

The Rise and Fall of the Saraki Political Dynasty and the 2019 General Elections in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the presence of political dynasties in Africa, most studies on political dynasties have focused attention on Europe, North America and Asia. Not much has been done on political dynasties vis-à-vis elections in Africa. One prominent political dynasty in Nigeria and Kwara state in particular is the Saraki political dynasty. Prior to the 2019 elections, not many political pundits predicted the fall of the dynasty. Thus, its eventual fall raises the vital question: what could have accounted for the eventual fall of the dynasty through its colossal loss in the 2019 elections in the state? It is against this background, that, this study examines the rise and fall of the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara state. The methodology is qualitative and descriptive combined with content analysis. The article drew on empirical evidence from the 2019 elections in the state. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were derived from the author's cumulative experience garnered from participant-observation of the 2019 elections and knowledge of the state's electoral and political processes in the Fourth Republic. Secondary data were drawn from journal articles, books, newspapers and magazines. It was discovered that while patronage networks were responsible for the rise of the political dynasty, the inability of the dynasty to institutionalise good governance was one of the main factors that led to its fall. The study concludes that, the state needs quality leadership to foster good governance which perhaps is visible in the new government.

Keywords: *Democracy; Elections; Political Dynasty; Kwara State; Abubakar Olusola Saraki; Bukola Saraki; Gbemisola Saraki*

INTRODUCTION

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Political succession through family ties has long remained one of the distinguishing features of hereditary monarchy. Unlike electoral democracies in which acquisition of political power is through competitive multi-party elections, the struggle for political power in hereditary monarchies has been between and has been bequeathed through influential and dominant families (Jalalzai and Rincker, 2018). However, contemporary democracies across the world have started witnessing the dominance and pervasiveness of governments by political dynasties. According to George and Ponattu (2018) political dynasties exists in 144 countries of the world and have remained a prominent point of discussion in literature on electoral democracies. George (2019) noted that close to 50 per cent of democracies across the globe have voted for leaders from one family and that 15 per cent are presently being ruled by the progeny of a previous leader. In the Philippines, over 50 per cent of the parliamentarians and executive governors have a kin that has formerly been elected into a public office.

Similarly, out of the 79 provinces in the country more than 30 have governors and lawmakers that are blood relations (Querubin, 2011).

Stephens-Davidowitz (2015) noted that in the United States (US), the probability that the son of a governor will emerge as a governor is 6,000 times more likely than that of the son of an ordinary citizen and that the prospects of the son of a senator emerging as a senator is 8,500 times likely than that of the son of an ordinary citizen. Political dynasties have indeed become ubiquitous in democracies around the world. Democracy guarantees citizens' liberty and fundamental human rights, masses involvement in governance and decision making process through elected representatives, fairness in political participation and improvement in the general welfare of the people. In this regard, democracy creates an all-encompassing process of socio-political, economic and human development through the establishment of comprehensive and just socio-political and economic programmes (Mendoza, Beja Jr, Venida and Yap, 2012). These precepts are common to advanced democracies of the world such as those of the United States and Europe.

Whereas political dynasties are found in both developed and developing democracies, their existence in the developing democracies has far reaching implications. In developing democracies, political participation is frail consequently there is the dominance of the political process by dynastic families (Mendoza et al., 2012). In these democracies, democratic institutions are weak, there is dwindling electoral participation, the electoral processes are characterized by violent acts and all sorts of electoral malfeasance and as a result the outcomes of elections hardly reflect the choices of the people. Thus, political dynasties monopolize political power to their advantage. Under this circumstance, there is the absence of political equality, elite dominance and asymmetrical allotment of democratic gains becomes the order of the day. Socio-political and economic wellbeing of the masses are therefore greatly undermined (Mendoza et al., 2012; Kenawas, 2015; Rivera, 2015).

Despite the presence of political dynasties in Africa, most studies on political dynasties have focused attention on developed democracies of Europe, US and Asia. Not much has been done on political dynasties vis-à-vis elections as it relates to the developing democracies of sub-Saharan Africa. In essence, past studies have not been able to account for the emergence of political dynasties in Africa and the circumstances under which they can fall by failing to secure success in an electoral contest. This study intends to fill this gap by examining the rise and the fall of a prominent political dynasty at the sub-national level in Nigeria in general and Kwara State to be precise.

Nigeria's political landscape is undeniably littered by the memories of a complex military dynastic rule which eventually went into oblivion in 1999. Such rule left indelible mark on the nation's political and electoral history (Odoh, 2019). With the

return to democratic rule, the politicians who assumed leadership positions merely consolidated the dynastic legacies of the military by building their own political dynasties to elongate their relevance to the nation's political space. Some of the dynasties have political leaders who dominate political process both at the national and sub-national levels (Odoh, 2019). While the existence of political dynasties runs across almost all the states of the federation, one of the states that are illustrious for the dominance of the political and electoral process by a political dynasty is Kwara state. The Saraki political dynasty in Kwara state has dominated politics in the state for close to forty years. The dynasty was established by Dr. Abubakar Olusola Saraki, the patriarch of the Saraki family of Ilorin.

