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Power Alternation in African Democracies

Joseph Yinka Fashagba

Department of Political Science, Federal University, Lokoja.

yinkafash.yf@gmail.com

Abstract

Before the return of multiparty democracy to Africa in the 1990s, monopolization of political power by one party or authoritarian regime was the hallmark of governance on the continent. However, in recent times, one of the emerging and increasing features of the new African democracies is that opposition parties now defeat the ruling party and gain power to rule. In some countries, the ruling and opposition parties have switched positions more than once. This study examines the social, political and economic factors driving the power alternation, focusing on Ghana and Nigeria. We employ survey research technique and archival data that we analysed, using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. The study argues that power alternation is driven by intra-party crisis, macro-economic crisis, corruption etc.

KEY WORDS: Nigeria, Power alternation, Ghana, Presidential election, Fourth republic, democratic consolidation

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Introduction

Since the 1990s in Africa, the number of countries where the opposition party has defeated the ruling party and replaced the same as the ruling party has been on a steady increase. In countries like Ghana, Senegal and Kenya among others, opposition and ruling parties have switched positions on more than one occasion. Many ruling parties that took over government after the return of multiparty democracy have become opposition parties, having suffered electoral defeat in the hands of the opposition parties. In some instances, the ruling and opposition parties have switched positions again and again. This is unprecedented. To be sure, in the 1960s and 70s, most parties that inherited power from the colonialists monopolised power and frustrated or banned opposition parties. In fact, most African states dismantled the multiparty system inherited from the colonialists and replaced them with one form of authoritarianism or the other, with military regimes and one-party system taking the centre stage on the continent (Lembani, 2014). Due to the suffocation of political competition, no opposition party could muster any political strength to compete and defeat the ruling party. Consequently, periodic elections became a mere ritual to renew and legitimise the tenure of the incumbents (LeBas, 2011).

Thus, until recently, only a few African countries have experienced transfer of presidential or parliamentary power to an opposition party as a result of elections. Following the sudden burst and sweeping tides of the 'Third Wave of democratisation' across South America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa in the 1980s and the 1990s (Huntington, 1991), most African countries went through a transition period that either took the shape of transfer of power from military to civilians or the opening up of the system to a multiparty arrangement. This resulted in the restoration of constitutional democracy in most African states, especially from the early 1990s. Through the process of political and constitutional reforms in most one-party or authoritarian states, multiparty democracy returned to the African political stage, with several parties freely competing for power. Consequently, an increasing number of executives are surrendering power to the opposition after losing to the opposition party in a competitive election. Very often, and consistently too, most states now organise periodic elections to elect members of the executive and the legislature under a competitive election in which a number of ruling parties and presidents have lost. Although, in some countries, the parties that gained power after the transition from one party rule or military regime has held on to power, in a number of states power has alternated between competing parties (Lodge, 2013). In this study, our focus is on Nigeria and Ghana, two of the African countries where power has alternated between ruling and opposition parties. In Ghana, power alternated in 2000, 2008, 2016 and Nigeria experienced the same in 2015.

Thus, this study examined the specific social, political and economic conditions that triggered power alternation in Nigeria and Ghana under the fourth-republic. The two countries are former British colonies in West Africa. They are developing economies with reasonable level of ethnic and religious diversity. Nigeria practices a presidential system, while Ghana practises the presidential-parliamentary mix. Furthermore, Ghana and Nigeria returned to multiparty democracy in 1992 and 1999, respectively. Although, Ghana has experienced three power alternations in 2000, 2008 and 2016 while Nigeria has only experienced power alternation only

once, nevertheless we are comparing the two countries in this exploratory study, not only to prepare the ground for a larger study but also because the two countries have shared similar political trajectories since their independence.

This study is important, one, because Huntington alluded to the importance of power alternation in democratic consolidation; and two, to know under what conditions power alternation becomes feasible. Most previous works that have dealt with power alternation in Africa, have not deemed it fit to examine the specific social, economic and political drivers of the phenomenon. This study filled this gap.

Method of Data Collection

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative data derived from the data bases of the World Bank group, African Elections Database, International Monetary Fund, and Transparency International among others. This is supplemented with interviews and focus group discussion. The data are analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. Analysing the data offered an insight into the factors that triggered power alternation in the two democracies examined.

By power alternation, we mean a political occurrence in which an opposition party or candidate defeats the candidate of the ruling party or incumbent executive in an election resulting in the switching of positions between the ruling and opposition parties. Leadership turnover is different from power alternation, because it is a situation in which the same party retains power, but different individuals occupy the executive office at different times, for example, South Africa.

