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Creating Political Legitimacy: Electoral Democracy Versus Good Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2023)

Adesina M. ALABI¹

Abstract

This study x-rayed election versus good governance in creating political legitimacy for a government by assessing the extent to which the successive administrations in Nigeria since 1999-2023 enjoyed political legitimacy based on the popular elections that ushered them into power versus their popularity in relation to their policies afterwards. Also, the study examined the reasons why a government that won a popular election with wide acceptability but later lost its popularity among the majority of the electorate, whereas a government with controversial election and lower acceptability of ascendance to power could easily warm itself into the heart of the majority, moving forward. Thus, to carry out the investigation, the study drew data mainly from secondary data and relevant literature; and content analysis was adopted to arrive at findings that: political legitimacy, greater citizens' confidence, and support for government are, most importantly, created and sustained by good governance or destroyed by otherwise. The study, also, aligned with the fact that election bolsters legitimacy because the citizens are afforded the opportunity to participate in the political process to elect their leaders. Then, the study concluded that elections, even though free and fair, cannot sustain political legitimacy for a government if it doesn't translate to good governance.

Keywords: *Electoral Democracy, Good Governance, Political legitimacy, Fourth Republic*

Introduction

Having suffered in the hands of the successive military governments for over sixteen years after the collapse of the 2nd Republic through a military coup, many Nigerian citizens expressed hopes with the restoration of a full electoral democracy on May 29, 1999. A new political regime, democracy with its inherent ethos that afford the citizens the opportunity to partake, at least, in the political recruitment of leaders who would govern on their behalf, has been installed. It is also believed that the new political regime would improve the performance of government, encourage accountability among leaders and revive the ailing economy. But after the euphoria that welcomed the installation of electoral democracy died down and governance began, a great sense of realism has set in among much of the Nigerian public (Lewis et al, 2002). The general public's feeling has been that the anticipated benefits of democracy have been slow to emerge, and the new dispensation has failed to fulfill the expectations of many Nigerians. Analysts, commentators and average citizens began to express deep concerns about political violence, corruption, ineffective government, unresponsive leaders, insurgency and economic deprivation that have become the hallmark of the democratic dispensation (Lewis, 2006). Thus, these realities continue to raise a dilemma of the gap in between the strength of electoral democracy on one hand and that of good governance on the other hand, in creating and sustaining legitimacy for government.

The question of political legitimacy is not peculiar to Nigeria's government, it is a cancer that is still eating deep into the fabric of the Third world countries including the African political systems as most African governments, according to Sabella (2007), come to power by way of coups or coercion, self-imposition, electoral malpractices, or combination of these and other means. Although studies have held that free and fair election bolsters citizen confidence in government (Levi *et*, 2009; Tyler, 1990; Paternoster *et*, 1997; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003), there seems that legitimacy that flows from outcomes in terms of competent provision of public goods is much stronger and endurable. For example, also, the political reality in Iraq after the 2005 general election gave credence to this line of thought when Bush's administration and its intellectuals had predicted political stability in Iraq given the establishment of electoral democracy (Plesch, 2005). But Rangwala (2005)

argued that enabling the Iraqi people to vote and thereby to choose who is going to wield political authority over them has hardly created much expected political legitimacy. It is presupposed that the expansion of political freedom associated with democratization would afford people the opportunity to choose their leaders that would formulate the right policies which would lead to economic prosperity to improve their lives and hence creating political legitimacy among people. Also, recently, in some West African States, political legitimacy of democratic governments completely collapsed and this gave justifications for the military to strike and takeover the countries namely; Mali (since August, 2020), Chad (since April, 2021), Guinea (since September, 2021), Burkina Faso (since January, 2022) and Niger (since, July, 2023).

