DEMOCRACY IN TWO DECADES, 1999-2019:



Reflections on Nation-Building and Development in Nigeria

RASHEED OLANIYI AND IDAYAT HASSAN (EDS.)

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE "O TO GE" MOVEMENT IN KWARA POLITICS: FROM 'ELITE COALITIONS' TO 'ELITE-MASSES CONSENSUS' FOR POLITICAL CHANGE

Ismail Salihu Otukoko

Abstract

The causal role of elites in the dynamics of change and continuity is among the dominant themes in history. Both classical and neo-elite theorists assigned prominent place to elites and their actions in developments in any given society.However, neo-elite theorists incorporate the masses and emphasise the interdependent relations between them and the elites. In other words, in causal explanation of political changes in modern societies such as democratic transitions and regime changes, the contentions in the 'New Elite Framework' is that the elite, though still a critical variable, are not the only determinants of political outcomes. They are rather 'dependent actors' whose actions and successes could be limited by the masses' interests and actions. Against this background, this paper explores the emergence of the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara State and the trajectories of the anti-Saraki struggle that culminated in the "O To Ge" movement and a major political change in the politics of Kwara State—a change, which, until 2019, previous 'coalitions of elites' had failed to actualise. It argues that, although the struggle against Saraki's hegemonic dominance had a fairly long history, its success in 2019 was more a result of the 'consensus' between the elites and masses—a consensus and success that were aided by a convergence of other intervening factors and interests that united both social classes.

Introduction

To account for the phenomena of change and continuity in any given human society is to interrogate the actions, and the nature and dimensions of the interactions among the major components, which classical elite theorists have identified as the elite, that is the organised minority, and the masses, usually unorganised. In view of their centrality to decision making, the elite, rather than the masses, were considered as major agents of change in history (Higley &Pakulski, 2012; Korom, 2015; Ayandele, 1974). In their review of classical elitism and formulation of 'a new elite framework,' neo-elite theorists emphasise "political causation" or "political determinant" of political changes in modern societies. However, while "political causation" is explained in terms of

the behavior of powerful actors or elites, due consideration is given to the interdependent relations between the elites and the masses and the fact that in modern democratic societies the elite are not the only determinants of political changes (Field, Higley & Burton,1990; Higley & Burton, 1989; Burton & Higley, 1987). Similarly, the masses, together with their interests and orientations, are now acknowledged as being capable of placing limits on actions of the elite. Therefore, the latter are seen as 'dependent actors' rather than an 'independent variable' as hitherto postulated (Field, Higley & Burton, 1990). In addition, in accounting for political change and continuity, the neo-elite theory also gives consideration to the place of competition between long established elites and newcomers, and the importance of cultural constraints on the actions of the elite (Daloz, 2010; John, Higley & Pakulski, 2012).

Like elites, conflicts are also identified as sources of, and keys to understanding change in societies, with the primary conflict being, first and foremost, that among the elite, and then those between them and the masses (Axel, & Janoski, 2005). Though essentially conceived as "struggle between individuals and groups who have opposing interests and who are competing for scarce resources," (Stephen, 2007, pp. 662-665) conflicts could bring about the emergence as well as the 'circulation of elites.' Political history across time and space is replete with records of conflicts such as those that resulted from elite's self-interest and primary desire to acquire, maintain and enhance power and to dominate their societies. Hence, it was within this context and the struggle that such desire engenders that Weber conceived politics as "first and foremost, an incessant struggle for power, the power to control or influence the collective actions of the community" (Max Weber, as cited by Axel & Janoski; Pakulski, 2012).

Central to the "O To Ge" movement in Kwara State is the twin issue of continuity and change and political conflicts as far as politics in, and development of the state, are concerned. Change here captures the age-long determination of members of the political of elite in the state to bring an end to the political dominance of a particular family, the Saraki political dynasty, in the politics of the state. On the other hand, continuity represents the ambition of the Saraki political camp to continue its hegemonic dominance in the politics of the state. The former adopted the "O To Ge!" (translated as "Enough is Enough") mantra as its political campaign slogan to express its resolve to end what was widely described as the 'long dominance of the Saraki dynasty' in Kwara politics and to mobilise and carry along a large chunk of the masses to actualise that goal. On the other side of the political divide, the pro-Saraki camp expressed its ambition for the continuity through the adoption of the "O Tun Ya" (translated variously as "Let's do it once more" or "ready (to go) again") slogan (Olawoyin, 2019; Agekameh, 2029). Both the "O To Ge" movement and its "O Tun Ya" opposition are, therefore, centered around the Olusola Saraki's political dynasty and its domination of politics in the state.

The struggle to challenge such dominance in local politics dated back to the Second Republic (1979-1983), when Olusola Saraki began to effectively establish his influence over politics in the state. However, the involvement of the masses, particularly the Ilorin masses, on the side of the anti-

Saraki movement, was a more recent phenomenon, which could be dated to the Fourth Republic and specifically the period between 2001 and 2003. As can be inferred from various episodes of political crises in Ilorin since the pre-colonial period (such as the overthrow of the fifth Emir in 1895, the 1913 anti-tax mass protests, and the Ilorin Talaka Parapo mass movement of 1954-1958), the involvement of the masses was very crucial in bringing about certain political changes (Adeleye, 1977, 185; Hermon-Hodge, 1929, 73, 79-80; Government Printer, Kaduna, 1937; Whitaker, 1970, 121-174; Danmole, 1980, 207-215). However, in such episodes of 'mass protest' and 'mass movement,' there are indications that the Ilorin elite were either overtly or covertly involved in spurring and/or exploiting mass discontent for their own interests. Thus, the role of the elites in mobilising and shaping the actions of non-elites for desired changes cannot be overemphasised just as the place of the masses in ensuring the success of agenda of the elites. The triumph of the "O To Ge" movement, which has been described as 'a political revolution' in Kwara State, exemplified this interdependence of the elite and masses.

On the "O To Ge" mantra as 'an ideology of change'

The phrase "O To Ge" is part of a Yoruba proverb, which is often used to express dissatisfaction with, and a determination to put a stop to, an undesirable situation. In its full expression, the proverb reads "*O to ge-e la se ole ile*," meaning 'you say 'enough is enough' to a domestic thief' (i.e. to end his activities.) Perhaps, the clear reference in the proverb to thievery and the need to put an end to it, and its implications on the incumbent government and the Saraki dynasty with which it was closely linked must have led to the perception that "O To Ge" was adopted by the APC gubernatorial candidate for the 2019 election as an attempt to instigate the people against the government (Jimoh, personal communication, 2020). Such perception must have informed the abortive attempt made to resist the use of the phrase in the build-up to the 2019 election. It has been observed that the slogan was adopted "to cause disenchantment with the authoritarian power of the Saraki political dynasty" and "to drive a wedge between the leader of the Dynasty (Abubakar Bukola Saraki) and the populace" (Ozden & Tanko, 2019) In the sense that it was adopted to express a determination to end the reign of a political dynasty, which had come to be presented as responsible for alleged socio-economic and political backwardness of the state, the "O To Ge" slogan can be explained to mean 'an ideology of change.'

As a proverb that is commonly used among the Yoruba, the phrase "O To Ge" is, therefore, specifically used to express dissatisfaction with the status-quo and a resolve to effect change. During the course of General Ibrahim Babangida's unending transition to civilian rule in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Odolaye Aremu, an Ilorin traditional folksong exponent, did not only draw attention to the need for a collective action to put pressure on the military president to 'fix Nigeria,' 'step aside,' and hand over power to civilians but also 'told' the Head of State that 'Enough was Enough.' With

regards to the need for a collective action to mount pressure on General Babangida, Odolaye, in his "Oro Nigeria, E ro wo" ('Nigeria's issue: think about it,' Aremu, nd.), appealed to all and sundry thus:

Eyinagbalagbaobirinte n beNanjeria-aa	Elderly women in Nigeria
EyinAafate n beNanjeria-aa	[Islamic] Clerics in Nigeria
Omok'ewute n beNanjeria-aa....	Students of Qur'anic education in Nigeria
Gbogbowayan-yan	All of us in our entirety
Atigbogboolorinti n beNanjeria	And all musicians in Nigeria
E je a p'anupọ	Let us all unanimously resolve
Kalo le ba Babangida	To meet Babangida
Karaba, kagode, kabe e	To plead with him with respect
KobawatunNanjeriawa se o-o-o	Urging him to help fix our Nigeria

Odolaye Aremu further addressed General Babangida thus:

Sole e, fi lakalaka, sole	Hand it over, dangle it anyhow, hand it over
Babangida-aa!	Babangida!
O to Ge-geiyann'IleApa	Enough is Enough to Iyan at Ile-Apa
O to Ge-geokal'OkeOyi	Enough is Enough to Oka at Oke-Oyi
Ro wọ ooo, OroNanjeria-aa, ro wo o!	Think over it. Think over Nigeria's matter
Rojusogbogbo kin niyilẹ	Be patient [and] hand over all these things
Kowa wo wal'ojul'odunmerin	And observe us for four years
Eniti o ba le se suru,	if, then, there are still impatient ones
tin batunbar'awon ja	fighting one another,
Kotunwagba-a l'owoawaoo	You can then take it back from us again

In the above excerpts, and indeed in the entire track dedicated to "Oro Nigeria", we can have a peep into the widespread disillusionment with IBB's regime, especially his transition program and apparent unwillingness to let go power. Such had informed Odolaye's telling the military ruler 'O To Ge' and advocating a four-year 'trial-and-observe' period for civilian rule during which President Babangida was to 'step aside' and 'watch' things. Of course, Babangida was eventually 'forced' to 'step aside,' as advocated by Odolaye Aremu.Another instance of the use of the 'Enough is Enough' slogan in recent time was in March 2010 when "a coalition of Nigerian youth leaders" under the umbrella name "Enough is Enough Coalition" organised a march to the National Assembly to express their dissatisfaction with the state of the nation, their decision that 'enough was enough,' and thus the determination 'to change our country positively.' In a letter titled "Nigerian Youth Say Enough is Enough" and addressed to the Senate President, the group outlined their agenda and demands concerning what were considered as "4 critical areas where we require urgent intervention to secure the future"(Anon, 2010).

As stated above, the "O To Ge" movement in Kwara was all about the political hegemonic dominance of the Olusola Saraki family. It should be noted that the establishment and exercise of Olusola Saraki's domineering influence on politics in Ilorin and Kwara State, and challenges to such

influence, were all phenomena associated with democratic dispensations. In other words, it was only during democratic eras that Olusola Saraki was able to gradually, but steadily, establish himself as a major factor that determined or greatly influenced the course and dimensions of politics in Kwara politics (Aliyu, 2013). The process, therefore, dated back to the events leading to the rise and collapse of the Second Republic, 1979-1983. Between 1979 and 2010, the domineering influence of Olusola Saraki in the politics of the state was reflected in his role in the election, among others, of five civilian governors of the state, including his son, and the frustration of the ambition of two of them (Adamu Atta in 1983 and Mohammed Lawal in 2003) for re-election for a second term. The period had also witnessed the inability of various politicians to actualise their political ambitions in the state due to Olusola Saraki's influence as the 'deciding factor' in the politics of Kwara State.

The Rise of Dr. Olusola Saraki and his Personal Dominance in Kwara Politics, 1974-1979

The emergence of Dr. Olusola Saraki in the local politics in Ilorin and indeed Kwara State was a product of the reactions of the Ilorin elite to political changes that attended the collapse of the First Republic in Nigeria in 1966. Among such changes were the creation of states in 1967 (among which Kwara State was one) and reform of local government and chieftaincy system between 1968 and 1976. By the early 1970s, the Ilorin elite under the umbrella of the then Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union (IDPU—the major socio-cultural organisation of all Ilorin indigenes), had started to react to what was perceived as "anti-Ilorin endeavours" of the first military governor of the state, the then Colonel D.L. Bamigboye (1967-1975), an Igbomina indigene of the state (Jimoh, 1994, pp. 338-340; Jimoh, 2019, Akodudu, 2017, andAdi, 2017, personal communication). Generally, the Ilorin community had thought that Bamigboye's regime deliberately neglected the traditional core Ilorin areas in term of physical infrastructure and adequate social services while concentrating attention on Government Reservation Area (GRA) (Jimoh, 1994, pp. 337-341, 349-351; Akodudu, 2015; Adam, 1974). In reaction to this alleged deliberate neglect, and as a challenge to the state government, the IDPU organised a community road project in April 1974 and brought in Olusola Saraki as guest/launcher (Jimoh, 1994, p.341; Akodudu, 2015).

Secondly, in their search for an Ilorin indigene who would serve as the community's 'political leader' preparatory to the widely anticipated return to civilian rule by the Gowon-led military regime in 1976, the IDPU had by 1974 settled for Olusola Saraki to fill 'a political leadership vacuum' noticed in the emirate. (Akodudu, 2015; Nuhu, 2013, pp. 95-97; Akodudu, 2017, and Jimoh, 2018, personal communication). Born in May 1933 and trained as a medical doctor, Olusola Saraki, then in his early forties, was not unknown in Ilorin by 1974 having contested for and lost the election into the House of Representatives in 1964 (Adeoti, 2009; Nuhu, 2013, p. 5; Saraki,2013,pp. 11-13). As 'champions' of Ilorin's interests," the IDPU's choice of Olusola Saraki was presented and made acceptable to the Ilorin traditional elite and masses, first through the launching of Ilorin community road project in April 1974, the month in which the second phase of the Local Government reforms by

the Bamigboye-led administration took off, and secondly through the honorary traditional title of *Turaki*of Ilorin conferred on him by the Emir in April 1974 (Anon. 1974 (a); Anon. 1974(b); Anon. 1974(c); Anon. 1974 (d); Jimoh, 1994, p. 341; Akodudu, 2017,Adi, 2017,Baboko, 2017, Jimoh, 2019: personal communication).

With the support of the IDPU, the deployment of his wealth for philanthropic and community development activities in Ilorin (and other parts of the state), Olusola Saraki gradually secured the affection of both the elite and masses and,thus, popular acceptability as the "political leader of the emirate."Although there were probably some few individuals who read other meanings to Olusola Saraki's philanthropy and community development efforts,to many others who keyed into the IDPU's "Saraki Project" and community development projects then, 'Ilorin had suffered long enough' and Olusola Saraki was "a man who came out in time of need to restore the status of his fatherland" and "a philanthropist" committing his wealth for the development of his community (Abdullahi, 1974; Sulyman, 1974; Anon, 1974(b)). He was to become widely accepted asa 'spokesman' for, and a 'custodian of Ilorin interests' at least as far as partisan politics was concerned (Alanamu, 2005, pp. 22, 24; Jimba, 2006, pp. 21-26; Jimoh, 2019, personal communication).Over the years, Olusola Saraki employed various strategies to maintain this status, his acceptability to, and popularity among, the elite and masses, and his continuous influence on local politics in the city and Kwara State at large. These, among others, included generosity, availability and accessibility to the ordinary people, identifying himself with the mood and"the interest of the [Ilorin] people," advocacy for the relevance and preservation of the traditional chiefs(Anon. 1974(e); Anon, 1974(f); Alore, 1974; Kasum, 1974) (Aleshinloye, 2003, pp. 763-764, 770-771, 774; Nuhu, pp. 326. 368, 382; Kawu. 2012; Alase, 2019, and Saliu, 2018, personal communication).

With particular reference to partisan politics in the state, the emergence of Olusola Saraki as a force to reckon with began in the events leading to the inauguration of Nigeria's Second Republic; he participated in the Constituent Assembly that fashioned the 1979 Constitution, and was one of the foundation members of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) who reportedly introduced the party to 'the leaders of thought' in Ilorin in October 1978. Then, another major name in local politics was AGF Razaq who introduced the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) to Ilorin. However, the NPN, being more or less a reincarnation of the defunct NPC, the dominant party in the defunct Northern Region, was considered to be favourable to 'Northern interests' and by extension Ilorin interests (Alanamu, 2005, 23, Sulyman, 2018, and Jimoh, 2018, 2020, personal information) and, thus, embraced by majority of the Ilorin. Unlike AGF Razaq who became the gubernatorial flag bearer of the GNPP in 1979, Olusola Saraki influenced the emergence of Adamu Atta as the state governor while he was elected into the Senate. The electoral successes of the NPN in the general elections in Kwara State in 1979 boosted the emergence of Olusola Saraki as a deciding factor in Kwara politics. His subsequent election as the Senate Leader further galvanised his status as a political leader at the state level.

Challenges to the Political Leadership of Olusola Saraki in Kwara Politics, 1979-1983

While members of the opposition camp in Ilorin politics, namely the remnants of the ITP-AG Alliance were the first toexpress concern over possible threat, which the emergence and growinginfluence of Olusola Saraki portended for politics in the state wasit was, however,from within the NPN that early traces of opposition to Saraki's influence on politics in the state began to unfold shortly after the inauguration of the Second Republic. Prior to the general elections in 1979, one A.Y. Onibonoje, a UPN Leader for Alanamu constituency, had warned that, "IfDr. Saraki and his clique of bootlickers are voted into power, we may live to witness another kind of "aristocratic political Kingmaker in the state" (Anon, 1979). This seems to have been in reaction to Olusola Saraki's role in the emergence ofAdamu Atta as NPN flag bearer for the election. Within the NPN, those that 'felt cheated or rigged out in favour of Atta' during the primaries, such as AkanbiOniyangi and Ado Ibrahim, started the intra-partyanti-Saraki movement (Alanamu, p.36; Suleiman, 2018, andSarumi, 2017, personal information).