Understanding Power Alternation in Africa

Political Power alternation between ruling and opposition parties was very rare in Africa between 1960 and 1990s. Monopolization of power by the party that inherited power from the colonialists was the hallmark of the post-colonial states. Opposition parties were frustrated, discouraged and banned in extreme cases (Englebert and Dunn, 2013). With the return of democracy to most previous authoritarian states under what Huntington refers to as the Third Wave of Democratisation, power alternation has become increasingly an emerging and visible feature of democracy in Africa since the 1990s. Although democracy in Africa seemed to be under siege with the renewed rounds of successful military coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger (2023) and Gabon (2023) among others, nevertheless, the number of states that have experienced power alternation since 2000 has changed the narrative on executive power monopolisation in Africa. This is in agreement with Huntington's view that under any wave of democratisation, the number of states experiencing the wave is usually higher than those moving in opposing directions. Using the history of previous democratisation waves, Huntington (1991:15) contends that 'each wave affected a relatively small number of countries, and during each wave some regime transitions occurred in a nondemocratic direction'. This aptly captured the recent African experience. Since the 1990s, some African democracies have experienced one or two power alternations among competing parties. Conversely, countries like Namibia, South Africa and Botswana among others are yet to experience power alternation, with only one-party monopolising power. In the literature on democratisation, power alternation is viewed as central to the consolidation and institutionalisation of democracy (Huntington, 1991, Ruiz-Rufino and Birch, 2020).

Emerging from the culture of authoritarianism, characterised by political power monopolisation, consolidating democracy has faced some challenges in most of the new African democracies. For instance, only a few countries have experienced power alternation. Various factors account for the low rate and slow pace of power alternation in Africa.

In Malawi, for instance, weak institutionalisation of political parties, lack of cohesion among opposition parties forming coalition and ethnically polarised political behaviour have weakened the capacity of the opposition to challenge the ruling party. The capacity of the opposition to effectively challenge the ruling party is therefore weakened. Thus, it took Malawi twenty-six years to experience its first power alternation in 2020 (Lembani, 2014).

The Kenyan experience is quite different from the Malawian and that appears to reflect in the different outcomes experienced by Kenya and Malawi. First, the Huntington's two power alternation benchmarks for a democracy to be considered consolidated was met by Kenya before Malawi recorded its first power alternation. Two, the fragile political party alliance and weak party cohesion in Malawi has undermined the opposition parties and weakened their capacity to challenge the ruling party over a long time. The Kenyan experience in building a coalition has been much more fruitful in tilting electoral victory to the coalition that is more formidable (Kadima and Owuor, 2013). Consequently, pre-elections political party alliances in Kenya have had significant influence on the outcome of presidential and parliamentary elections. In Kenya, coalition building by (small) political groups or parties that would have contested election as fragmented and weak parties, enhances the capacity of the parties in coalition to challenge and unseat the ruling party.

The Zambian experience seemed similar to the Malawian in some respect. For instance, the proliferation of small parties has been a major issue since Zambia returned to multiparty democracy in 1991. This has undermined the aspiration of the opposition for frequent power alternation. Often, fragmentation of parties lead to voting along ethnic lines. This weakens both the electoral competition and the capacity of the opposition or small parties to challenge the ruling party. The Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) which gained power in the first multiparty election of 1991 was accused of undermining the multiparty system (Burnell, 2001), but the opposition parties were too weak to unseat the party for twenty years. Although Zambia returned to multiparty democracy in 1991, there was no significant political competition until 2008. After 2008, the 2011, 2015 and 2021 elections were competitive, giving birth to two power alternations. While proliferation of parties was an issue in 2011, the Patriotic Front (PF), nevertheless, built on the momentum of 2008, when it emerged runner up, to defeat the incumbent president, Rupiah Banda, of the ruling MMD in 2011, leading to the first power alternation in Zambia. The second power alternation of 2021 occurred with the defeat of PF by the United Party for National Development (UPND) (Tang, 2023), largely due an alleged high level of corruption and economic mismanagement against PF. In both power alternations, electoral competition was very significant, the political space was more open and the two opposition parties that defeated the ruling PF in 2011 and the UPND in 2021 remained consistent and persistent in challenging for power until they triumphed. Since 1999, these elements of consistency and persistence have been very rare among Nigerian politicians due to lack of party loyalty and high rate of party switching among the political class, resulting in the high mortality rate of political parties. Party membership in Nigeria is fluid and unstable because the politicians live off the state and therefore often switch to any party controlling power and dispensing patronage (Fashagba, 2009, 2014). This undermines

the stability of the political parties and erodes any possibility for institutionalisation. This perhaps explains why Ghana and Zambia have recorded more power alternations than Nigeria.

Until recently, in Africa, defeating a ruling party was only possible when the incumbent president was not seeking re-election (Ogbonnaya and Lamin, 2013). Therefore, most power alternations occurred when the ruling party presented a fresh presidential candidate. This was the case in Liberia when the candidate of the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) defeated the candidate of the ruling Unity Party (UP) in 2017 because the incumbent president, Ellen Sirleaf, was not seeking re-election. Conversely, in Ghana (2016), Gambia (2016) and Nigeria (2015) the respective incumbent presidents lost to the candidates of the opposition and left office. This perhaps suggests that as a system becomes more open, and inter-party competition deepened, the opposition's capacity to challenge the incumbent becomes enhanced. Nevertheless, we need to draw a caveat here. The extent to which the trend represents a democratic progress for these countries and Africa will become obvious over time, especially with the recent wave of democratic reversals in West Africa. However, while Ogbonnaya and Lamin (2013) sought to identify the social, political and economic factors that triggered power alternation in Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia, they failed to provide data to justify their claims. The study argues that the rising poverty and corruption level played significant roles in the 2015 power alternation in Nigeria, but did not back up the claim with concrete evidence.