In Nigeria as well, the general feelings towards the successive administrations in the current 4th Republic have not always been on a positive side even at a time when election was both nationally and internationally adjudged to be fair. This paper, thus, intends to find out, on individual scale, the strength of electoral democracy on one hand and that of good governance on the other in creating and sustaining political legitimacy for elected governments. The focus is specifically on the current 4th Republic in Nigeria by looking at the public expectations and gauging public feelings in relation to the performance of successive governments in Nigeria within the period of 1999-2023. The rest of this paper is divided into five sections; the immediate section after this introduction contains conceptual clarifications and theoretical framework. Section three briefly presents the journey of electoral democracy in Nigeria since 1999 while Nigeria governments' performance in relation to people expectations are examined in section four; then a conclusion is drawn.

Conceptual Clarifications

Legitimacy

The concept of legitimacy can be viewed from a perception of procedural fairness (Levi, Sacks and Tyler 2009; Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, and Sherman 1997; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tyler and Huo 2002). Some studies also hold view on

legitimacy from the angle of what flows from outcomes in terms of competent provision of public goods (Bernstein and Lü 2003; Fjeldstad and Semboja 2000; Guyer 1992; O'Brien 2002; Levi 2006). Whatever we may consider as the meaning of legitimacy or however controversial and conflicting, its meaning and intent is not ambiguous, it measures acceptability and popularity of a regime. That is, it refers to a situation which is significantly based on the acceptance and recognition that the occupier of a political seat is acting on the consent of the governed, to the extent that citizens regard the state, the institution, personnel or policies as morally right or acceptable (Robertson 1985; Bogdamor 1991; Tansey 1995; Ademola, 2009). So, a government is said to be legitimate if people accept its procedure to ascendance as fair, and is conformable to their values, and also willingly give their supports to the regime based on its popular policies.

Thus, it is logical to state that in a political system, there is a correlate relation and a chain sequentially connecting the three concepts of electoral democracy, good governance and legitimacy. Although, in practice, electoral democracy may not guarantee good governance most especially when elections are not free and fair. To give birth to a properly called democratic government that will ensure good governance, the rules of law guiding the electoral process must be strict and strictly adhered to. The fact that there is periodical elections where politicians will have a recuse back to the electorate for endorsement or re- endorsement, is expected to make democratic government responsive and responsible, and ensure good government that will eventually create and sustain political legitimacy.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of electoral democracy versus good governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2023) shall be undertaken within the framework of theory of electoral democracy and the theory of good governance. The theory of electoral democracy is designed to give explanation that election is a mechanism to legitimize a democratic government by which the citizens are afforded the opportunity to recruit the people in government through voting while the theory of good governance is used to illustrate the standard of how the business of government is run in the interest of the citizens.

Theory of Electoral Democracy

Firstly, it is considered appropriate to broadly look at the concept of democracy and election as a way of giving background to the idea of electoral democracy. The term democracy is derived from two Greek words, 'demos' meaning people and 'kratos' meaning rule. By translating directly, democracy means a form of government in which the people rule. Abraham Lincoln extolled the virtues of democracy that it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Also, democracy is viewed as a form of government in which the great mass of citizens can participate in political decision making and policy making (Newton & van Deth, 2010). In his elaborate definition, Agbaje (1999) refers to democracy as a system that entrenches and expands, or seeks to entrench and expand the rights, ability and capacity of people, in any community, large and small, from the most complex to the complicated, to take control of their lives through participating, as fully as possible, in discussion and decisions on issues and events that affects them and their community. The term democracy can be laconically summed up in what could be described as the principles or features of democracy as the term has been bombarded with different definitions. Principles of democracy include regular, fair and free elections; universal adult suffrage; popular sovereignty; an independent judiciary; competitive political participation and representation. Other features of a democratic system include freedom to vote and contest for office, freedom to speak and publish dissenting views, freedom to form and join organizations; strong civil society organizations; political tolerance; transparency; the separation of powers of the various arms of government; and respect and protection of citizens' rights (Klein, Kiranda & Bafaki 2011, p. 5; Johnson 2001, p. 5). On election on the other hand, the term is defined by 'Wikipedia', as a formal group decision-making process whereby a population chooses an individual or multiple individuals to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Given the claim that democracy is "rule by the people for the people", many scholars and politicians associate democracy with holding free and fair elections. Elections are seen as a very popular prerequisite for democracy in scientific and political activity, and is an important stage of the movement towards democratic system of government (Lyubomyr, 2022).

