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Book Review

Title: *Impeachment in the Nigerian Presidential System: Challenges, Successes and the Way Forward*

Author: Omololu Fagbadebo

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Introduction

The book provides comprehensive insight and analysis into the impeachment process and the constitutional mechanisms that address accountability within the presidential system of government. The author draws on political science, constitutional law, public governance and comparative politics to justify his position on the impeachment process in Nigeria, its evolution, manipulation, and failure in the Fourth Republic. The work is timely, as impeachment cases have been surging in recent times. The author interrogated the political realities of impeachment in the Fourth Republic, reflecting on it as a force shaping Nigerian politics.

Fagbadebo's main argument in the book, from a constitutional perspective, is that impeachment in the Nigerian presidential system is an accountability mechanism to check the executive branch's excessive use of power, but it has been hijacked and used as a weapon of political vendetta by political gladiators. The political elite have explored the mechanism as an instrument of bargaining for power and pecuniary interests, especially by the various political godfathers. The author further noted that the failure of impeachment as an accountability mechanism in the presidential system results from dysfunctional institutions, godfatherism, money politics, and the concentration of power, which characterise the country's political culture.

Several case studies were used to strengthen the book, especially the episode in Osun State and other states of the federation in the Fourth Republic. The cases showed how power politics among political gladiators, as well as informal channels, structures, and institutions, shaped the outcome of impeachment in Nigeria. The author explored the role of the judiciary, which often holds contradictory or opposing views, slowing or preventing the impeachment process from seeing the light of day, or even sometimes manipulating the process depending on the money bags.

Context of the Book

The book has 10 chapters, each exploring the impeachment process with a theoretical foundation grounded in empirical data. The first chapter on power and politics in the corridors of the presidential system of government offers insights into the tension between constitutional power and the practical realities of politics. He also delved into the next by comparing the presidential systems of different democratic states to provide insights into the Nigerian situation, experiences, and peculiarities. The author discussed how the separation of powers and checks and balances are needed to check the excesses of the executive branch

and avoid wholesale concentrations of power. The executives enjoy prolonged tenure in power and autonomy; impeachment should be intended to ensure good governance and accountability in the system. These theoretical postulations set a standard for understanding Nigeria's challenges.

In Chapter Two, the author contextualised impeachments in other countries with a presidential system, noting that their impeachment processes include standard legislative oversight procedures, constitutional limits, and safeguards. Their impeachment process was more credible and well-coordinated, unlike the Nigerian one, which is characterised by institutional failure and elite involvement that often distort the process. These sections help readers understand comparative politics and the limitations of impeachment processes in Nigeria.

In Chapter Three, the author further contends that the success of impeachment in Nigeria is determined by actors such as the legislature at both the national and state levels, as well as political parties. The author acknowledges that there is more to impeachment processes, noting that the success depends on political actors rather than constitutional provisions. This behaviour shows how personal interest, party loyalties, and informal power networks shape legislative action. These inquiries provide evidence of the power tussle between formal constitutional provisions and the pervasive informal political influence.

Chapter Four presents cases of impeachment in Nigeria since 1999, most of which resulted from political party rivalries, godfatherism, executive-legislative conflict, and intra- and inter-party rivalries rather than alleged gross misconduct. This chapter presents empirical evidence supporting the claim that impeachment has become a weapon of political vendetta rather than a tool of accountability in Nigerian politics. This misuse of instruments undermines public trust in accountability and in democratic institutions, and weakens legislative due process.

Chapter Five analyses the impeachment episode in Osun State to consolidate the broader view of impeachment, in which local political elites use it to settle power scores. This chapter shows how constitutional rules can be manipulated, coerced, and ridiculed. This chapter uses a micro-level analysis to examine how weaknesses in Nigerian political culture manifest in a case study of a specific state. Chapter six examines the judicial architecture and its roles in the impeachment process. The author explains how conflicting judicial pronouncements, occasioned by external political pressure, undermined the institution's impartiality. These actions undermine the constitutional due process and weaken the rule of law regarding the impeachment process. The chapter calls for judicial independence and impartiality, noting that without judicial independence, the impeachment process will undermine the accountability it is meant to achieve.

In Chapter Seven, the author appraises the behavioural disposition of members of the legislature, shaped by personal interests rather than by constitutional duty and rules. The impeachment process serves as a tool for seeking favours, lobbying for positions, and punishing opponents. This chapter reveals how deeply ingrained the patron-client culture is, how it has distorted and eroded constitutional and democratic processes, and how it has weakened the legislature's institutional responsibility. Chapter Eight compares the impeachment episodes in the Parliamentary and presidential systems of government in the First and Second Republics, respectively. The account shows that both regimes share the same attribute: undermining the constitutional process designed for accountability. The author argues that weak institutions, elite interests, and political culture are not the only problems; the constitutional provisions also exacerbate these weaknesses.