Furthermore, Sierra Leone has also experienced the two-power alternation benchmark. In 2007 and 2018, an opposition party defeated the ruling party and formed a government. The defeat of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in 2007 by the All-People's Congress (APC) occurred when serious allegation of corruption was raised against the ruling SLPP; secondly, the implosion of SLPP and the attendant defection of some members and supporters of the party to form the PMDC had weakened the SLPP; thirdly, the coalition between the All-People's Congress (APC) and PMDC for the presidential run-off election (Kandeh, 2008) secured numerical advantage for them. Specifically, the SLPP was accused of squandering public good will and misappropriation of donor funds and failed to deliver basic social goods and services. Nevertheless, the most significant factor in the defeat of the SLPP in 2007 was the alliance formed by the PMDC and APC. In 2018, the SLPP defeated the ruling APC and returned to power. However, the outbreak of Ebola in 2014 and the collapse of commodity prices in the international market had affected the Sierra Leonean economy, weakening the health and educational sectors. The economy was yet to fully recover when the 2017 presidential elections beckoned. Instead of focusing on tackling the economic challenges facing the nation, the APC led government focused on winning the 2017 elections and ended up losing it (Bertelsmann, BTI 2020).

Senegal experienced its first power alternation in 2000 and has recorded one more after returning to multiparty democracy. Although Beck (1997) contends that the managed institutional reform of Socialist Party (PS) was detrimental to a vibrant political competition that could lead to power alternation, nevertheless, the foundation for the 2000 power alternation in Senegal was laid by the incremental institutional reforms that opened up of the political space for effective public participation and strengthened the opposition by enhancing their capacity to compete. The all-encompassing reform achieved an unintended outcome for the ruling Socialist Party (PS). It eliminated or narrowed the chances of the ruling party manipulating the result of elections (Vengroff and Magala, 2001, 138). Also, the internal conflict within the PS that triggered the

defection of two prominent members who themselves formed new parties constituted a threat to the ruling PS and cut its share of the ballots before the runoff in 2000. Through coalition, the opposition parties succeeded in offsetting the first ballot lead of the PS and defeated it in the 2000 presidential run-off.

Evident from the foregoing is that weak party institutionalisation, ethnic politics, and lack of cohesion among opposition parties among others are the major challenges against power alternation. Conversely, coalition among opposition parties, intra-party conflict, lack of transparency and accountability, multiparty democracy that encourage political competition and tolerance of opposition have proved decisive in electoral outcomes in Africa in recent times.

Ghana and Nigeria in Historical Perspective

Between 1957 when Ghana became independent and the current fourth republic, the country has had its fair share of political instability, experiencing both democratic and military rules at different times (Biswal, 1992). Prior to the current fourth republic (1992 till date), Ghana has had three republican constitutions (1957, 1969, and 1979) (Mensah, 2022) but the current fourth republic has been its longest democratic experience, under which eight national elections have been held (Alidu, 2022) with the ninth slated for 2024. Although multiparty is encouraged, only the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) have been competitive, and controlled both parliament and the presidency and alternated power since 1992.

On the other hand, Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and became a republic in 1963. Democratic and military rules have alternated at different times due to frequent military incursion into politics. Nigeria is characterised by ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Prior to 1999, three previous republics and constitutions were operated but collapsed, namely the 1960 independent/parliamentary, 1963 republican/parliamentary and 1979 presidential constitutions (Fashagba, 2021). In 1993, attempt to return the country to democracy failed, because the military annulled the presidential election that would have produced a civilian president. Consequently, an unelected interim government was installed to conduct a new presidential election after the military withdrew from politics in August, 1993. The interim government was dissolved after three months in office, following another military take-over of November, 1993. After thirteen-years of military rule, democracy was restored in May, 1999, giving birth to the fourth republic. Since 1999, seven general elections (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023) have been held. The mortality rate of political parties has been high. Many parties have ceased to exist after registering and participating in a number of elections (Fashagba and Nwankwor, 2020). Many of the small parties exist only for their nuisance value, because they lack the capacity to compete and win election. The PDP has remained the most resilient, contesting all the elections held since 1999. Unlike in Ghana, party membership in Nigeria is fluid and driven by patronage, thereby eroding the stability of the Nigerian political parties and making their institutionalisation difficult. In both Nigeria and Ghana, the electoral cycle is four years.

Power Alternation in Ghana and Nigeria

What specific social, political and economic conditions triggered power alternations in Ghana (2000, 2008 and 2016) and Nigeria (2015)? We answer this question here, examining the country one after the other.

Power alternation in Ghana: The first power alternation in Ghana's fourth republic occurred in 2000. Politically, Ghana has two strong and competitive parties, namely, the NDC and the NPP. The two prominent parties have dominated parliament and alternate executive power (presidency) since 1992. The NDC is affiliated with and dominated by the Ewe ethnic group, while the NPP is affiliated and dominated by the Akan. The largest votes received by each party come in the form of bloc votes from the ethnic group each dominated. Each party often seeks to make in-roads into the political enclave of the other, with the NDC more open and welcoming to other ethnic groups (Alidu, 2022). In fact, 'a two-way cleavage has evolved into a two-party system that advances consolidated processes. Elections over four republics have remained highly competitive, and governance has alternated almost equally between the two sides of the cleavages' (Morrison, 2004).

