

ELECTORAL MANIPULATION AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FOR THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Hussaini Ibrahim Abubakar*

Department of Public Administration
Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Aliyu Muhammad

Department of Public Administration
Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State Nigeria
Email: fallypinky73@gmail.com
+2348036239326

Abstract

Elections are the most important aspect of democracy for both citizens in a country and the politicians. A free and fair election guarantee the trust of the citizens in the elected government. People participate in elections and choose their representatives in the government. In Nigeria, however, elections have been the main problem of democratization processes. Over the years, the political elites have made a mess of the electoral norms, and virtually everything about election has been criminalized. The attitude of the Political class, coupled with apathy and indecision on the side of the electorate, together with insincerity and corrupt tendencies of the electoral umpire has created a permanent suspicion on the conduct and credibility of every election at whatever level in Nigeria. The paper examined electoral manipulation in Nigeria with its associated limitations. It revealed that electoral manipulation has over the years resulted to rancor, pandemonium, chaos and aggression between and amongst Nigerians with terrible break down of law and order. The paper adopted the elite theory as an approach, and concluded that election manipulation can deepen the hate and negative reaction with violent destruction of lives and properties. It advocated an improvement in the integrity of our elections, reform in the electoral processes, civic education to enlighten the citizenry of their rights, duties, and responsibilities before, during and after the elections amongst other recommendations.

Keywords: Democracy, Elections, Manipulation

Abstrait

Les élections sont l'aspect le plus important de la démocratie pour les citoyens et les politiciens d'un pays. Des élections libres et régulières garantissent la confiance des citoyens dans le gouvernement élu. Les gens participent aux élections et choisissent leurs représentants au gouvernement. Au Nigeria, cependant, les élections ont été le principal problème des processus de

* **Address of Corresponding Author:** Hussaini Ibrahim Abubakar, Department of Public Administration, Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Email: abuhussaini888@gmail.com, Phone: +2348067161773

démocratisation. Au fil des ans, les élites politiques ont gâché les normes électorales et pratiquement tout ce qui concerne les élections a été criminalisé. L'attitude de la classe politique, associée à l'apathie et à l'indécision du côté de l'électorat, ainsi qu'à l'hypocrisie et aux tendances corrompues de l'arbitre électoral a créé une suspicion permanente quant à la conduite et à la crédibilité de chaque élection à quelque niveau que ce soit au Nigéria. Le document a examiné la manipulation électorale au Nigeria avec ses limites associées. Elle a révélé que la manipulation électorale avait, au fil des années, provoqué rancœur, pandémonium, chaos et agression entre et parmi les Nigériens, entraînant une violation terrible de l'ordre public. Le document adopte la théorie des élites comme approche et conclut que la manipulation électorale peut renforcer la haine et les réactions négatives entraînant une destruction violente de vies et de biens. Il préconisait une amélioration de l'intégrité de nos élections, une réforme des processus électoraux, une éducation civique afin de renseigner les citoyens sur leurs droits, devoirs et responsabilités avant, pendant et après les élections, parmi d'autres recommandations.

Mots-clés: démocratie, élections, manipulation

Introduction

Elections is the hallmark of democracy. It makes fundamental contributions to domestic governance, and also enables voters to select leaders and hold them accountable for their performance in office. Democratic governance requires that people should be governed on the basis of their wish, be given the opportunity to freely choose those they wish to govern them and those that are chosen on the basis of their consent and mandate should be responsible and accountable to them when elected (Ifomase,2009).

In liberal democratic theory, an election is a viable mechanism for consummating representative government. Apart from facilitating leadership succession, it promotes political accountability, citizens' participation and gives voice and power to the people. In other words, elections are an expression of the people's sovereign will.

Over 90 percent of the World's states currently select their national leaders through multiparty elections (Ham, and Lindberg, 2015). However, in Nigeria the quality of elections is still problematic, precisely because of electoral fraud. Elections in Nigeria have often been associated with political tension, crisis and even violence. The outcomes of many elections have been so fiercely contested that the survival of the democratic order has been compromised. This sad history of electoral fraud or rigging has serious implications for Nigeria's democratic future because the phenomenon is growing rather than declining. Mostly, the results of perfected rigging and electoral fraud is that the outcome of elections has been subversion of the democratic process rather than consolidation (Ibrahim, 2007).

This paper is organized into seven sections. Section one deals with the introduction, section two defines the key concepts; i.e. democracy, Elections and Manipulation. In section three, the methodology for the study is highlighted. Section four reviews some related literatures and the theoretical framework. Section five deals with the results and findings of the study. In Section six, the implication of electoral manipulation on the survival of democracy in Nigeria is analyzed, while section seven concludes the presentation with some recommendations.