The resultant intra-party crisis, which the struggle against Olusola Saraki took, lasted from 1981 to 1983 andbecame popularly known as "Sa-a l'ake" ('cut him with an axe') crisis in Ilorin; It started from what was described as a 'misunderstanding' between Olusola Saraki, the Kwara NPN Chairman and Senate Leader, against Akanbi Oniyangi, the State Publicity Secretary of the NPN and the Minister for Defence. Other leading members of the state NPN who had scores to settle with Olusola Saraki were drawn into the crisis and joined the anti-Saraki camp. These included the first elected civilian Governor of the state, AlhajiAdamu Atta (1979-1983); HaliruDantoro, the State Vice Chairman of NPN; Shehu Usman, and Israel Moronfoye, the Speaker, and Deputy Speaker of the Kwara State House of Assembly respectively, and Ado Ibrahim,who had been involved in a struggle for the control of the National Movement with Olusola Saraki prior to the formation of the NPN (Suleiman, 2018, personal communication; George, 2010). With the exception of Oniyangi who hailed from Ilorin, some other key actors in the crisis such as Ado Ibrahim and AdamuAttah (both from Ebiraland), HaliruDantoro (Borgu), Shehu Usman (Lafiagi), and Israel Moronfoye (Irra), were princes.

The central issues in the crisiswere Saraki's alleged "dictatorial political leadership in the state and his inordinate ambition to convert the party into his personal estate" and thus establish a continuous personal and political dominance over both the party andthe state (Anon, 1981; Anon, 1983; Olowoyeye, 2013, p. 46; Saraki, 2013, pp. 22,30-31;Jimoh, 2019, and Suleiman, 2018, personal communication).It has been explained that whileSaraki "expected not only loyalty from his followers but wished to be regarded like and treated as a royal figure" and always felt 'greatly offended whenever any public officer did not immediately react to his call,' the duo of Adamu Atta and Akanbi Oniyangi refused to be subservient to him just on the ground that 'he was the leader who got them into their high public offices' (Aleshinloye, 2003, pp. 767-769; Nuhu, 2013, pp. 165-166). Recently, it was suggested that the princes in the anti-Saraki camp were opposed to the alleged

attempt by Olusola Saraki to impose, both on the NPN and Kwara State, 'a dictatorship' and 'personal hegemony that had neither royal background nor longstanding historical bona fides' (Kawu, 2015; George, 2010; Saraki, 2013, 22, 30).

The seeming 'Coalition of Princes' against Olusola Saraki must have informed the complexity of the crisis and the failure of various efforts to resolve the crisis prior to the 1983 elections when Olusola Saraki refused to support Governor Atta's second term bid. During the crisis, Olusola Saraki enjoyed the support of the Ilorin elite and masses. The former had included those who probably read meanings to the plot by Atta and other princes and associated such with not just an opposition to Olusola Saraki as an individual but as part of an "anti-Ilorin" scheme and rivalry by certain groups in the state for both the leadership of the state NPN and the control of the state (Jimoh, 2020, personal communication). Thus, informed by considerations for the interests of the Ilorin community (including the popular demand for more local government areas which Olusola Saraki then supported) and fear of vengeance should Atta win a second term, members of the Ilorin political elite, including those serving in Atta's government, rose to counter the anti-Saraki movement within the NPN and the state (Anon, 1981a; Anon, 1981b; Anon, 1981c;Suleiman, 2018, Sarumis, 2017, andJimoh, 2020, personal communication).

With the support, which Adamu Atta received from other leading members of the party both at the state and national levels, and which ensured his nomination for a second term contrary to Saraki's opposition, the governor became the first major challenge to Olusola Saraki's factor in Kwara politics. Indeed, the incumbent governor reportedly declared that he could win the 1983 general election without Saraki's support (Nuhu, 192-193; Saraki, 43-44; Aliyu, 2014; Sarumi, 2017, Jimoh, 2020, personal communication). However, in spite of such support, Olusola Saraki was able to turn the table against the incumbent governor and the NPN. Saraki did not only dismiss Atta's administration as a failure but also blamed an alleged failure of the NPN to deliver on the campaign promises on the governor's alleged inefficiency, his involvement in the protracted intra-party crisis.In addition, Olusola Saraki blamed himself and indeed apologised for having committed what he described as the "1979 Mistake," that is, his nomination of Adamu Atta for the governorship (Saraki,2013, pp. 38-39, 42-43, 49).

The support that Olusola Saraki expressed for the, pro-LGA agitations in Ilorinbolstered his image and helped him to sustain his popularity among, and acceptability to, the ordinary people within Ilorin. Thelocal mass and elite support did not only enableOlusola Saraki to survive the plot to 'dethrone him' as the leader of the NPN in the state during the Second Republic but also to affect a defeat of the incumbent governor at the 1983 governorship elections.The electoral victories for Saraki and his faction of the NPN at the 1983 general elections, including the victory of the UPN gubernatorial candidate he supported helped to establish Olusola Saraki asthe 'strongman' and 'kingmaker' in Kwara politics'(Nuhu, 2013, pp. 196-200).Thus, prior to the military take-over in December 1983, Olusola Saraki had established himself as the major deciding factor in the politics

of Kwara. The electoral victories he secured for the two political parties he associated with (namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Congress for National Consensus (CNC)) during the aborted transition programmes organised by military regimes in the 1990s, confirmed Olusola Saraki as the 'political Kingmaker' and enabled him to survive another 'elite coalition' allegedly aimed at 'dethroning' him as 'kingmaker of Kwara politics' (Nuhu, 2013, pp. 220-222, 224, 245-247, 349; Nuhu, 2007, p. 78). The transition program that ushered in the Fourth Republic also saw Olusola Saraki retaining his cherished position as the 'Kingmaker in Kwara politics.'

The Aborted 'Movement' to 'End' Saraki's Political Dominance,1999-2011

As with previous democratic dispensations, Olusola Saraki played a leading role in the formation of one of the dominant political parties, the All Peoples Party, and in the electoral successes of the party at various elections that characterised the transition to civilian rule, which ushered in the Fourth Republic in May 1999. By this time, there were three dominant political parties in Kwara: the Alliance for Democracy (AD) mainly composed of the "Awoists", that is, those still committed to political ideas of Chief Awolowo but the traditional opposition in Kwara politics; the All Peoples Party (APP, later transformed to All Nigerian Peoples Party, ANPP), composed of the "Sarakites," that is, the traditional loyalists and supporters of Dr. Olusola Saraki as well as those who saw the APP as having "better prospects of winning than any other party" and thus wanted to enjoy Saraki's political blessings to actualise their various political ambitions. The third major party was the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), which was dominated by 'those who were traditionally opposed to Dr. Saraki' and his style of politics (Lawal, 2015).

With a combination of Olusola Saraki's influence and resources, and the financial resources and political followings of the wealthy members of the party, the APP took control of Kwara state with the retired Rear Admiral Mohammed Alabi Lawal, an indigene of Ilorin, as the fourth elected governor of the state—the first Ilorin to be so elected since the creation of the state. Various factors have been advanced to explain Olusola Saraki's choice of Mohammed Lawal in spite of his military background and the former's lack of preference for individuals with such credential. Perhaps, one of the most critical of such reasons was the widespread clamour by the Ilorin that it was high term an Ilorin indigene was elected governor of the state. Though there were some other Ilorin indigenes among the aspirants, that one of them, Mohammed Lawal, was 'anointed' by Olusola Saraki must have contributed to the mobilisation of support by all to ensure the party's and Lawal's victory at the gubernatorial election in 1999.

Furthermore, in addition to the governorship, the APP also won majority of the LGA chairmanships as well as the State and National Houses of Assembly seats. Although Olusola Saraki's bid for presidency was frustrated by the APP at the national level and his attempt to return to the Senate was foiled locally, his daughter, Gbemisola Saraki, was elected member of the House of Representatives while his son, Bukola Saraki was later appointed as a Special Assistant to President

Olusegun Obasanjo (Jimba, 2006, pp 13, 17; Lawal, 2005; Nuhu, 2013, pp. 265-291). However, circumstances surrounding how Olusola Saraki was schemed out of the APP presidential primaries in favour of a joint candidature with the AD was at the root of the APP crisis at the national level, which was to further the crisis that ensued between Olusola Saraki and Governor Mohammed Lawal.

