Research Paper .

CAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT RESOLVE THE CHALLENGES ELECTORAL POLITICS IMPOSE ON GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA? THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE, 2015 – 2023.

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Abstract

Recent years have witnessed a growing enthusiasm for an accelerated deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to strengthen weak sectors of human endeavour in Africa. AI technology is a tool or system that performs specific human-related intelligent tasks in all forms of human activity. Its benefits and challenges are well documented across the globe. This paper logically answered the question, can AI technology deployment convincingly resolve the challenges Electoral Politics (EC) imposes on Good Democratic Governance (GDG) in Africa? It used library research methods and drew experiences from the electoral politics of Nigeria and its impact on good democratic governance in Africa. The paper adopted the capture theory of politics (CTP) for the analyses while contending that electoral politics poses a great challenge to good democratic governance in Nigeria and Africa, and it is exacerbated by Capture Politics (CP) rooted in the 'winner takes all' syndrome in African democracies. It discovered that there is limited penetration of AI in electoral administration that enhances GDG in the continent due largely to CP being rooted in the 'winner takes all' syndrome in African democracies. Therefore, the paper concluded that adding AI technology to the electoral process will not resolve the challenges of electoral politics related to engendering GDG in Nigeria, or Africa.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence, capture theory, capture politics, good democratic governance.

Introduction

Electoral politics in almost all global democracies is quite challenging. In Africa, it is bridled with widespread corruption and criminality, often leading to violence, bad governance and a resurgence of military rule conquered since the 1990s (Anani, 2023). To treat such electoral maladies, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) of African nations, such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria; the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana; the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia; the Independent Electoral Commission, or *Commission Electorale Independante* (CEI) of Côte d'Ivoire; the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) of Kenya; and the Electoral Commission (EC) of Zambia, among others, have taken further steps to deploy Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other related technologies to improve their electoral processes (Idowu, 2021; Novelli et al 2024). This enthusiasm for the deployment of AI technologies, particularly into the electoral processes of African democracies kept increasing with the conviction that: (i) AI technology uptake will restore the confidence of all stakeholders in the electoral process; (ii) with AI technology, critical electoral challenges such as electoral corruption and criminality that often lead to the various forms of electoral crises will be avoided; and (iii) when (i), and (ii), are addressed, good democratic governance can thrive in Africa. These propositions underscore the enthusiasm for the accelerated deployment of AI technologies into the electoral politics of African democracies. In other words, the deployment of AI technologies in Nigeria, and other African democracies was to bring about concrete changes in their political or democratic experiences. However, AI technology deployment encompasses other critical sectors in the continent, such as transportation, agriculture, healthcare, education, and financial transactions (Jaldi, 2023).

Thus, what is AI, or AI technology? The technology, which is also sometimes referred to as "Machine Intelligence" (MI); is "the intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the Natural Intelligence (NI) displayed by humans and other animals" (Gams et al. 2019, p. 73). Generally, they are digitalized tools or systems of controlled computer robots (otherwise known as Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) that perform tasks associated with human beings' intelligence (Singh, 2019; Hassani et al. 2020). Their use, particularly, in recent years cut across the globe (Padmanabhan et al. 2023), and covers all areas of human endeavour (Hassani et al. 2020); which in many cases, has radically reshaped sectors as varied and diverse as medicine (Rajpurkar et al. 2022; Padmanabhan et al. 2023), and transportation (Iyer, 2021; Padmanabhan et al. 2023). It is also widely believed that AI

technologies can undertake tasks once limited to the human mind. In other words, they can deliver effective and efficient services with benefits, including reducing costs, doubts, and risks (Shubhendu & Vijah, 2013). Due to such high-level demonstrations and benefits, AI technologies, especially at the macro level have been seen as an appropriate replacement for Human Intelligence (HI) (Singh, 2019; Hassani et al. 2020). But the question is, how can that be; for an item created and manipulated by man becoming his potential replacement?

Notwithstanding, major players from countries of the Technologically Advanced Global North (TAGN), such as the United States (U.S.), European Union, and China, are rapidly developing their AI capabilities to enhance their critical sectors and urging African countries to do the same (Dallo et al. 2024). However, the path to utilizing AI-enabled technologies in African nations to improve their governance and economic outcomes has been critically challenging (Dallo et al. 2024). The critical challenges were observed to be significantly more in the public sector than the private sector due to the impacts of AI technologies on human rights, political accountability, and its likely intensification of existing power asymmetries (Kuziemski & Misuraca 2020). Coupled with that, AI technologies are noted for generating nuances and painting negative pictures and trade-offs between benefits and harms (McDaniel & Pease, 2021). Such impacts and many other related challenges have prompted scholars like Maphunye (2019), to question the constitutionality and feasibility of deploying AI-related technologies into the electoral (voting) processes of African democracies. There is also growing interest in considering the ethical, legal, political, policy, and organizational challenges of AI technologies in the continent. These challenges notwithstanding, African nations are increasingly becoming more enthusiastic about deploying AI-enabled technologies in their critical sectors (Sun & Medaglia, 2019; Effoduh, 2021).

