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**HISTORIC PATTERNS OF DEMOCRATISATION IN
GHANA AND NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The paper examines the historic pattern of democratisation in Ghana and Nigeria, respectively. Election management and subsequent transfer of power have been largely problematic in Africa. It also follows the trend that the pattern of power rotation has been tilted and lopsided, often taking place within the ruling political parties and incumbent governments, usually via manipulation of the process. This paper adopts an exploratory research design and collected primary data via 20 semi-structured interviews to empirically interrogate the historic pattern of democratisation in these very prominent countries of the West African sub-region. This was with the view to harnessing the inherent lessons for the rest of the continent; identifying and seeking to build on areas which need improvements concerning democratisation in the countries studied. The paper found, among others, that Ghana has enjoyed a more peaceful and seamless power rotation and a more successful democratisation process than Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, democratisation, election, Ghana, Nigeria

Introduction

The advent of democracy in Africa ensured that democratic transition also came to the limelight. Democratic transition is the process by which a new government emerges through the conduct of elections, to take over power from a government just defeated in an election and is leaving the seat of power. This implies that the emphasis in democratic transition is on the process of election. Nonetheless, given the quality of the process (election), the democratic transition in Africa has been largely problematic (Idowu, 2018). In some instances, to use Guo's (1999, p. 133) description of Eastern Europe and the former USSR, most of Africa's democratic transitions are "complicated and far from completed." Furthermore, despite the claim to democratic practice, experiences of democratic transition from incumbent government to the opposition are few on the continent. The most recurring pattern of democratic transition on the continent has been those involving transfer of power from an incumbent president to candidates of ruling political parties. In many of the instances where transitions had to be from an incumbent president to the opposition, they were "forced" transitions and often met with restrictions (Idowu, 2018; Idowu & Mimiko, 2020a, p. 89). In another development, some African political leaders, like Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, among others, have made any form of democratic transition virtually impossible in their countries (Idowu, 2018). Two years after his tenure ought to have expired; Joseph Kabila remained in office in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

However, some successes have been recorded in patterns of democratisation in some parts of Africa, with some countries experiencing a transfer of power from the incumbent to opposition political parties (Mungai, 2014; Songwe, 2016), albeit, Ghana and Nigeria possess certain unique qualities that deserve specific focus. Both have experienced a transfer of power from an incumbent president who was seeking re-election, to an opposition party (2017 for Ghana; and 2015 for Nigeria), rather than from an incumbent party (where the incumbent president was not seeking re-election) to an opposition party (Idowu & Mimiko, 2020b). Ghana is far

ahead in West Africa in the transfer of power from the incumbent party to an opposition party, having experienced it three times (Songwe, 2015, p. 2016).

Nigeria and Ghana share certain qualities that make both countries comparable. In the West African sub-region, both Ghana and Nigeria were part of the first set of countries to gain independence from Britain and have also witnessed the highest incidents of military coups (Idowu & Mimiko, 2020a, p. 89; Souaré, 2010). Both countries top the West African sub-region in many aspects and one of them is population (Nigeria tops with 218.4 million, and Ghana is next with 32.6 million) (Worldometers, 2022). Furthermore, both have the largest economy in the sub-region (Nigeria tops with a nominal GDP of \$504.203 billion, and per capita of \$2,326.230; and Ghana follows with a Nominal GDP of \$75.996 billion, and per capita of \$2,368.814) (IMF World Economic Outlook, 2022). It, therefore, becomes pertinent to juxtapose Nigeria with Ghana in a study of this nature, as a basis for comparative analysis. Hence, with a focus on the Fourth Republics of the countries of study, we do a comparative analysis of the historic pattern of democratic transition in both countries.

The paper is structured into six sections. The introduction is followed by a review of the literature on elections and trends in democratisation in Africa. The subsequent section presents the research method, while the fourth section presents the results. The final sections focus on the discussion of the findings and the concluding remarks/recommendations, respectively.

