of violence particularly in the mixed "border" communities in the middle of spatially segregated towns such as Jos (Madueke 2018). When both local and national election are widely deemed to have been rigged in favour of either community this can provide a specific trigger point (Higazi & Lar 2015). On the other hand, though south west state such as Ekiti are religiously plural and feature the dominant Christian/Muslim divide, such divides do not also map unto ethnic identifications and segregated settlement patterns as they do in the north west and middle belt. The narratives recounted below therefore focus on the perspective of Zaria City based party members who spoke to me during fieldwork.

Several loyalists with whom I spoke in Zaria City, recalled 2011 in the midst of conversation and without being specifically asked about it. Dikko (2017, int.), in the earlier reference conversation, offered a clear perspective on how he had witnessed the 2011 violence.

It was hell for us [PDP loyalists] here in 2011... They saw that [President Goodluck] Jonathan, a Christian [had] won some weeks before, and he defeated their messiah Buhari. Because of the way they have used religion to manipulate the people, that time the opposition (the right-wing All Nigeria People's party, which later merged into the APC), started telling people that 'PDP are cheats, PDP are corrupt, PDP are un-Islamic...' They started telling people that we who are Muslim in the party [PDP] that we are traitors, that we are infidel. You can understand what the means. It means somebody who has shaken your hand last week will not even look at your face again. Your neighbours, even the lady that sells tomatoes on your street... This is why so many lives were lost...

Sincerely, we also had to prepare ourselves... I am not saying we harmed anybody, but you cannot be foolish... Everyone [in the PDP] saw that our lives were in danger, so we also decided to bring some youths around and make sure they were well prepared. Sincerely, in some areas, it was a battle to death... many houses went up in flames.

Firstly, Dikko confirms Angerbandt's, view that the victory of Christian Goodluck Jonathan over Muslim Muhammadu Buhari during the 2011 presidential elections fed into narratives of betrayal and enmity at the local level, narratives which in turn inflamed partisan divisions, triggering violence after the Kaduna state governorship election. However, Dikko a Muslim himself, who feared and "prepared" himself against attacks from fellow Muslims given his affiliation with the PDP, slightly complicates the view that religious and regional divisions were the most salient drivers of post-election violence in 2011.

Dikko's traumatic recollection of his having been considered "infidel" by fellow Muslims heralds the superimposition of democratic politics with identitarian passions which in Mouffe's terms, threatens to "shatter the liberal democratic consensus". This aspect of the episode affirms Kalyvas' (2003) sociological observation regarding mass violence. Kalyvas notes that the national level "meta-cleavage" from the perspective of political leaders or analysts in the capital city, rarely captures the plurality of actions, motivations, and identities that may drive violence in provincial or local contexts. This convergence of "local motives and supra-local imperatives" is what for Kalyvas endows large scale violence with its "puzzling character" (475). Thus, while the conflict was framed as a regional/religious division narrated from the centre, it was experienced as a battle between neighbours, and co-religionists from the perspective of party members in Zaria City.

Dikko's recollection also highlights how electoral narratives in 2011 so easily began to adopt morally and religiously laden terms like "traitor" and "infidel", terms which defined the political community in a divisive and essentialist manner, revealing a feature which Mouffe attributes to right-wing populist political mobilisation. In Nigeria, such vocabulary has been used to reframe the political community not in adversarial terms, as a battle between worthy opponents "in which conflict takes a form that does not destroy the political association"(Mouffe 2005: 20), but in antagonistic terms, as a battle between mortal enemies. Other loyalists in Zaria City affirmed, Dikko perspective, even if through opposition. For instance, Galadima Hussain Ismail, an APC loyalist from Kwarbai B Ward, had the following recollection of 2011:

Our people were inconsolable. It would have been worse even because people were fed up... PDP cheated, it was large scale rigging. We heard that Jonathan won, then they said they had also won us in the Kaduna state, of course people would not take it... I also said I would protest... The youths were difficult to control. Many people in our community saw that the (governorship) election was being rigged in the state that time... What happened was very bad, and so much lives were destroyed...

To try to show us [Muslims] that we are politically irrelevant in our own state, is not possible, and sincerely, that is how many people saw it. How long can one tolerate cheating in broad daylight?

At this point, I interrupted Mallam Ismail's train of thought to point out that he seemed to be painting an entire community with the same broad brush. He responded as follows:

Not to say that it is all of them. It comes from the leaders [of the PDP], and even pastors sincerely. But it is not to say that all of them, or that the people in southern Kaduna [the Christian/non-Hausa part of the state] entirely. This [PDP rule] is why ordinary people have suffered in this state.

In Galadima's testimony, the election is recollected as a battle between those who "own" the state, and "cheats", particularly the leadership of the opposing identity group. The populist element of right-wing

populist mobilisation is visible in this aspect of the statement: right wing populism opposes the “ordinary people” of one identity group to the corrupt elite of the alternative group. Notice also the invocation of “youths” as the political category of people who are at the frontlines of street-level politics, a recurring trend in northern Nigerian politics (Ya’u 2000; Last 2005), as well as in Nigeria’s south west, south east, and south south (Pratten 2006; Von Hellermann 2010; Adebani & Obadare 2013). A further testimony from Hajjiya Jummai, a Zaria City APC Women’s Leader, expressed the same sentiment in starkers terms. “The violence was the fault of those hypocrites who wanted to use force to steal the election. We said *lai lai* [truthfully], we refuse. It is a shame many of our youths started fighting and died. But that is the fault of hypocrites.” A February 15 entry in field-notes offer a final more sobering account, this time from the PDP side, regarding how the 2011 post-election period was lived and experienced in Zaria City. As I note:

Yesterday I met Fahrida Umaru [pseudonymised], a former PDP Loyalist who lost two sons in 2011. I met Hajjiya Umaru through her husband who sells provisions near the University. She is middle aged, and a first wife. She does not work. She was quite composed during the conversation but it was also a deeply moving one for the family to have shared with an almost stranger from out of town. Two of her sons were on the road back from Bauchi, her home state, when their car was stopped and burned... She said that, obviously muslim in their dress and comportment, her sons were probably misidentified as opposition supporters on their way from the south. She said ‘I am still in the party to remember my sons who died for something that they believe.’