In defining electoral democracy, therefore, Schumpeter (1962 [1942], p. : 269), described it as: ‘-“that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”-’. Huntington (1970) opined that democracy exists where the principal leaders of a political system are selected by a competitive election in which the bulk of the population has the opportunity to participate. In other words, considering the nature of a modern State in terms of its nature of relative size in population and landmass, it is impracticable for all citizens to converge in a place to make decisions for the entire State, hence the inevitability of the adoption of the principle of representation where some individuals are selected or elected to oversee the affairs of the state (Held, 1993). Even in tiny communities, such as the classical city-state of Athens or a Swiss commune of a few thousand people, it is very difficult to base government on the direct political participation of many people. For this reason government is usually in the hands of a comparatively small number of elected representatives who are supposed to exercise their power in the interests of the much larger number of people they represent (Newton & van Deth, 2010). What can be deduced from the explanations of electoral democracy is that election serves as a mechanism to ensure indirect participation of the citizens through their elected representatives in the running of government affairs, and, also, to legitimize democratic government.

Theory of Good Governance

The concept of good governance has no standard definition in the dictionaries. The World Bank (WB) states: “Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.” More explicitly, World Bank, (1992) stated further that good governance is “the means by which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (World Bank 1992). In their own view, Bradley and Ewing (2010) opined that good governance or good

government entails limited government, i.e. a political regime that respects the rule of law. Moreover, limited government in relation to civil society implies a state that operates under certain key rules. Thus, the above definitions give credence to Ogundiya (2010) that there is an inseparable connection that exists between electoral democracy and good governance since both concepts are based on almost the same principles, i.e rules of law. For instance, advocates for democracy have argued that a democratic system of government is more beneficial than other forms of governments. This is because a democratic system will guarantee better quality of individual lives through the granting of political and civil rights. It also is expected to be more responsive to the demands and pressures from citizens (Oke 2010). Other forms of governments like authoritarian regimes would likely be less concerned with poverty reduction and other issues relating to human development compared with democratically elected governments. This is because poverty and other challenges affecting the masses may not threaten authoritarian regimes who do not need the votes of the masses to remain in power (Gerring, Strom & Alfaro 2012).

In a general term, good governance is when the representatives of the people rule in the overall interest of the populace by ensuring security of life and property, accountability, transparency, participation, rule of law, general welfare of all, among others. And, an existence of a dearth of all the indicators of good governance mentioned may impair the legitimacy of a regime.

A synopsis of the Journey of Electoral Democracy in Nigeria Since 1999

Following the death of military dictator and *de facto* ruler of Nigeria, Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998, his successor Gen. Abdusalami abubakar initiated the transition which heralded Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. The ban on political activities was lifted, and political prisoners were released from detention facilities. The constitution was styled after the ill-fated 2nd republic which saw the Westminster system of government jettisoned for an American Presidential system. Political parties were formed by politicians and registered by the government; People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and Alliance for Democracy (AD), and elections were set for April 1999. In the widely monitored

1999 election, former military ruler, Olusegun Obasanjo was elected on the PDP platform. On 29 May, 1999, Obasanjo was sworn in as Executive President. The election was not totally without irregularities; many Nigerians accepted the election results and expressed hope for “dividend of democracy” from a government which they decided the selection of its leadership (Lewis, 2006). Obasanjo re-contested on the platform of his party PDP in the 2003 general election with Gen Muhammadu Buhari of ANPP being his major contender. Although, more than thirty political parties registered to contest the presidential elections, the elections itself was a two-man contest between Obasanjo and Alhaji Muhammadu Buhari (Anifowoshe, 2003). At the end of the elections, INEC declared Chief Olusegun Obasanjo the winner. This time, the election results did not go unchallenged as Buhari refused to accept the results and headed for the courts (Abubakar, 2007). It took the intervention of the Nigerian Supreme Court before Obasanjo’s administration could be legitimated (Isa & Zakari, 2008).