Yet, like most Developing Countries of the Global South (DCGS), AI deployment into the electoral processes of African democratic nations, remains very limited, ineffective, or nonexistent (Padmanabhan et al. 2023). This condition has been traced to the political leadership's disregard for the critical role electoral systems play in democratic societies, including the public expectation of the integrity and trust of the electoral system, or the democracy itself (Norris, 2019). Indeed, perceptions about electoral integrity are positively associated with the propensity to vote in an election (Birch, 2013). There is a far cry of electoral integrity and trust in Nigeria, and Africa due to the phenomenon of Electoral Capture (EC). The EC phenomenon is a form of clientele politics and corruption of public authority (Dal Bó, 2006). The Nigerian case is exacerbated by unhealthy competition and the stench of political gladiators to have electoral victories at all costs due largely to the winner-takes-all syndrome (Jega, 2017; Olakunle *et al.* 2019; Abada et al. 2023). Electoral corruption and its related acts are criminal offences in Nigeria (Part VII, Electoral Act, 2022), and go by names, such as electoral malpractice, electoral misconduct, electoral malfeasance, electoral fraud, electoral manipulation, vote rigging, vote buying, and violence (Birch, 2013; Abada et al. 2023). Electoral corruption erodes political trust and undermines political legitimacy in various institutional settings (Della Porta, 2000; Seligson, 2002; Chang & Chu, 2006; De Vries & Solaz, 2017).

To eliminate such corrupt and criminal tendencies in the electoral system, Nigeria explored the use of various Biometric Technological Innovations (BTIs), such as Biometric Voter Registration (BVR), Biometric Voter Identity Cards (BVIDCs), and Biometric Voter Verification (BVV) machines (Idowu, 2021, pp. 23-43), and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), as well as, the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal to enhance its voting process during the 2015 and 2023 general elections respectively. Also, the intention was to restore the political trust of the electorates and legitimize governments that evolved from the democratic process of the country. In specific terms, the deployment of such AI-related technologies was to eliminate the various forms of electoral corruption-related offences as listed in Part VII of the Electoral Act in the conduct of the 2015 and 2023 general elections in the country. The measure was also to identify and punish likely offenders of the Act. However, it suffices to state that the deployment of the BTIs, which essentially, were to resolve the challenges of electoral fraud and criminality and engender good democratic culture and governance in Nigeria has not achieved the purpose. In other words, the reality is that the BTIs have not eliminated electoral fraud and crime in the electoral process in Nigeria.

The Nigerian situation about AI-related technologies within the electoral process is not totally, different from some advanced democracies in the world. The reason for the similarity of AI-related technologies in practice in Nigeria and other climes is that they are capable of demonstrating negative situations, especially in the public service domain irrespective of the country. Arguing in this regard, Padmanabhan et al. (2023), stated that AI technologies despite having an implicit expectation of acting fairly and responsibly in the public service domain still demonstrate negative situations. Corroborating, the European Commission for

Democracy (ECD) through Law, stated that digital technologies are capable of negatively affecting the electoral processes of many developing countries (Barrett et al., 2020; Bender, 2022). In the same vein, AI technology uptake can lead to recidivism predictions (Larson et al. 2016). Interestingly, the task of addressing such anomalies of AI technologies sits on the fringes of Nigeria's legislature and the judiciary as observed by Padmanabhan et al. (2023), in the case of many democracies. However, the judiciary to determine the role of AI technology in the electoral process has also been queried by scholars such as Russell and Zamfir (2018). The authors argued that AI technologies further, can lead to manipulating the electoral process and outcomes and, therefore cannot be a quick fix for problematic elections in Africa. Nevertheless, the deployments of BTIs in the electoral process have been applauded for improving electoral integrity in some African democracies (Alvarez et al. 2013; Osei-Offul, 2017; Idowu, 2021).

In light of such assertions, this paper logically, provides answers to the critical question; can the deployment of AI technology convincingly resolve the challenges electoral politics imposes on good democratic governance in Africa? It drew experiences from Nigeria's electoral politics and its impact on good democratic governance in the country between 2015 and 2023 and related it to Africa in general. The paper adopted the library research method and the Capture Theory of Politics (CTP). The paper believed that the library research method was adequate in gathering all the related documentation about the topic and qualitatively analyzed their contents through the mirror of the CTP. While contending that electoral politics exacerbated by Capture Politics (CP) rooted in the 'winner-takes-all' syndrome undermines good democratic governance in Nigeria and other African countries.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

Artificial Intelligence Technology

AI technology is widely regarded as one of the significant components of the fourth industrial revolution that will continue to engender fundamental changes in the way people live, work, and relate to one another (Jaldi, 2023). However, the concept of AI dates back to the 1940s and 50s (Warwick, 2013). In specific terms, studies such as Shubhendu & Vijah (2013), and Sivasubramanian (2021) stated that AI as a concept was first created by McCarthy, a Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1956. The European Commission (EC), on its part, conceived AI, as a generic term that traditionally refers to any machine, agent, or algorithm, that is capable of observing and interacting with their environment, and other machines and humans with some degree of autonomy, and learning, and based on the experience gained, take intelligent actions and make proper decisions (Samoili, et al. 2020). It is important also to state that the AI phenomenon is studied in many tertiary institutions now as a branch of Computer Science devoted to teaching and learning new concepts; performing new tasks; and reasoning and making useful decisions and predictions within specific contexts (Shubhendu & Vijah, 2013, p. 29; Smith & Neupane, p. 10); as well as, developing Intelligent Machines (IMs) or Intelligent Systems (ISs) (Jaldi, 2023).