The Saraki political dynasty is worth studying in the sense that, it is the longest ruling dynasty in the North-Central geo-political zone of the country having held on to political power for over four decades. Given the longevity of the dynasty and its grip on the state, not many political pundits predicted its fall in the 2019 general elections in the state. Thus, its eventual fall raises the vital question: what could have accounted for the eventual fall of the dynasty through its colossal loss in the 2019 elections in the state? Against the backdrop of this poser, this study explored the conditions which gave rise to and the factors which accounted for the fall of the Saraki political dynasty with specific reference to the 2019 general elections in Kwara state.

Kwara state, one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was created on 27th May, 1967 by the regime of General Yakubu Gowon. It is situated in the North-Central geo-political zone of the country (otherwise known as the middle belt). The state covers a land mass of 36, 835 square Kilometres which is approximately 14,218 square miles and has a population of 3, 193, 893 (Nigeria Data Portal 2016). The state which is made up of 16 Local Government Areas is bordered to the North by Niger state, to South by Osun, Oyo and Ekiti states, to the East by Kogi state and to the West by the Republic of Benin. The state comprises of main ethnic groups of Yoruba, Fulani Nupe and Barubas. The people are predominantly Muslims and Christians (McKenna, 2020). The mainstay of the state's economy is agriculture. Its capital, Ilorin, is the largest metropolitan city in the state.

The study continues with a literature review on political dynasty and elections. This is followed by a discourse of the rise of the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara State. The next section examined the fall of the Saraki Dynasty viv-a-vis the 2019 general elections in the state. The final section concludes by looking at what next for Kwara politics after the fall of the Saraki dynasty. The study adopted the qualitative research design and drew on empirical evidence from the 2019 general elections in Kwara state. Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were derived from the author's cumulative experience garnered from participant-

observation of the 2019 general elections and cumulative knowledge of the state's electoral and political processes in the Fourth Republic. Secondary data were drawn from relevant journal articles, books, newspapers and magazines as well as reports of governmental and non-governmental organisations on the 2019 elections. The data were analysed using content analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Dynasties and Elections

Despite the existence of political dynasties across democratic systems, a handful of studies exist on political dynasty-elections nexus (Cirone and Rivera, 2017; Feinstein, 2010; Geys, 2017; Rivera 2015). As a concept, political dynasty has been defined as a limited number of families who controls power distribution in a specific geographic area (Querubin, 2011). In the perspective of Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, and Ueda (2015) political dynasty connotes a collection of political office holders who inherit an elective position from one of the members of his or her family who has occupied the position previously. While these definitions are found to be nifty, they have been found to be defective in the sense that they did not adequately capture the vicissitudes of political dynasty (Kenawas, 2015). Such criticism is based on the notion that political dynasties are not absolutely about perpetuation in elective positions of a particular type through family ties but moreover involves the extension of a family's political prowess to other democratic and political institutions at higher levels (Kenawas, 2015).

Nevertheless, a concise conceptualization of political dynasty can be found in the definition given by Mendoza et al. (2013). They defined political dynasty as a condition in which individuals of the same family hold various elective posts in succession or at the same time. Based on this definition, the study views political dynasty as a powerful family in a particular state which has one or more of its members in elective positions within the state or at the national level based on familial connection over a long period of time. This definition underscores the essence of a political dynasty's ability to capture state power through electoral competitions. It has also formed the basis of studies on political dynasties vis-à-vis elections in developed and developing democracies.

In a study to determine whether political dynasties have an edge over non-dynastic families in elections, Feinstein (2010) studied US's congressional elections between 1994 and 2006 using a set of data comprising of both individual candidate and constituency level covariates for the entire contestants in open-seat house elections. Findings from the study indicated that contestants from political families enjoy considerable advantage over non-dynastic contestants. According to him, the relative advantage enjoyed by contestants from political dynasties comes as a result of the long term name that such political families have made and that has been recognized over a long period of time as well as the resources and dexterity that they acquire from their predecessors (Feinstein, 2010). Much as this study is insightful, the cases selected are not encompassing. Congressional elections are just one specific election in the US. The findings may not be absolutely applicable to other variants of elections such as the Presidential and governorship elections.