The idea of terminating the dominance of Olusola Saraki in Kwara politics became pronounced with the advent of the conflict between Governor Lawal and the godfather around March, 2001.Though not expressed in Yoruba with the slogan of "O To Gẹ," the idea of "Enough is Enough" to the political dominance of Olusola Saraki gained currency in the press during the course of Saraki-Lawal crisis. A number of reasons have been advanced to explain the conflict although the causes of the crisis kept increasing as the tension between the two parties mounted from March 2001 to April, 2003 (Adedayo, 2001, 9; Oyinloye, 2002; Oyinloye, 2003, pp. 1, 2; **Anon, 2003**; Lawal, 2005; Nuhu, 2013, pp. 307, 309; Kawu, 2012; Saraki, 2013, p. 89; Abdulraheem, 2002, 7; Djeba, et al, 2003, 30-34). For instance, between March 2001 and July 2002, Governor Lawal had variously identified an alleged ambition of Olusola Saraki to have his son as the next state governor and his opposition to an alleged proposal by Saraki that the allocation to the state should be shared between them as the genesis and "main reason" for the disagreement between them and their eventual parting of ways (Adedayo, W. 2001; Agbim, 2002; Oyinloye, 2002; Oyinloye, 2003).However, there seems to be a consensus that the problem emanated from the conflict of interest between Lawal's second term ambition and Olusola Saraki's (initially rumoured) ambition to present his son, Bukola Saraki, for the governorship in 2003. Though the rumour was initially allegedlydenied by Olusola Saraki, his refusal to bless Lawal's second term ambition marked a turning point in their relations. While Olusola Saraki continued to threaten that he would ensure that the governor was 'flushed out' of the Government House in 2003 (Ogundolapo, 2002; Anon, 2003), Governor Lawal began to take steps to ensure he did not only get the APP nomination but also win enough support across the state to win his re-election.

One of the major steps the governor took to actualise his second term ambition was to take over the control of the APP at the state level from Saraki—a step reported to be similar to what other APP governors in the country were taking then. The state APP executive committee, then led by a Saraki loyalist, Professor Albert Ogunsola, was dissolved, all "Sarakites" among the executive members were removed and replaced by 'Lawalites' or loyalists and supporters of the governor while commissioners loyal to Saraki were dropped (Adedayo, 2001; Lawal, 2005).Like Adamu Atta before him, the support of the APP national leadership to the governor's extension of his control of the government to that of the party machinery or a 'highjack' of the Kwara APP from Olusola Saraki, further strengthened Mohammed Lawal in his anti-Saraki struggle.

Following his nomination as the sole ANPP gubernatorial candidate in the state, Governor Lawal and his supporters began to clearly articulate the idea of ending Olusola Saraki's leadership

and dominant influence in the state, which were increasingly associated with hunger, slavery, oppression, backwardness, etc. In June 2002, for instance, the Governor declared that: "Our people have responded positively to our leadership by embracing democracy. Our people have said NO to hunger, NO to slavery, NO to oppression, NO to injustice, NO to deprivation, and an emphatic NO to civilian dictatorship...." (Anon, 2002b) When it was obvious that Olusola Saraki would field his son, Bukola Saraki, to contest against the incumbent Governor, efforts began to be made to draw attention of the Ilorin masses and indeed Kwara populace to the need to end 'servitude' to Saraki. In one newspaper advert, the call was "You served the father. Why serve the son? Kwara must be totally free. Up Kwara. Vote Lawal" and that:

> For far too long, the people of Kwara have had to slave under the yoke of one family. Is it because no one else has the capacity for leadership? Where has the loyalty to one man's cause led the state? We took the first bold step to break the shackles of bondage more than three years ago. Now we must solidify that step and never go back to the days of servitude (This Day, 2002, 14).

From 2002, when the battle line had been clearly drawn between the godfather and his erstwhile godson and their respective supporters, including armed gangs (Kareem, 2016; Alanamu,2005, pp 52-55; Lawal, 2005; Sambo, 2005, 190-201), to April 2003 when elections took place, the anti-Saraki struggle became somewhat 'ideological' as it was continuously 'defined' and presented as 'Kwara liberation struggle' by the "Lawalites." The battle, which started as, and was for long dominated by, press campaigns, involved contentions by the pro-Lawal camp on the need to decide 'whether or not to move forward from the past or keep to the status quo.' Then, identifying with the past and status-quo, which Olusola Saraki's influence on politics was argued to represent, was defined to mean and include the "unalloyed loyalty to a family," "retaining the booming industry of poverty that has thrived in the state for more than 35 years" and "to keep the state down perpetually underdeveloped, socially, industrially and economically." 'Moving forward' from that past and status-quo, which Lawal was presented to represent, meant putting an end to what was variously presented to be "perpetual servitude to a local supremo (sic)," 'political slavery since 1964' or 'political bondage of 40 years' and the 'colonisation of the people of Kwara State' by Olusola Saraki (Akanbi, 2002; Raji, 2003; Ajibade, 2003; Olatunde, 2003;Oladepo, 2003). In other words, in the press war dimension of the anti-Saraki struggle, arguments were made to the effect that it was high time to attain 'freedom to a past of servitude to one family's whims and caprices' and 'freedom from fear, freedom from compromises that enslave the dreams of a greater Kwara" (Oladepo, 2003).

Various declarations made by Olusola Saraki to discredit Lawal, as the arrowhead of the anti-Saraki movement further widened the gulf between the two camps and made any reconciliation abortive. In December 2002, Olusola Saraki reportedly declared:

> Lawal's days are numbered in the state. We thought he was a man of honour, we thought he was a man of integrity. That was why we gave him the mantle of governor.... We gave him a blueprint for Kwara development. He did not implement it. I will ensure that someone who would implement our blueprint for Kwara development comes on board. Lawal has disappointed us.... (Anon, 2003).

In response to the 'December Declaration', Mohammed Lawal did not only refute Saraki's claim of a 'blueprint in the interest of the state' but also described him as a man who was concerned about his own self-interest and therefore denounced his leadership. In his counter declaration, Lawal was reported to have said, *inter alia*,

> I have been avoiding the situation where I would have to denounce Saraki's political leadership....he is the brain behind current political violence in Ilorin....In the last 30 years of his political leadership, people have not felt his impact, he didn't create any industry, rather, he is only interested in legacies of other people. I cannot associate myself with his leadership any longer. As from today, I denounce him as my political mentor. The time has come for me to make this decision and declaration in view of recent political events in the state (Anon, 2003).

By 2003, Lawal had come to be perceived as a "Liberator" and "the Moses of our time to liberate Kwara State from Saraki" (Raji, 2003). The desire for "freedom" from what was various called "slavery," "bondage" and "colonisation" dominated press and political campaigns in the build up to the 2003 elections in the state. In several press campaigns for Governor Lawal against his estranged godfather, appeals were made to the people of the state on the need to use their votes to "free" themselves and the state from "bondage," One such advert reads: "Your vote alone can free Kwara from one man's bondage. Kwara must be totally free. Up Kwara. Vote Lawal" (The Herald, 2003, p.5). In another full page advert, an outline of alleged reasons why Olusola Saraki fell out with previous state governors that he had helped to win elections in 1979, 1983, and 1993 was given. The advert then reads: "And now, he has continued his game with Governor Mohammed Lawal....It's time to say a loud NO to his antics. Vote for the man who dared to set Kwara free from bondage. Vote for Lawal" (Kwara Freedom Forum, 2003, 13).

On the eve of the 2003 gubernatorial elections in the state, core members of Lawal's 'elite coalition against Saraki' were convinced that the election would mark a turning point in Kwara politics and history. AyotundeRaji, the Commissioner for Sports and Tourism then, referred to the frustration of Kwarans with the repeated "Promises of an Eldorado" by Olusola Saraki without nothing to show. According to the commissioner,

> Kwarans are yearning for a change. Kwarans want to be liberated.... want to continue to enjoy the dividends of good and purposeful governance being provided by Mohammed Lawal....want to be free from the retrogressive policy of Saraki and his false promises. Kwarans do not want Saraki to turn Kwara state to Saraki and

> Family PLC....We want elections to hold in April 2003 so that we can chase Saraki out of Kwara State by our votes (Raji, 2003).

Raji did not only call on other political elites opposed to Saraki's political dominance (such as C. O. Adebayo, ShaabaLafiagi, John Dara, GbengaOlawepo, Lai Mohammed, and Nurudeen Mohammed, among others) to 'team up with Lawal to present a common front at the April polls' but also advised Saraki to "allow Kwara State to progress" but added that:

> All the industrial establishments that dotted the state in the sixties and seventies have folded up....we have not enjoyed enough Federal presence in the state in spite of Saraki's claim of closeness to Central Government. Kwarans have followed Saraki long enough without getting to the Promised Land. To Saraki, Kwarans want you to go and rest in retirement from politics. Enough is Enough (Raji, 2003).