Definition of Concepts

Democracy

Democracy is referred to as the ``institutionalization`` of freedom. Democracy, though not perfect has been accepted the world over as the ideal system of government. Hence every nation aspires to achieve democracy (Goshit, 2006).

Agomo (2006), quoting Oputa, defined democracy as a form of government in which the supreme power of the state is vested in the people collectively and is administered by them or by officers appointed by them. The distinguishing badge of democracy is the acceptance and the recognition of the essential equality of all before the law. This in turn dictate equality of rights and privileges be they social, political or religious. There cannot therefore be any meaningful democracy without justice, liberty and freedom. (Agomo, 2006).

According to Odusote (2014), democracy is underpinned by three essential components: healthy competition among political parties, political participation by the populace in electing their leaders, and a credible electoral process. In a democracy, power and significant decisions in a society is distributed among the population which is carried out by the elected representatives of the people. Viable political parties and credible elections are essential components of a democracy (Odusote, 2014).

Elections

Elections in the democratic process are very crucial. It is one type of social mechanism amongst others for aggregating preferences of a particular kind. An election is therefore a procedure recognized by the rules of state where all or some members of the society choose a small number of persons to hold an office or offices of authority within the state. One of the functions of elections is to provide opportunity for a peaceful succession and transfer of office (Duddley, 1982).

Egwemi (2018) quoting Anifowose (2003), defined election as the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given Political system. Although controversy rages among political thinkers about the nature of representation, there is one point of universal agreement, the representation process is intrinsically linked to elections and voting. Political representation according to him is implicit in the very idea of constitutional government and elections are essential to the functioning of a truly representatives government. In this regard, representatives acting on behalf of the electorate make the legislative and executive decisions that voters in the aggregate could not possibly make for themselves, considering the sheer numbers of people involved (Egwemi, 2008).

Election is very crucial to the survival of democracy. This is because the source of power in a democratic regime is election, and consequently it is the basis of legitimacy. According to Afgan (2016), the purpose of parliamentary elections in multiparty democracy, first and foremost, is to clarify which party or parties will govern the country for a certain period, in other words, election is to determine which party will establish the government or which party will be in the opposition.

Manipulation

Manipulation according to Usman (1987) means, essentially, controlling the action of a person or group without that person or group knowing the purpose and method of that control and without them being aware that a form of control is being exercised on them at all (Usman,1987:6). Manipulation in relation to electoral fraud in Nigeria has to do with the partisan attitude or excessive support of one person, group of persons or ideas especially without considering its merit carefully. This has discouraged peaceful cooperation between individuals politicians and other sections of Nigerian populace.

Electoral manipulation according to Nwabueze (2003) refers to the manipulation that are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent or sinister motive to influence an election

in favour of a candidate (s) by such as illegal voting, bribery, treating and undue influence, intimidation and other forms of force exerted on the electorates, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as the winner (without altering the recorded results).

Methodology

The paper is based on secondary data. The secondary data is derived from relevant published and unpublished documents such as journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, seminar papers, conference proceedings and monographs. The publications of some research centres and institutes relevant to the study have also been consulted and adequately acknowledged.

Theoretical Framework

Elites Theory

Elite theory is a political tool advanced to explain political realities within a political system. This theory was developed from the popular writings of Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1932), and Robert Michel (1876-1936). The theory emanates from political sociology to explain the political and social relationships among individuals and groups in their societies with regards to decision making, power relations and resources, the theory is a compliment to pluralism and conflict theories.

Generally, Mosca emphasized the ways in which tiny minorities `` out-organized and outwit`` large majorities, the political classes. Mosca`s term for Political elites, usually have `` a certain material, intellectual, or even moral superiority`` over those they govern. Pareto postulated that in a society with truly unrestricted social mobility, elites would consist of the most talented and deserving individuals; but in actual societies elites are those most adept at using the two modes of political rule, force and persuasion, and who usually enjoy important advantages such as inherited wealth and family connections. Pareto sketched alternating types of governing elites, which he likened, following Machiavelli, to lion and foxes. Michel rooted elites `` oligarchies`` in the need of large organizations for leaders and experts in order to operate efficiently; as these individuals who gained control of funds, information flows, promotions, and other aspects of organizational functioning, power becomes concentrate in their hands. Emphasizing the inescapability and also the relative autonomy of elites, all three men characterized aspirations to fully democratic and egalitarian societies as futile (Higley, 2005).