By description, AI systems have combined sophisticated hardware and software components with elaborate databases and knowledge-based processing models to demonstrate characteristics of humans such as effective decision-making (Kumar & Thakur, 2012). In that sense, AI systems are machines that demonstrate intelligence, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans and other animals (Gams et al. 2019, p. 73). Thus, AI technologies are digitalized tools or systems of controlled computer robots (otherwise known as artificial narrow intelligence (ANI) that perform tasks associated with human beings' intelligence (Singh, 2019; Hassani et al. 2020); devoted to achieving sets of human-defined tasks, including making predictions, recommendations, and decisions influencing the real or virtual environment (Annoni et al. 2018). They are designed with some levels of autonomy in areas, such as speech recognition, learning, planning, and problem-solving (Carter-Browne et al. 2021; Paul et al. 2024). It implies that AI machines or systems have the potential to understand a natural language (Adeniyi, 2018), and perceive and comprehend a visual scene (Shubhendu & Vijah, 2013, p. 29). AI technologies or systems can also display behaviour intelligently, analyze their given environment perfectly, and take appropriate actions with some degree of autonomy to achieve their specific goals (Annoni et al. 2018).

With such potential, the EMBs of many African countries became increasingly enthusiastic about AI technology deployment in their electoral processes. However, substantial social, economic, political, and legal challenges undermine the deployment and implementation of AI technologies across the continent (Jaldi, 2023). Some of such challenges include - the absence of significant Corporate Research and Development (CR&D) of AI in Africa, and the use of AI capabilities by African governments sometimes in controlling citizens' perceptions, as was the case in Ethiopia (Gwagwa, 2018), and Zimbabwe (Chimhangwa, 2020). These challenges in Africa are related to the fact that AI technologies are foreign-designed, and thus have cultural and infrastructural implications, thereby, lacking contextual relevance (Gwagwa et al. 2020).

It suffices to state that AI technologies, in the African setting; cannot be dissociated from foreign interferences. This is the reason why scholars such as Birhane (2019), Couldry & Mejias (2019), and Coleman, (2019), respectively argued that AI technologies are another form of neocolonialism.

The use of the 2015 and 2023 general elections of Nigeria in this paper accentuates earlier concerns raised against AI technologies from the global North while reinforcing the argument that the technology could be easily compromised to undermine the fundamental changes the EMBs themselves intended to bring into the electoral process to engender good democratic governance in Nigeria in the strings of the CP rooted in the winner-takes-all syndrome by political gladiators. It also underscored the reasons for the serious romance African leaders usually have with their foreign counterparts related to their elections. In Nigeria for example, such romance has triggered various accusations, including manipulation of AI solutions, election results, and suppression of citizens' choices of governments in the two general elections chosen in this study. Imagine a situation where the presidential candidates of the two major political parties, namely; General Mohammadu Buhari (Rtd) in the 2015 general elections, and Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023, both of the All Progressive Congress (APC), and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general elections; shuttled Washington (United States of America [USA]), London (United Kingdom [UK]), and Dubai (Saudi Arabia), respectively with their stakeholders to campaign for endorsement to be president of Nigeria justified the use of the two-cycle elections in this paper.

Coupled with that, are other issues related to the outcome of the two elections in question, which also, pointed accusing fingers at INEC; giving further credence to their use in this paper. For example, imagine a situation where INEC officials and opposition party stakeholders of northern extraction were accused of having already prepared results in the AI systems it introduced to Nigerians in the 2015 general elections; that it was waiting only to announce the opposition candidate, General Mohammadu Buhari (Rtd) as the winner after Election Day was too weighty to be ignored in this type of study. Also, imagine a situation where INEC officials with some opposition party stakeholders of northern extraction visited Dubai and had a long stay there before the 2015 general elections and manipulated election results of the presidential election between President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the PDP, and General Mohammadu Buhari (Rtd) of the APC opposition party should be subjected to scrutiny in this type of study. These issues raised, whether true or false, are weighty accusations against INEC; a body that is supposed to be neutral discloses a tendency of RC to favouring the opposition candidate of the APC. INEC also repeated the same attitude in the 2023 general elections after it boasted to Nigerians that it would transmit the election results from the polling stations to its IReV portal but failed to do so and attributed its inability to network failure and glitches. Again, the agency was accused of manipulating the AI systems (rigging the general election results) in favouring the APC candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Therefore, using the 2015 and 2023 general elections in this paper was justified to underscore whether INEC's regulatory powers were captured.