Elections and Democratisation Trends in Africa

Some changes have been observed in democratic transition programmes (one of continuous gains and reversals) across the Anglophone West African states of Ghana, Nigeria, the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia (Ibrahim, 2003). The people of Anglophone West Africa, just like other Africans, are in the main, highly supportive of democratic transition. Such transitions are not mere facades because when properly implemented, they respond to the needs of the populations for civic and political rights, freedom

of speech, assembly and association, as well as the right to vote and be voted for, freedom from arbitrary arrests and the right to a fair hearing (Ibrahim, 2003). The attainment of these freedoms has not been easy, as too many obstacles have constantly and continually restricted the process, even where the basic principles of democratic rule have been conceded. The military, the security forces and the associated armed gangs are some of the serious obstacles that thwart the people's will in Anglophone West Africa. The main challenge of democratic transition in the region has been "the militarization of society and the rise of the security state" (Ibrahim, 2003, p. 65). However, the beacon of hope for the future is that these challenges of militarization have reached their limits, and across the Anglophone West African region, there is a consensus that military rule can only make matters worse. Albeit, the fact also remains that the beacon of hope remains dimmed in some cases, largely due to the militarization of society which has severely damaged civil society and the institutions of Constitutional rule.

For a democratic future for the African people, the crafting of democratic institutions must be given a prominent place on the continent. Also, because Anglophone West Africa and its civil society have suffered excessively from state arbitrariness and violence, the first phase of the democratic transition consists of peace-building and tolerance. Hence, the recommendation that education and particularly civic education, must be given a major role in reconstituting West African society; plus, a central aspect of civic education must be oriented towards the rehabilitation of the concept of politics and liberal democracy (Ibrahim, 2003).

For Africa at large, there is the question of whether the level of democratization on the continent should be considered merely as political liberalization or genuine democratic transition. Political liberalization which is prevalent in Africa is part of the process of democratization however; the process itself can undergo reversals (Diouf, 1998). The essential elements of democratic transition have been identified as the establishment of Constitutional rule and the operation of a multiparty political system (Diouf, 1998). The transition could also be expected to involve socio-political transformation that allows freely elected leaders and the majority of the civil

population to impose their supremacy over ruling oligarchies of the military or civilian ethnic cabals.

The most urgent and immediate challenge confronting the process of democratic transition in Africa is ensuring that democratization is accompanied by the institutionalisation of constitutional rule. This is correct to the extent that constitutions do not, in themselves, make democracy or make the democratic transition possible. What seems glaring in Africa is the fact that most African democracies are not based on constitutional rule; rather, they are “tinted authoritarianism”. Oftentimes, most of the alleged democratic transitions that have been experienced in Africa have not led to constitutional rule (Diouf, 1998).

Lindberg (2004) has established and provided evidence that elections have a colossal impact on improving the quality of democracy and democratic transition in Africa. There is no general negative trend either in the frequency or the quality of elections in Africa. What this implies is that the frequency and quality of elections vary between good, bad and worse experiences. It would, therefore, be misleading to conclude that the frequency and quality of elections in Africa hold the same and common trend across the continent (positive and negative). Elections play sacrosanct roles in democracies. Elections are not the end of a transition process, nor are they merely formal procedures (Elklit & Reynolds, 2000). Rather, the introduction of a multiparty system and frequent elections provokes liberalisation which, in turn, fosters the expansion of democratic qualities. Furthermore, a series of elections not only contribute to increasing democratic quality but also have positive effects on broadening and deepening *de facto* civil liberties in society (Lindberg, 2004).

Institutional factors and institutional choices and the ensuing administrative and political behaviour (regarding election management) contribute both to the transition and the consolidation of new democracies. This approach “inevitably leaves aside a whole array of other issues that will also influence how the first democratic election is perceived, and later, the democratic regime is accepted as “the only game in town” (Elklit & Reynolds,

2000, p. 2). Elections play a crucial role in the above development, as they serve as a germane condition for democratic transition and democratic regimes.