Another member of Lawal's cabinet, the Commissioner for Information, described April as "the month of history" and the election as "a bitter struggle between the force of change and stagnation....a struggle for supremacy between the force of freedom and the trio for (sic) godfather, godson and goddaughter.... between self-determination and the running of Kwara as a family estate" (Oladepo, 2003). Songs and jingles were also composed to express dissatisfaction with the perceived ills of Saraki's long dominance. One such that was popular in the state capital and which re-echoed during the 2018-19 "O To Ge" political campaign) targeted one of Saraki's major strategies that had won and sustained for him the continuous support of women, that is provision of textiles ("*Ankara*"), food and pocket money. Thus, the anti-Saraki group expressed disgust with such when they sang thus:

O yol'emiawa, o yol'emiawa Ebaatiwaso, o yol'emiawa.	We are fed up! We are fed up! With a bowl of Eba and #50, we are fed up!

To that, the pro-Saraki camp countered:

O yol'araawa, o yol'araawa Ebaatiwaso, o yol'araawa	It is evident in us, It is evident in us A bowl of Eba and #50, is evident in us.

It should be noted that it was not only Governor Lawal and his supporters within the ANPP and the government that resisted the emergent dimension of the domination of Kwara politics by Olusola Saraki. After the irreconcilable disagreement between Lawal and Saraki had led to the exit of the latter from the ANPP to the PDP where he got his son and his daughter, Bukola and Gbemisola Saraki, nominated for the 2003 gubernatorial and Kwara Central senatorial seat respectively, tensions began to mount within the PDP. Though the grievances generated by the defection of Olusola Saraki to the PDP and alleged imposition of his children as the party's candidates did not result in a major exodus of leaders and members of the PDP to the other parties (such as the ANPP and AD) opposed to Olusola Saraki and his ambitions, the developments occasioned the splitting of

the state chapter of the PDP into the "original" or "old PDP" group (i.e. the anti-Saraki faction, composed of the original leaders and political aspirants in the party, who were eventually labelled as the 'A o nigba' ['we shall not accept']) group, and the "new," pro-Saraki faction. The latter emerged dominant as a result, among others, of support from key leaders of the PDP at national level andthose within the Kwara PDP who were either won to Saraki's faction or agreed to work with the Sarakites (Jimoh, 2019, 2020, personal communication; Suleiman, 2018; Ojiabor, 2003).Both the Lawal's APP camp and anti-Saraki dynasty group(s) within and outside the PDP, however, were unanimous in their perception of the Olusola Saraki's "Bukola Project" in particular as an attempt that was tantamount to 'turning Kwara politics into "familydom"' (Oyinloye, 2003) and 'enthroning the Saraki dynasty in the state' (Ojiabor, 2003).

Indeed, those who raised objections to the perceived ambitionof the Sarakis included those who had been positively and negatively affected by the political influence of Olusola Saraki in the state. For instance, C.O. Adebayo, who was believed to have won the 1983 governorship election due to Olusola Saraki's support,raised alarm about what he described as'turning Kwara governorship into a dynastic heritage' and 'privatisation or personalisation' of the state (Salami, 2003).Similarly, Sha'abaLafiagi, another Saraki-made former governor of the state and who also contested and lost the 2003 PDP gubernatorial ticket, contended that it was "too early for the embattled politician to establish a political dynasty for himself in the state" (Salami, 2003) while another aggrieved PDP governorship aspirant, John Dara, reportedly described "the 35 years of leadership of Dr. Olusola Saraki in the state as nonsense and rubbish" and that "Kwarans are yearning for change" (Fatigun, 2003).

Another clear reflection of the widespread dissatisfaction with the hegemonic dominance of Olusola Saraki and, therefore, traces of the idea of 'O To Ge' by 2003 was captured in an open letter to 'the Kingmaker' by one Kamarudeen Olatunde. The relevant portions of the letter are worth quoting:

> .... Politics is not hereditary. The people will not serve you and serve your son. Your family alone can not (sic) have the monopoly of everything in the state. ENOUGH is ENOUGH.
> ....There is nothing in life that is permanent....Presently and most importantly in Kwara today, we need both physical and mental emancipation. The battle now is between slavery and freedom. ENOUGH is ENOUGH.
> .... You are the cause of the revolution against you, today in Kwara politics because your views and authority are meant to be final and unchallengable (sic). But now, people are saying, No and capital No. Enough is Enough.
> ....Finally, Kwara must not be hijacked by any single individual....must not be held to ransom by any single individual. Kwara is not a limited liability company and neither is it a Plc. Kwara must not be mortgage (sic) for selfish and individual intention. All we ask now is our liberation, we have all paid our dues for over three decades, we now want our future and destine (sic) to be determine (sic) by us and us only. ENOUGH is ENOUGH (Olatunde, 2003).

Despite the appeal to all those opposed to Saraki's perceived hegemonic dominance on Kwara and its politics to join hands together to fight a common cause, other developments within the state seem to have prevented the emergence of a formidable coalition of the elites, on one hand, and of the elite and masses, on the other hand.Among the developments within the state and particularly Ilorin emirate which impacted on the Lawal-led anti-Saraki movement related to ethnicity and its politicisation in the build-up to the 2003 elections. The initial fears expressed in some quarters prior to the 1999 election, that Mohammed Lawal, being a descendant of Afonja, would revive the age-long Afonja-Alimi contestations over Ilorin were gradually substantiated during the crisis between Saraki and Governor Lawal. In the early period of the outbreak of the Saraki-Lawal conflict, during which the "Yoruba Oba project" was being canvassed by the OPC and its Ilorin ally, the Afonja Descendants Union (ADU, widely believed to have been financed by the governor), Olusola Saraki ruled out such possibility and continuously opposed the agitations including those for the upgrading of the Ilorin chiefs (Ibrahim, 2001; Saraki, 2013, pp. 86-87).

On the other hand, Lawal's alleged 'soft spot for groups canvassing for a Yoruba Oba in Ilorin' was substantiated with various developments that helped to buttress the belief in some quarters that the governor was out to revive the Afonja-Alimi struggle for Ilorin and possibly to redress past wrongs done to the Afonja family (Kawu, 2015; Yushau, 2002; Oladesu, 2013). Such developments included the upgrading of the stools of the Magaji Aare and Baba Isale, the heads of the two main Afonja family in Ilorin, to a First Class and Second Class status respectively, and the subsequent appointment and installation of his father, Alhaji Busari AlabiAlasa, as the Magaji Aare in 2002—a development that was propagated as part of the governor's ambition to install his father as the "Yoruba Oba" in Ilorin (Saraki, 86-87; Anon, 2002c; Oyinloye& Salami, 2002;Obiagwu, 2002).

Events that led to the above developments are known to have been influenced by the OPC and ADU, among other pro-Yoruba organisations within and outside the state whose activities and agitations (such as alleged attempted OPC invasion of Ilorin in 2000 and the calls for a 'Kwara-South-West merger,' reminiscent of the Ilorin-West Merger of 1956-1958 led by the ITP-AG Alliance), increased noticeably during Lawal's tenure(Anon, 2001a; Ajanaku, 2001a; Aderibigbe, 2001; Dare, 2001; Adetayo, 2001; Bolarinwa, 2001). The agitations of the OPC and the ADU, including its widely reported alleged threats to install a Yoruba Oba in Ilorin, were considered not only as threats to the peace of the city and the state in general but also as threats to "Ilorin interests."While Governor Lawal was increasingly linked up with the movement for 'a revival of separate identity for the Yoruba in Ilorin' and indeed alleged to be instigating the OPC and ADU's agitations, including the "Ilorin Yoruba Oba project," Olusola Saraki expressed strong opposition to such.

Although the Lawal-Saraki conflict and the perceived pro-Yoruba policies of the governor polarised Ilorin community—the elite and masses—Olusola Saraki's opposition to such activities, agitations and alleged threats to Ilorin and thus his posture as 'defender of Ilorin's interests' at this

time, won him the support of a cross-section of Ilorin community still supportive of the emirate structure and values. This, as Modibbo observed, made it possible for "a tactical alliance" of the pro-Saraki camp and other interests opposed to Lawal and his alleged pan-Yoruba agenda to be built against the governor who was 'increasingly profiled as antagonistic to the Emir of Ilorin and the structures of value of the community' (Kawu, 2015 [remembering Mohammed]; Alanamu, 2005, pp. 56-57).