As with previous conversation during fieldwork which delved into the questions of post-election violence in 2011, speaking to Fahrida alerted me to the extent to which Nigeria's experiment with liberal democracy has profoundly shaped the lives of millions of citizens across the country. Her account in particular also sheds a light on the depth of commitments which party activism has generated among many activists for whom party identification involves questions of family, memory, and death. We do these activists a disservice by dismissing their heartfelt political commitments and practices as little more than a banal survivalist expression. However, these commitments and practices also come with deadly implications when they mobilise citizens along a right-wing populist lines, particularly in the moments when liberal institutional safeguards reach their limits. Ultimately, Fahrida's testimonies, like the testimonies above, highlights the power of ethno-communal mobilisation to divide communities and to dangerously infuse Nigeria's practice of liberal democracy with the deadly spectre of communal violence.

Conclusions

In Nigeria, parties rarely generate a narrative consensus that can produce ethno-communal polarisation and engender mass violence. Liberal institutional reforms that created new states, established the constitutional federal character principles, and inspired the informal party practice of "zoning" have limited the extent to which such deadly mobilisation can occur (see Chapter 3). The case studies on post-election violence convincingly argue that violent outbreaks require a particular mix of conditions. For violent outbreaks, a dominant electoral narrative must make regional and local ethno-religious

differences coterminous with national partisan divides. In such conditions, a unifying narrative around “fraud” and “marginalisation,” and “enmity” particularly championed amongst partisans of the losing party, becomes a deadly spark. However, such a consensus is difficult to accomplish in the context of Nigeria’s coalition partisanship marked by disjunctions, disloyalty, and non-compliance. The nature of post-election partisanship in contemporary Nigeria may be much more frequently characterised by internal discord than a deadly consensus. Therefore, in the 2014 Ekiti and 2015 Kaduna Governorship elections, sharp and vocal disagreements, among activists of both parties, over the reasons for the electoral results shaped the post-election period. Though these disagreements did not result in mass protests, these responses did produce their own peculiar forms of violence. These more “mundane” instances of violence that pit co-religionists, co-ethnics, and party members against each other still pose significant threats to the lives of loyalists and their communities. However, even exceptional moments of mass violence require explanation, and moreover help us better understand the varying degrees and gradations of violence that might occur at the end of the electoral cycle. Recollections above from the 2011 election period highlights the power of ethno-communal mobilisation to divide communities and to infuse Nigeria’s practice of liberal democracy with the deadly spectre of communal violence.

These arguments bring two important dynamics to the fore: Post-election violence and the nature of political party activism after elections end in Nigeria. With regards to the former dynamic, studying the specific instances of violent outbursts can help identify the factors that increase the likelihood of violence. With regards to the latter dynamic, this chapter shows that, as elsewhere on the election cycle, centre-right populism defines the character of Nigeria’s parties of government. Yet the post-election period highlights the ways in which forms of right-wing populism have been constrained

by institutional reforms within Nigeria's political system. The terms in which the final moments of the election cycle are understood, thus, point to the fusion of ethnic and religious identarian politics, liberal institutional rules, and centrist valence politics, while also exposing the deadly contradictions that can emerge in the heat of centre-right populist party competition.

8.

Conclusion: “Your boys remain loyal!”

The call to imagine beyond “choiceless democracies” is important for intellectuals as well as citizens. The idea of politics as posing fundamental choices gets lost in technocracy just as easily as in pathologising views of African politics as a lost cause.

—Portia Roelofs, 16 Nov 2018, 10:42 a.m. Tweet.

Introduction

The end of the 2015 - 2019 election cycle brought with it a new electoral confrontation: President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC challenged Alhaji Atiku Abubaker of the PDP. Atiku, a founding member of the APC, returned to the PDP in mid-2018 where he once served as Vice President under Olusegun Obasanjo. To some observers, Atiku’s political career of party defections mirrors the story of the Fourth Republic — a story of ambition and opportunism unrestrained by political commitments or ideological loyalties. Call this position the pathological perspective, where elections pit two opportunists against each other.

To others, the 2019 election reflects a new narrative. The intense confrontation between two electable political parties has finally produced presidential candidates able to articulate rival programmatic visions. The Buhari campaign spoke to the northern *talakawa*, or working class. Atiku’s

campaign spoke to the southern middle-class and business community. Some have argued that this was the election that pitted people who care about the dollar exchange rate against people who care about the price of fertilizers; it was the first Fourth Republic election to split the country on class lines.²² On one hand, continues this perspective, President Buhari or “Mr. Clean” maintains a reputation for honesty but pursues statist policies — including defending the national currency against devaluation — to international investors’ distaste. On the other hand, Atiku or “Mr. Action” appeals to his business experiences, promise to sell state companies, and deregulate Nigeria’s foreign exchange markets, “albeit with a tinge of corruption.”²³ Call this latter view the technocratic perspective, where elections pit competing visions for balancing public and private ventures.