Evidence from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia show that the quality of electoral administration has a direct impact on how elections, especially in the developing world, and their outcomes are regarded (Elklit & Reynolds, 2000). Such regard for electoral outcomes is not only from international observers but more importantly, by domestic actors; such as voters, political parties, media and local observers. Mexico and Ghana have been able to demonstrate that a “conscious, positive and professional approach to election administration is crucial for the outcome of the electoral process and the way it is perceived by political actors at all levels” (Elklit & Reynolds, 2000, p. 2). Individual experiences in several fields related to the conduct of elections have a direct bearing on how the sense of political efficacy develops in individual citizens. Furthermore, such individual experience in election management is an important factor behind the eventual development of legitimacy and a principled commitment to democracy, that is, progression towards democratic consolidation. Hence, cases with low perceived legitimacy of the electoral process illustrate flaws in the electoral steps (Elklit & Reynolds, 2000).

Election administration in Africa continues to be beset by a series of problems and challenges (Idowu, 2021). Jinadu (1997) avers that Africa is faced with the problem of conducting elections of indeterminacy; that is, elections which ensure that erstwhile winners become losers and erstwhile losers become winners. There is a weakness in electoral administration in Africa (a situation which produces elections devoid of indeterminacy), poised with challenges which are by no means insurmountable. Elections are central to competitive politics. This is because, ideally, elections should “provide an opportunity for yesterday’s winners to become today’s losers, and for yesterday’s losers to become today’s winners” (Jinadu, 1997, p. 1-11), albeit, this is the very challenge with African elections.

Some of the challenges of African elections, and therefore, their inability to meet the indeterminacy criterion include, among others: the fragile and stunted character of electoral machinery inherited at independence; the politicisation of electoral administration, bureaucracy and the judiciary by the ruling party. Also, constituting such challenges are the composition and mode of appointment of electoral bodies, their structure, independence and their tenure of office. Concerning composition and mode of appointment, it is a “critical issue that bears on the autonomy of these electoral bodies and, therefore, on the possibility of ensuring the indeterminacy of African elections” (Jinadu, 1997, p. 5). These issues, for instance, eroded the pre-election discussions by opposition parties and civil society groups in the Zimbabwe elections of 1991 and the Kenyan and Ghanaian elections of 1992, respectively. Also confronting African elections are the challenges of underdevelopment and economic crises which appear to be the roots of other challenges. Thus, the submission that “a number of the weaknesses and constraints of electoral administration [in Africa], are fundamentally due to underdevelopment” (Jinadu, 1997, p. 3). This is often due to the reality that electoral administration entails huge economic costs and financial commitments which the weak economies of most African states find difficult to cope with. Also, poverty often makes the electorate susceptible to the influence of money, thus, resorting to voting to sell and buy on Election Day. If Africa must make tangible democratic progress, the problem of election management on the continent in ensuring transitions from incumbent to the opposition, “must be realistically set against the problem of underdevelopment and the economic crises of the state” (Jinadu, 1997, p. 4).

The Trends in Transition Elections and Democratisation in Ghana and Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

The Ghanaian Fourth Republic was inaugurated on January 7 1993, with the swearing-in of Flight Lt. John Rawlings as the president. The newly elected Parliament was opened on the same day. It elected Justice D. F. Annan as Speaker. In 1996, Rawlings was re-elected for a second term. The 1996

election marked a milestone in the fledgling democracy in Ghana because, for the first time in the country's political history, an elected government completed its term in office, had an election contest, and secured a renewed mandate in a democratic manner (Adedeji, 2001).

In the December 7, 2000 elections, John A. Kufuor of the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) led in the presidential election with 48.17% of the total 6,500,870 valid votes (Ghana web, 2017). A run-off election had to hold as no candidate got up to 50% of the total votes cast to be declared the winner. In the run-off election, Kufuor defeated Atta Mills, Rawling's deputy and candidate of the ruling party, by winning 56.73% of the total 6,381,387 valid votes. President Kufuor took the oath of office on January 7, 2001, and became the first opposition candidate in Ghana's political history to defeat an incumbent party and succeeded the ruling government. This marked a major turning point in Ghana's democracy in particular, and the democracy project in Africa, in general. He was re-elected in December 2004 for a second four-year term and became the first civilian president (without a military background) to fully serve his tenure and go ahead to be re-elected (African Elections Database: 2000 and 2004 Ghana Elections).