Good Democratic Governance

The concept of Good Democratic Governance (GDG) can only be well understood by expositing what democracy and governance mean in the context of this paper. Democracy has been variously construed, such as a form of government or power or rule by the people (Mbachu, 1994; Remy 1994, pp. 31-34; Stiftung, 2011; Abubakar, 2022, p.249; Akingbade, 2023); and an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions for the realization of the common good of society through the election of individuals who have been assembled to carry out the will of all (Schumpeter, 2003, p. 250). In other words, democracy is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire political power to decide through a free competitive elective process for the people's votes (O'Donnell, 2000, p. 8). Thus, democracy in the context of this study underscores the power of the people in Nigeria, and other African countries to elect their leaders at all levels of state power in competitive, free, fair, transparent, and credible periodic elections to lead or govern their people. In addition, it emphasizes in a broader sense, all governing processes, institutions, and practices through which issues of concern are decided upon and regulated. Going further, it underscores all the processes of decision-making and how decisions are implemented, or not.

Governance, on the other hand, generally concerns the various institutions, mechanisms, and established practices through which a country exercises governmental authority, discharges its responsibilities and manages its public resources (Gisselquist, 2012); as the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority at all levels in managing a country's affairs (Gisselquist, 2012); consisting of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised (Kaufman et al., 2010, Gisselquist, 2012); as a process of decision-making (policy formulation), and a process by which the decisions (policies) are implemented, or not implemented (Ali, 2015); the process whereby public or governmental institutions at both national

and local levels conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and guarantee the realization of the public or common good of society (Adetoye & Omiluisi, 2016; Ibaba, 2020). Thus, governance encompasses the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and obligations, and mediate their differences (Kaufmann et al., 2010; Gisselquist, 2012). In effect, governance is a process through which the political, social, economic, and administrative goods or resources that the citizens have the right to expect from those (i.e., the leadership, government, or state) managing the resources, and with the responsibility to deliver goods to them (the citizens).

Governance, traditionally, is also associated with ruling and control; specifically how state power and authority are exercised (Kjaer, 2023), which includes the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels (Kaufmann et al., 2010; Gisselquist, 2012). It also includes how governments (leaders) are selected, monitored, and replaced. In other words, governance is a measure of the government's capacity to formulate and implement sound policies, provide public services, and earn the respect of citizens and institutions that determine economic and social interactions (Kaufmann et al., 2010, Asefa & Huang, 2015, p. 131). Thus, governance primarily comprises the essence of a political regime, and its mechanisms for exercising power and authority, including control of the social and economic resources of a country, the degree of competence and ability of the public authority (the regime) to formulate and implement policies, and the capacity of the public authority to fulfill its duties generally.

Generally, governance can be good, poor, or bad (Ali, 2015; Ibaba, 2020; Dajwan, 2020; Dan-Woniowei, 2020). Similarly, democracy or democratic governance can be good, poor, or bad (Morlino, 2017). However, the focus here is the GDG, which underscores transparency and efficient use and management of state power and public resources for the overall benefit of society (Dan-Woniowei, 2020). Also, the GDG from a human rights point of view, primarily refers to a process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs transparently, manage public resources efficiently and accountably, and guarantee the realization of human rights in a country. In addition, GDG generally, underscores key democratic values, including inclusiveness - wider citizens' participation in decision-making; responsiveness - regarding institutions and respect for human rights and justice; and gender equality - related to women and youth empowerment, among others.

Furthermore, the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMT), underscored the GDG as a culture that moves beyond the mere procedures of democracy and the establishment of democratic institutions. But it involves promoting the sustainability of democracy with an enduring capacity, related to issues such as separation of powers and independence of the branches of government; the exercise of power by the rule of law; the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and transparency and accountability of a responsible civil service, functioning at both the national and local levels. However, it remains critical for a democratic state to have all these principles functioning adequately at the local, national, and regional levels at any point in time. It suffices to state that for the aforementioned democratic values to function properly in a country; depends on ethical leadership. It is so because the State (in this case government) is the site of political processes and an expression of the sovereignty of citizens. In other words, the government in power must emphasize that leadership must emerge only from a free, fair, credible, and inclusive process. The conviction is that any leadership that emerges through such a transparent process in a country will be committed to promoting all the ingredients of the GDG without prejudices.

Going further, the GDG from a development perspective, must be a vehicle that facilitates sustainable development, reduces poverty, and maintains peace, as well as the rule of law, and inclusive institutions responsive to the needs of citizens in a country or region (Asefa & Huang, 2015). It requires transparency and accountability to be able to show respect for the citizens and promote their participation in the country's affairs at all levels. In addition, it must also allow a free press and overall freedom of expression. What it means is that the government must ensure the promotion of the principles of inclusiveness and responsiveness regardless of diversity or affiliations in the delivery of the needs of the people. Inclusiveness underscores various dimensions of group participation, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights, including youth and women rights, among others. While, responsiveness focuses on transparency - being open to scrutiny in decision-making processes, and consensus-orientated in reaching decisions, based on widespread agreement, accountability, and quality service delivery, among others.