Both the pathological perspective and the technocratic perspective omit two important points. These perspectives fail to acknowledge that it is only due to the candidates’ shared identities — both Northern Hausa-Fulani Muslims — that region, religion, and ethnicity have not explicitly become key axes of political competition in the campaign. Indeed, to differentiate themselves, both candidates set out to woo other ethno-nationalist constituencies: Atiku’s selection of a popular Igbo running-mate or Buhari’s promise to pick a Yoruba successor. These are not simply primitive agitations for the recognition of one’s tribe member. These are moral politics in the Lonsdalian sense of moral ethnicity. The spectre of ethno-nationalism, even if masked by the co-ethnicity of the competitors, still haunts Nigerian

²² Thanks to Olly Owen for the conversation which sparked this realisation.

²³ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-18/mr-clean-v-mr-action-how-nigeria-s-top-contenders-square-up>

electoral politics and remains a powerful mobiliser in 2019. Moreover, both the pathological and technocratic perspectives also fail to note how both candidates completely agree on the basic centrist credo that there is no alternative to neoliberal globalisation. Calling the APC the left-wing and PDP the right-wing of the two centre-right populist parties amounts to splitting hairs; a distinction without a difference. Regardless of who won the 2019 elections, voters decided on two variants of centrism and far right-populism.

Beyond the usual focus on election drama and political elite, this ideological fusion better explains the rise and character of Nigeria's contemporary mass party members. These parties have given Nigerian political and associational life a vibrancy and scale that surpasses mid-twentieth century Europe — often seen as the golden era of mass membership parties. Yet these parties are a unique breed. Historical accounts for the rise of European mass party membership stress how the socialist strategies of mobilizing and organizing masses of the poor and down-trodden eventually shaped right-wing parties, which are otherwise inclined to be elitist. Nigeria, however, has witnessed no “contagion from the left” (Duverger 1962). If any, Nigeria instead witnessed a contagion from the right and the centre, characterized by military authoritarian populist political manoeuvres, liberal institutional reforms, and pragmatic bargains made between political centrists and ethno-nationalists (Kendhammer 2010). This contagion, from a historical standpoint, has almost literally killed the Nigerian left. These parties may carry distant imprints of the left's organisational strategies, but right-wing populist and centrist ideologies fuel them. This concluding chapter summarizes my core argument, first with a reflection on Mkandawire's notion of “choiceless democracy,” then with a summary of the arguments of each chapter, a restatement of the

contributions of my study, and a reflection on future angles of research and politics opened up by my line of inquiry.

Choiceless Democracy

Nigeria's version of mass politics poses an interesting dilemma. A "Tocquevillian" associational vibrancy with evocative moral politics and intriguing cultural displays, such as the glass-eating and fire-breathing Sango worshipper described in Chapter 4, characterise ground-level politics. Simultaneously, these parties have ushered in technocratic commitments: Maintaining good-governance, attracting foreign investment, stabilising the currency, pursuing fiscal responsibility, and striving for public sector reform (see Chapters 5 and 6). These developments may inspire hope in both the cultural relevance and developmental potential of Nigerian democracy, especially since mainstream scholars associate "programmatic politics" over "issues" with better developmental outcomes (Cheeseman 2014). But Mkandawire's (2004) reflections on "choice-less democracies" and Mouffe's warnings about the dangers of "politics without adversary" should give rise to concern given these developments. As Mkandawire (2004), observes:

With globalisation, state capacity has been severely eroded; nations must comply with the exigencies of global market forces or be marginalised. This loss of sovereignty is supposed to be compensated for by higher levels of growth. Failure to achieve high rates of growth in the era of neoliberalism is perceived to be evidence of failure of internal economic policies. Thus the marginalisation of whole

continents and the persistence of such national problems as “unemployment” are blamed on the failure of policy makers to remove domestic market distortions and rigidities. In this way, a whole range of policies that states have pursued in the name of social welfare, national cohesion or development is associated with “distortions” and rigidities.

Mkandawire argues that consensus politics narrows the range of choices national leaders can make because this mode of politics submits to globally imposed programmatic developmental policies. Citizens are left with “choiceless democracies” where “citizens can vote but cannot chose.” Countries cede politico-economic “sovereignty,” while, paradoxically, national governments are blamed for any failure to meet higher levels of growth. Furthermore, the “choicelessness” of Nigerian democracy enables politicians to cross parties without the need to shift their programmatic orientations.

Mouffe’s theory of radical democracy offers an even more pressing reason why the character of Nigeria’s mass parties of government call for caution, despite their vibrancy and rising technocratic sensibilities. A “politics without adversary” — or politics based on the consensus around the idea there is no alternative to neoliberal globalisation — shuts down the possibility of legitimate left/right political disagreement. In this vacuum, only the passions of right-wing populist impulses thrive. Overwhelmed by ethno-nationalist political identification and governments oriented towards opportunistic compromise, the political centre cannot hold forever. Nigeria’s paradoxical and masculine politics reflect both Mkandawire and Mouffe’s concerns. Former military dictators are democratically elected. Political figures, mostly men, easily cross parties, while others, again often men, kill and die for the same two parties of government. Nigerian democracy remains suspended in a paradoxical state of predictability and peril. Indeed, the partially playful greeting exchanged between political allies in Nigeria — “your boys remain

loyal!" — can never escape a certain cultural, political, and gendered irony. The ideological fusion of right-wing populism and centrism, exemplified by the APC and PDP, generate these paradoxical extremes with vibrant mass participation along the high-points of the democratic electoral cycle.