President Kufuor was succeeded by John Atta Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), following the presidential election of 2008. This meant a second transfer of power from an incumbent government to the opposition party in the country. John Atta Mills was inaugurated as the third (3rd) president of the Fourth Republic and sixth (6th) president on January 7, 2009 (Kokutse, 2009). Mills died in office and was succeeded by his vice, John Dramani Mahama on July 24, 2012 (Nossiter, 2012). Mahama won the 2012 election and was inaugurated as the fourth (4th) president of the Fourth Republic and seventh (7th) president on January 7, 2013 (African Elections Database: 2012 Ghana Election). Nana Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) defeated the incumbent president in the presidential election of December 2016 and was inaugurated on January 7 2017, for a four-year term. This marked the first time in the history of Ghana that an incumbent president seeking re-election was defeated, and he conceded defeat and handed over power to the opposition party. Before the 2017 transition, the

2001 and 2009 transitions had been from incumbent parties to opposition parties, the incumbent presidents were not competing in the elections (Idowu & Mimiko, 2020b). The 2017 election was most significant because the incumbent president contested, lost, and handed over power. In 2020, incumbent President Nana Addo of the NPP won his re-election and the new government was inaugurated on January 7 2021.

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military Head of State was elected president. This ended the almost 33 years of military rule (from 1966 until 1999), excluding the short-lived Second Republic (between 1979 and 1983). The election, which brought Obasanjo to power in 1999 and for a second term in 2003 was condemned and described as unfair and unfree (Transition Monitoring Group, 2003; Carter Centre, 1999). Umaru Musa Yar'Adua of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) came to power in the general election of 2007, after an election also adjudged to be severely flawed (European Union, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2007).

President Yar'Adua died in office on May 5, 2010, and his deputy, Dr Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as his replacement on May 6, 2010 (BBC News, May 6, 2010), and became Nigeria's 14th leader. Goodluck Jonathan served out Yar'Adua's term until April 16, 2011, when a new presidential election was conducted. President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP was declared the winner on April 19, 2011, with 22,495,187 of the total 39,469,484 vote cast, ahead of Muhammadu Buhari from the main opposition party, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who got 12,214,853 votes (African Elections Database: 2011 Nigeria Election; Purefoy, 2011). In the March 2015 election, Muhammadu Buhari defeated President Goodluck Jonathan by roughly 2 million votes (African Elections Database: 2015 Nigeria Election). Observers generally reported that the election was fair, and Jonathan was globally commended for conceding defeat and limiting the risk of unrest (The Nation, April 3, 2015). On March 23, 2019, Nigeria held another general election which, again, saw the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari win the election. The election was relatively free and fair but was adjudged as retrogression over the previous election in terms of management and

general credibility of the process in some quarters (Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, 2019; EU EOM, 2019).

Research Method

This study adopted an exploratory research design. It relied on primary data sourced from Ghana and Nigeria. Data were sourced through semi-structured interviews. A total of 20 key informant interviewees (KIIs) were purposively selected from top officers of Election Management Bodies (EMBs), heads of election observer groups, key officers of electoral institutes and high-ranking members of key political parties in Ghana and Nigeria. The sample size and sample technique adopted were informed by the assumption that in this type of qualitative research, statistical representativeness is not the aim. Rather, respondents were selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the study (Patton & Cochran, 2002, p. 9). Thus, respondents were selected based on their specialization, expertise, experience, practical involvement and observation of the transition processes in both Ghana and Nigeria. While telephone and email interviews were administered to Ghanaian respondents from November 5 2017 to February 17 2018, one-on-one interviews were administered to Nigerian respondents from December 15 to December 27, 2017. Each interview lasted between 18 to 54 minutes. Data collected were subjected to thematic analysis.

Research Results

This section provides the results from the interviews administered to interviewees in the countries of study to highlight the historical accounts of democratic transition experiences in Ghana and Nigeria since the countries' return to democratic rule in 1992 and 1999, respectively.