In addition, the GDG emphasizes listening and responding to the needs of the citizens in a country. What that portends is that the leadership of the State (the government) should engender capable democratic institutions to effectively and efficiently raise and manage resources to deliver basic services, deliver human development, and ensure equity

(including some sections of the population, especially those that are more vulnerable or marginalized), sustainability, as well as, peace and security for the citizens. These are fundamental to the State as the major actor in the modern state or governmental system through its institutions – the police, the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary and courts, the military, among others. The State in the process can also be influenced by other non-state actors - religious or tribal leaders, civil society, trade unions, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), and Community Based Groups (CBGs), among others. Therefore, the GDG is a function of legitimate leadership with quality, character, and conduct in line with citizens' expectations and norms of society (Dan-Woniowei, 2020).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Capture Theory of Politics in Nigeria and Africa

The Capture Theory of Politics (CTP) is one of the several intellectual underpinnings constructed to explain the subtle and systemic seizure of regulatory powers of Public Regulatory Bodies (PRBs) by political gladiators in countries across the globe. The CTP related to the political ecology of Nigeria was espoused by Prof. Jonah Onuoha of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) in one of his works, titled "*The State and Economic Reforms in Nigeria: An Exploratory Note on the Capture Theory of Politics*", published in 2008, as an extension of the Capture Theory of Regulation (CTR). However, the CTR as an intellectual foundation was first set out by George Stigler, an American Economist, and Jurist (Onuoha, 2008; Novak, 2013), and extended by others, including Duncan Black, James Buchannan, Gorden Tullock, and Mancur Olson (Onuoha, 2008), and Prof. Richard Posner and Samuel P. Huntington (Novak, 2013).

The CTP is a synthesis of decision-making theories, such as Elite Theory, Public Choice Theory, Collective Action Theory, and Power Theory among others (Onuoha, 2008), which postulates that government agencies set up in the interest of the public must be able to regulate the activities of the government that established them to serve the purpose for which they (the agencies) were created. In addition, the CTP contends that regulatory agencies are routinely and predictably 'captured' and manipulated to serve the interests of those who supposedly, are to be subjects to them (i.e., bureaucrats and politicians - legislators and executives) who write or control them. Thus, the CTP construct was basically, to enable scholars to assess the various subtle and systemic political changes and considerable regulatory situations routinely carried out by Public Regulatory Agencies (PRAs) intended to favour both the regulators and governing authorities that established or created them.

The CTP helps us to discover when a PRA such as an EMB like INEC, created to serve the interest of all the citizens of Nigeria to conduct free, fair, transparent, and credible violence-free national and regional elections; captured and ends up serving the political, economic, ethnic, or religious interests of a few people in government, such as members of a ruling political party, a particular ethnic or religious group, or people of a specific geopolitical zone in the country. Not only that, it also helps us to explain, and understand where, when, and how RC occurs in Nigeria or other African democracies. Particularly, the theory helps us demystify how the state authorities in Nigeria seize and capture the regulatory powers and role of INEC through various channels, including the employment of outright Superior State Power (SSP), and other subtle means, such as Financial and Monetary Power (F&MP), Privileged Position and Connections (PP&C), and Threat and Violence T&V), among others. In addition, the CTP enables us to explain and understand the dimensions of electoral corruption and criminality in the electoral process of Nigeria, including inducement and threat of violence and institution of corruption cases against officials and staff of the country's electoral body (INEC), the top hierarch of security agencies, and the judiciary, among others; to seize and capture the regulatory powers and role of the INEC, and the electoral process (including the electorate) to do the biddings of the government (party in power) that appointed the officials, and created and funds the EMB to manage elections in the country.

Also, through the CTP, we discovered that electoral politics in Nigeria and Africa is rent-seeking, and it is triggered by CP that is rooted in the winner-takes-all syndrome. The winner-takes-all syndrome is the major reason why political gladiators influence the electoral process through INEC (its commissioners and staff), the hierarchy and personnel of the Police, and other security agencies in Nigeria to successfully capture the regulatory powers of the EMB and the judiciary to win elections and have larger stakes of the total public good of the country (wealth and other privileges inclusive). It suffices to state that the interests of the politicians and privileged bureaucrats are more important than all other Nigerians. It is worth noting that when a PRA like INEC is captured, it becomes worse than no regulation at all in the electoral process in Nigeria. Going further, it means that the public good or interests of Nigerians concerning elections and GDG will suffer for a very long time. In other words, immediately those in power gain control of the regulatory powers of INEC; it performs the bidding of the government of the day. Such practice leads to imperfection in the performance of the EMB and the electoral process. It enthrones ineffective leadership and engenders Bad Democratic Governance (BDG)

– the failure to uphold the ethos of GDG in the country.

The undeniable reality of that effect is traceable to the selfish interests and decisions of some politicians and bureaucrats who emerged not because of the interest of the public good of society. As a result, their decisions to capture the EMB in most cases, are orchestrated systematically, subtly, and criminally to satisfy or favour their particular vested interests, instead of acting in or serving the public interest, or good. This happens, according to public choice theorists, because the individuals and groups with high-stakes interest in the outcome of a specific policy or regulatory decision will naturally focus their energies and resources to obtain the policy outcomes that best suit them, while the rest of society – members of the public – each with only a minuscule individual stake in the outcome, are likely to ignore it completely.