This argument challenges the reigning analytical paradigm set out in Richard Joseph's prebendalism. It does so by contesting the Josephian view that Nigerian politics is devoid of ideological and normative contestation. But the fact that Nigerian party organisation and identification contains ideological politics is hardly novel. Joseph himself, in an essay entitled "Nigerian Political Parties and Ideology" (1978), written on the eve of Nigeria's Second Republic and shortly before his work on prebendalism, observed early signs of the rising dominance of centrist politics, the marginalisation of radical leftist voices, and the rise and dangers of essentialist forms of political identification. That Joseph's later work, which eschewed the category of the ideological spectrum, came to dominate the scholarship indicates the ideological changes in the scholarship rather than the ideological changes in Nigeria. This is not to claim that patronage or corruption have not been important dynamics in the politics of contemporary Nigeria. Rather, my claim is that the singular focus on the "brute data" (Taylor 1971) of legitimate or illegitimate forms of material exchange can serve to occlude the intersubjective and ideological backdrop that informs such social practices. One can acknowledge the tendency for resource rich countries to be plagued by recurrent financial scandals without turning corruption into the "the fundamental processes of Nigerian political life" as does Joseph. The fact, for instance, that patronage tends to exclude women, youth, and other marginalised communities — people who may radically challenge the status quo — suggests that pre-existing social norms and ideas inform the meaning of these exchanges. Material exchanges express a vector for wider norms and ideological configurations. The prebendal paradigm

reflects Mkandawire's concerns about the increasing choicelessness of Nigerian democracy insofar as it frames politics as a choice between corrupt or programmatic leaders, rather than as a struggle between those who hold power and those without it. This blindness to the ideological forces which drive political identification has also meant that the analysis of political action, such as the emergence of mass party membership, has eluded scholars working within the prebendalist paradigm.

This focus on ideology also poses challenges to the emerging comparative politics research on political party organisation in African democracies. Despite calls to abandon Eurocentric models and "Western European Bias" (Erdmann 2004), this scholarship still tends to idealize "institutionalized" political parties in Europe and America. Furthermore, the field distinguishes these idealized Western parties from "neopatrimonial parties" (Erdmann 1999) or "clientelistic parties" (Ichino & Nathan 2013) in Africa and new democracies elsewhere. While lamenting the supposed absence of ideological contestation in African democracies (Bleck & Van de Walle 2013), this scholarship does not engage with the historically contingent emergence of ideological differentiation in Western democracies (Duverger 1962) as well as the more recent critique of the emergence of "a politics without adversary" (2000) in the West. This scholarship failed to consider that the global diffusion of a "choiceless" economic orthodoxy has fostered adherents in African democracies (see also Burnell 2006) and the possibility that the agreement between parties in contexts such as Nigeria might, rather than its absence, be a product of a powerful ideological consensus. The idealisation of Western democracies by comparative scholars has thus fed a misrecognition of both the contingent conditions that produce mass ideological politics in Europe and the possibility of their emergence elsewhere under new ideological configurations. In short, the scholarship is "badly prepared to grasp the nature of 'mass' political movements" (Mouffe 2005).

Through embracing a radical theory of democracy and eschewing such idealizations, this study delineated how a fusion of centrism and right-wing populism drives mass party membership in contemporary Nigeria.

Contributions

This study focused on Nigeria's parties of government, the APC and the PDP, to substantiate this claim. I examined local party branches in the south-western and north-central states of Ekiti and Kaduna. At these locations, I undertook an ethnographic examination of party mobilisation, organisation, and norms during the key moments of the democratic electoral cycle. The first part of the study set the historical and structural backdrop of contemporary Nigerian mass party politics. The introductory chapter sketched out the context, methodology, and main arguments of the study centred around mass party membership, centrism, and right-wing populism in contemporary Nigeria. The second chapter presented key aspects of the six-decade long process of political mobilisation and institutional experimentation which shaped the emergence of Nigeria's centrist and right-wing populist mass membership parties. This chapter showed that the fourth republican convergence of two mass parties around centre-right populist ideology has not occurred by chance. Rather, colonial policies and the decisions of First Republic leaders, both of which encouraged the formation of coalitions between centrist and ethno-nationalists, left an ideological imprint that still marks the logic of contemporary politics. The era of authoritarian military rule also left liberal and populist institutional innovations, including the creation of new states, the Federal Character provisions, and the construction of national and grassroots party organs, which still

mark mass politics amongst Nigeria's parties of government. These legacies, influenced both by the rules of the founding elections that ushered in the Fourth Republic and the alliances that produced the APC, have marked the convergence of right-wing populist and ideologically centrist politics that accounts for the contemporary fervour of mass party membership in Nigeria. The third chapter explored the social identities of those who claimed to be active partisans in recent Afrobarometer surveys from Nigeria and party members' own qualitative perspectives on party loyalty. The chapter made three key contributions. Firstly, the chapter highlighted data showing that the vibrancy of Nigerian (and African) party membership far exceeds that of twentieth-century Europe. Secondly, it traced the national-level socio-demographic composition of this membership, unpacking the impact of socio-economic class, gender, and generational identities on party engagement. Thirdly, it showed how loyalists in two local party branches affirm the role, not of prebendal godfatherism, but of centre-right populism in shaping their experience of participating in party activities. The contests between tradition and meritocracy observed in these parties encapsulates the politics of centre-right populism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The rest of the study examined the organisational practices and political debates across the electoral cycle. Drawing primarily from material gathered in local party branches in Kaduna and Ekiti, these chapters presented a series of bottom-up ethnographic snapshots of the mix of ideological centrism and far-right populism which infuses the activities and ideals of Nigeria's parties of government. The fourth chapter, on constituency building and party mobilisation, outlined the bureaucratic organisation of Nigeria's local party branches. To further demonstrate the weakness of the patrimonial framework, this chapter assessed party membership from a rational choice perspective. It momentarily adopted both a "supply and demand" and a "rewards" framework to demonstrate that, even from a rational-choice

perspective, the “rewards” that party loyalists receive through their participation far exceeds the prebendalist category of “political patronage.” Rather, the constituency building phase underscores how centrist and right-wing ideals infuse both the “supply” of party “rewards,” which attract loyalists, and the “demand” for such “rewards.” I then provide an organisational profile of the way in which both parties organise their local bureaucracies. Though parties attract a mass following, the allocation of party “rewards” within the APC and the PDP by-and-large reproduces the gendered, gerontocratic, and economic hierarchies present in wider society. Ultimately, the sheer diversity of political goods parties supply exceed the frequently deployed but rarely specified category of “patronage.”