Historic Patterns of Elections and Democratisation in Ghana

Since its return to democratic rule in 1992, Ghana has experienced a total of six democratic transitions within ruling parties and from incumbent

governments to opposition parties. The 1979 election was one of the best elections conducted in Ghana, however, since the country's return to democracy in 1992, her first transition election was highly problematic (Asante-Kissi, Interview, 2017). The first transition in Ghana from military to democratic rule in 1992 was accompanied by so much scepticism on the part of political observers and the generality of the citizenry. The prevailing scepticism emanated from past experiences in Africa where leaders devise means to hold on to power at all costs. The transition was ridden with scepticism by the citizenry on whether Rawlings was going to attempt to manipulate the constitution and hold onto power but he did not and that set the tone for democratic transitions in the country (Akwetey, Interview, 2018). After the 1992 transition in Ghana, the country has not looked back on ensuring smooth transitions. There have been a lot of reforms in the country's electoral system since then, and the system has greatly improved over the years (Asante-Kissi, Interview, 2017). It was not only the 1992 election that suffered scepticism from the citizenry. Indeed, all the subsequent elections that had led to the various transitions in Ghana were fraught with various challenges, including the sense in which the opposition felt cheated, agitations with the Electoral Commission (EC), and how to deal with the advantages conferred by incumbency. Yet, all of Ghana's elections were relatively peaceful, and the transitions were seamless. As such:

In 1992, presidential and parliamentary elections became controversial. The opposition was not satisfied because the voters' register was flawed and there were lots of grievances and the process was not transparent... the incumbent government...had undue advantage; there was no level playing field. So, it was a trust issue, but the Electoral Commission then was able to meet the parties through the IPAC, and systematically addressed the problem (Akwetey, Interview, 2018).

Nimako (Interview, 2018) of NPP, Ghana, noted that in the 1992 presidential election, the then-major opposition party (NPP) boycotted the election because it felt cheated. Interestingly, however, the party (NPP)

went ahead to win the 2000 presidential election, defeating the incumbent party. The reforms introduced by the EC to address some of these challenges covered issues relating to the compilation of a new register, the introduction of transparent ballot boxes, the counting and declaration of results and collation at polling stations, and constituency collation centres and their transmission and the use of strong rooms (Akwetey, Interview, 2018). Furthermore, there have been various reforms in the transition programme of Ghana regarding elections and the transition programme proper. From 1996, Ghana has moved from opaque balloting to transparent balloting, and to curb cases of impersonation during voting, the voters' ID card now bears the owner's thumbprint and picture (Kofi, Interview, 2017). It would seem that overall, Ghana has conformed to the dominant thought in the literature that transfer of power should be anchored on a clear and unambiguous policy, laid down processes and procedures, and guided by a culture of tolerance, accommodation, and respect for fundamental human rights (Huntington, 2009, p. 31-69). Before 2012, before Ghana adopted a Transition Act, the transitions had been rancorous and incidences of conflict and disagreements between the incoming and the outgoing government. However, the Transition Act has been able to address this challenge (Akwetey, Interview, 2018).

In 1992 and 2012, serious questions were raised over electoral credibility in Ghana. In 2012, the opposition refused to concede defeat but for the intervention of the Supreme Court (Acheampong, Interview, 2017). There are two unique features of Ghana's experience in the transition of power. First, is the fact that most of such transitions have been via re-run. This signals the level of political competitiveness in the country. Except for the 2017 transition where the opposition won in the first-round elections, anytime there was a transition, it had been through a re-run (Arhin, Interview, 2017). Second, is the margin of votes for deciding the victor. The 2008 presidential election was the closest, with only a 40,000 votes' margin between the winner and the runner-up. In 2012 and 2016, the margin of the votes was 300,000 and 150,000, respectively (Akwetey, Interview, 2018).

Of concern to the Ghanaian transition programme is the shortness of the period between the elections and the transition, which often hampers a

proper transition, especially from the incumbent president to the opposition party. Baffoe (Interview, 2017) posits: “[In] Ghana, our problem is the shortness of the period...the election is conducted 7th December...the transition takes place January 7th the following year. So, that constitutes a serious problem because it does not give room for proper transition...” Another issue with the Ghanaian democratic transition pattern over the years is the fact that during transition periods, there are always a few instances of supporters of the candidate who had lost trying to take the law into their hands, albeit, these had been isolated cases (George, Interview, 2017).