A more comprehensive case selection was found in Coppennolle's (2014) study when investigating the preference of voters for candidates from political dynasties and non-political dynasties in the 2010 Belgium general elections. A set of data comprising information of all candidates contesting in the elections were used. Findings revealed that belonging to a political family matters for the 2010 elections. Candidates from political dynasties garnered more preference votes from the electorate than their counterparts. The study further showed that candidates from dynastic families enjoy relative advantage over candidates from non-dynastic families in terms of the aggregate knowledge that they have accumulated either as legislator or as a government official. This shows that dynastic contestants are extra proficient than non-dynastic contestants. In essence, voters in the elections preferred contestants from political dynasties to contestants from non-political dynasties (Coppennolle, 2014). A defect is that, the study did not account for the loss of dynastic contestants in the elections. It is assumed that some dynastic candidates may have contested and lost in the elections.

In another insightful study, Cruz, Labonne and Querubín (2017) investigated the influence of political family networks on electoral outcome using a comprehensive statistical figure from more than 20 million people in 15,000 rural communities in the Philippines. Findings shows that a political dynasty's networks are valuable causative agents of electoral victory and that there is high probability that an individual from a political family is more likely to emerge as a candidate for an elective post than an individual from a non-political family. This according to the scholars occurs because

candidates jostling for elective offices are inconsistently selected from political families and their networks which consequently results to higher votes during elections (Cruz et. al., 2017). While this study further confirms that candidates from political dynasties have an edge in electoral contests compared with candidates from non-dynastic families in democratic societies, it did not take into consideration the predicament the political parties which dynastic families belong to have to contend with before such dynastic candidates could emerge as the parties flag-bearer. Cruz et. al. (2017), are not the only ones guilty of this as a handful of studies have also failed to account for this.

Rivera (2015) may have resolved this puzzle when he studied political dynasties and party strength using Victorian Great Britain as a case study. In the study, he discerned the measures political parties adopt in dealing with political dynasties. The scholar developed a theory in which political parties have to cope with the stark reality of selecting between powerful but indisciplined contestants from political dynasties and devoted but feeble candidates from non-dynastic families. Findings show that wealth and brand name are significant tools at the disposal of political dynasties. However, the tendency that strong political dynasties may lack party loyalty and discipline makes political parties to allow candidates from the dynasties to represent them in places where such political parties are weak and lack strong party presence (Rivera 2015). As valuable as the findings of the study are, the Victorian Era in Great Britain which the scholar selected as case study seems to be too pre-historic. The configuration and ideological dispositions of the conservative and liberal political parties then must have drastically changed with time. Thus, findings pertaining to such period may not be so applicable to contemporary political and electoral processes.

In a related study, Cirone and Rivera (2017) studied the relationship between electoral formulas, political dynasties and party development by adopting experimentation in the electoral reform of the French Third Republic. The electoral reform was aimed at putting an end to local and personality politics that was a main distinguishing feature of the French 19th century politics. Findings indicated that with the embracing of Multi Member Districts and the consequent elaboration in the number of voters, candidates from political dynasties emerged successful in their re-election bids. Similarly, their political party of affiliation also had bright electoral projections, thus, were able to get more supporters. This further buttresses the aforementioned findings that candidates from political dynasties can make-up for the inadequacies and

weakness of a political party. Like the above study, the case study appears to be too archaic.

Using a relatively recent data set between 1997 and 2007 Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi and Ueda (2015) studied how politicians from political dynasties with acquired advantage influence election outcomes and policy options in the Japanese parliament. They assumed that in comparison to legislators from non-dynastic families, legislators from political dynasties attract more allocations to their constituencies and are in an advantageous position to achieve electoral victory. Their test of hypothesis actually suggested that apart from the claim that politicians from political families have high likelihood of securing victory in elections, lawmakers from dynastic families generate more benefits to their various constituencies than lawmakers from non-dynastic families. On the negative side, they found out that, constituencies which often elect lawmakers from political families despite surplus benefits usually accomplish little in terms of economic performance (Asako, et al., 2015).

From the study, it can be deduced that the personality of candidates for elective posts have a direct bearing on the part they play in policy-making procedures in a democratic polity. This cannot be unconnected with the impression that candidates are variously endowed with different personality traits and capabilities. These traits influence the role they play in the decision-making process, the outcomes of which are various policy adoptions (Asako, et al., 2015). However, the scope of applicability of this study is limited because the scholars focused on a single case to derive their findings. The ability of elected office holders to influence policy making-process so as to amass distributive benefits for the good of their constituencies brings to the fore the quality of dynastic politicians. Zheng, Batinti, Ghosh and Wen (2016) noted that highly heterogeneous democratic societies are at the risk of having bad and non-responsive dynastic candidates. This notwithstanding, candidates from bad political dynasties can still triumph in electoral competitions because in highly heterogeneous societies, both bad and good political dynastic candidates have almost the same opportunity of triumphing in elections (Zheng, et al., 2016).