Consequently, it is important to state that all PRAs can be exposed to the risks of RC depending on the very nature of the political environment. Thus, as much as possible, all PRAs should be shielded from outside influence.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTORAL POLITICS CHALLENGES ON GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA 2015-2023

Studies such as Ayanleye (2013), and Afolabi (2017), among others, have respectively shown that election incontrovertibly remains the most important ingredient in engendering GDG in any democratic setting like Nigeria. That means all elections in Nigeria, or any other African democracy must be transparent, inclusive, competitive, free, fair, and credible. The elections must also be conducted periodically; every four years as the case in Nigeria (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 [As Amended]). The elections must be periodic because the life of every elected democratic government in the country ends or expires at the end of the four-year tenure, and a fresh election must be conducted to usher in a new government. The reason is that elections remain the only legitimate means through which the citizens select their representatives in or out of all levels of government in the country (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 [As Amended]). The Constitution intended to produce legitimate democratic governments with inclusivity, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness only through elections to engender good governance throughout the Republic. In other words, the spirit of the Constitution is to institutionalize, strengthen, and entrench the ideals of democracy and good governance throughout the Federation.

Conversely, it has been observed that elections in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, are generally problematic (Norris, 2015; Nkwachukwu, 2021). The elections are problematic because political gladiators with high stakes and diverse interests, some seeking power, others holding power and do not want to lose it (Modupe, 2012); and those having control of the State and the election machinery (Orji, 2021); employ various unconstitutional means, such as fraud and violence (Modupe, 2012); and poverty, ignorance, and leadership claims (Usman, 2020), to win elections in Nigeria, and by extension, in Africa. As earlier argued, it is a form of electoral politics engendered by CP rooted in the 'winner-takes-all' syndrome, which is a condition that allows winners in an electoral contest to "win everything in the same way losers lose everything" (Abada et al. 2023, p. 2) in Nigeria's democracy. It is a form of politics that has consciously, denied the citizens of Nigeria from enjoying the fundamental ingredients of GDG since the resurgence of democracy in 1999.

Electoral politics in Nigeria like many other African democracies, is seen as a game of survival-of-the-fittest in which any strategy (whether legal or not) could be adopted to win electoral contests to occupy positions of authority. For example, religious and ethnic persuasions and north and south dichotomy were employed by the All Progressive Congress (APC) during the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria to claim the presidency from President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) - a Christian minority from the South-South region of the country. However, it is pertinent to state that the employment of such divisive factors in the politics of Nigeria, just like many other African countries is not new (Jonathan, 2018; Usman, 2020). Yet, the worrisome aspect of it is that it has almost become a common norm in the country because of the ambiguous and lax legal provisions that rarely restrain the political gladiators (Abada et al. 2023). As a result, electoral corruption and criminality have become the order of every General Election in the country since the resurgence of democratic governance in 1999.

Electoral corruption and violence not only threaten the hard-earned democracy, or GDG but also, impose a great challenge to the corporate existence of Nigeria. The 2015 Presidential Election was a pointer to this, if not the wisdom of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, who shelved his ambition and interests to uphold the national interest of Nigeria beyond his reign. The 2015 General Elections (particularly, the Presidential) - the most celebrated General Elections in which an opposition candidate won for the first time in the country's history (Usman, 2020), were not different from the 2011 General Elections that preceded it. For example, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the

Presidential Candidate of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections, pointed out that the elections were marred by widespread corruption, criminality, and violence, associated with Smart Card Readers (SCRs) (an AI-related technology) manipulations of higher dimensions mostly in the northern part of Nigeria, which related to widespread technical hitches, and non-uniform application throughout the country (Jonathan, 2018). The former President's position confirms an earlier study by Alebiosu (2015), which highlighted some of the challenges experienced using BTIs in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, including reliability issues, equipment failure, and user challenges. Going by the enormity of the challenges, Sibe (2015) queried INEC for going ahead with the SCR technology to conduct the 2015 General Elections by ignoring the 41 percent failure rate (which was too significant to ignore) of the biometric process it reported in the pilot test of the SCR technology in the 2015 General Elections.

Coupled with that, was the role of INEC leading to the 2015 General Elections in the country. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Presidential Candidate of the PDP in the 2015 General Elections, reported that INEC carried out a lopsided distribution and collection of Personal Voter Cards (PVCs), as well as, housed some PVCs in the custody of non-INEC personnel before the elections (Jonathan, 2018). It is ridiculous for INEC, which is supposed to be transparent, free, and fair to all parties in an election to engage in such an act confirms the position of this study that INEC was captured by the powerful political and religious elite leading to the 2015 General Elections to favour the opposition northern candidate of the APC, General Mohammadu Buhari.

Recall that the deployment of AI-related technologies in Nigeria, essentially, is for improving some of the country's derailing sectors; including the government in the aspect of general governance; information dissemination; election administration; politicians and political parties for political mobilization; and civil society groups and citizens for civic action, among others (Oladapo & Ojebode, 2021). However, the most defining arena where AI-related technology solutions have been more pronounced in the country is the political landscape of election administration and management as enunciated in the preceding paragraphs.