The Ghanaian fourth republic politics of NDC and NPP has followed the previous patterns of the defunct republics largely dominated by two dominant groups, the Ewe and the Akan (Asante). To be sure, in 1992, the presidential candidate of the NDC, an Ewe, was the incumbent military ruler, Jerry. J. Rawling. He contested and won to become the first democratic president of Ghana under the fourth republic. His party, the NDC, also dominated parliamentary election. Ethnic influence on voting was visible, with majority of Akan voting the NPP while majority of Ewe voted for Rawlings and the NDC. Substantial proportion of non-Ewe also voted for the NDC. The non-Ewe often support the candidate of NDC. Nevertheless, NDC won in part, because majority of Ghanaian voters cared more about their material living than about human rights (Oquaye, 1995). During his electioneering campaign, Rawlings had insinuated that, if the NPP's candidate was elected, he would reverse the gains of his (Rawlings) revolutionary military government. Thus, he undermined the NPP's candidate (Oquaye, 1995).

Although the 1992 constitution did not make provision for term limit, Rawlings did not seek re-election after completing his second term of four years in 2000. Rather, he imposed a new candidate on his party. The imposition triggered discontentment among many previous supporters of NDC and Rawlings. Thus, the NDC went into the 2000 presidential election polarised along the three major groups that formed the party in 1992 (interview with Professor no 5 on 17th February, 2023). The imposed NDC candidate contested against the candidate of the NPP.

Earlier on, the NDC won the 1992 election with a 28.1 percent margin. The margin was cut to 17.7% in 1996. By 2000, the candidate of NPP had neutralised the margin and won with a margin of 13.8%, leading to the first power alternation in Ghana. Consequently, power shifted from the Ewe to the Akan. Just like in 1992, when the NDC received just enough electoral support from the stronghold of the NPP coupled with those of swing voters to win the presidential election, the NPP also succeeded in receiving the needed electoral support from the stronghold of the NDC and the swing voters to win the 2000 presidential election.

In 2008, the incumbent president decided not to seek re-election after completing his second term. Consequently, a new presidential candidate was picked by NPP. However, the NPP went into the 2008 presidential election with internal crisis and division over unresolved presidential candidate selection crisis (interview with Professor no 1 on 17th February, 2023). Seventeen other candidates that vied for the NPP presidential ticket and lost did not support the party's candidate. This weakened the party going into the 2008 election and robbed it of the electoral support needed to boost the drastically eroded victory margin which had plummeted to

7.8% in the 2004 presidential election. Thus, the fresh candidate of the NPP lost to the candidate of the NDC, resulting in the second power alternation of 2008. Again, some marginal vote from the stronghold of the NDC, the Ewe, and those of swing voters were key in the electoral victory (information retrieved during focus group discussion on 17th February, 2023).

The winner of the 2008 presidential election had died as president in 2011. Therefore, his deputy inherited the presidency and completed the four years. In 2012, the incumbent president sought his own first mandate, contesting under the NDC and won the election. However, in 2016 when he sought re-election, he lost to the opposition NPP. Thus, in 2016, when another power alternation occurred, an incumbent president was defeated for the first time, changing the previous pattern of ruling party losing only when represented by a fresh candidate. Worth to note is that no previous democratic president had contested twice as an incumbent president like the candidate of the NDC in 2016 and PDP in 2015. In both cases, the incumbent presidents were defeated by the candidates of the opposition parties for the first time. For Ghana, this suggests the deepening and consolidation of democracy and the expanding space for political and electoral competition.

On a general note, the NDC seemed more of a mass party while the NPP is an elitist party. The Akan, comprising the Asante among others have always voted the NPP, while the Ewe and non-Akan have always voted the NDC. Political sympathy, especially for serial election loser, appears to influence voting decision because presidential candidates who contested and lost one or two previous elections have eventually been elected (interview with Professor no 2 on February 17th, 2023). This was the case in Ghana in 2016 and Nigeria in 2015. Although regional politics and ethnicity are key determinants of voters' preference, religion does not seem to have any weight in Ghanaian politics (Alidu, 2022). Ethnic groups give bloc votes based on the personalities of party leader (interview with Professor no 5 on 17th February, 2023). Nevertheless, while the NDC always present Christians as presidential and Vice-presidential candidates, the NPP has always presented a Muslim Vice alongside a Christian presidential candidate (Views expressed by Participants at focus group discussion on 17th February, 2023, see appendices for details).

Next, we examine how the economic situations influenced power alterations in Ghana. The most significant economic factor between 1992 and 2000 was the devaluation of the Ghanaian currency. Before the 2000 election, the World Bank reported that the economic outlook looked good. However, the devaluation of the cedi triggered inflation that eroded the real wage of workers (Interview with a Professor no3 on February 17th, 2023, refer to the appendices). This combined with the division within the NDC severely damaged the chances of the party.