The 2007 general election in which Umaru Musa Yar’Adua of PDP was declared winner was widely regarded controversial and described as a charade. The presidential elections were characterized with massive vote rigging and various electoral malfeasances. At the end of the presidential polls, some international observers even adjured it to be the worst in Nigeria’s electoral history (Campbell, 2011; Falode, 2013). The elections, marking the first time Nigeria conducted three consecutive polls (1999, 2003 and 2007) uninterrupted by military rule since independence from British colonial rule in 1960, were marred by such widespread irregularities that neither Nigerians nor the watching world considered the results credible (International Crisis Group, 2007). It was an election that was supposed to consolidate the country’s evolution as a democracy, facilitate the peaceful resolution of its many internal conflicts and bolster its stature as a leading peacemaker and peacekeeper in Africa, but serious electoral irregularities marred what could have been a landmark achievement (NDI, 2008). Instead, the conduct and outcome deepened long-running political crises, pushed the country further down the road to failure as a democratic state and weakened its position as a broker of peace across the continent.

Following the death of Umar Yar’Adua on May 2010, his Vice President, Goodluck

Jonathan became the Acting President and later won the 2011 general election. The election was reported in the international media as having run smoothly with relatively little violence or voter fraud in contrast to previous general elections, in particular the widely disputed 2007 general election. Indeed, at least one observer pronounced them the most smoothly run elections held since the restoration of democracy 12 years earlier (Nossiter, 2011). The United States' State Department said the election was "successful" and a "substantial improvement" over 2007, although it added that vote rigging and fraud also took place (Carson, 2011). Gen Muhammadu Buhari, the major contender who was contesting for the third time claimed that his supporters in the south were not allowed to vote. This assertion sparked election riots in Northern Nigeria. It was reported that about 140 people were killed in political violence the day after the election alone. According to the head of a leading Nigerian civil rights group living in Kaduna, more than 500 mostly Muslim people had been killed in three villages just in Kaduna in political violence. A speaker for the "Open Society Justice Initiative" stated the only comparable episodes of the violence occurred in the mid-1960s and early 1980s, which both led to government overthrow. Buhari had refused to condemn possible violent reaction to the election result, which has been interpreted as an invitation to his supporters to riot. Up to 1,000 people could have died in post-election violence (Nossiter, 2011).

The Nigerian general election of 2015 was the 5th quadrennial election to be held since the end of military rule in 1999. The election was first scheduled to be held on 14 February 2015, but the Electoral Commission postponed it by six weeks to 28 March, mainly due to the poor distribution of Permanent Voter Cards, and also to curb ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in certain places. What makes the election so special and historic was that it marks the first time an incumbent has lost re-election in Nigeria. The opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari who was contesting for the fourth time won the presidential election by more than 2.5 million votes, and the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat (Schneider, 2015). Both local and international observers agreed that the election free and fair. UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon congratulated the citizens and government for conducting a peaceful and orderly election (UN, 2015). The AUEOM concluded that the elections were conducted in a "peaceful atmosphere" and met the

“continental and regional principles of democratic elections” (AUEOM, 2015). The election posed threat of post-election violence as many people were not sure of the outcome of the election. For instance, the postponement has been seen by the critics as a ploy by President Jonathan and the ruling party PDP to buy time to sway support from the popular main opposition candidate and former military dictator, Muhammadu Buhari.

The import from the above brief journey of electoral democracy since the inception of the current fourth republic is that Nigerians have been given the opportunity to decide who is to govern their affairs, though the system of selection has not been without the challenges of malpractices that sometimes thwarted the results of political decisions of the people. But the fact that there have been elections whether fraudulent or not, continues to uphold Nigerians’ patience and trust in the system. Nigerians are not directing their dissatisfaction towards the system rather to political leaders and parties (Lewis, 2006).

Election Versus Good Governance in Creating Political legitimacy

This section examines the potency of election and good governance, each, in creating legitimacy in Nigeria since 1999 by looking at the acceptability of elections that ushered in the successive governments in relation to their governance, afterward, in terms of making and executing policies that were considered acceptable by the Nigerian public.