Political dynasties are generally perceived to be corrupt and have the tendency to propagate patronage politics. In essence, they are seen as agents of underdevelopment, poverty as well as socio-economic and political inequality. This is because they are touted to be breeders of illogical economic policies. Most political

dynasties develop from non-economically viable parts of heterogeneous countries (Tadem and Tadem, 2016). Empirical evidences abound to buttress this claims. Ali (2016) in a study that investigated the ability of political dynasties to respond to reconstruction and developmental needs of the people in a particular province after a natural calamity in Pakistan discovered that expenditures on developmental needs in places affected by flood and with high number of political families present in government was 10.9 per cent lesser than places not affected by flood and without political dynasties. This according to Ali (2016) implies that non-responsive dynastic politicians are a feature of a feeble and developing democracy. Similarly, Mendoza et al. (2013) claimed that political dynasties are characterized by weak political contests, low level of accountability, autocratic rule and clientelism. Under these circumstances, political dynasties engender poverty among the people of the state or province where they are situated. The impoverished electorate serves as a ready-made source of votes for the political dynasties during elections because they are easily deceived into providing support for dynastic candidates based on provision of material items during electioneering process (Mendoza et al., 2013).

In his own contribution, George (2019) posited that the discouraging effects of the proliferation of political dynasties in democratic societies is borne out of the fact that political dynasties flourish because the progenies of first-generation politicians are initiated into politics and consequently, they are bequeathed with their parents constituencies. This scenario goes a long way to prevent loyal, qualified and industrious candidates to enter into electoral contests with dynastic candidates (George, 2019) because for dynastic candidates politics is the family's business. These negative attributes of political dynasties as indicated above, may not apply to dynastic families across all democracies. There is a sharp difference in the nature and operations of political dynasties in developed and developing democracies (Kenawas, 2015). Government officials from political dynasties in advanced and developed democracies have been found to be more responsive to the needs of the people and are more concerned with peoples welfare (Crowley and Reece, 2013; Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder, 2009; Feinstein, 2010).

In these democracies, candidates from political dynasties have a precious brand name to protect because it is through the name which they have built and protected overtime that they garner votes to win electoral contests (Crowley and Reece, 2013). Such name also gives them edge within political parties in terms of candidates'

nomination for electoral and political posts and makes informal networks which have supported their precursors available to them during elections. Accordingly, the family brand name maintains them in power (Dal Bó, Dal Bó and Snyder 2009; Feinstein 2010). In the developing or consolidating democracies political dynasties emerge out of past political and family heritage. Such political dynasties are seen as not responsible to the peoples need and are not concerned about the wellbeing of the people. They are thus, described as a product of weak adherence to the rule of law, weak political party institutionalization, absence of political party ideology, dominance of personality politics and corruption (Amundsen, 2013; Chhibber, 2013).

Abubakar Olusola Saraki: The Making of a Political Patron and the Rise of a Political Dynasty

Abubakar Olusola Saraki, was born on 17th May, 1933 in Lagos state to the family of Alhaji Mukthar Mustapha Saraki of the Agoro family of Agbaji in Ajikobi Ward of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara state and Hajia Ummuani Saraki (Saraki, 2013). At the age of seven, Olusola Saraki was enrolled in Breadfruit Primary School, Lafiagi, Lagos state in 1940. After completing his primary education in 1945, Saraki proceeded to Eko Boys High School for his secondary education in 1946. After spending a year there he was moved to Reverend Lukas College Lagos in 1947. While in secondary school Saraki was described as a very brilliant pupil. His good academic performance coupled with his father's financial prowess as a successful business man enabled Saraki to leave the shores of Nigeria to the United Kingdom (UK) in 1950 to further his education (Nuhu, 2013). On getting to the UK Saraki attended Chattan College where he completed his ordinary level education and by 1956 Saraki has obtained an Advance Level school certificate. From 1956 to 1959 Saraki enrolled at the University College London where he obtained a Bachelor of Medicine degree. He later attended the University of London and in 1962 he bagged a MBBS degree in Human Medicine (Nuhu 2013).

After his university education Saraki got married to his wife, Florence Morenike. On getting back to Nigeria, Olusola Saraki registered with the Nigerian Medical Council (NMC) in 1963 to legally practice his profession. This made him the maiden indigene of the state to register as a qualified medical practitioner (Saraki, 2013). Having registered to practice his profession, Saraki worked as a Medical Officer at the General Hospital Lagos and later at the Creek Hospital also in Lagos. Having

been able to establish his private hospitals Saraki resigned from public service to concentrate on his hospitals (Jimba, 2006). Saraki's emergence as a medical doctor was accidental. This is because he never wanted to study medicine. His earlier ambition was to study engineering so as to become an engineer and make life easy for the people by constructing good roads and social infrastructures. He nevertheless, regretted being a medical doctor because to him, that afforded him the opportunity of ensuring people lived a healthy life (Saraki, 2013).