Nexus between Elite Theory, Election Manipulation and Democracy

There is no democracy without elections. Indeed, it is election that gives people the opportunity to exercise their voting right. Therefore, the transparency of the electoral system tend to sustain people`s confidence in democracy. The electoral system is a compendium of rules, regulations and procedure that guide elections. It is enforcing it rigidly that guarantees its sanctity. Again the credibility of any electoral system is demonstrated when breach of any rule or procedure by any person or group of individuals, irrespective of status is appropriately punished (Zimako, 2009).

In Nigeria, right from the first republic, the consent of the people does not count. Politicians have won elections without votes from voters. In 1964, 1979, 1983, 1991, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and to some extent in 2015, there was rigging and electoral fraud of different magnitude. Politicians achieved this through manipulation of the electoral process at the levels of formulation of rules, establishment of election management bodies, the conduct of elections and adjudication (Osabiya, 2014).

Elites maintain different positions in their political system that informed them to behave the way they like. According to Omojuwa, (2008) “ the major determinants of particular elite attitude to democracy have been their individual positions in terms of their levels of powers” Elite, most especially the political class who hold offices and political power used various means in order to remain relevant without considering the state of socio-political harmony of their respective societies and the sustainability of democracy. Therefore, elite theory enable us to examine and explain the way in which the ruling and non-ruling elites manipulate elections to serve their interest and also perpetuate their dominance in the political system.

Elections as an Element of Democracy

The source of power, in a democratic regime, is election, and consequently it is the basis of legitimacy. Therefore, the purpose of elections in multiparty democracy, first and foremost, is to clarify which party or parties will govern the country for a certain period, in other words, the essence is to determine which party will establish the government or which party will be in the opposition. Voting and democracy is crucial in a government because it allows people to participate in their government, hold elected representatives responsible for their decisions, and prevents minority from dictating the policies of a majority (Afgan, 2016).

According to Nwokeke, and Jayum, (2011), in a democracy, election is the best option to change government periodically. It does not only promote leadership change, it encourages accountability in leadership. It allows for participation and it helps to reside power to the people. To be precise, elections are the best means to make, the sovereign power of the masses known. On the strength of this. Amimashaun (2000) asserts that universally, election is regarded as the heart of representative democracy. A credible election not only confers legitimacy on political leadership, it is also crucial to the sustenance of democratic order. Election provide citizens with the freedom to choose their rulers and to decide on public policy. Under any democratic system, citizens who are legally qualified to exercise franchise are provided with opportunity to choose political alternatives and to make decisions that expresses their preferences. In a multi-party dispensation, this choice is made out of the several parties and candidates competing in the electoral market (Amimashaun, 2000).

Odozi (2008), asserts that election attracts a lot of public interest because they provide opportunity for a change or further confirmation of the government in power, the rulers and the ruled use election to evaluate Political leadership and Public Policy making through their manifestations. They serve as avenue for political education of the citizens in which they learn much about the political, economic and social conditions of their country, as politicians compete for votes.

It is equally important to stress here that democracy is built on the foundation of free and fair elections. To Yamma (2008), the institutionalization of free and fair elections is one of the hallmarks of a democracy. A free and fair elections is one of the ways through which the policy preferences of the electorates are ascertained. Elections offer citizens the opportunity to enthrone a government of their own, a set of people they trust to deliver certain public good to them using state resources which are collectively owned. Furthermore, elections also offer the citizens the opportunities to change governments which have failed to deliver or to live to their expectations or have betrayed their trust through previous elections. Elections are also veritable tools through which citizens reward a serving government or a political party which has served them creditably, providing social and economic good for the benefit of the majority (Yamma, 2008).

The State, Democracy and Elections in Nigeria

In democratic systems, elections conducted between or among competing political parties, are supposed to be the principal means through which citizens can influence the selection of their leaders and the policies they make (Izah, 2003). Because the leaders have to submit themselves periodically for election, they are more sensitive to the opinion, needs, and concerns of their constituencies. This is the hallmark of liberal democracy, and it is this system albeit with some modifications that has attracted the political elites in Nigeria.

Quoting Ake (1993), Izah (2003), maintained that Nigeria and most of the African states are the successors to the colonial territories where colonial rule was all encompassing in all activities that mattered. Rights from its origin, the Nigerian state and other African states have had an overwhelming control and influence over the affairs of their citizens. After independence, rather than diminishing, the role of the state, in regulating and promoting economic, social and political life of the people, have been all embracing. In other words, the colonial structures which were inherently antidemocratic, survived and were, reproduced and rejuvenated (Izah,2003).