Remember also some of the digital solutions mentioned earlier that were adopted in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, among others; include Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) (Maphunye, 2019), namely; SCRs, BVRs, BVIDCs, and BVVs (Idowu, 2021). Specifically, for the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria, include the BVAS and IReV respectively. Also, recall that these digital devices were essentially deployed to curb electoral corruption and criminality in the electoral process in Nigeria and other African democracies. All these were geared toward electing legitimate and accountable public representatives for all governance levels. However, the promise of AI technologies comes with various risks: it amplifies economic and social inequalities (Powles & Nissenbaum, 2018; Hagerty & Rubinov, 2019); it can be used by already-dominant technology firms to further entrench their economic and social power; and by governments to violate the privacy and other human rights of citizens, as well as; can be used to compound issues related to lack of transparency and accountability as the systems are scaled up as was the case of Ethiopia (Gwagwa et al. 2020), and Zimbabwe (Chimhangwa, 2020). Consequently, any form of AI-related technology deployed in the electoral process must derive legitimacy from the underlying legal framework for their recognition and support of their operations (Sibe & Kaunert, 2023). This is important because electoral politics generally is guided by the Constitution and other extant laws. It implies that any tendency or strategy adopted to win electoral contests should not violate the enabling laws and legislation. However, it also depends on the people and the body assigned to implement the enabling laws of AI solutions (Gwagwa et al. 2020, p. 18).

The observation by Gwagwa et al. (2020) had numerous digital rights implications in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. For example, what qualifies an electorate to vote in an election in Nigeria is the PVC, issued by INEC. The PVCs are to be authenticated on Election Day using the BSCRs. But Election Day came and the voter could not vote because he/she was not accredited to do so by the technology for an unimaginable reason of malfunctioned technology. As a result, INEC officials resorted to manual accreditation and voting procedures instead of technology. Such situations are clear violations of the election laws in the middle of the game, which do not go down well with many election stakeholders, raising doubts in some quarters about INEC's credibility, related to deliberate sabotage of the technology by its officials in collusion with dominant party agents within the locality, and election security personnel to rig the elections in favour of the dominant party.

Apart from sabotage and manipulation of BVAS, political gladiators in Nigeria adopt other forms of rigging elections, which include monetization, violence, and structural emasculation of the electoral process, among others. These tendencies characterized the 2015 General Elections (Jonathan, 2018). INEC was again accused of sabotaging its own IReV portal with excuses of network failure and glitches after it assured Nigerians that with it the

2023 General Elections would be better than all previous elections in the country. The election results were to be transmitted directly through the BVAS to the IReV portal at Abuja, the nation's capital, from all accredited polling stations nationwide on Election Day. However, INEC failed to maximize the technology to deliver authentic and reliable election results to Nigerians, particularly in Nigeria's 25 February 2023 Presidential and National Assembly General Elections.

As earlier argued, what enables this type of electoral politics in Nigeria, and Africa is the CP that is rooted in the winner-takes-all syndrome. It is engendered by robust national election legislation and weak national democratic institutions like INEC, the Police, and the Judiciary, among others, captured and unable to enforce compliance related to the feasibility and use of the AI solutions deployed to administer and manage the two-cycle General Elections in Nigeria ex-rayed in this paper. This finding further confirms an earlier observation by Smith and Neupane (2018, pp. 11-12), which states that AI technologies in developing countries face potential risks of undermining democratic values, such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. Thus, AI technology solutions used in the 2015 and 2023 General Elections in Nigeria, like other African democracies, such as Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa, among others, remain 'Election Rigging Machines (ERMs)' that require adequate scrutiny (Maphunye, 2019).

Why? Because AI solutions within elections and media remain a far cry in Nigeria and other African democracies. These sectors will continue to face criticism because the political gladiators in Nigeria will never stop rigging elections, or hunting, arresting, prosecuting media personnel, and sanctioning media outfits. The reason is deepfakes generated by AI technologies. Deepfakes are a set of AI techniques used to synthesize new visual products, for example, by replacing faces in the originals, which is a major concern to politicians (Floridi, 2021). In addition, deepfakes are AI-manipulated media, that make people appear to do or say things they never intended (Carter-Browne et al. 2021). Going further, deepfakes are fake news from AI-enabled social media outfits. Fake news emanating from AI solutions has been a major concern to politicians and governments in Nigeria and other African democracies. The phenomenon has exacerbated digital rights breaches and the closure of civic spaces by political heavyweights in Nigeria and other African democracies because elections are high-stakes events to achieve political ends in the country and the continent (Rutenberg & Sugow, 2020).

Notwithstanding, such AI technology headwinds within core government sectors related to the integrity of the electoral process should not be brushed aside in Nigeria, or any other African democracies. The reason is that elections without integrity will create political apathy and a lack of confidence on the part of the electorate (Usman, 2020). Not only that, flawed electoral processes in African democracies are major causes of violence, bad governance, and resurgence of military rule recently in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger in West Africa (Anani, 2023).

As earlier pointed out, weak democratic institutions constitute a major challenge to GDG in Nigeria and other African democracies. In Nigeria, for example, the democratic institutions, including the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary, as well as, INEC, and the Police, among others, are generally weak. Weak in the sense that, in principle, each of these institutions constitutionally, is empowered to maintain a certain degree of independence and autonomy while serving as checks on each other. However, the Executive arm has some overbearing influence and dominance over the other arms in Nigeria. The overbearing character of the executive branch is located in the pattern and practice of electoral politics, which negatively impacts GDG in Nigeria and other African states.