Prior to the 2008 presidential election, the Ghanaian economy had improved tremendously under the ruling NPP. Indeed, the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2007) pointed out that, 'The Ghanaian economy has performed well in recent years; in 2006 the real GDP growth reached 6.2 percent, the highest rate since the early 1990s'. Substantial progress and improvement was recorded in both the extractive, service and construction sectors of the Ghanaian economy by 2006. The economy received further boost from the increasing foreign remittance inflow, driving impressive local consumption and investment in housing and property. Nevertheless, in the same period, the country experienced an energy crisis. The government responded to the growing concern of energy shortage and made concerted efforts to stabilise the sector, because energy was central to the survival of the small scale, mining, service and construction industry. The various policies of the government ensured that Inflation continued to decline, falling below 10 percent at

the end of March, 2007 (IMF, 2007). Thus, the performance of the economy under the NPP administration gave a deceptive hope of victory in the election that was about a year away. Curiously, while the macro-economic policy had the ultimate aim of reducing poverty, in an interview with some Professors at the University of Ghana at Legon in February 2023, the convergence of opinions among the interviewees suggested that while the macro-economic policy of the government possibly grew and stabilised the economy over the periods, it did not translate to improved living condition for the working class and average Ghanaians. For instance, inflation, poverty and worsening living conditions were major issues prior to the election (Interview with Professor no3) on February 17th, 2023. Not surprisingly, the hope of victory was dashed because the NPP lost the 2008 presidential election to the NDC. What the NPP's experience seems to suggest is that a robust economic performance may not necessarily translate to electoral reward or success for a ruling party, especially if it does not translate to concrete and positive economic and material benefits for the voters. The contradiction in the IMF assessment and the prospect the assessment held for the NPP going into the 2008 presidential election and analyses of the interviewees, explains the complexity between economic performance and voters' preference in a democracy. This is an area that further research is needed in both new and developed democracies.

The 2016 presidential election was held when the IMF and the World Bank considered the economy of Ghana to be very volatile. Ghana had challenges in various areas including: high probability of debt distress; risks of further weakening the fiscal situation; fiscal destabilisation; substantially increased indebtedness and extremely high costs of debt service among others (World Bank, 2016). The World Bank attributed Ghana's descent into debt and its attendant adverse effect on the economy, after the recent debt forgiveness, to indiscipline fiscal management, leading to accumulation of new debt and increasing debt servicing obligation with adverse consequences for economic governance. The outlook of the economy in the election year was indeed gloomy. To be sure, Ghana was servicing debt with 7 percent of GDP per year by 2016, and in the process was unable to pursue its agenda of poverty reduction because the resources meant to achieve that had been drained by debt servicing obligation (World Bank, 2016). Thus, unlike in 2008 when positive economic performance did not translate to electoral victory for the NPP, the NDC lost the 2016 presidential election when the economy was in a bad shape, with pro-poor policy not feasible due to poor fiscal management. Consequently, the ruling NDC, with the incumbent president as its candidate, was defeated in the election. This further points to the inconsistency of economic performance as a driver of voters' preference.

Furthermore, in this section, we examine how some social factors spurred power alternation in Ghana. Although corruption may be treated as an economic factor, because of its different aspects and facets, in this study, it is conceived of as a social problem deriving from human behaviour, driven by some predetermined and anticipated benefits. Thus, Corruption is here classified as a social problem because it deals with the attitude of an individual, both in the public and private spheres, and most often with some economic benefits as the propelling factor. This is rightly captured by the World Bank which sees corruption as 'as the abuse of public power for private benefit', The abuse of public power is not necessarily for one's private benefit but it can be for benefit of one's party, class, tribe, friends, and family among others (Tanzi, 1998). With this background on corruption, we proceed to examine the possible relationship between power alternation and corruption in Ghana first and focus on Nigeria later.

When Ghana returned to democracy in 1992, the Transparency International corruption perception index (TICPI) which measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption, evaluated and ranked 99 countries and Ghana occupied the 66th position, leaving only 23 countries behind it as more corrupt than Ghana that year. In 2006, Ghana occupied the 70th position out of the 163 countries ranked. While more countries were captured, relatively, Ghana maintained its position and did not drastically decline in ranking. In 2007, a year before the 2008 presidential election, the Ghanaian position improved to 69 out of the 169 countries ranked. This suggests that corruption did not grow worse under the first eight years of the NDC (1992-2000) and the tempo was sustained under the leadership of the NPP (2000-2008). Despite this, the people voted for the opposition NDC in the 2008 presidential election, leading to the second power alternation between the two major dominant parties.

From 2013, it appeared Ghana was able to combat corruption and this reflected in its ranking of 63 out of the 177 countries ranked that year. In 2014, Ghana was in the 61st position out of the 175 countries ranked, suggesting a further strengthening of its effort at reducing corruption. In 2015, Ghana ranked 56 out of the 168 countries ranked (TICPI, 2014). Although, based on TICPI's report, corruption did not appear to have grown worse in the two years before the 2016 presidential election, unlike the period before the 2000 and 2008 presidential elections, the ranking of the TICPI appeared to count little as the general perception of the average Ghanaian prior to the 2016 presidential election was that the government lacked accountability and had allowed corruption to fester. This view was captured by both the members of the academics interviewed and the focus group discussion in Ghana in February, 2023 during the field work of this project in Legon, Ghana. Consequently, the ruling party was sanctioned by majority of the voters, giving their votes to the opposition NPP, precipitating the defeat of the incumbent president, leading to the third power alternation. The 2016 election was also the first time an incumbent would contest against the opposition parties for the second time. Other incumbents had contested their first election as a fresh candidate and contested the second as an incumbent.