Olusola Saraki had passion for peoples' welfare. This accounted for his growing interest in the affairs of his state even while working as a medical doctor in Lagos. Saraki and his colleagues always created time to meet in his hospital to discuss about government policies and programmes most especially as it relates to peoples' wellbeing (Obadare, 2014). The first time he came to Ilorin after returning from UK, Saraki came with a mobile clinic with which he rendered free medical services to the people of Ilorin and toured other parts of the state to render the same services (Nuhu, 2013). With this and other philanthropic gestures, Saraki became increasingly popular not only amongst the people of Ilorin but also among the people living in other parts of the state (Obadare, 2014). Since then, Saraki visited Ilorin often to meet with members of the communities and the state at large to deliberate on socio-economic issues as it affects the people of the state. This may have signified his incursion in partisan politics.

Saraki's first attempt at partisan politics was in 1964 when he contested the House of Representatives seat against Alhaji Babatunde Alanamu. Alanamu defeated Saraki in the contest (Oladimeji, 2015). Saraki who contested the election as an independent candidate blamed his loss on the notion people had that he was fresh in politics and that he was contesting against the candidate of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) which was a very strong party in the country then and which will not have nominated Saraki as its flag bearer (Saraki 2013). Saraki's loss in the 1964 elections did not deter his political ambition instead he made himself more accessible to the people by engaging in more philanthropic activities and by playing major role in issues pertaining to the state. Thus, by 1978 Saraki was nominated to represent the state in the Constituent Assembly inaugurated by the then Military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. In 1979 Saraki contested the Kwara Central-Senatorial ticket under the then ruling party, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and emerged victorious (Oladimeji, 2015).

At this time, Saraki's political sagacity started to manifest for some reasons. Firstly, he became the national Vice-Chairman and the state Chairman of the then ruling party, NPN. Secondly, he was the Senate Leader, a feat which enhanced his political personality and his resultant political progress and thirdly, as the founder of Society Generale Bank his political image was greatly enriched because of his access to finance. As a result of these and ever since 1979, Abubakar Olusola Saraki became the acclaimed political kingmaker in Kwara state (Ojo and Lawal, 2011). Since becoming a force to reckon with in the state's political affairs, no individual succeeded in his or her bid to capture an elective seat or any public or political appointment without Saraki's approval (Ojo and Lawal, 2015).

Saraki's political dexterity was put to test in the tussle for the governorship ticket of the state in the 1979 governorship elections. The NPN in selecting candidate for the election had favoured Alhaji Ado Ibrahim, an Ebira man as its candidate. Saraki being aware of Ado Ibrahim as an independent minded individual knew that Ado Ibrahim was not going to be controllable if he eventually becomes the governor of the state, thus, he frowned at the party's choice of Ado Bayero. Instead, Saraki threw his support behind Alhaji Adamu Atta who is also an Ebira man. Saraki called a state congress of the party and raised the hand of Adamu Atta in front of his teeming supporters to show them his choice in the then coming election. Adamu Atta emerged victorious with a landslide victory (Oladimeji, 2015).

By the time Adamu Atta completed the first tenure, Saraki has developed into a full-blown political patron of Kwara state politics with well built patron-client networks. To demonstrate this, Saraki single-handedly prevented Adamu Atta from getting a second term as a governor of the state (Alamu, 2011). With strong patron-client relationships, Saraki ensured that Cornelius Adebayo a member of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) emerged as the governor of the state in 1983 even when he did not belong to the NPN (Alamu, 2015). Saraki also had great influence on the emergence of Alhaji Mohammed Shaaba Lafiagi as the governor of the state during the Babangida aborted transition programme in 1993. Also, in 1999 Saraki saw to the victory of Muhammed Lawal as the governor of the state. In the National Assembly elections Saraki ensured that his party, the All People's Party (APP) won all the three Senatorial seats and five out of the six House of Representatives seats (Ojo and Lawal, 2011).

The display of Saraki's political might came to an apogee in 2003 when what started as a cordial relationship between a godfather and a godson turned sour. Shortly after becoming the governor, Lawal became adamant to Saraki's wishes and advances as a result Saraki tagged Lawal 'an ingrate' the aftermath of which was a fierce battle for survival between the two political figures. Having the people on his side, Saraki was able to dislodge the 'stubborn' Lawal. Thus, in the 2003 governorship election, Saraki got his first son, Bukola Saraki elected as governor of the state and also got his first daughter, Gbemisola Saraki elected as a Senator (Ojo and Lawal, 2011). With this feat the Saraki political dynasty was established. From 2003 to 2011 both Bukola Saraki and his sister enjoyed two terms each as a governor and as a Senator respectively.