Corroborating Governor Lawal's perceived Pan-Yoruba agenda was the report that, in his bid to win the "survival war" with Olusola Saraki and, thus, terminate his political hegemony in the state, the governor reportedly established contacts with one of the major traditional quarters of opposition in Kwara politics (also often described as 'traditional enemies of the Ilorin'), namely Offa, an AD enclave. The contacts for a possible alliance with that Yoruba community was made through Ayo Opadokun (then Secretary-General of the Afenifere) and was intended "to ignite a comprehensive Yoruba backing" both for his second term bid and "on the need for support to enable him fight Dr. Olusola Saraki, the symbol of Fulani domination in Kwara State, who has over the years worked against the interest of the Yoruba" (Ajanaku, 2002). Opadokun, who was reported to have expressed the conviction that such a coalition would have ensured that his people's "dreams and aspirations" (i.e. self-determination of the Yoruba in Kwara State) will be met," allegedly facilitated the decamping of some Offa people from the AD to Lawal's APP—a development that led to accusation of working against the interest of the AD and Afenifere and therefore his dismissal as the group's Secretary (Esajere, 2002; Anon, 2002a).

In spite of the dismissal of Opadokun, on the eve of the 2003 election, another pan-Yoruba group in the state, the Yoruba Council of Elders, did not only come out to endorse Lawal's second term bid but also criticised Olusola Saraki's alleged imposition of his son and daughter as PDP candidates. The group did not only call on Kwarans to do away with Saraki and on all registered political parties to close their doors to him, but also threatened to any Yoruba who associated with Saraki (Akanbi, 2003). Indeed, the overreliance on ethnicity as a key factor in the anticipated electoral success of Governor Lawal was clearly articulated on the eve of the election by AlhajiOlolaKasum, the President of the Afonja Descendants Union. Kasum did not only dismiss various factors or 'multiplicity of ideas' that had been identified as likely to determine the 2003 election (such as 'pocket appeal (i.e. money)' and religion) but posited that "ethnic factor will be the most decisive factor" followed by incumbency. While he defined the ethnic factor to include Yoruba population in the state given as 50% and the 'phenomenal growth in the number and influence of Yoruba liberation groups in the state, incumbency was defined as "the totality of socio-economic achievements as well as the political institution and facilities on the ground that can be exploited to his [Lawal's] advantage" and also the pro-Yoruba policies such as the grading of Yoruba chiefs seen as "impetus to the self-determination struggle to liberate the state from the shackles of Fulani oligarchy"). The ADU President also contended that "the realignment of royal fathers in the Ilorin

Emirate[i.e. the Ilorin High Chiefs elevated to various statuses by the governor]against Saraki" would also work in favour of Mohammed Lawal as such gesture had "grossly weakened Saraki's strong hold in the Emirate" (Kasum, 2003).

Given the strong ethnic factor and meanings read into the above developments and their effective exploitation by the pro-Saraki camp and others against Governor Lawal, it was quite difficult for the anti-Saraki struggle of the period to win and sustain the support of the masses in Ilorin emirate or Kwara Central in particular. This was in spite of the increasing media profiling of Governor Lawal as 'the Messiah' or 'Moses of our time' by members of his cabinet and other supporters. To some observers then, Lawal, rather than being the "Saviour," was more or less the "arrowhead of the elite coalition ruthlessly determined to put an end to the Saraki invincibility and myth" and his "primacy in the politics of his home state" (Ajibola, 2003; Djeba, Collins, & Constance, 2003). The anti-Saraki 'elite coalition,' according to Ajibola, for instance, was "weakened by its inability and failure to incorporate opinion leaders and respected intellectuals like Cornelius Olatunji Adebayo who possibly see Lawal's struggle as self-serving, deceptive, if not altogether confused" (Ajibola, 2003). In addition, the struggle against Saraki by Mohammed Lawal in particular was to some a "campaign of calumny" that failed to attract popular support due to several intervening factors.Such included the embargo the governor placed on employment since 1999, refusal to pay salaries and allowances of civil servants, denigration of the civil servants, instigating one section of the society against the other, the influence of his son-in-law on his public decisions, and alleged institution of 'a culture of violence hitherto unknown to the people,'despite the fact that both camps were known to have been involved in political violence (Ajibola, 2003; Lawal, 2005; Sambo, 2005; Kawu, 2015c;Kawu, 2012).

There are strong indications that the Lawal-led anti-Saraki 'movement' was apparently carried away not only by its confidence in the potency of the Yoruba ethnic factor but also by the "teeming crowd that often troupe out" at ANPP political rallies. Such attendance at political rallies made the camp to be confident that the masses would, given their perception of the achievements of the incumbent governor, "vote massively" for Lawal to break Saraki's jinx and thus end his long reign and imminent perpetuation of his political dynasty. Thus, despite admitting the need to 'work harder in all the senatorial districts' and that the Kwara Central in particular where Olusola Saraki might "still be of some relevance," 'required more work,' the belief that a lot of factors—such as incumbency, performance of the governor, grading of chiefs, creation of new LGs, ethnicity, etc. (Kasum, 2003)—were in Lawal's favour seems to have made the movement to take things for granted.

Furthermore, in spite of the press campaigns built on the need to end Olusola Saraki's hold on politics in Kwara and its alleged effects on the growth and development of the state, none of the individuals and groups opposed to Saraki's dominance (including the incumbent governor) adopted "O To Ge" or "Enough is Enough" mantra as its political campaign slogan. Rather, Lawal and his

campaign teams adopted slogans that never really captured the aspiration of all political elite opposed to Saraki or the circumstances of the masses. Thus, the most popular campaign slogans in 2003 were "No Shaking"; "Second Term: No Shaking"; "Gbosa" and "Government House: No Chance." This, perhaps, strengthened the reduction, in some quarters, of the anti-Saraki movement, as it were then, to 'a survival war' for both Lawal and Olusola Saraki rather than an all-embracing 'liberation struggle' for the emancipation of the state from the grip of Saraki political dynasty.

With a combination of 'federal might' (following his declaration of support for the second term bid of then President, Olusegun Obasanjo),and other intervening local factors, Olusola Saraki was able to lead the state PDP to victory in the 2003 general elections. The PDP, which was initially in opposition in Kwara, took over control of the state; in addition to the governorship, the party won 4 of the 6 House of Representatives and all the 3 senatorial seats, and a clear majority in the state House of Assembly (Jimba, 2006, 14, 17; Nuhu, 2013). This marked the peak of the transformation of Olusola Saraki from 'the deciding factor' in Kwara politics to 'the only factor which determined the political direction of the state' (Aliyu, 2013).

From Olusola to Bukola Saraki's Hegemony: Unfolding of "O To Ge" Movement, 2011-2019

As a phenomenon that has continuously thrived during democratic dispensations and particularly during election periods, the idea of 'liberating Kwara from the grip of Olusola Saraki' that gathered some momentum during the period from 2001 to 2003 lost its momentary tempo following the 2003 general elections, which resulted rather in the consolidation of the hegemonic dominance of Kwara politics by the Sarakis. From 2003 to 2011, Bukola Saraki's two-term tenure as governor of the state, the demise of some key actors in the struggle such as AbdulkareemAdisa(d. February 2005) and Mohammed Lawal (d. November 2006) and the defection of key supporters of the former governor from the ANPP to PDP in 2011, among others, helped in the consolidation of the Sarakis' political influence in the state although that did not put an end to the anti-Saraki movement.

In 2011, the movement gathered momentum preparatory to the general elections. One of the major reasons for this was Olusola Saraki's 'Gbemisola Project,' which concerned the gubernatorial ambition of Bukola Saraki's sister to succeed his brother as governor of the state. This was opposed by Bukola Saraki who floated a counter 'Megida Project' that aimed at having his own candidate, Abdulfatah Ahmed, as his successor in 2011. Although the conflict of interest of the Sarakispolarized the dynasty, there were initial suspicions as to the veracity of such an intra-Saraki dynasty crisis. However, there are suggestions that by 2011, Bukola Saraki, like other two-term governors, was interested in the Senate after his second term as governor. This meant that her sister, Gbemisola, who had been the senator representing Kwara Central since 2003 had to give way if the senatorial ambition of her brother would be realised. The 'Gbemi Gubernatorial Project,' sponsored by Olusola Saraki, was, probably, connected such ambition and its implication.

By 2011, however, there were others within the party and in the state who also had ambitions both to the State Government House and the National Assembly. One of the political actors in the PDP, who had long associated with Olusola Saraki and who played some role in the latter being admitted into the PDP in 2003, was Jimoh LAK. Between 1983 and 2003, Jimoh, a politician from Ilorin, had had his gubernatorial and senatorial ambitions truncated or forfeited as a result of the influence of, or his support for, Olusola Saraki. In 2010-2011, the prospect of his renewed interest in the senatorial seat for Kwara Central, though seemingly boosted by the 'Gbemi Project,' eventually clashed with that of the then outgoing governor, Bukola Saraki. Alleged efforts to truncate the ambition through moves to scheme him out of the contest for the senatorial ticket or to get him to drop his ambition again brought about his adoption of "**O To Gee**" ("Enough is Enough") slogan for his campaign to win the ticket (Jimoh, 2020, personal communication).