In order to understand the dynamics of Nigerian politics, therefore, it is necessary to understand the nature of the state that is all powerful. In the liberal democratic states of Europe and North America the State's role is limited to providing the legal framework for economic activities, social security for the very bottom of citizens and providing law and order. The huge corporations and labour unions are the most influential. For example, the corporations dominate economic activities in liberal state. In Nigeria, however, the state is the major initiator of economic, social political and even cultural activities. This role of the state in Nigeria is largely due to its origin rooted in colonialism.

On the strength of the above, Izah (2003) noted that the state appears to intervene everywhere and own virtually everything including access to ``status and wealth``. For this reason, competition for political power is regarded as a matter of life and death issue. Therefore, the root to understand the problem of corruption, abuse of office, political instability, violence during elections in Nigeria lies partly in the power of the state to control contracts, employment, loans and services and now `` foreign exchange`` which ordinarily are provided by private enterprises in the liberal state. In Nigeria, politics is an ``investment`` where most politicians place a very high premium on winning an election. Claude Ake was absolutely right when he said, to understand political instability, attention must be paid on the primary goal of winning power. The high premium placed on winning political power inevitably leads to a desperate struggle to win the control of state power. Politics as he observed becomes a warfare, a matter of life and death. The ``winners in the competition for power win everything and the losers lose everything (Izah, 2003).

Electoral Fraud; Typology and Manifestations

Elections ordinarily constitutes an important element in liberal democracy. This is very important as Adejumbi (2000) asserted that elections are viable means of ensuring the orderly process of leadership succession and change in political authority and legitimation. However, in the case of Nigeria, the concept of democracy and credible elections are very difficult to understand, and this is because the very factors which qualifies a democracy and free elections has become difficult to achieve. During elections, the ruling parties employ all devices using their incumbent power to suppress any opposition from other parties. They commit the national resources, especially finances using it to influence the security agents to protect and safeguard their manipulations during elections (Onwe, S.O *et al*, 2015).

According to Sha (2004), most elections in Nigeria have been marred by crude violence, weakening of the opposition and manipulation of the electoral process. In most exercise, the events that have been called elections were consciously organized to finalize a crude monopoly control

of the state apparatus by a faction of the power bloc in Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, violence and myriad irregularities have persistently marred the process of electing the country's leaders. Nigerian Politicians have become habituated to fraud, corruption, intimidation, and violence, as if they consider these the necessary weapons of political winners. Nigerian voters have over the years been denied the chance to count and be counted and, disturbingly, the trend has worsened.

It is important to note that election rigging in Nigeria were evident in 1964/65, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections. In fact, since independence, elections have been played in a do or die affair or manner. For instance, in the first republic, rigging has been properly integrated into Nigeria's political lives during the regional elections of 1961. During that elections, there were allegations of political intimidation, coercion, arrest and imprisonment of opposition leaders in the northern regional election of May, 1961 which gave the Northern People's Congress (NPC) a sweeping victory of 94% of the seats in the regional assembly. Similar allegations were levelled against the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) dominated Eastern Nigeria. According to Ifomase (2009), the first post-independence federal general elections that took place in the late December through to January 1965 between the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and United Progressives Grand Alliance (UPGA) was marked by nationwide electoral malpractices, political intimidation and violence that degenerated into constitutional crises. The final whistle for the first republic was the western regional election of 1965.

The second republic, however, was arguably considered to be worse. There was rigging of unimaginable proportions during the actual voting, vote counting and declaration of results. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) staff were variously accused of aiding and abetting the perpetration of electoral fraud. Of the five political parties that contested the August 11th 1979 presidential elections (UPN, NPN, NPP, GNPP and PRP), three ((UPN, NPP and GNPP) rejected the result. In 1983, the general elections into the 19 States House of Assembly, Governorship, the Federal Houses and the Presidential elections contested by six political parties were characterized by malpractices, wanton fraud and rigging at all levels. Between 1985 and 1993, the third republic witnessed series of elections under the military regime of Babangida. There were many cases of electoral malpractices, but the most serious case was the annulment of June 12, Presidential election by the IBB junta (Ifomase, 2009).

The general elections of 1999 was not different from other previous elections. In a Special Report Series title "Observing the 1998-1999 Nigeria Elections, the Carter Centre in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs notes that the registration process and all four election rounds were marred by varying degrees of electoral irregularities, and sometimes, outright fraud (NDI/Carter1999:8). Furthermore, there was low voter turnout and serious irregularities nationwide. Abuses of the electoral process- including ballot stuffing, inflation of results, and voter intimidation – were – widespread enough to question the elections outcome in certain electoral districts. It must be stated that the transition process in 1999, fell short of its democratic objectives. Electoral irregularities, including fraud and vote rigging that was witnessed are cause for serious concern, especially disconcerting, were the inflated voter returns and altered results in many state. These instances not only call into question the integrity of the overall election process, but also the legitimacy of these elected and their ability to govern (NDI/carter, 1999).