During his tenure as the governor, Bukola maintained the political structure and the patron-client relation his father had established. The author's knowledge of the nature and operation of the clientele relationship is that Bukola Saraki often distributes material things such as food items and money to a large gathering of the supporters of the dynasty at a place called the Great Hall at Olorunsogo area of Ilorin. Such gatherings are mostly women within the age bracket of 45 years and above. The distribution of material items was one of the legacies of his father to take care of the people whom he referred to as his supporters. Towards the end of the tenure of Bukola Saraki as governor, his father Abubakar Saraki gave Bukola a free-hand to nominate his successor. In spite of this privilege, Bukola remained mute on the issue. Nonetheless, Bukola never knew that his father had the ambition of making his sister, Gbemi the next governor of the state, an ambition Bukola stood against vehemently (Alamu, 2015).

Bukola in antagonism to his father's ambition argued that it will not be morally just for another member of the family to become the governor when one has just spent 8 years and aside that, his predecessor was from the same Kwara Central Senatorial District. So by and large, if Gbemi should become governor and spends 8 years the zone would have ruled the state for 20 years, a scenario Bukola did not want to see happen (Oladimeji, 2015). Based on this, Bukola Saraki nominated Abdulfatah Ahmed as his successor. Despite this, Abubakar Saraki did not relent in his ambition of making his daughter governor. This conflict of interests led to fierce political conundrum not only among father, son and sister but also among the various supporters of the political dynasty.

While the scuffle led Saraki and Gbemi to dump the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), prospective candidates in the PDP bowed-out for the preferred candidate of Bukola Saraki. The eventual loss of Gbemi Saraki in the election and the triumph of Bukola's candidate, Abdul Fatai Ahmed merely led to the perpetuation of the political dynasty. The impression was that whichever way the victory went power would still reside with the family. Based on this, most people believed the fight was staged-managed to keep the family in power and relevant to Kwara state politics (Ojo and Lawal, 2011). Before his death in 2012, Abubkar Olusola Saraki described his son's actions as an insult on his person and that Bukola Saraki will be disgraced out of politics as he has done to him. Having been able to install his candidates as governor, Senators (including himself) and House of Representatives members in 2011 and 2015, Bukola Saraki took over the mantle of leadership of the political dynasty. He controlled the existing patron-client networks inherited from his father. He distributed political and elective posts to his clients according to his caprices and dictated who gets what and how in the state. This remained the status quo till the 2019 general elections were held.

The 2019 General Elections and the Fall of the Saraki Political Dynasty

The 2019 general elections in Kwara state marked an important watershed in the political annals of the state. It was in the elections that what remained of the Saraki family in Kwara state's political space was defeated, putting an awful end to the over forty years old political dynasty that had held the state by the jugular in terms of electoral and political engagements. It is noteworthy, that, shortly before the 2015 general elections, Bukola Saraki with his political cronies and supporters decamped to the All Progressives Congress (APC). Similarly, prior to the 2019 general elections, precisely on 31st July, 2018 Bukola Saraki decamped back to the PDP. All his political associates also went the same way. Following his defection back to PDP, the PDP officials and bigwigs in the state in disaffection to Bukola's decamping to PDP left the party for the APC. This occurred shortly before the 2019 elections. The 2019 elections in Kwara state comprised the Presidential and legislative elections of 23rd February and governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections of 9th March all of 2019. Though about 90 political parties contested the elections, the elections were mainly a contest between the APC and the PDP. Lived experience during the elections and observer reports indicated that the elections were generally peaceful with no casualty recorded in the state.

The presidential election was contested by the incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari and former Vice-President of the country, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. The Presidential election was held concurrently with the National Assembly elections. These elections in Kwara state were a litmus test of Saraki's grip on the state. Bukola Saraki being a prominent PDP member and a contestant for the Kwara Central Senatorial seat urged his supporters and the people of the state to vote for the PDP candidates in all elections. The results of the presidential and the national assembly elections nevertheless indicated that it was not going to be business as usual for the political dynasty. The PDP presidential candidate lost in the election in Kwara state. Buhari of APC won the state with 308, 184 votes. Atiku's PDP came second with 138, 184 votes (Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC], 2019). In the National Assembly elections, the PDP lost all the Senatorial and House of Representatives seats to the APC. The outcomes of these elections were probably the most devastating not only for Bukola Saraki but also the entire political dynasty as he lost his bid to return to the Senate.

In the governorship election, the APC fielded Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq as its candidate while the PDP nominated Abdulrazaq Atunwa, a former Speaker of the State House of Assembly and a crony of Bukola Saraki. The APC candidate won in all the 16 Local Government Areas of the state. The APC candidate polled a total of 331,546 votes, while of the PDP flag-bearer polled 114, 754 votes. The results of the State House of Assembly elections also indicated that the APC won all the 24 seats (INEC, 2019). The 2019 elections in Kwara state were actually not business as usual for the Bukola Saraki and the political dynasty. While his cronies lost in their various contests it would have been succour for Bukola Saraki if he had won his Senatorial election. But worst still, he and all his anointed candidates lost the elections even in their respective local governments and wards. This implied that he is totally shut-out of government both at the state and the federal level, a venture which he has been involved in for close to 20 years. Bukola Saraki's exploits in the 2019 elections were therefore, a colossal failure and total disgrace.