The fifth chapter focused on the format and content of two sets of party primaries held in Ekiti and Kaduna in 2014 and 2015 respectively. It examined how loyalists vetted candidates and what they looked for in them. Candidates are vetted on a range of attributes which include but exceed their material contributions to the party. These include particular “valence” centrist policies as well as whether or not candidates offered gifts in a culturally appropriate manner and perform convincingly enough to appear as “viable” contenders in the general election. At the centre of this process is the messy interaction between centrist “competence” politics and the mobilisation of socio-cultural political norms and values.

The sixth chapter, focusing on two governorship elections, analysed the relationship between party leaders and their loyalists during the election. Specifically, it assessed why loyalists chose to comply with or defect from the party line in governorship elections. The chapter showed that a loyalist’s assessment of a candidate’s “moral competence” – rooted in ethno-cultural morality and centrist assessments — determined their compliance to or defection from the party line on Election Day. Moral competence took on different meanings in Zaria City and Ado Ekiti, but in both cases referred to embedded notions

of gift-giving, charisma, and a commitment to particular valence policies. This finding troubles the established distinctions in African studies between "moral ethnicity" and "political tribalism" (Lonsdale 1994) and between personality, patronage, and programmatic based strategies of mobilisation in multi-party democracies (Cheeseman 2014). Concluding the empirical core of the study, chapter seven explored a paradox: Why fluid political loyalties could result in outbursts of post-electoral violence. Drawing on the testimonies of loyalists who witnessed or participated in violence in Kaduna and Ekiti, it showed that ethno-culturally infused assessments of election results deployed moral language such as "traitor," "cheat," "hypocrite," "infidel," and "enemy" — language which herald the return of Mouffian antagonisms. However, elections rarely result in outbreaks of communal violence in Nigeria, owing to liberal institutional reforms which have made rare the dangerous superimposition of partisan, ethnic, and regional divides. More typically, party allegiances in the post-election period are marked by the internal contradictions which arise from contests between two parties that share the same centre-right populist ideological fusion, resulting in an atmosphere of implicit threat even between those who share the same party and ethno-communal identities.

Ultimately, in opposition to the classic "deficiencies" identified in the literature on African political parties, I advance the following three claims throughout the thesis: I found that local party branches sustain vibrant memberships; that party activists exercise a measure of both formal and informal influence on party decisions; and that, rather than ideological vacuity, party membership embeds a plurality of normative and ideological commitments to both party leaders and parties as institutions. All three of these dynamics are best understood through a consideration of the interplay between right-wing populist and centrist ideology in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

This study contributes to the empirical study of political ideas in democratising Africa. There has been an increasing — albeit gradual — recognition that political contestation in Africa cannot be understood without the role of normative politics — including moral values, political ideologies, and civic ideals. Studies of the role of normative politics in contemporary Africa elucidate the enduring power of nationalism (Alexander & McGregor 2001); the developmentalism of Africa's illiberal state-building elite (Jones, et al. 2012); the rise of politicised technocrats in Nigeria (Thurston 2018); and the competition between global good governance norms around anonymity and local understandings of "accountability as accessibility" in Nigeria's Oyo state (Roelofs 2016a). This scholarship dovetails with a longer-running historical interest for how the deeply held commitments by African and other post-colonial leaders, social groups, and international advisers have profoundly shaped the development trajectory of the state and society (e.g. Cooper 2002; Young 2016). This literature often focused on the role of elites in forging political ideals or of voters and citizens in appropriating or resisting them. In contrast, this study focused on the shared meaning generated in the midst of mass political party mobilisation. This focus provides an analytical means to frame both elite and popular politics together (Von Hellermann 2010; Pratten 2013). Most importantly, this scholarship reintroduced the left/right ideological spectrum into the analysis of contemporary African party politics.

My study also contributes comparative politics. Comparative political scientists researching democratisation in Africa have become increasingly interested in the empirical study of political party organisations and ideals. This scholarship has been enriched by studies from South Africa, Zambia, and Ghana (Darracq 2008; Cheeseman & Hinfelaar 2009; Bob-Milliar 2012; Giollabhuí 2013; Osei 2016), but has yet to take stock of partisan organisation and activism in Africa's largest democracy — Nigeria.

Like these works, this study moves beyond generalised notions of neopatrimonialism and clientelism to empirically assess the organisational reach, bureaucratic strength of political parties, and the extent to which they enable ordinary citizens to participate in public life and hold their leaders accountable. It thus focuses on both the organisational form and political content of party activism. Studying mass participation in local party organs in some of Nigeria's remotest towns provides, perhaps, a "most extreme case design" (Gerring 2004). Extreme in that the existence of strong party organisations and normative politics in such "spaces which are [furthest] removed from theories of liberal democracy" (Michelutti 2007: 16) — and we would least expect to find such politics — may suggest its relevance across Nigeria and in African democracies more generally. The study also challenges and extends this scholarship by showing the ways in which shifting party "disloyalty" in Nigeria, often seen by comparative scholars — in an interestingly Leninist view — as a sign of party weakness in African democracies, might paradoxically reflect shared and stable ideological commitments instead.