The 2003 elections especially went with many and a lot of reported cases of manipulation. Confirming this, Ibrahim (2007) notes that in 2003, Nigeria conducted the second general election

since the return to civilian politics in May 1999. These elections were almost as contentious as the infamous 1983 elections that precipitated the collapse of the second republic. Ibrahim (2007) further maintained that the report by the Nigerian observers confirmed numerous reports of fraud in many states across the country. The varied forms of electoral malpractice and the high number of incidents of electoral violence rekindle old fears that the basic institutional weaknesses associated with the electoral system could bring the democratic experiment to grief (Ibrahim, 2007).

The 2007 general election was not in any way different from other previous elections. It was observed that the 2007 elections was a step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria, considering especially the delay in delivering electoral materials and opening of polling sites. Above all, the international community for obvious reasons is very much concerned about good governance and people-oriented policies. Zimako (2009, p. 244), quoting the European Union monitoring team at the 2007 elections which had 150 observers remarked that:

The whole thing was not at all living up to the hopes of the Nigerian people...chaotic ... EU observers' witnessed examples of ballot box stuffing, alteration of official results forms, stealing of sensitive polling materials, vote buying and under-age voting.

Nigeria according to the international observers has remained in the eyes of the international community as one of the African countries with crisis of governance. In this regard, observer groups' poor rating of Nigeria's 2007 elections has both legitimacy and image implications for the Nigeria government. Contributing and confirming the recklessness that ensued during the 2007 election, Tar and Zack-williams, (2007) asserts that like all previous post-independence elections, the 2007 elections were full of controversies and were widely condemned as fraudulent, violent and stage-managed by the outgoing president Olusegun Obasanjo and his ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The nature of the conduct of the elections has generated widespread anger and fury amongst Nigerians, as well as local and foreign observers (Tar, and Zack-williams, 2007).

In the 2011 general elections, irregularities were still manifested in several ways. In general, the European Union Electoral Observation Mission noted inconsistent application of regulations and procedures by the independent National Electoral Commission structures in the field, contrary to the INEC instructions. Examples include the inadequate display of result sheets at all levels and simultaneous accreditation and voting in numerous polling units throughout the country on all election days. This confirmed a lack of control by INEC Headquarters in their efforts to implement electoral procedures consistently.

Another issue that represented a form of violation during the 2011 general elections was the high number of underage registered voters which was a phenomenon that became clearly visible during the election day, particularly in the northern areas of Nigeria. This contravene the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) and INEC instructions. Furthermore, in many instances, National Youth Service Corps Members conducting the registration exercise were put under pressure to allow the inclusion of underage registrants (EU, 2011).

Justifying the above, in another way, the Human Rights watch notes that even though the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has significantly improved the conduct of the elections, by creating new voter's register, improving transparency in reporting results, and publicly pledging to hold accountable those who broke the rules, there were still incident of violence, hijacking of ballot boxes by party thugs and report of police misconduct, particularly in Southeast Nigeria and the volatile Niger Delta region (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

The elections according to the report, were also marred by allegations of vote buying, ballot-box stuffing, and inflation of results, most noticeably in Southeastern Nigeria-Jonathan's Stronghold – where official results in the presidential election in some rural areas recorded close to 100 percent voter turnout (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

It must be stated that in many cases, corrupt politicians backed by mafia-like ‘‘godfathers’’ openly mobilized gangs of thugs to terrorize ordinary citizens and political opponents and to stuff or steal ballot boxes. The police were often present during such incidents but frequently turned a blind eye or at times, participated in abuses. In other locations, elections simply did not take place, yet the electoral commission reported ruling-party victories with high voter turnout.

In 2015, there were records of irregularities in different geopolitical zones of the country. However, the nature of fraud in the 2015 general elections was systemic and scientific, in the sense that both the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Party (APC) were involved in the manipulation on the basis of how strong they were in certain states. Furthermore, the manipulation of region, ethnicity and other primordial sentiments has manifested clearly which negates ideological reasoning in politics.

Credible Elections and the Problem of Electoral Administration

Historically, studies of election rigging in Africa have tended to focus on repression, vote buying and ballot box stuffing. At the same time, malpractice has generally been seen as a top-down process, the work of candidates seeking power. More recently, increasing attention has been devoted to other strategies such as gerrymandering, the manipulation of electoral commissions, and the role of local party organization, although the emphasis on elite strategies has remained.