Secondly, the suffering of the people under military rule appeared to have shaped their reasoning. To avoid tyranny, people change the ruling party from time to time. The reason being that, the longer a party stays in power, the more they are likely to be more corrupt, lacking accountability and transparency and non-responsive (Interview with Professor no4) on February 17th, 2023.

Power Alternation in Nigeria: In this subsection, using the same set of indicators, we interrogated the factors that triggered power alternation in Nigeria in 2015.

The seed that spelt the death knell of the ruling PDP in the 2015 presidential election was sowed in 2010, shortly before and after the demise of President Musa Yar'Adua. Yar'Adua, a Hausa-Fulani Muslim from northern Nigeria and candidate of the ruling PDP won the 2007 presidential election and had taken over from President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southern Yoruba Christian (Fashagba, 2010). Obasanjo transferred power to Yar'Adua, a northerner because of the sensitive nature of ethno-religion, regional politics and inter-group relations in Nigeria.

The sudden death of Yar'Adua disrupted the power rotation/balancing arrangement meant to make power rotate between north and south, cutting short the years the north would have ruled. The south had ruled from 1999 to 2007 and the north would have ruled for eight years as well before transferring power back to the south. To the northerners, therefore, the thought of abdicating

the presidency to another southerner in 2010, less than three years after taking office was unacceptable. To ensure that power remained in the north, the president's inner circle deliberately held on to power and prevented the transmission of power to the Vice president as constitutional required, when the president was terminally ill and flown out of the country for treatment. With the power vacuum, major decisions could not be made and governance was at a standstill. The political tension that enveloped the country over the executive power vacuum from late 2009 to early 2010, made the country drift towards anarchy. To save the country, the national assembly employed an innovative political mechanism, called the 'doctrine of necessity' by which power was transmitted to the Vice President, a Southern minority Christian (Fashagba, 2010). Having taken power in 2010, less than two years before the 2011 presidential election, Jonathan did not only complete the remaining term of Yar'Adua, but also contested the 2011 presidential election as an incumbent. However, Jonathan's decision to contest the election was challenged by a group of northerners. Nevertheless, with the support of some northern PDP governors and political gladiators, the tension surrounding whether to contest or not was resolved. Indeed, an agreement was claimed to have been reached between Jonathan and the northern elites in the 2015 election. The agreement, according to Babangida (2014), a former governor of Niger State (2007-2015), was for the northerners to support the president only in the 2011 election while he ceded the presidency to the north in 2015. Consequently, while President Jonathan received far lesser votes in the north than Major General Muhammadu Buhari, his major challenger, a Hausa-Fulani-Islamist and candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) despite the claimed agreement, however, Jonathan still received enough northern votes to meet the requirements to be declared the winner of the 2011 election. Specifically, the PDP received 3,395,724 while the CPC received 6,453,437 votes from North-West; PDP received 1,832,622 and CPC received 3,624,919 votes from North-East; PDP received 3,123,444 while CPC received 1,612,999 votes from North-Central; and PDP received 253,444 while CPC received 131,576 votes from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Thus, the presidential candidate of the PDP received 8,351,472 (about 42 percent), while the candidate of the CPC received 11,691,355 (about 58 percent) of votes cast in the north in 2011. In the south, the PDP received 2,786,417 votes from South-West; 4,985,246 votes from South-East; 6,118,608 votes from South-South. Majority of the southern votes was cast for Jonathan.

As the 2015 election beckoned and it became obvious that the incumbent president would seek re-election, irrespective of the claimed 'agreement', the northerners united in their opposition to the president's ambition. Perhaps, taking advantage of the northern opposition, the leadership of the Action Congress of Nigeria's (ACN) initiated a coalition that led to the formation of a mega party. The ACN, the CPC, the All-Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All-Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) united to form the APC. Meanwhile, the internal division and tension caused by the opposition of majority of the northern members of the PDP to the 2015 re-election bid of the president triggered an implosion in the PDP, leading to the defection of 38 members (10.5%) of the House of Representatives (HORs), nine Senate members (8.3%) and many political gladiators and members of the PDP, both from the north and south, to the newly formed APC in 2014. The speaker of the HORs, also a northern-Muslim, in fact switched to the APC with thirty-seven PDP members, undermining and weakening the grip of his ruling PDP on the HORs. The defection of the Speaker created confusion in the HORs during the last six months

of their four-year tenure (2011-2015). The argument over whether the PDP still controlled legislative majority and whether the speaker had the constitutional right to remain as speaker remained unresolved until the party lost majority in the two-chamber assembly and presidency in the 2015 general election.