This study further contributes to a recent scholarly move to reassess the politics of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in light of, yet looking beyond, the analytics of prebendalism and patronage politics. Indicative studies in this regard include recent work on both rule-bound and particularistic modes of recruitment into the Nigerian Police Force (Owen 2013); on the precariousness of patrimonial relationships between youth groups and political leaders in south-east Nigeria (Pratten 2013); and on the enduring force of the centre-left and ethno-nationalist ideological legacy of Obafemi Awolowo in south-west Nigerian electoral politics (Hoffmann & Nolte 2013) all published in the edited volume *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations* (Adebanwi & Obadare 2013). This scholarship stresses the importance of popular normative expectations to understand the state and political

contestation in Nigeria — a much needed perspective. The scholarship's prebendalist framework, however, limits its theoretical reach and sophistication. Furthermore, it has paid very little attention to political parties. More specifically, it has not analysed how the modes of organisation and mobilisation that channel popular aspirations or otherwise reflect or negate predominant patterns of political contestation. As organisations that profoundly influence the state and possess a nation-wide apparatus for social mobilisation, Nigeria's main political parties merit careful examination. This study into the inner workings of local party branches and how parties inspire mass participation sheds light on this important arena of political contestation.

This study also contributes to political theory. Specifically, it examined how Mouffe's post-Marxist theories, constructed with an explicit focus on Western democracies in the neoliberal and third-way eras, can be extended into a study of contemporary African politics. Postcolonial scholars have been wary of the uncritical application of Euro-centric theories derived in Western societies — including Marxist and other critical theories — to the realities of life in the non-Western world — and rightly so (cf: Chakrabarty 2009). "One major implication of this understanding," Rao (2017) argues, summarising this perspective, "is that the terms and categories of conventional social theory, emerging as they do out of a particular experience of capitalism in the West, are [...] inadequate in grasping the political modernity of the non-West." But if we view liberal democracy, not as a distinct artefact of the European cultural heritage (as Mouffe herself problematically suggests), but as a set of institutional practices — including elections, parliaments, political parties, etc. — adopted in and imposed upon many parts of the Western and non-Western world, then, stripped of its Euro-centric baggage, it is possible to apply Mouffe's theories of liberal democracy beyond the confines of Europe. Moreover, given that centrist politics,

Mouffe's primary concern, has global ambitions, exploring the applicability of Mouffe's critique to arrangements in other regions of the world seems an especially productive development of her ideas. Indeed, this aspect of Mouffe's theory might be even better suited to the African context. Not only do these politics afflict African contexts but also — following Comaroff and Comaroff's contentions in "Theory from the South" (2012) — the "choice-less" turn in African democracies might have even prefigured the emergence of the "no alternative" and third-way consensus on austerity gripping Europe. These factors make it possible and even productive to "take Mouffe to Africa," even if in amended form.

Conclusion

The practice of liberal democracy in Nigeria has produced a unique and energetic form of mass party organisation which fuses centrism and right-wing populism. Nigeria's extensive and dynamic party organisations emerged, not from the left-ward diffusion of ideas about political organisation and mobilisation, but through a unique history of authoritarian populist political manoeuvres, liberal institutional reforms, and pragmatic bargains made between political centrists and ethno-nationalists. The results of this process are best understood through exploring the main activities and debates which enliven party activism across the democratic electoral cycle — the public calendar of party activities and the temporal backbone of liberal democracy. In pursuing these arguments, my study shed lights on the strengths of taking a qualitative approach to the study of democracy. It also revealed the possibilities opened up by a radical theory of liberal democracy which views democracy as never consolidated and the left/right spectrum as an ever-present feature of liberal democratic politics.

The import of this approach reaches beyond Nigeria's borders. The study of African democracies can offer a lot to the nascent field of anthropological studies of democracy (Paley 2002; Michelutti 2007; Banerjee 2011). The nature and composition of party memberships in other African contexts, such as Benin where even higher levels of party engagement have been recorded, also beckons comparative scholarship. Radical theories of democracy enable scholars to fundamentally re-consider ideology and normative politics in contemporary African societies. They provides an illuminating alternative to the ultra-materialist model of political analyses which imagines African politics as merely the product of ideologically vacuous exchange and inspires economistic visions of a fully quantifiable "political marketplace" (de Waal 2016). Specifically, it enables investigations into the contemporary character and composition of centrist, far-right, and leftist contestations and politics in Africa. It eschews exoticist views of African politics, idealised accounts of the promises of technocracy, and the teleological narrative of the end of history. This approach also allows African cases into conversations about the trajectory of liberal democracy across the globe, a possibility that has been as much ignored in the critical scholarship as in the mainstream study to democracy.

Finally, my study raises important normative questions regarding the nature of democracy and democratic participation in Nigeria. How should vibrant democratic participation be assessed when it is premised on ideologies that, in the extreme, lead to exclusionary and even violent outcomes? While it creates room for the politics of recognition in a multicultural context, the fusion of centrist and right-wing populism is fundamentally incapable of transforming the social and economic status quo. This inability is dangerous in a context marked by extreme poverty, ethno-religious diversity, and mistrust. The supposed maladies of diverse democracies, that of conflict and marginalisation, are not inevitable,

even if the end result of Lonsdalian moral ethnicity in a multi-ethnic context is often political tribalism, —as well as the exclusion of women, the young, and minorities.. Liberal democracy can provide space for both difference and co-existence. But this possibility can only actualise when both its liberal and democratic traditions are permitted to engage in agonistic confrontation. In other words, and as has become evident in many parts of the world, far-right populism succeeds when other forms of politics which valorise the *popular* are denied expression. The marginalisation of radical alternatives inspired by the democratic value for equality can only deepen Nigeria defining paradox of predictability and peril. Politically, this impasse calls for the construction of a left-populist political organisation that can bridge the class divide between left political strategists and Nigeria’s unheralded mass of democratic citizens, the *talakwa*.