According to Willis. (2017), as the technologies available to election organizers and election monitors have evolved, so have the strategies of rigging: attempts to hack elections technology, undermining the capacity of opposition parties to put together effective election petitions, and paying the election monitors of rival parties (agents) to turn a blind eye to vote inflation. In this regard, Jinadu (1997), posits that the starting point is the fragile and stunted character of the electoral machinery inherited at independence. Much of it was rudimentary and adhoc on a narrow and restrictive franchise in most cases and designed and contrived generally and in most cases to ensure succession favourable to the colonial regime.

Jinadu (1997), asserts that the inherited electoral administration was in effect easy prey to manipulation and, in many cases, to outright control by the successor regimes to colonial rule, who in their bid to retain power by all means to monopolize the political market-place, saw no reason to develop strong,, independent electoral administration but one that would only serve to undermine or subvert their hegemonic drive. In this manner, electoral administration was politicized (Jinadu, 1997).

Another dimension to the problem of electoral administration is about the composition and mode of appointment of the electoral bodies. This is an issue which recurs again and again in many articles. It is of course a critical issue that bears on the autonomy of these electoral bodies and, therefore, on the possibility or ensuring the indeterminacy of African elections.

Results of Findings

Many of our elections have not achieved the highest standards expected of a democratic regimes. Free and fair elections and functioning electoral systems which are the quintessence of democracy have eluded Nigeria as a polity. As a result, government officials no longer have an incentive to perform or respond to their constituents' needs. Over the years, worse elected officials have engage in corrupt behavior that inhibits economic growth, such as exploiting bureaucratic red tape to exact

bribes from firms. This lack of electoral accountability perhaps explains why, despite the rise of democratic institutions around the world, corruption and poor government performance remain persistent problems, caused by unnecessary red tape and corruption has been shown to significantly inhibit economic development through the effects on discouraging investment (Peralta, n.d).

Most of the perennial civil wars in Africa and other forms of violence have been associated with poor conduct and the manipulation of elections. According to Isola (2018), elections related violence has been a growing trend in African countries since the wave of democracy that swept across the continent in 1990s. The 1992 election in Angola led to a 10 year old civil war in the country that resulted in thousands of deaths. Following the 2005 elections in Ethiopia, election-related violence led to about 200 deaths. In Kenya, the 2007/2008 election left about 1,500 people dead. The 2010 presidential election in Ivory Coast recorded about 3000 deaths. Following the commencement of the fourth republic, after a protracted military rule in Nigeria, most of the elections held in the country have been characterized by violence, and thousands of people have died in election-related violence. The Human Rights Watch reported that more than 800 people died during the 2011 election violence in Nigeria. Similar trends have been recorded in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Rwanda, Ghana, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and others, where thousands of people have been killed and properties damaged following election violence. Between 2011 and 2017, over 1000 elections were held in 44 African countries. Almost all the elections witnessed violence during stages of the elections. In different cases, the violence occurred due to citizens' dissatisfaction with the preparation for elections by electoral management bodies; from nomination and imposition of candidates for electoral position by political parties, allegation of election manipulation and rigging by electoral bodies, outcome and results of elections and the execution of violent tactics by security agents to manage election disputes, among other reasons (Isola,2018).

Corroborating the above assertion, Nwokeke and Jayum (2011), asserts that elections fraud in Nigeria have dealt a huge blow to the development of democracy. Nigeria's elections so far have not live up to expectations due to various forms of electoral manipulations which have denied the country credible free and fair elections in her body politics. Election rigging has not only marred democratic consolidation in Nigeria but has also violated the fundamental human rights (right to life) of so many Nigerians. Election rigging has resulted into the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who have no regard to the principles of democracy which are off-shoots for good governance, rule of law, constitutionalism and fundamental human rights.

It has also been observed that absence of free and fair election has discourage a large number of qualified citizens in participating in any election. This is because participation is meaningful when the votes of the participants count but not when their votes are subverted for the interest of a few. According to Ebirim (2014), almost all the leaders that emerged victorious in her elections, rigged themselves into the corridors of power and this has restricted the chances of honest candidates from winning the election even when they are people's choice. In a society where candidate (s) is imposed against the will and choice of the peoples, democracy cannot be consolidated.