Reactions that greeted the announcement of the results signified that people were delighted with the outcomes of the elections. It was wild jubilation at the Irepodun Local Government Secretariat collation centre in Omu-Aran after the Presidential and National Assembly elections. The situation was also the same in Patigi Local Government following the announcement of the governorship and State House of

Assembly elections. People danced and expressed happiness on hearing that Bukola Saraki and his cohorts lost in the elections. While the loss of Bukola Saraki and the consequent fall of Saraki political dynasty were celebrated, many political pundits were stunned by his total loss in the elections and as such could not decipher how he could have lost elections in a state where electoral contests used to be a walkover for him and whoever he anoints.

Unravelling the mystery that surrounded the loss of Bukola and his anointed candidates in the elections may after all not be that difficult taking into cognisance some occurrences in the state prior to the 2019 elections. Several factors account for his loss and the eventual demise of the dynasty. The way and manner in which the 18th November, 2017 Local Government elections were conducted may not have gone down well with people in some parts of the state. In the election, the then APC, which Bukola Saraki belonged to, was declared winner by the Kwara State Independent Electoral Commission (KWASIEC) in all the sixteen Local Government Areas of the state. The APC also won 181 councillorship seats, while the PDP won 8 (Ahmad and Aliyu, 2017). The PDP rejected the result in totality claiming that the results were outcome of a muddled election process. The party claimed that the results were doctored and that KWASIEC did not announce the authentic election results (Ahmad and Aliyu, 2017).

While the claims by the PDP may be regarded as speculations, the fact that the KWASIEC is staffed and funded by the state government shows that the Commission is actually under the whims of the state government-led APC. Above all, the delay in the release of the results may give credence to the allegations of rigging. The aftermath of the elections were marred by protests across major towns of the state including Ilorin the home town of Bukola. This scenario brought to the fore, the notion that Bukola Saraki perhaps was losing his grip on the state as protests after results were announced and indicates victory for Bukola Saraki and his associates were strange to the state. Bukola Saraki's strength and influence in the state was again put to test in the 17th November, 2018 Ekiti/Irepodun/Isin/Oke-Ero Federal constituency by-election necessitated by the sudden death of Princess Olufunke Adedoyin of the PDP who until her death was representing the constituency. It would be recalled that Bukola had decamped to the PDP and worked assiduously for victory of Saheed Damilare the PDP contestant. The by-election was keenly contested by the APC and the PDP. The APC candidate Raheem Olawuyi was declared winner of the by-election (Fagbemi, 2018).

The loss of Bukola's candidate to the APC was the first time the dynasty will lose an election to an opposing party in the state. Based on this, political commentators were quick to reach the conclusion that the end may be near for the hegemonic dominance of the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara state. Another factor that dealt a huge blow to the aspirations of the PDP and Bukola Saraki in the 2019 elections was the issue of unpaid workers salaries. While he was not the state governor, Bukola Saraki is hardly separated from governance issues because of the huge influence he wielded on the decision making process in the state (Olawoyin, 2019). Kwara state being essentially a civil-service state has a bulk of its electorate made up of teachers, local government workers and pensioners who depends on their monthly salaries and pensions for survival. Salaries of public workers were owed by the government for several months. This scenario led to displeasure on the part of the workers with the government. Consequently, there were series of protest and strike actions by the civil servants.

In addition, the April 2018 robbery incident in Offa, a major city in Kwara state led to a tragic image laundering of Bukola Saraki. On 5th April 2018, a group of over 30 armed robbers stormed Offa and attacked 6 banks and a police station. In the incident, 33 people lost their lives including 9 police officers (Ugbodoga, 2018). The police were able to make arrests of 5 gang leaders of the group. During the course of investigations, Bukola Saraki was indicted and was invited by the police to come and respond to accusations of indictment from the confessions of the arrested gang leaders (Ugbodoga, 2018). The robbers claimed that they were sponsored and provided with vehicles and firearms by Bukola Saraki and the then governor Abdulfatah Ahmed to carry out the operation (Olawoyin, 2019). While this allegation may be regarded as spurious and directed at tarnishing the image of the duo, further investigations showed that the jeep which was used during the bank robbery has a plate number connected to the Kwara state government was found in the premises of one of the state ministries (Ugbodoga, 2018). Based on this development, the people of the state were not convinced that the gang leaders were not working for the politicians as political thugs (Olawoyin, 2019).