I wish to conclude this discussion on a personal note. My inspiration for this project has evolved since the work’s inception. In my master’s dissertation (Husaini 2015) which preceded this thesis, I sought to investigate the factors which led to the surprising defeat of Kayode Fayemi in the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election. Naturally, this led to a study of “stomach infrastructure” an evocative term coined in that election that is now used as a political synonym for the fruits of vote-buying and clientelism in Nigerian elections (Durotoye & Husaini 2016, Cheeseman et al. 2019). However, amidst this study, I came to two realizations. The first was that Nigerian political parties and party leaders attract committed followers at the grassroots level, contradicting what I had read about African political parties, thought in the literature to be “empty vessels”. I was struck to find that the most relevant expression of party engagement in Nigeria goes beyond social media (Adepoju 2019), and rather takes place in real life meeting venues across Nigeria, across the election cycle. The apparent negation of the “empty vessels”

perspective then led me to reassess other pillars of what I had read about the factors which motivates citizens in Africa's third wave democracies. Given the extent of discussion about stomach infrastructure which emerged in my first interviews, it became difficult to avoid given the term serious consideration to understand the ways in which it was being used to explain the victory of Ayodele Fayose in the 2014 Ekiti election. Travelling down this analytical path then led to an encounter with anthropological explorations of "the gift" (Mauss 1988, Bourdieu 1998) which gave me insights into the complexities, normative expectations, and ideals that surround moments of social exchange. The rational choice perspective on clientelism, which sees citizens in a calculating *homo economicus* frame could not account for these much richer displays which revealed how people assess the manner in which "gifts" and resources are distributed in society. What I was witnessing, I came to think, were "normative politics".

As my interests in party members and the complexities of exchange grew in the year after my master's dissertation, my interests in left populist theory were growing in tandem. I began reading Chantal Mouffe in the required option course for first year DPhil Candidates at Oxford's Department of International Development (ODID). The course, called, "The Politics of the Poor" was convened by Injadit Roy and informed a monograph (Roy 2018) that goes by the same title. When I first encountered Mouffe's definitions of the ideological spectrum, of liberal democracy, and of populism, I began to gradually see a link between her construal of these concepts and to the phenomena which I had witnessed in Ado Ekiti and thereafter in Zaria. The intersection between Mouffe's view of centrism and Bleck and Van de Walle's description of "valence politics" in African democracies ultimately formed the clearest bridge that helped me see the parallels that united what I had witnessed in Nigeria to wider theories aimed

at understanding the democratic trends that govern the current phase of economic globalization (Salih 2005, Burnell 2006, Mouffe 2000, Mair 2006,).

Ultimately, the post-Marxist and critical scholars in this tradition most drew my interest because their perspectives offered an opportunity to consider more fundamental issues that constrain the ideal expression of liberal democracy. In other words, this perspective offered the most hopeful view about the promises of liberal democracy despite its many ills, and moreover, it was a vision that did not deny or disparage the role of political affect and of desires and fantasy in the practice of democratic politics. By embracing radical variants of populism while fully articulated the dangers of right-wing populism, these theories seemed to offer a way to valorise the popular political practices I had witnessed during fieldwork. They also seemed to offer a path out of “a politics without adversary”, the prevailing condition in Nigeria in which citizens are presented with the false choice between APC and PDP; a condition in which citizens can vote but not chose. By shedding light on the economic and ethno-cultural undercurrents of contemporary party mobilization -- and thus on the fact that *ideology and not simply “stomach infrastructure”* still governs Nigerian political parties in the fourth republic -- these theories also open the possibility that alternative ideological formulations may one day arise. Finally, these theories opened my eyes to the normative possibility that a crisis of political imagination may underlie the economic outcomes which are most frequently attributed to a failure of technocratic management produced by the resource curse. In spite of the continued dominance the two centre-right populist parties, the 2019 election shed light on a developing trend; namely decreasing voting turnouts, down to 36% in this

election from the 47% turnout of the 2015 election.²⁴ The declining voter turnout among the wider electorate in presidential elections has overtaken the ever-increasing levels of membership in the two dominant parties suggesting that though these parties have growing fan bases, they are also increasingly unattractive to a wider, growing demographic of voters who have added their names to INEC's electoral register, but may yet remain open to future alternatives.

²⁴ Election Monitor. 2019. "Analysis of the 2019 Nigerian Presidential Election". Retrieved from: <http://election-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ANALYSIS-OF-THE-2019-NIGERIAN-PRESIDENTIAL-ELECTION.pdf>

Interviews

Abejide Gbenga, APC [Fayemi] Loyalist and Social Media coordinator, 3 November 2016

Abdulahi Umaru Muhammad, PDP Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 12 March 2017

Aderonke (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 15 March 2016

Adeolu Durotoye, Professor of Political Science, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti LGA, 10 April 2015

Adesoye Adeleye, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 11 November 2016

Adamu Electronics, APC Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 2 February 2017

Adamu (pseudonymized), APC [Fayemi] Loyalist, 16 April 2015

Adefunke Adesina, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2015

Ajibade (Mrs, no first name given), APC Loyalist, 24 November 2016

Aishatu Ibrahim APC Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 14 February 2017

Aladetoyinbo (Chief Mrs), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 15 April 2015

Adegani (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 November 2016

Abejide Gbenga APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 16 November 2016