"***O To Ge,***" as a political campaign slogan, therefore, first appeared in 2011 in the struggle to win the PDP ticket to contest for the 2011 National House of Assembly elections. Though primarily influenced by previous personal experiences of the domineering influence of the Sarakis, which had been responsible for the recurring frustration of his political ambitions over the years, the adoption of "O To Gẹ" mantra at the time was meant to express dissatisfaction not only with the political dominance of the Sarakis but also the emergent widespread displeasure with the fact that everything had to be all about the Sarakis. Jimoh L. A. K. was eventually schemed out of the race, thereby paving way for Bukola Saraki to contest and win the 2011 National House of Assembly elections. The ensuing protracted legal contest on the seat was not resolved to the satisfaction of the aggrieved until 2019 by which time he was an 'elder' in the APC and a major player in "O To Ge" the movement (Jimoh, 2020, personal communication; Anon, 2019).

Meanwhile, the Saraki versus Saraki political struggle for the state in 2011 continued to polarise the Saraki family and their supporters. Olusola Saraki had to move to another party, the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN popularly known in the state as "Egbe Okere" or the 'Squirrel Group') to actualise the 'Gbemi Project.' The contest was, however, eventually, won by Bukola Saraki and his gubernatorial candidate. In his anti-'Gbemi Project,' Bukola Saraki had led the state PDP to adopt the principle of rotation, which provided that the governorship seat would be zoned to other parts of Kwara (i.e. Kwara South to which his anointed candidate, Abdulfatah Ahmed, belong) other than Kwara Central, where the incumbent governor and his sister hailed from (Aliyu, 2013; Ahmad, 2019). This, among other concessions, ensured some support from Kwara South, the traditional area of opposition in Kwara politics and equally won some key members of the 'liberation struggle' and different groups of supporters of the former governor, Mohammed Lawal, for the Bukola Saraki-led PDP shortly before and after the 2011 election (Anon, 2012). The 2011 electoral victory of Bukola over his father and sister, brought the reign of Olusola Saraki as 'the kingmaker' in Kwara politics to an end and heralded the advent of Bukola as 'successor' to the political dynasty established by him.

With the death of Olusola Saraki in 2012, Bukola Saraki became the major focus of attention in the anti-Saraki movement. By the time of the2015 general elections, the Saraki hegemony, as personified by Bukola Saraki, had come to be variously described as "the hegemony of corruption and enslavement," "one of the greatest dangers to democracy, and the wellbeing of Kwara State...." and "the greatest threat to our people and state" (Kawu, 2014b; Kawu, 2015a). One of the persistent critics of Bukola Saraki's dominance of politics and government in the state especially since 2003, was Is'haqModibboKawuwho, in 2014,had asked a PDP gathering in the state whether it had the vision and was really ready 'to mass mobilise the people of Kwara State to effect a radical new dawn' and 'bring an end to the elaborate fraud that has masqueraded as governance since 2003?'Kawu also submitted that:

> If the people of Kwara state, especially the elite groups, do not work together, you will inadvertently ensure that Kwarans remain Bukola Saraki's slaves and the reactionary, and anti-people politics that he represents..... This is the situation of Kwara state today. The imperative is to END the situation. We must END the condition that impoverishes our people while Bukola Saraki, his family and cronies live in luxury (Kawu, 2014b).

Earlier in March 2014, Modibbo Kawu and others in the 'Kwara liberation struggle' had thought that the defection of Bukola Saraki from the PDP to the APC, which had occasioned the exodus of key members of the opposition and and 'all those genuinely committed to the struggle to liberate our state' to the PDP, would ensure a success for the 'liberation movement.' The optimism of ModibboKawuand other 'freedom fighters' was expressed thus:

> What is unfolding in Kwara State, is a seismic political shift of potentially sweeping dimensions. After eight years of arrogant, insensitive and anti-people governorship and another three years of the most elaborate satrapy in recent Nigerian political history, Bukola Saraki made a transition from Governor to Governor-General. But Kwarans have had ENOUGH of deceit, governance as elaborate fraud and the impoverishment that has sapped the people of all dignity. The end game has arrived in Kwara State for Bukola Saraki's political regime of hegemonic control of power and the financial resources of our state. This week's "Unity/Freedom Rally" is an indicator of the dominant mindset in Kwara today. The people are saying emphatically: "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"!(Kawu, 2014a).

In spite of the seasonal declarations of the arrival of the 'end' to Saraki's hegemony in Kwara politics and the momentum that the anti-Saraki movement had gathered by 2014, the 2015 elections did not bring about such a political change. Rather, the Bukola Saraki-led dynasty benefited much from the wind of political change that blew across Nigeria with the Buhari-led APC "Change Dole" mantra. Thus, having crossed from the Goodluck Jonathan-led PDP to the APC, Bukola Saraki's Kwara APC won the 2015 elections and the dynasty, though threatened as usual, remained unruffled until the 2019 season of electoral process and political change.

By 2018-19, there had emerged a coalition of those who have had had their political ambitions frustrated or truncated as a result of Olusola or Bukola Saraki's influence. These included those referred to as the "Ilorin allied forces," (Olawoyin, 2019) which comprised, in addition to Alhaji Jimoh, LAK,individuals likeDr. Ibrahim Oloriegbe (who lost the 2011 Senatorial election to Bukola Saraki); Dr. Alimi Abdul-Razak and MallamAbdulrahmanAbdulrazak (both sons of AGF Razak, who himself had been unsuccessful in his gubernatorial ambition in 1979 due to Olusola Saraki's influence on local politics); Dele Belgore (a 2011 candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria in the state), and Gbemisola Saraki, a member of the Saraki's dynasty who lost the 2011 gubernatorial race due his brother's anointed candidate. There were other former loyalists of Olusola Saraki and aides of Bukola Saraki such as Yinka Aluko (former security aide to Bukola Saraki), Abdul-Ganiyu Cook Olododo (a former Chief of Staff and Secretary to the State Government); Moshood Mustapha (former Special Adviser on Inter-Parliamentary Affairs, Protocol and Special Duties on National Assembly Matters) (Ahmad, 2018; Olawoyin, 2019a; Olawoyin, 2019b; Aliyu, 2013).

Furthermore, others from outside Ilorin included Alhaji Bio Ibrahim, a former Speaker of the State House of Assembly and a 2011 governorship aspirant in the state, aggrieved by the way he was allegedly edged out in the governorship race by Saraki;AlhajiLai Mohammed, then Minister for Information, who had previously contested for governorship and lost under the AD, John Dara, Simeon Ajibola, and Chief IyiolaOyedepo, among others. For all these and other aggrieved political elites and veteran aspirants to various posts in the state, it was "O To Ge" to the Saraki political dynasty and its long dominance of local politics in the state, which had been responsible for the truncation of their political aspirations. It was not surprising that for the first time in a long time, all of them, drawn from across the state, came together in an elite coalition for what has aptly been described as "the renewed anti-Saraki dynasty revolt in Ilorin and other parts of the state" (Olawoyin, 2019a). Thus, unlike previous phases and episodes of the anti-Saraki movement that had been largely dominated by political actors from outside Ilorin and Kwara Central (Olawoyin, 2019b) (where Olusola Saraki always had enormous following and political support), the 2018/2019 "O To Ge" movement drew members from the three geo-political zones particularly from Kwara South, the traditional opposition area in Kwara politics.

To achieve the much desired goal of ending the Sarakis' long dominance of politics in the state, and thus 'liberate Kwara' from their grip, the primary goal of the 2019 phase of the anti-Saraki struggle was winning the elections. Writing recently on the emerging intra-party crisis in Kwara APC, Hammed Shittudescribes the movement as a "struggle to win elections" and reports a leading member of the APC in the state as having explained the coming together of the anti-Saraki coalition of elites was:

> ....a fusion of varying interest groups arising from the various consensus and compromises necessitated by the need to temper all personal interest for the general goal of achieving the much desired victory envisioned as the end result of the 'O to Ge' mantra (Shittu, 2020).

The fact that the various political actors, in spite of their differences and clash of interests and political ambitions, agreed to work together to win the 2019 election as a major step to ending the Saraki dynastic dominance in Kwara politics—presented as 'total liberation of Kwara'—was admitted by Lai Mohammed, who reportedly 'agreed' or decided to 'bury any political ambition' (however temporarily) for that goal. Lai Mohammed reportedly told a Congress of Kwara Progressives, which resolved in 2018 to 'liberate Kwara from years of political bondage and subjugation,' that there was the need "to subordinate our individual ambitions to the collective efforts to wrest our state from the authority of one man and his cohorts" (Chung, 2018).