The 2017 transition in Ghana, in a way, was unique because there had been transitions from incumbent to opposition in Ghana in 2001 and 2009. 2017 was the first time an incumbent president was seeking re-election for a second term and he was defeated (Tettey, Interview, 2017). The transitions of 2001 and 2009 were from incumbent party to opposition party and not from incumbent president to opposition presidential candidate, as was the case in 2017. The 2017 transition from incumbent president to an opposition presidential candidate who had won the 2016 presidential elections was full of intrigues. However, it just did not stop there; rather, it seemed to have been accompanied by fears, tension, suspicion and all sorts of allegations. The appointment of the chairperson of the EC was another issue which aroused fear within the then-major opposition party, the NPP. Because the electoral chairperson was appointed by the ruling party, there was a strong suspicion, especially from the opposition that she was going to work in favour of the ruling party (Akwetey, Interview, 2018).

Nevertheless, the 2017 Ghanaian transition was very peaceful and the political Transition Act which institutionalises transitions played a major role and ensured the process was not rancorous (Esebagbon, Interview, 2017). The transition success that Ghana enjoys today, was not a mirage, it had come through a series of reforms and to a point where the culture of democracy has now been instilled in the people. A history of a vibrant civil society, endearing civil society has also been identified as important in the Ghanaian transition programme (George, Interview, 2017).

The above account of the historic pattern of democratic transition in Ghana reaffirms Ghana's achievements in the peaceful transition from incumbent presidents/parties to the opposition. It also strengthens the argument that Ghana has enjoyed more seamless democratic transitions from incumbent presidents/parties to opposition parties in Africa (Idowu & Mimiko, 2020b; Songwe, 2015; 2016).

Historic Patterns of Elections and Democratisation in Nigeria

Since its return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed five democratic transitions, with 2015 being the very first instance of an incumbent president losing to an opposition presidential candidate. Elections and democratic transitions in Nigeria have come a long way and have had numerous challenges. Giving a highlight of the electoral processes and the transitions that followed since 1999, Abati (Interview, 2017) observed that:

For the 1999 elections...People wanted democracy by all means possible...and President Obasanjo came to power, one of the issues was with the integrity of the Electoral Commission...the Obasanjo government won again in 2003...there was again litigation... The 2007 election that brought Goodluck Jonathan and Yar'Adua to power, even the president himself was so embarrassed that he said "well, we may have won, but we have issues with our electoral process." ...the 2011 election that brought him [President Jonathan] to power, one of the achievements claimed by that administration was that it should be the first time that election would be adjudged free and fair in Nigeria... In the 2015 election, there were people complaining; the whole of the East. They were complaining that they could not get the electronic voters' card, and that became an issue even during the election... in the Northern parts of the country, the electronic voters' card system which was being tested for the first time, did not work. INEC had to abandon the ECR [Electronic Card Reader] in many parts of the North, and there were reports of underage voting and multiple voting.

Reaffirming the above claim, Ibrahim (Interview, 2017) of CDD, Nigeria, submitted that:

Election management has been a problem historically. First round elections, you have good election management, second round elections; you have deterioration in the quality of election management. But in the Fourth Republic, that deterioration of election management did not lead to a collapse of the regime... The 1999 elections were considered relatively free and fair, but the 2003 and 2007 elections were heavily rigged... 2011 was the first election that was better than the previous one... By the time we came to 2015, especially the mechanisms introduced to reduce electoral fraud, created conditions in which in general, Nigerians believed that the incumbent had lost the elections and then the opposition candidate had won. And of course, at that point, it became very difficult for President Jonathan to do anything about it. That is not to say he could not have refused the results. He could have, but that would have precipitated a major political crisis for the country.

The above opinions corroborate scholarly research and reports given on these processes and the transition which followed, each year there was a transition (see, for instance, Transition Monitoring Group, 2003; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Carter Center, 1999; Oyekanmi, 2015; ECOWAS EOM, 2015; and Commonwealth Observer Group, 2015). The fact that Nigeria has equally made significant progress in her election management and transition programme has also been stressed by various political observers and stakeholders in the polity. Right from 1999 and after the 2007 election which was regarded as the worse election in the history of the country, there has been significant progress in election management and transition in the country (Abdullahi, Interview, 2017). The introduction of technology into the 2015 elections greatly improved the system and produced a more credible electoral outcome which, in turn, birthed a unique transition (Abati, Interview, 2017). The trend in election litigations in the country also points to

the progress in the electoral process. In 1999, there was no election litigation; in 2003, it rose to 574; it was 1,291 in 2007 with eight of them contesting the presidential election; and it was 731 in 2011 with only two contesting the presidential election (NDI, 2008; Electoral Reform Committee, 2008; NDI, 2012; IRI, 2014). For the 2015 election, there was no election litigation concerning the presidential election, but election litigation came up again after the 2019 presidential elections.