The northern governors, legislators, party leadership and members of the PDP from the north deliberately sabotaged their party, placing regional interest above party interest, precipitating the defeat of the president. Consequently, the share of the president's votes dropped significantly in the north in 2015. The two leading candidates in 2011 were also the two leading candidates in 2015. However, Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of CPC and runner up in 2011, contested under a new label, the APC. Consequently, the candidate of the ruling PDP, a Southern-Christian, received 1,339,708 votes from the North-West, while the APC candidate, Northern-Muslim received 7,115,199 votes. Similarly, in the North-East geopolitical zone with Muslim majority, the incumbent president and candidate of the PDP received 796,588 votes while the opposition APC candidate received 2,848,678. In the North-Central where both Muslims and Christians are both fairly represented, the candidate of PDP scored 1,558,623 while the candidate of APC received 2,264,614 (Osimen and Ologunowa, 2013). In South-South, the region where the candidate of the PDP originated from, a Christian dominated region, gave the PDP 4,714,725 votes as against the 418,590 received by the candidate of APC. In the South-East, a Christian dominated region, the candidate of PDP received 2,464,906 while the candidate of APC got 198,248. In the South-West with a fair mix of Muslims and Christians, the candidate of APC received 2,433,193 votes as against the 1,821,416 votes delivered to the ruling PDP. Thus, 79 percent of the APC's candidate votes came from the three Northern geopolitical zones while 88 percent of the votes of the candidate of PDP came from the three Southern geopolitical zones (Ishaq, Adebisi and Bakare, 2018). The 2015 election voting patterns clearly demonstrated the influence of ethnicity, religion and region on the preference of voters. The result agrees with the argument of Aluaigba (2013) who contends that in 2011, religion was a major determinant of voters' preference in Fagge Local government Area of Kano state. Kano state is predominantly Muslim in North-West Nigeria and has the largest population in the north. Consequently, despite the claimed agreement and promise by the northern elites to support the incumbent president in 2011, majority of the voters in the North-West and North East voted for the northern Muslim candidate and the southern voters gave majority of their votes to the PDP candidate who hailed from the south.

One major outcomes of ethno-religion and regional politic of 2015 was that most northern political office seekers who while contesting under the PDP placed regional interest above their personal political interest, sabotaging their party's presidential candidate in the process, also lost their re-election or election bid into the various offices they contested against the APC (Fashagba, 2020).

Furthermore, the murderous and violent campaign of Boko Haram, a terrorist group, fighting to end western education in northern Nigeria, especially in the north-east, its primary base where it has killed thousands of people and abducted hundreds of young female students and raping young women, posed a serious challenge to the Jonathan administration before the 2015 election. The northern elites seeking to weaken the PDP's presidential candidate support base in the north weaponized the escalating terrorist campaign to de-market the candidate of PDP. The presidential candidate as well as the ruling PDP was presented as anti-North/Islam, although the same

northerners have benefitted from the party until the disagreement over the 2015 presidential candidate triggered polarisation. The growing Boko Haram violence was attributed to either the weakness of Jonathan administration or lack of political will to fight and end insecurity in the north (Animashaun, 2015). By this, the northern elites and the opposition APC largely undermined the 2015 presidential re-election bid of the incumbent President Jonathan, leading to the defeat of the PDP and the first power alternation in Nigeria.

Having examined the political factor that triggered power alternation in 2015, we will examine the economic factor, using data from the IMF and the World Bank. After his election in 2011, the President constituted a cabinet, giving Okonjo Iweala, a former Vice President of the World Bank, the role of Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy. Some economic reforms were initiated. Consequently, by 2014 when the various parties were electing their candidates for the 2015 presidential election, the World Bank (July, 2014) reported that 'Nigeria's short-term economic outlook had improved and prospects for continued growth and macroeconomic stability were good in light of increased revenues to the federation, stable foreign reserves and an augmented fiscal reserve fund'. Nevertheless, because of over dependence on oil revenue whose international price was very volatile, the Nigerian economy was volatile and that exposed the macroeconomic and annual budget to the vagaries of international oil pricing fluctuation. Between 2013 and 2014, Nigeria faced a challenging macroeconomic and budgetary situation, Oil output decreased, unexpected declines in exports and budgetary revenues, low oil price benchmark and declining oil revenue. In fact, Nigeria lost more than \$10 billion in external reserves and almost exhausted its fiscal reserve fund (World Bank, 2014).

As the World Bank reported, a year to the 2015 presidential election, the Nigerian economy was not doing too badly. Poverty analysis suggested that the poverty situation was not as serious as previously thought. Nevertheless, while the country appeared to be experiencing strong economic growth averaging 7% annually in years leading to the 2015 presidential election, with the growth concentrated in the pro-poor areas of agriculture and trade, according to World Bank, the national per capita poverty rate remained very high at more than 60% of the population. Despite the high level of poverty, there was little evidence that suggested that progress was made in poverty reduction. Furthermore, the report showed that poverty was more prevalent in the north than the south and among rural than urban dwellers. Looking at the 2015 voting pattern, the incumbent president' shares of the votes in 2015 suggest that he received far less votes in the North than he received in 2011. This suggests that in 2011, the political factor, which perhaps relates to the publicised 'claimed support' by prominent northern PDP members and elites for the then incumbent president, were strong enough to vitiate the influence of adverse economic situation in the decision of voters. With the withdrawal of such little support in 2015, winning 25% of votes cast in two-thirds of 36 states as well as receiving enough votes to be declared the winner of the presidential election became complicated. To make matters worse, the President received far less votes in the South-West in 2015 than he received in 2011.