The exit of Bukola Saraki and his key supporters including the incumbent state governor, Abdulfatah Ahmed, from the APC to the PDP in 2018 provided enough opportunity for the opposition to forge ahead with the formation of a coalition to ensure victory at the 2019 polls. Unlike the development in 2003, Bukola Saraki's defection from to PDP led to the mass exodus of the Who's Who in the PDP to the APC.There was also the defection of core supporters of Olusola Saraki and those of Bukola's who had become frustrated for one reason or the other. Such core "Sarakites," widely believed to have been "the backbone of the Saraki winning machinery," were to join forces with members of the anti-Saraki movement that crossed to the APC from the PDP (Ahmad, 2019; Olawoyin, 2019b).

The emergent APC 'coalition' against Bukola Saraki was, therefore, made up of different interest groups or 'tendencies' including those that left the PDP for the APC following Bukola Saraki's exit and those factions within the APC itself. These included the 'Akogun Group,'the 'Fagbemi Group,'the 'Lai Mohammed Group,' and the 'Gbemisola Saraki Group.' With four nominees from each of the four factions, a platform was formed to constitute the Caretaker Committee of the party while the APC National Headquarters nominated the Chairman (Jimoh, 2020, personal communication). In addition, the intervention of the APC national leadership also contributed to the eventual emergence of Abdulrahman Abdulrasaq as the party's candidate for the 2019 gubernatorial election. Such involvement was explained to have been informed, among others, by its opposition (and that of others in the Buhari-led Federal Government)to the emergence of Bukola Saraki as the Senate President in 2015 and failure of efforts to get him removed. The 2019 elections, therefore, provided opportunity for those described as the "APC cabals" at the national level to bring "federal might" to the aid of the "O To Ge" movement in Kwara against Bukola Saraki (Omotoso, 2019; Ahmad, 2019).

In spite of the initial dissatisfaction with the emergence of Abdulrahman Abdulrasaq, all the factions and interests agreed to rally round him in order to defeat Bukola. Then, "O To Ge" was adopted as the slogan with other riders targeting both the Saraki's camp and the mass of the people.

Such included "*Ii lo le lo*" ('you just have to go'); "*E yite se yin na to*" ('Enough of what you have done') and "*Bi iyayi to abi o to, ika yin ni e fi so,*" meaning 'whether your suffering is enough or not, let your fingers [votes] express it' (Jimoh, 2020, personal communication).

The slogan and its message were strengthened by other developments that helped the course of the elite and masses' coming together in the "O To Ge" movement. These, among others, included Bukola Saraki's trial at the Code of Conduct Tribunal, the Offa bank robbery and alleged links between the suspects and Bukola Saraki, and the state governor; failure of the state government with regards to the payment of salaries and allowances and promotions of state civil servants, and alleged poverty and widespread hunger. Unlike past democratic dispensations in the state that the late Olusola Saraki installed, and two of which he blamed for the woes of the state, the alleged impoverishment of the state and various development problems allegedly faced in Kwara from 2003 to 2018 in particular, came to be blamed on the Saraki's especially Bukola Saraki who governed the state between 2003 and 2011 and installed a successor who also served two terms (2011-2019) and was widely believed to have been a mere stooge of Bukola Saraki.

Furthermore, unlike in the past, the mass of the people was well informed not only of politics-related developments but also the activities of the government and other elected political office holders in the state. This resulted from an information explosion that attended the recent revolution in information and communication technology. The availability and effective use of a wide range of information outlets such as digital and social media platforms, private and state (especially FM Radio and TV) media houses as alternative sources for the dissemination of news, political education, and spread of propaganda, helped to mobilise the ordinary people into the movement. This development ended the situation in which the state government and powerful state actors had controlled the media and the flow of information to the people. Thus, digital platforms and social media channels were deployed "to galvanize the opposition, persuade the undecided voter, and turn the allegiance of the Saraki's core supporters;" to "epitomize the ills, challenges and dissatisfactions of the electorate in Kwara State" (Kemal & Abubakar, 2019). All this helped to arouse and sustain mass interest and popular followership for the "O To Ge" movement beyond the political party campaigns arenas.

In view of the effective mobilisation of the masses, what the political elites succeeded in doing in recent history was what Nnoli considered to be "the task of the leader", namely "to continually raise the consciousness of the masses to new heights," to sustain "their enthusiasm for the political process," and "to stop the people's consciousness from being bogged down" (Nnoli, 1984). That in the build-up to the 2019 elections, the political elite/leaders in Kwara State were able to achieve such task prevented the occurrence of the consequences of their failure to do so, which Nnoli suggested to be that there would be the 'disarmingof the masses by one concession or another and thus the waning of their enthusiasm for the political process' and the 'abandonment of the struggle if it continues.' (Nnoli, 1984).

The intra-party consensus among political elites in the state, and the consensus between them and masses on the one hand, and the agreement between the main goal of local 'coalition of elites' and that of the powers that be at the national levels, created enough political grounds for the electoral defeat of Bukola Saraki at the 2019 elections. From the State and National House of Assembly seats to governorship, the APC-led "O To Ge" anti-Saraki movement swept the polls, thus heralding along-sought political change in the state—the 'overthrow' of the Saraki dynasty.

Conclusion

The anti-Saraki movement, which began in 1979 and culminated in the "O To Ge" movement in 2019, was not necessarily a 'mass protest' or 'political movement of the poor'. In its origin and manifestations over the years, it was more of an elite struggle primarily motivated and, until recently, influenced by elite self-interests. While the movement had for long been dominated by a desire to 'dethrone' a political dynasty and end its control of politics in the state, albeit largely for the benefit of the political class, the last phase under the banner of "O To Ge" involved the coalition of political elites, drawn from hitherto traditional rival and opposing camps that had failed to work out a united front, but lately united by a common interest of instituting a political change that was expected to benefit both elite and the masses. Thus, to some considerable extent, the "O To Ge" movement that brought about a major change in the politics of Kwara State might not be too different from previous instances of 'mass revolts' orchestrated or exploited by the Ilorin elite.

However, when compared with previous episodes of the anti-Saraki movement in the state, the involvement of the masses and immediate political outcome of the "O To Ge" movement go a long way to corroborate some of the key contentions of classical and neo-elite theorists. The most pertinent of such contentions include their submissions on the inevitability and preponderant influence of the elites in the direction of processes in the society and in affecting major political outcomes; the mobilisation and manipulation of the masses for the self-interests of members of the political class; the importance and indispensability of non-elites, social actors, to the elite; the fact that elites are not completely an independent variable, and that the interdependence of the elite and masses implies that, if the former must succeed, they need to format the behaviours/actions of non-elites by couching their (elites') policies and ambitions to appeal to mass orientations and inclinations.

Furthermore, as exemplified in the rise and collapse of the Saraki dynasty, the direct and adequate involvement of the ordinary people is crucial in political processes in modern societies. Major avenues for such involvement of the masses in politics at local level, and, thus, in the direction of the affairs of their societies have been democratic and electoral politics through which they elected their representatives and leaders. It is also during democratic dispensations and particularly electoral processes that the dependence of the elites on the masses is often made obvious. Hence, the mobilisation (and, more often than not, the manipulation of the masses and their interests) by the

elite becomes essential for political process and the success of the elites, individually and collectively.

Unlike past experiences of, and involvement in, democratic politics, the masses in Kwara in recent history became more informed of the activities of the elected government and individuals at various levels and the connection between their failures and socio-economic and political developments at the local level that impacted on the daily life of the ordinary people. Specifically, the leaders of the "O To Ge" movement succeeded in establishing a causal connection between alleged poor and bad governance of successive civilian governments installed in the state since 1979, by Olusola Saraki,but more specifically since 2003, and the underdevelopment in the state, and the cumulative sufferings and woes of ordinary people, with the Saraki political dynasty.

Given the effective mobilisation of the masses through the adoption of the "O To Ge" slogan and deployment of mass and social media, it was possible for the coalition of elites opposed to the Saraki dynasty to work out a consensus for political change, however unwritten, with the masses in the three geo-political areas in the state, namely Kwara Central, North, and South. The cumulative discontent in the latter zone and recent ones in the others, due to failures of political office-holders, facilitated such accord and, unlike previous phases in the anti-Saraki movement, ensured the sustenance of the 'elite-masses agreement' beyond the electoral campaigns arenas to the streets, houses, and the polling units. Quite more than previous attempts at checkmating the era and rule of Olusola Saraki in Kwara politics, the success of the 2019 "O To Ge" anti-Saraki movement could also be attributed to the 'consensus' between the elite and masses in the Kwara Central (Ilorin Emirate areas and hitherto bastion of Olusola Saraki) and the Kwara South, the so-called 'traditional enemies of the Ilorins' and the traditional areas of 'opposition in Kwara politics.'

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