In a pseudo-democracy like the Nigerian variant, where elections are fraught with malpractices, the value of political parties as a vehicle for peaceful transfer of power is always defaced. This is always the cases where there exist a strong ruling party whose control of power weakens other opposition parties because of its political might. At a point, members of these opposition parties cross the carpet to join the ruling party. This trend makes politician's evermore

less principled in their political conduct because the obsession to acquire political power in order to amass illegal wealth outweighs all other considerations, including integrity and reputation. For example, in the build-up to the 2007 elections, while members of other political parties defected to the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), the members of the PDP—including the then Vice President under Obasanjo, Atiku Abubakar—defected to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). That gave Atiku the opportunity to run as the Party's Presidential flag bearer in 2007 election. Surprisingly, in 2009 Atiku re-defected back to the PDP. In 2010 again Atiku ran to the All Progressives Congress after the merger of some political parties where they later form a government in 2015. In 2017, Atiku Abubakar defected back to the PDP. This habits and attitudes among Nigerian Politicians is demeaning to the country's effort at stabilizing its democracy.

Conclusion

It must be reaffirmed that elections are of utmost importance in any democratic system. Elections are important because the people participate in elections to choose their representatives. An effective democracy and electoral system therefore, is founded upon the ability to hold free and fair elections, independent and effective electoral umpire, effective policing, and incorruptible and responsive judiciary. From the above argument, it is important to state that the common stand is that democratic rule is a government by the people of their chosen and freely elected representatives. It is a government based on the rule of law, free and fair elections, and credible electoral process.

There is an obvious matrix between democracy and electoral process in every polity. If there is no credible elections, there cannot be a dependable democracy. Democracy is anchored on a credible electoral system because if there is no elections, there cannot be political office holders that would exercise the people's sovereignty. When politicians rig elections to get into public offices, they truncate the wish of the people. Hence, public offices holders wear the garment of impunity and treat the people with brazen disdain and contempt because they are not accountable to the people. It must therefore be stressed that democracy cannot be sustained in Nigeria if the electoral system remains an object of manipulation by Politicians, including incumbent leaders. Democracy cannot retain its core values in Nigeria neither can it endure if INEC allows its powers to be swayed from honest application of electoral rules and procedures.

Recommendations

Arising from the above discussion, the following recommendations are pertinent.

- i. There is no over-emphasizing that, as the 2019 elections approach all hands need to be on deck for continuous improvement of the integrity of our elections. The more the integrity of our elections, the better, more responsible and responsive our elected office holder and indeed our entire governance system and processes, would be.
- ii. There is an urgent need to reform electoral processes, including election instructions. INEC represents the most important institutional foundation of any successful electoral processes in Nigeria. The credibility of an electoral system lies in the impartiality of the main umpire or electoral body. The electoral body must always act in accordance with the laws which established it, to conduct free and fair elections. The umpire must demonstrate the capacity to be absolutely independent. But it cannot be truly independent if it continue to rely directly on the executive for funding. INEC should be detached completely from the presidency and be made entirely independent. The funding of INEC should be charged to

- consolidated account, while the appointment of Chairman and Commissioners should be made truly independent from the manipulation of any arm of government.
- iii. The unwholesome delay in the amendment to the electoral legal framework (constitution and the Electoral Act) is also worrisome. It is important to urgently conclude this because there are some provisions in the extant laws, which require repeal or amendment so as to improve the integrity of our election. Such current provisions, as the one pertaining to internal party democracy, run-off elections and bye-elections threaten the conduct of elections with integrity and should be addressed urgently.
 - iv. Civic education should be accorded a high priority between now and the 2019 elections. The argument has been made that the real challenge in producing free and fair elections in 2019, just like any other credible election involves what happens before that date. The task of enlightening the citizenry of their rights and duties and defending the integrity of their votes are crucial. People must be educated to demand justice and ensure that justice is being dispensed. The generality of the population must be educated to understand their rights during the elections and after the elections, and also, they should be made to understand their duties and responsibilities as well.
 - v. Electoral laws should further be strengthened to ensure serious punishment for offenders and to also deter intended violators. Electoral offenders should be prosecuted under a law not just on the wishes or mercy of those in power. The consolidation of democracy, however requires the institutionalization of political power in which due process and rules and regulations replace the exercise of personal power.
 - vi. Government at all levels must confront poverty, unemployment and restiveness between and amongst young men in Nigeria. As the saying goes, the idle mind is the devil's workshop, therefore, employment opportunities for young Nigerians would definitely reduce the possibilities of those youths to be used as thugs and political vandals by the foster elites and, that would further entrench the culture of responsibility among the youth thus, peaceful electoral process could easily be achieved.
 - vii. Finally, it is important to pay attention to the challenge of neutrality, professionalism and impartiality of the Nigeria police and other security agencies in their engagement with elections. The police and all security must exhibit a very high sense of civility and democracy in their conduct, particularly in relation to their interaction with the opposition. They must display greater impartiality and neutrality in the 2019 elections.