The Executive arm of government plays a significant role in the life of INEC; it appoints the Chairperson of INEC, and other National Electoral Commissioners (NECs) and Directors, and finances its activities, among others in Nigeria. Its influence goes around the Legislature (determines who became Senate President, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and other leaders of the National Assembly), the Police Chief, Army, Navy, and the Air Force, among others, and the Judiciary (the Chief Justice of Nigeria, and Supreme Court, and Appeal Court Justices, among others. As a result, the role of these institutions and agencies depicts a favourable disposition to the party in power regarding elections in Nigeria. For example, the Judiciary has "served as a tool for creating political topsy-turvy that undermined the democratic process" in Nigeria (Nebeife et al. (2022, p.131). It leads to various forms of manipulation of electoral laws and judgments in favour of a party or anointed candidate(s); prevents other political parties and candidates from contesting or winning elections; and exclusion of a large section of the population from exercising their franchise, among others.

The trend erodes the rule of law, especially the power of the people to decide who should govern them. It also leads to arbitrariness, impunity in using state power, and high-level political and institutional corruption in the country. This legacy has

fundamentally undermined GDG in Nigeria, among other African countries. This finding reinforces the point made by Carothers (2007), that nothing enfeebles democracy more than corruption. Electoral corruption distorts democratic governance, provides perverse incentives for dysfunctional behaviour, and ultimately diminishes the quality of life of the citizens for funds for social services are diverted into private pockets. In addition, electoral corruption mixed with criminality has continued to undermine the effectiveness of elections in engendering GDG in Nigeria (Adeniyi, 2018; Nebeife et al. 2022). Furthermore, it deepens economic stagnation, causes underdevelopment, reduces State capacity, and ultimately leads to State failure and military intervention experienced in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger in West Africa (Anani, 2023).

Thus, electoral corruption and criminality must be ducked to engender GDG in Nigeria and other African democracies. It will ensure legitimacy and entrench democratic values such as transparency and accountability in the governance process at all levels in the country. Also, it will help to strengthen the democracy and the democratic institutions in Nigeria and other African nations, for example, if the periodic elections are strictly conducted based on the rule of law, with the capacity for enforcement and respect for human rights and dignity; and the capacity for building a viable public service or the bureaucracy and the private sector to deliver the basic needs to the people, including the security of lives and property, quality education and health care systems, the right to vote and be voted for, and fair wages, among others. The presence of these virtues points to the fact that GDG is a fundamental requirement for genuine national transformation and quality development of African countries. In other words, the absence of GDG is the cause of Africa's development challenges. It was because leaders of Africa practiced uncivilized and unhealthy politics in the continent (Akingbade, 2023). It is a form of politics that is characterized by non-compliance to the rule of law and employment of other means to get into political offices in Africa (Akingbade, 2023). In addition, it is a process that often leads to the imposition of people on the citizens (Akingbade, 2023).

However, with careful planning and a well-thought-out electoral process, strictly guided by the rule of law, particularly the deployment of AI solutions, and the tendencies that enable the capture of INEC and other EMBs in Africa; it will be a remarkable improvement in engendering GDG in Nigeria and other African democracies. Elections without integrity create political apathy, and a lack of confidence in the electorate, as well as, cause legitimacy crises in the governance process (Usman, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper logically provided answers to the critical question: can the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies resolve the challenges electoral politics impose on Good Democratic Governance (GDG) in Africa? It does so by drawing experiences from Nigeria's 2015 and 2023 General Elections through critical analyses of the type of electoral politics in the country related to the behaviour of election stakeholders, including political gladiators and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the conduct and use of the AI solutions, such as Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal, among others. The paper discovered that these devices were adopted to enhance the electoral process during the 2015 and 2023 General Elections in Nigeria through the Capture Theory of Politics (CTP) in Nigeria and Africa. The theory demystified the complexities surrounding AI solutions and the outcome of the two elections in Nigeria. One such issue discovered was that the AI solutions were adopted to eliminate electoral corruption and criminality in Nigeria, but have become systemic Election Rigging Machines (ERMs) in the country. Also, it was discovered that the tendency was facilitated by Capture Politics (CP) which is rooted in the winner-takes-all syndrome in Nigeria. In addition, it found out that this type of politics practiced in Nigeria and other African democracies is enabled by robust national laws and weak democratic institutions, such as EMBs like INEC, the Police, and the Judiciary, among others; captured and unable to enforce compliance related to the feasibility and use of the AI solutions deployed to manage elections in the country, or the continent. Strictly speaking, the paper found out that these bodies are usually captured to favour the bidding of the few at the detriment of the majority.

Therefore, the paper concludes that the mere deployment of AI technologies into the electoral process in Nigeria or any other African State cannot be a quick fix for electoral corruption and criminality; for elections are high stakes and quite problematic in the country and the continent. Nevertheless, it also acknowledges that elections are significant ingredients in the democratic process, particularly in engendering the principles of Good Democratic GDG), such as inclusiveness; responsiveness; and gender equality, among others in Nigeria, or any other African democracy.

As a result, the paper recommends strict adherence to the rule of law, particularly in the area of enforcement and compliance by all citizens of all national legislations regarding elections in the

country. It, also recommends that the weak national democratic institutions such as INEC and the Police be strengthened to avoid being captured by those, they are supposed to regulate to ensure GDG Nigeria and other African democracies.

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