Both general elections of 1999 and 2003 that ushered in Obasanjo’s administration for the first and second term were not declared, locally and internationally, as irregularities-free as rightly stated in the immediate above section. Although many Nigerians accepted that of 1999, obviously for being tired of the military rule and for the hope of getting the dividends of democracy (Lewis, 2006), election results of that of 2003 were not allowed to go unchallenged. Nevertheless, the administration cannot be said to greatly suffer from electoral legitimacy. Obasanjo’s regime went ahead to deepen its political legitimacy by making and executing some certain policies that ensured good governance. For example, Obasanjo carried-out extensive socio-economic and political programmes during the life of his

administration between 1999 and 2007. These policies were designed to broaden and deepen Nigeria's democracy (Falode, 2013). The administration set out from the outset to tackle the myriad of structural problems that afflicted Nigeria's federal political system. Obasanjo's major aim was to create political institutions that will strengthen Nigeria's democratic base and ensure its sustenance in the longer term (Falode, 2013). This was the rationale behind the administration's use of the constitutional provisions, such as the federal character principle and principle of fiscal federalism; and, the use of the concepts of zoning, rotational presidency and power-sharing. These are all tools the administration used between 1999 and 2007 to ensure that the inherent structural and institutional defects in Nigeria's federalism are corrected (Falode, 2013).

Also, President Obasanjo must be credited for implementing a range of policies for economic revival. In trying to ensure Nigeria's economic survival and tackle the challenge of corruption, the administration launched National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) (Rustad, 2008). The three concepts formed the bridgehead of the administration's socio-economic reform package between 2003 and 2007, and also, his introduction of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in late 2003 breathed new life into the anti-corruption agenda (Rustad, 2008). In analyzing Obasanjo's anti-graft crusade, Ehwareme (2010) noted that the anti-corruption crusade of the administration had recorded some successes. He also, opines that the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission even in the face of daunting challenges had made some significant progress in at least showing that corruption was unacceptable. The EFCC under Ribadu even went beyond that by actually prosecuting and sentencing an Inspector General of Police Mr. Tafa Balogun and Governor Alamiesighan of Bayelsa State.

Other common credits of the OBJ regime were the reduction in foreign debt, by which his administration paid off a substantial portion of the debt Nigeria owed to the Paris Club in 2006, the establishment of GSM mobile phone networks in the country and his campaign of privatizations (USAID-Nigeria, 2006; Chiakwelu,

2012). These policies significantly reshaped the country's economy and their positive effects were felt by Nigerians, for example, a growth rate of 2.58 per cent in May 1999, ended with 6.06 per cent growth in May 2007, and inflation rate dropped from 11.91 per cent to 8.55 per cent. Also, the administration was able to grow the external reserve from \$7.11bn to \$42.30bn (Alade, 2023), among others. Therefore, the public perception of Nigerians about the government and governance began to change for better despite their experience during the military era. Although the third term effort clouded other aspects of his presidency during late 2005-2006, it is not hard to argue that Obasanjo created legitimacy for his administration through good governance.

The 2007 general election that ushered in President Umaru Yar'Adua to office was generally considered a charade. The elections, in the view of Nigerians and the many international observers alike, were the most poorly organised and massively rigged in the country's history. That victory was bitterly disputed by many Nigerians including broad-based labour, religious and civil society groups. It was stated that the election pushed the country further towards a one-party state and diminished citizens' confidence in electoral institutions and processes (Africa Report, 2007). According to Suberu (2007), the 14 and 21 April 2007 general elections that should have been a milestone for democracy threatens instead to be a millstone, as an electoral process riddled with corruption and malfeasance raises doubts about prospects for democratic stability and consolidation in Nigeria. Thus, the declared winner, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, assumed the presidency on 29 May with less legitimacy than any previously elected president (Africa Report, 2007). This left the newly elected President with an uphill task of creating legitimacy for an unpopular new government.