Akindun Emmanuel, APC Ward 4 Ex Officio, Ado Ekiti, 28 October 2016

Aliyu Goje, PDP Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 14 February 2017

Annabel (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 21 March 2016

Asaolu Oladejo, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2016

Azeez Apenpe, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 22 November 2017

Ayomide Alao, Youth Activist, Ado-Ekiti, 19 October 2015

Azeez Olaseni Owolabi, PDP Chairman Ward 9, Ado Ekiti LGA, 19 November 2016

Babalola Solape, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 22 November 2016

Bakare Bello, PDP [Fayose] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 21 March 2015

Bose Ale, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 26 November 2016

Bose Aladelokin, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 23 November 2016

Bhumi Aborisade, APC Ado Ekiti Executive, Professor of Communication, Afe-Babalola University, Ado Ekiti LGA, 8 April 2015

Chika (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, 23 March 2015

Christina Adebisi, PDP Loyalist, Ado-Ekiti, 20 March 2015

Danladi Jama'a, PDP Chairman Dutsen Abba Ward, Zaria City LGA, 23 March 2017

Daniel 'I.D.' Komolafe, PDP Member [APC Loyalist], Ado Ekiti LGA, 15 April 2015, 23 September 2016

Dauda Gowon, PDP Senatorial Candidate Plateau Central, Abuja FCT, 8 September 2016

Deji Ogunsakin, LGA Chairman, Ado Ekiti LGA, 09 November 2016

Deolu Oyebode, APC Youth Leader, Ado Ekiti LGA, 18 December 2016

Dotun (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2015

Egghead Odewale, Technical Adviser, Ekiti State Governor, Telephone Interview, 18 April 2015

Emeka (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 March 2015

Emeka Diru, International Republican Institute, Abuja FCT, 4 October 2016

Emmanuel Anakwelu, PDP [Fayose] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 23 March 2015

Esther Sunday, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 26 November 2016

Ewenike Jeosaphat Elo, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 20 March 2015

Favor (Mrs, no name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2015

Falilat Akinbo, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 14 April 2015

Fahrida Umaru [pseudonymised], PDP Loyalist, Zaria City, 14 February 2017

Florence Bamigbaye, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 10 October 2016

Folake Iginla, PDP [Fayose] loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 24 March 2015

Funke Fatoba, APC [Fayemi] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 11 November 2016

Hamza Aliyu, PDP Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 17 February 2017

Ibrahim Faruk, Senior Program Officer, Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA), Abuja FCT, 26 August 2016

Ifeanyi Nelson, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 20 March 2016

Isaac Oluwaniyi Onenirun, PDP Loyalist, Okemesi LGA, 22 October 2016

Iyabode Ibijola, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 1 December 2016

James Adeleye, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 November 2016

Jamiu Adebola, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 21 March 2015

Jibrin Shehu, APC Youth Leader Dutsen Abba Ward, Zaria City LGA, 24 March 2017

Kole (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 8 April 2015

Lawrence Olatunji, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 11 November 2016

Martin Luther of Africa APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 25 November 2016

Michael (no last name given), PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 18 March 2015

Mike Opeyemi Omilusi (Dr.), Lecturer in Political Science, Ekiti State University (EKSU), 18 October 2016

Mohammad Kuna (Professor), Special Assistant to the Chair, Independent National Election Commission (INEC), 28 February 2017

Nwachukwu Orji, Research Fellow, Institute for Development Studies, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, 30 September 2015

Odeyemi (no last name given), APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2015

Okoro Mercy, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 20 March 2016

Olaschinde Akadri, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 11 November 2016

Ololade Bamidele, APC Member, Ikeja, Lagos State, 7 April 2015

Olumide (no last name given), APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 22 November 2016

Oluremi Faronike, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 22 November 2016

Olaschinde Akadri, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 November 2016

Olaseni Tajudeen, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 21 March 2015

Olaiya Jumoke, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 16 March 2015

Onipede Oladotun, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 April 2015

Oshofemi (no last name given), Labour Party Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 17 March 2015

Otunba Adeniyi, APC Strategist, Senior Special Assistant, Fayemi Administration, 17 April 2015

Owolabi Tunde, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, November 2016

Rafiu Anifowoshe, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 22 October 2016

Raji Dauda, PDP [Obasanjo] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 12 December 2016

Remi Okunato, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 26 November 2016

Sani Muhammad Abdulrahman, APC Youth Leader, Kwarbai B Ward, Zaria City LGA,

Salman Ouwatoyin, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 23 March 2015

Sefiatu Oseni, PDP [Fayose] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 1 December 2016

Taibi Ayeni, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 24 November 2016

Toyin Adepeju, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 November 2016

Tunde Owolabi APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 16 November 2016

Tunde “Honourable” (no last name given), PDP Youth Ward 1 Leader, Ado Ekiti LGA, 9 April 2015

Tunde “Ghaddafi” Williams, APC [Fayemi] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 27 October 2015

Timothy Falaya, Beneficiary of Fayemi Agricultural Empowerment program, Ado Ekiti LGA, 9 April 2015

Taiwo (no last name given), Secretary, National Union of Teachers, Ado Ekiti Chapter, Ado Ekiti LGA, 12 April 2015

Umar Ishak Dikko, PDP Loyalist, Zaria City LGA, 18 March 2017

Victoria Adebolu, PDP Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 23 November 2016

Wisdom (no last name given), PDP [Fayose] Loyalist, 23 March 2016

Yemisi Adedeni, APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti LGA, 2 December 2016

Yaks (pseudonymised), APC [Fayemi] Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 16 April 2015

Yinka Ajayi (Mrs), APC Loyalist, Ado Ekiti, 23 March 2015

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