Furthermore, socially, corruption among public office holders appeared to shape voters' preference using the TICPI and the public perception about level of corruption in 2013 and 2014. Since the presidential election took place early 2015, we supplemented TICPI data with data from the World Bank and IMF. In 1999 when democracy returned to Nigeria, only one country was

rated more corrupt than Nigeria out of the 99 countries evaluated by TICPI. In 2012, Nigeria scored 27 percent and occupied 139th position out of the 180 countries ranked. In 2013, Nigeria scored 24 percent and ranked 144 out of the 177 ranked. This showed an increase in the level of corruption. In 2014, the percentage score was 27 and the position was 136 out of the 175 ranked. This suggested reduction of corruption level (Transparency International, 2013, George, 2014). However, the TI's report contradicted the daily reports of most national dailies and the campaign emphasis of the opposition APC which raised allegation of lack of accountability and transparency against the PDP and its candidate in its 2015 electioneering campaign. The campaign billboards of the APC across Nigerian urban centres carried a bold inscription and message, 'If we don't kill, corruption will kill us'. The South-West dominated print media clearly keyed into this and reported government corruption frequently during the 2014/2015 presidential electioneering campaign.

In addition, Jonathan failed to play his politics of inter-ethnic relations well. For instance, the political elites in the South-West accused Jonathan administration of neglecting and marginalising the South-West in his ministerial and other major appointments, despite the substantial support given him in the 2011 presidential election. The president was accused of not giving the South-West any substantive ministerial appointment but only some junior ministerial (Ministers of State) positions between 2011 and 2015. This made the allegation of corruption against him easily sellable and appealing in the South-West. This drastically cut his shares of the presidential ballots in the 2015 election, undermining his re-election bid in the process.

Conclusion

The political trajectories of Nigeria and Ghana are very similar in a number of respects, especially in areas of colonial history, failed republics/constitutions and military regimes from the first to the current fourth republic of the respective countries. However, the factors that account for power alternation that have become frequent in Ghana and started to emerge in Nigeria, are similar in some ways and different in others. For instance, ethnicity, regional, religious politics, intra-party crisis, and mass party switching played significant roles in the power alternation of 2015 in Nigeria. From 1999 to 2012, the opposition parties experienced sustained weakness due to high turnover and frequent switching of elected and important members to the PDP. Therefore, the coalition or formation of a mega party by four opposition parties and the defecting members of the PDP in 2014 was very central to the success of the opposition and the power alternation of 2015.

In Ghana, the two leading political parties receive bloc votes from the respective ethnic groups and regions they are affiliated with, but that was rarely enough to translate into electoral victory for any of them. No political coalition has ever been formed to unseat the ruling party in Ghana. Rather, swing voters and political apathy, especially among members of ruling party over dissatisfaction with development within their party have influenced outcomes of election as was the case in 2000 under NDC and 2016 under NPP. As members protest against the decision of their party and its leadership during election, they either stay away from casting their ballots or cast their ballots for an opposition, undermining their party in the process. This suggests that intra-party crises in the respective ruling parties in Ghana in 2000 and 2016 as well as Nigeria in 2015 significantly accounted for their defeat. The more the number of party members protesting against their party by not voting the party's candidate, the better the chances of the opposition to win.

Economically, the result is mixed in Nigeria. Although, before the 2015 presidential election, the economic outlook was generally good from 2013 to 2014. The per capita poverty rate was still over 60 percent but higher in the north than elsewhere (World Bank, 2014, IMF, 2014). However, since the North-West and North-East always voted for Muslim or northern candidates, the massive vote received by the opposition APC viz-a-viz the ruling party from the two geopolitical zones in 2015 cannot be attributed to the high poverty level under PDP.

In Ghana, devaluation of the currency was cited as a major economic factor that undermined the support base of the NDC in 2000 and 2016. In Nigeria, devaluation of the currency has been a major policy of the government since 1999, exacerbating the poverty level among workers in both formal and informal sectors. This declining value of the naira was a major campaign tool of the APC before the 2015 election.

Also, the energy crisis that affected the small-scale, mining, service and construction industry before the 2016 Ghanaian presidential election outraged many voters. Many Ghanaians seemed outraged by the energy shortage and consequently voted against the ruling NDC. In Nigeria, in the northern part, the violent campaign of Boko Haram had crippled the economic activities of the rural farmers, instigating animosity against the PDP led administration. Thus, when the people who faced an erratic power situation in Ghana and those confronted by inability to access their farmland and lived under constant fear of attacks by Boko Haram, had the opportunity of casting their ballots, the opposition party became the beneficiaries in Ghana in 2016 and Nigeria in 2015. From experience, in Nigeria, majority of North-East/West votes always went to a northern presidential candidate, which made terrorism most unlikely the reason for voting APC in 2015.

Corruption was also mentioned as one of the reasons for the defeat of the NDC led government in Ghana in 2016 and the PDP led administration in Nigeria in 2015. Thus, to varying degrees, political, economic and social factors underlay the power alternations that the two countries have experienced in their fourth republic.

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Appendices

Interview with a Professor (no1), Department of Political Science, University of Ghana at Legon, on February 17th, 2023.

Interview with a Professor (no2), Department of Political Science, University of Ghana at Legon, on February 17th, 2023.

Information emanated from focus group discussion at the Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana at Legon, 17th February, 2023.

Interview with a Professor (no 3) of Economic, Department of Economic, University of Ghana at Legon, on February 17th, 2023.

Interview with an Associate Professor (no4), Department of Political Science, University of Ghana at Legon, on February 17th, 2023

Interview with a Professor (Lecturer) (no 5), Department of Political Science, University of Ghana at Legon, on February 17th, 2023