Chapter Nine of the book presents the contradictions that characterise the application of the Constitution's impeachment provision. Described as the "Sacred Cows" phenomenon, the author presents the impeachment process as one that sees the light of day despite evidence of gross misconduct. The author admits that the selective enforcement of impeachment provisions undermines the democratic credentials of political systems and undermines the oversight purpose of constitutional checks and balances, thereby promoting impunity. Chapter Ten proposes measures to ensure the integrity of the impeachment process in Nigeria's presidential system. It reinforces the point that institutional reforms must be accompanied by a broader political culture, transparency, and transformation.

Across the 10 chapters, the book offers critical insights into the impeachment in Nigeria's Fourth Republic presidential system, highlighting the challenges posed by the country's political cultures, elite interference, and institutional failures. The book contributes to an understanding of Nigerian government and politics,

showing how informal networks and power dynamics hinder formal constitutional duties. The author offers a consoling proposal: institutions need to be strengthened, and there should be a shift in political norms and practices away from political vendetta. The book offers important, insightful contributions to the governance challenge in Nigeria's presidential system of the Fourth Republic impeachment, drawing on detailed empirical data from case studies.

Appraisal of the Book

Impeachment in the Nigerian Presidential System: Challenges, Successes and the Way Forward is a valuable and comprehensive book that presents detailed theoretical propositions and empirical case studies, providing a reference for researchers and readers and helping them understand impeachment in broader terms. The work contributes to the development of a democratic setting and accountability in Nigeria. The author's intuition not only addresses impeachment as a constitutional matter but is also shaped by factors such as the institutions, elites, and behavioural dispositions of the formal and informal political actors involved in controlling the constitutional mechanisms of accountability.

The book is rich in analysis, but there could be a deeper understanding of the phenomenon discussed. Although the author highlights the influence of political culture in Nigerian politics across both presidential and parliamentary systems, there is a need to expand the scope to deepen understanding of the historical context, evolution, legacies, socio-economic conditions, and party structures that enabled patronage politics. Similarly, the analysis of judicial involvement might be strengthened with a deeper analysis of the landmark court case and its long-term implications for misinterpretations of the Constitution. Claims of the judiciary's complicity would require more empirical evidence to substantiate the analysis. The author also failed to juxtapose the internal rivalries among judges in the judiciary, which may truncate judicial due process. The book references other presidential democracies, but for a more systemic one, perhaps the author could have considered the framework of institutional performance, which would have sharpened the contrast and clarified what Nigerians can realistically benefit from those systems.

The book presents opportunities for expansion, particularly regarding the roles of civil society organisations and the media in society. Their roles could be pivotal in shaping public opinion of the impeachment process and in holding elected officials accountable for their actions. The author did not consider the media as a tool for shaping public opinion on the impeachment process, thereby placing greater emphasis on elites and institutions while neglecting citizens' engagement and civil society activism. Understanding how citizens react to the impeachment process will provide greater insights and greater feasibility in the mechanism.

The work's strength paved the way for widespread acceptance, with a clear theoretical foundation in presidentialism, the separation of powers, and the purpose of impeachment. These details provided a strong foundation for the subsequent chapters. The rich empirical evidence from primary data lends the work relevance and credibility, especially by using Osun State and other cases as practical examples in the Fourth Republic impeachment. The insights gained from the authors' eye-witness accounts of impeachment cases strengthened the analysis therein. However, comparative eyewitness accounts from other climes will deepen understanding of the factors that shape the impeachment process in Nigeria. The use of Larry Diamond's (2008) work on the state of democracy in Africa might bolster the work and help show the contemporary implications of impeachment. The use of Robert Dahl's (2008) theories on democracy can further substantiate the discussion on accountability. Despite these weaknesses, the author's arguments are largely logical, well-structured, detailed, and supported by empirical evidence. The link between political culture and impeachment is greatly convincing.

Conclusion

Fagbadebo's book is a timely study of accountability in Nigeria's presidential impeachment process. The book successfully exposed the contradictions between constitutional duty and political realities in Nigeria, where impeachments have been used as a bargaining tool rather than a tool for good governance and democratic integrity. It combined different theories, comparative politics, analysis and empirical evidence to substantiate the work. It is a valuable and credible job for a researcher in the Nigerian government and politics, constitutional law, and democratic good governance. Although some areas need deeper exploration, the books' strengths outweigh their weaknesses. It provides insights into the failure of

impeachment in the Fourth Republic and offers recommendations for reform. Importantly, the work challenges researchers to look beyond and ask broader questions about how democratic government can function effectively in a place where political culture and elite interests mostly undermine constitutional norms and practices. Fagbadebo's work sits within broader discussions and ongoing debates on governance, accountability, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

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