As Bukola Saraki's fortune in the then upcoming 2019 general election continued to dwindle, the Kwara North part of the state which has been a long time ally of the dynasty compounded his woes by withdrawing their support to the dynasty and all his candidates in the elections. The people of the area prior to the elections lamented

that they remain one of the most marginalized part of the state in terms of infrastructural development and distribution of political and electoral offices. As a result they resolved to vote against Bukola Saraki and all his anointed candidates. To certify that their intent was not just a lip service, PDP members campaigning for votes were stoned in all parts of the area which include: Kaiama, Baruten, Lafiagi, Patigi and other notable places in the zone. In order to win back their hearts, Bukola Saraki promised to give the governorship post to the zone come 2023. This promise fell on deaf ears as the people of the zone rejected the offer.

Similarly, notable allies and loyalists of Bukola Saraki from Ilorin did not help matters as they also merely compounded it. It was observed by Olawoyin (2019) that one of the reasons why Bukola Saraki always emerged victorious in electoral contests is the support he gets from notable fellow indigenes and stalwart from Ilorin. Such notable stalwarts which include: Yinka Aluko, Ibrahim Oloriegbe, Yahaya Seriki, Moshood Mustapha, Abdulyekeen Alajagusi and Saka Cook Olododo that use to be his main electoral strategist worked against his ambition in the elections. Furthermore, the allegation that the former Senate President, Bukola Saraki was still receiving salaries as governor even when he was no longer the governor of the state infuriated the people of the state, particularly the civil servants who struggled to make ends meet due to non-payment of their salaries. This was coupled with the inappropriate pension he was reported to be receiving by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Thus, the peoples concern was that while the government was finding it difficult to pay workers salaries, it found it convenient to indulge in illegal payment of salary and pension to a former governor and a sitting Senate President who was no longer entitled to such. The people having realised that the PDP government and the Bukola Saraki hegemonic rule was no longer paying attention to their welfare waited patiently for the 2019 elections in which he and his stalwarts will be booted out of office.

With the peoples seeming dissatisfaction with the government due to the lacklustre approach which it handle the welfare and governance issues in the state, the indictment of Bukola Saraki and the government of the state in the Offa robbery tragedy in which 33 persons were killed, Kwara North's zone withdrawal of support for Bukola Saraki, his inability to secure the support of his fellow Ilorin indigenes who were suppose to be his allies and the illicit financial transactions between Bukola Saraki and the state government, the PDP and the dynasty appeared to be losing the 2019 electoral contest in the state. Taking advantage of these as potent setbacks for the party in the

then upcoming elections, the APC staged a campaign programme that was aimed at unseating the age-long political dynasty of the Bukola Saraki family. What appeared to be the defining moment for the PDP was the intensity and brand of the APC campaign which sought to bring change to the state through its '*O to ge*' (enough is enough) mantra. By the time campaign started for the elections, the APC's '*O to ge*' mantra became an ubiquitous campaign slogan in everyone's mouths not only in Ilorin, the capital of the state but across all the nook and cranny of the state. By the time the 2019 elections were completed, the resolve of the people of the state to end the dominance of the dynasty in the state's electoral and political space was made a reality when Bukola Saraki and all his anointed candidates were defeated in an historic electoral contest that brought an end to the hegemonic rule of the age-long political dynasty.

CONCLUSION

The 2019 elections in Kwara state has gone down in the political history of the state to be most historic since the state was created in 1967. It was in the elections that a political family that has held on to political power for over forty years was voted out of power. This study has shown the factors responsible for the fall of the Saraki dynasty in the 2019 elections in Kwara state, Nigeria. The study has also shown that despite their high propensity to secure victory in elections, political dynasties are not after all invincible and insulated from electoral defeats. As it is the case in Kwara state, political dynasty can be defeated in an election based on low quality leadership and bad governance. This finding is more applicable to new democracies of Africa than developed democracies of America, Europe and Asia. In developed democracies, political dynasties maintain themselves in power through quality leadership they provide in government. In these democracies, public policies are people-oriented and are geared towards the welfare of the people which is the priority of the government, there is steady economic growth, citizens take active part in political and electoral processes that is, they are involved in the decision making process and are free to choose their representatives in free and fair electoral contests.

On the contrary, political families in Africa keep themselves in power through patrimonial and neo-patrimonial networks that are highly operated by clientelism. In these democracies, the political space is constantly constricted, there is low quality leadership in governance, the welfare of a few is the priority of government, the

decision making process is a venture reserved for the political elite and they secure electoral victories through crude means. The continued existence of political dynasties lies at the mercy of the electorate who provides electoral support during elections. The support, as demonstrated in Kwara state, can however be withdrawn when the people, over a period of time realise that they are not better off with such political dynasty's rule. The resultant effect is total rejection of the political dynasty in a specific election. For the people of Kwara state it is freedom at last which is worth celebrating. While this is so, the ouster of the Saraki political dynasty should be celebrated with caution and sober reflections on the lost years of good governance and quality leadership. There is a great task ahead for the present government of Abdulrahman Abdulrazak to bring Kwara state to its desired position in terms of growth and development of the state and the general welfare of the people of the state.

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