Being the first-time power was transferred from an incumbent president to an opposition party in the country, the 2015 transition programme was particularly of interest to many observers. The intrigues and the circumstances surrounding the 2015 transition in Nigeria ranged from hate campaigns, ethnoreligious conflict, and unending communal clashes in several Northern states and parts of the North Central, to the Boko Haram insurgency (Adebiyi, 2015). There were also predictions that the transition process was not going to be successful should the incumbent president lose the elections (The Nation, 2015; Ameh, 2014), and suggestions that the country was going to break up (Oyekanmi, 2015; Oladesu, 2014). The opinions of respondents regarding the 2015 election management and transition were not different from what the literature hold. During the 2015 election, for instance, there was a lot of tension because people threatened that if their candidates did not win, there would be bloodshed. With President Jonathan's concession, the tension was doused and the impending crisis was averted (Abdullahi, Interview, 2017).

On the issues that had to do with the 2015 transition, and the need for the country to improve her transition programme, especially when it comes to the transition from incumbent president to the opposition party, Esebagbon (Interview, 2017) observed that the 2015 transition was not smooth and was thus, rancorous, because both the incoming and outgoing governments refused to cooperate to ensure a smooth transition. Aligning his views with the above submission, Adesina (Interview, 2017) of APC also submitted that the outgoing government wanted to prove that they were still in power until the last day and as such refused to engage with the incoming government to organise a smooth and seamless transition. This led to the late settling

down of the new government, having been given the bulk of handover notes only a few days before the transition (Kuna, Interview, 2017). The incumbent government also blamed the delay in picking his cabinet on the late handing over by the outgoing government (Shehu, as cited in Opejobi, 2018).

Albeit, the circumstances surrounding the 2015 transition from incumbent president to the opposition party in Nigeria are quite understandable, being the first experience of such a Transition pattern. Esebagbon (Interview, 2017) buttressed it thus: “it was the first time we [Nigeria] had a transition from one administration to the opposition. That was a real transition test case... So, relatively, our experience in this area is very, very new. So, I would say that our transition processes have been very smooth, but the last one [2015] was not very smooth.” In 2019, the incumbent president and party retained power.

Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing results in line with the specific objective to trace the historic pattern of democratic transition and democratisation in the study areas, the paper finds concerning Ghana, that the country has had a very peaceful, smooth and seamless transition history. The study still observed some challenges but they did not undermine the peace and seamlessness of the transition in the country. Since Ghana’s return to democratic rule in 1992, the country has experienced six (6) democratic transitions and they were all peaceful and seamless. Of the six (6) transitions, three (3) have been from incumbent presidents/parties to incumbent or ruling parties/presidents (1996/97 and 2004/05, 2012/2013), and the other three (3) (2000/01, 2008/09 and 2016/17) had been from the ruling presidents/parties to opposition parties/candidates. The study also found that of all the three democratic transitions from incumbent to the opposition in Ghana, 2017 was the first time an incumbent president sought re-election, lost the election, conceded defeat and handed over power to the opposition. In all other transitions, the incumbent presidents either won or did not seek re-election. To ensure a smooth democratic transition, Ghana had embarked on several reforms in its electoral system and transition programme (see also, Debrah, 2001; Gyimah-

Boadi, 1999; Ayee, 1997) which has instilled the culture of democracy into the people.