However, the first bold step taken by Yar'Adua to warm himself into the hearts of Nigerians and International Community was to publicly admit that the election that brought him to power was flawed, and went ahead to set up an electoral reform committee, headed by Justice Muhammadu Uwais (rtd) to look into the country's electoral process and administration with the aim of normalizing the anomalies (Ehwareme, 2010). A fact, which even his critics had attested to, was that, unlike his predecessor, Yar'Adua operated within the realm of the law. He didn't pay lip

service to the rule of law and due process he preached. The courts regained the freedom they lost during his predecessor's tenure. They handed down verdicts that cancelled political victories even though his party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the victim. He was also noted to be the first President to publicly declare his assets (Ehwarieme, 2010).

Considering the strategic position of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria's economic, the purposeful way in which the Yar'Adua administration dealt with the militancy crisis in the area largely increased people's confidence in his government. Shortly after his inauguration, his administration approached the MEND crises with an understanding of the pressing situation and a new policy was adopted called "Presidential Amnesty Programme" that would help to proffer solution to the menace of violence in the Niger Delta (Aderogba, 2016). This Amnesty programme that was worked out for the agitating youth whose destructive activities had reduced Nigeria's oil output by almost half, was good intention of Yar'Adua's government to address the agitation in the region by granting unconditional amnesty to militants hoping the gesture would effectively stop the ranging restiveness in the oil bearing area (Imongan, 2015). The programme initially proved to be monumental success as peace that eluded the immediate government as far as creeks was concerned, was restored to the Niger Delta. Crude oil production reached it all time height of 2.6 million barrels per day as at that period (Imongan, 2015; Aderogba, 2016).

With all these elements of good governance and his expressed desire to take up the challenge of developing the country's economy to make her one of the twenty top-most economies in the world by the year 2020, the available statistics under Yar'Adua's administration did not indicate an economic improvement as inflation moved from 8.55 per cent to 14.10 per cent while unemployment rate increased from 12.30 to 19.70 per cent. In International Trade and Finance, the official exchange rate moved from N128.29/\$ to N149.99/\$, the external reserves declined from \$42.30bn to \$37.47bn as the current account balance as percentage of GDP dropped from 25.31 per cent to 8.33 per cent (Alade, 2023). Nevertheless, the Musa Yar'Adua administration which came to power in May 2007 through a highly flawed electoral process was later accepted by the people and it enjoyed a reasonable level of legitimacy from Nigerian public, perhaps due to his style of governance that

was considered as relatively following the rules of law (Ehwarieme, 2010). So, it is convenient to state that Yar'Adua created legitimacy for his administration through quality of government, despite the questionable and widely unacceptable election that ushered him to power.

Goodluck Jonathan was first sworn in as Acting President on May 6th, 2010 based on the constitutional provision after the death of his boss, President Yar'Adua. He was later substantially elected as President in the 2011 general election which was widely accepted among Nigerians most especially the southern part of the country. The election was reported in the international media as having run smoothly with relatively little violence or voter fraud in contrast to previous elections in particular the widely disputed 2007 general election. According to Nossiter (2011), indeed, at least one observer pronounced them the most smoothly run elections held since the restoration of democracy 12 years earlier. In order words, ab initio, Jonathan administration enjoyed electoral legitimacy. But the legitimacy began to suffer a set back within the first year of the administration as a full-fledged government when President Jonathan announced the removal of fuel subsidy on January 1st, 2012 by directing the Petroleum Pump Price Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) to ensure the implementation of a new pump price increase from ₦ 65 to ₦ 141, but later, amidst outcry and stiff opposition from the public, got reduced to ₦ 97 after a 5-day sustained nationwide protest which claimed about twenty-five lives (*The Guardian*, 2012). The announcement of the removal of oil subsidy by the President caused civil unrest that almost collapsed the state of Nigeria as the organized labour mobilized Nigerians to demonstrate against what they considered obnoxious, draconian and highly inhuman policy of the federal government. The Nigeria Labour Congress leadership opined that the action of President Jonathan showed that the federal government did not listen to the popular demand of the people. And, government must be made realize that sovereignty lies with the people and not the government (*The Punch*, 2012). For the first time in the history of citizens' protest in Nigeria, the people were united across religious and ethnic divides, with protests in major cities across the country. Protests by Nigerians in Diaspora were held in major cities around the world; in UK, Canada, USA, Ghana, South Africa and other countries (Social Action, 2012).