While all other transitions from 1992 had been done without a proper Transition Act, during the 2012 democratic transition, Ghana adopted a Transition Act which has contributed immensely to the country's seamless transition programme. A major problem with the Ghanaian transition programme is the shortness of the period between elections and transitions. This is usually a month-long period (in the case where there are no re-run elections), and less than a month where there is a re-run election. This does not give enough room and time for proper and hitch-free documentation and transition. Indeed, the historic pattern of democratic transition in Ghana puts Ghana ahead in Africa (Idowu & Mimiko, 2022b; Songwe, 2015; 2016). On the whole, the Ghanaian democratic transition history has been fraught with a few challenges (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999; Idowu & Mimiko, 2020y; 2020b; Idowu, 2021), albeit, generally, the country's democratic history shows a pattern of a peaceful and seamless process.

On the other hand, since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, the country has had five (5) democratic transitions. While four of the elections heralding these (2003, 2007, 2011 and 2019) had been from incumbent presidents/parties to incumbent candidates/parties, the 2015 transition was from an incumbent president to an opposition political party. However, unlike the Ghanaian democratic transition history, Nigeria's transition has been characterised by violence and tension (see also, Adeniyi, 2017; Idowu, 2021; Naswem, 2017). The process leading to democratic transitions in Nigeria has been fraught with irregularities, manipulations and the abuse of power of incumbency; a fact that studies such as Moveh (2015); Idowu and Mimiko (2020a); Idowu (2021) and Carter Center (1999) affirm. Furthermore, there have been a lot of reforms to make the transition process much more seamless. Such reforms, among others, include more open transparent procedures, such as the use of biometric technologies (INEC, 2014). Although all other democratic transitions since 1999 have been characterised by violence, the election of 2015 from an incumbent president to an opposition political party was relatively peaceful, though there were

some post-election violence and exchange of inciting statements among politicians. The 2015 democratic transition was the first time an incumbent president lost the election in Nigeria, and handed power to the opposition presidential candidate. So, this transition became the most significant in the country's democratic transition history. The periods leading up to the 2015 transition were very critical and threatened the continued existence of the country, owing to the ethnoreligious tensions, Boko Haram insurgency and tribal intolerance which characterised the period. The study finds that even though the 2015 democratic transition was, perhaps, the tensest in the history of Nigeria; it turned out to be the most peaceful.

Unlike Ghana, which has a Transition Act, Nigeria lacks a Transition Act. This often hampers smooth and seamless transition, especially from incumbent to opposition as it played out in 2015. The major issue with the 2015 democratic transition in Nigeria was that it had to do with the transition programme itself, wherein both the incoming government and the incumbent government had their separate transition teams. Both teams refused to work harmoniously and often clashed. Whereas one was eager to demonstrate that it was in power till the final day of the administration; the incoming team was desperate to start calling the shots as soon as it was proclaimed the winner. This accounted for the tension. One grave effect of this was that the incoming government settled down late in the office and had to find and spend considerable time studying the handover notes just a few days before the transition. In all, the pattern of democratic transition in Nigeria has largely been rancorous for much of the time, with 2015 being the most peaceful, though it had hitches too. In 2019, the incumbent government returned to power for a second term; the maximum permitted by the constitution.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Over the years, the democratic transition pattern in Ghana has been seamless and relatively violence-free. The country has a Transition Act which guides and ensures a smooth transition. Nevertheless, the period between presidential elections and the actual transfer of power is relatively too short, which often makes transitions disorderly, devoid of proper documentation and handing

over the programme. In the case of Nigeria, the study found that the history of democratic transition in the country has been characterised by wobbling, rancour, tension and heating up of the polity before and during the transition. Nigeria does not have a proper transition plan to help midwife a seamless and violence-free transition. It is also worth noting that the various patterns of democratic transition observed, and the political environment during such transitions in both countries, were largely products and consequences of the election process leading up to them.

Nigeria needs to emulate Ghana when it comes to the country's transition programme. There is a need for a transition plan to guide the process of handing over to an incoming government by the outgoing one. The study, therefore, recommends that before the country's next transition, the legislative arm of government should, as a matter of exigency, pass a bill to establish a Transition Act in this regard. For Ghana, the EC and the Parliament should review the country's Electoral Act to give enough room, say 3 months between the election and transition to give enough room for proper documentation and handing over. This is usually the trend in some leading democracies such as the United States (two months) and Mexico (six months).

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