Therefore, the government of Jonathan that was welcome by Nigerians with appreciable level of support based on his fair ascendance, later found itself in legitimacy problem ensued from the removal of fuel subsidy which people considered, perhaps erroneously, as bad governance. Since that time the administration continued to battle with the legitimacy problem for the rest of the tenure, and perhaps led to Jonathan's defeat in the 2015 general election. Nevertheless, there are certain credits that cannot be taken away from the Jonathan administration. Among others, in 2010, President Jonathan assured Nigerians as well as Nigeria's external friends that he would break the jinx of flawed elections in the country. To an appreciable extent, according to Adamolekun, (2011), the administration of Jonathan delivered on his promise by reforming the country's electoral system and administration so that the electoral process can gain public confidence.

The 2015 general election that brought President Buhari to power was not only special and historic for being the first time an incumbent has lost re-election, but also the election that marked the first time in the current fourth republic when both local and international observers agreed on the conduct of election to be free and fair. No candidate contested the results of the election in the court of law. Therefore, the declared winner, President Buhari entered office with enormous goodwill and support from Nigerians with great expectations and high hopes. When he came on board, however, the first 100 days in office of Buhari's administration was the only period during which the generality of Nigerians could remember as having the 'honeymoon' with the administration. After this initial period, it seemed the government went into slumber acting as if unprepared for governance and unable to consolidate its victory (Zubairu, 2016).

Moving forward, the eight years administration of Buhari was described to have witnessed a relentless upsurge in human misery, rising national debt, two recessions, record of unemployment and inflation levels, and receding foreign direct investment. For instance, the naira exchanged officially at N197.8 to \$1 in June 2015, it was N460.97 to \$1 by April 2023, while at the parallel market where most buy, and it was N747. In 2015, annualised inflation was in single digits at 9.0 per cent, but by December, 2022 the inflation rate

hit 21.47 per cent, and by March, 2023, it climbed to 22.04 per cent (Alade, 2023; The Punch Editorial, 2023). In addition, the naira redesign policy under Buhari's government severely knocked the economy as Nigerians were still living in hardship and businesses were incurring losses because of the policy, with the banks experiencing liquidity problems and the new banknotes still scarce. Also, food insecurity was alarming because of Fulani herdsmen tormenting farmers on their farms. And, by December, 2022, Nigeria's debt stood at N44.7 trillion from N12.12 trillion in June, 2015 (The Punch Editorial, 2023). So, all these negative economic indicators which actually translated to hardship for the citizens made the administration Buhari find it hard to sustain the legitimacy acquired through the popular election that brought it here into power.

Conclusion

This study examined the strength of electoral democracy and the strength of good governance in creating and sustaining legitimacy for a government, taking the current Nigeria's fourth republic as the focus of analysis. It was discovered that some administrations were welcome to power with appreciable level of popularity and support but failed to maintain the warm relationship with the public due to low performance in governance. On the other hand, some democratic regimes in the current dispensation came to power with fraudulent and widely criticized electoral victories but were later able to win the confidence of the people after its inauguration, based on what the public considered as better performance. The paper, therefore, argues that, while agreeing with the notion that election bolsters legitimacy for a new regime, sustainability or otherwise of the legitimacy largely depends on formulation and implementation of good policies for the good of the society. That is, the main sources of political legitimacy are situated in the output from the political system, and have to do largely with the quality of governance. Good governance in terms of protection of life and properties, absence of corruption, rule of laws, employment opportunities and general economic prosperity, among others, are the indicators of good governance that can actually create, maintain and sustain political legitimacy for a government. The strength of

election to create political legitimacy, even though free and fair, can be short-lived if it doesn't translate to good governance.

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