References

- Adejumobi, S (2000) -''Election in Africa: A fading shadow of Democracy?''- International Political Science Review 1.1. 59-73; retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org> 10/11/2018.
- Afgan, Z.F (2016) -''Political Elections as an Element of Democracy-'' Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs; retrieved from <https://www.omicsonline.org> 10/11/2018.
- Agomo, C.C (2006) -''Human Rights, Civil Society and Democratization in Nigeria''- in M.O. Maduagwu and A.S. Mohammed (Ed), Challenges and Prospects of Democratization in Nigeria. Kuru, National Institute Press, pp48-79.

- Aluaigbam, M.T (2016) - "Democracy Deferred: The Effects of Electoral Malpractice on Nigeria's Path to Democratic Consolidation"- *Journal of African Elections* 15.2.136-158; retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net> 7/28/2018.
- Amimashaun, K (2000) - "Regime Character, Electoral Crisis and Prospects of Electoral Reform in Nigeria"- *Journal of Nigerian Studies*, 1.1. retrieved from www.unh.edu 7/29/2018.
- Duddley B.J. (1982) *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics*, Macmillian.
- Ebirim, S.I (2014) - "The Effects of Electoral Malpractices on Nigeria's Democratic Consolidation"- *Journal of Public Policy and Administration Research* 4.1. 49-54; retrieved from <https://www.iiste.org> 7/29/2018.
- Edet, L.I (2016) - "Election Administration and Democratization Process in Nigeria: An Appraisal of 2007-2015"- *Aeta Universitatis Danubius-Administration*, 8.2.66-78 retrieved from Journalunivdanubius.ro 8/4/2018.
- Egwemi, V. (2008) - "Electoral fraud, Legitimacy Crisis and the Government of National Unity (GNU) Option: Focus on the 2017 General Elections in Nigeria"- in S.M. Omodia (Ed) *Managing Elections in Nigeria*. Keffi, Onaivi Press, pp145-167.
- Goshit, Z.D. (2006) - "Food Security and the Entrenchment of Durable Democracy in Nigeria"- in M.O. Maduagwu and A.S. Mohammed (Ed) *Challenges and Prospects of Democratization in Nigeria*. Kuru, National Institute Press, pp179-189.
- Ham, C.V. and Lindberg, S.I (2015) - "From Sticks to Carrots: Electoral Manipulation in Africa 1986-2012"- *Journals of Government and Opposition*, 50.3.521-548; retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org> 8/4/2018.
- Higley, J (2005) - "Elite Theory in Political Sociology"- University of Texas at Austin, retrieved from www.pdfsearchengine.org 8/4/2018.
- Ibrahim, J (2007) - "Nigeria's 2007 Elections. The Fitful Path to Democratic Citizenship"- United States Institute of Peace Special Reports; retrieved from <https://www.usip.org> 8/01/2018.
- Ifomase, S (2009) - "The Behavior and Attitude of the Political Class with Particular Reference to Democratic Ethos, Culture and Practice"- *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 18.61-78 retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org> 11/01/2018.
- Isola, O (2018) - "Election Violence and the Future of Democracy in Africa"- retrieved from <https://africaupdose.wilsoncentre.org> 10/7/2018.
- Izah, p.p (2003) - "Political Parties and the Nigerian Constitution"- *Nigerian Journal of Political Science* 19.1.1-12.
- Jega, A.M (2018) - "Peace Building and Good Governance for Sustainable Development in Nigeria"- Democracy Day Lecture Delivered at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, May 28, 2018 retrieved from <https://osgf.gov.ng> 8/7/2018.
- Jinadu, L.A (1997) - "Matters Arising: African Elections and the Problem of Electoral Administration"- *African Journal of Political Science* 2.1.1-11' retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org> 11/01/2018.
- Nigeria: Final Report – General Elections, April 2011, retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int-report-nigeria> 10/8/2018.

- Nigeria: Post Election Violence Killed 800, Promptly Prosecute Offenders, Address Underlying Causes, May 2011; retrieved from www.heh.org 10/8/2018.
- Nwabueze, B (2003) - "Nigeria: Election Rigging and Democracy"- retrieved from allafrica.com 10/8/2018.
- Nwokeke, P.O. and Jayum, A.J (2011) - "The Electoral Process and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria"- Journal of Politics and Law; 4.2. 128-138; retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net> 10/8/2018.
- Observing the 1998-1999 Nigerian Elections; Final Report (nd) The Carter Centre and National Democratic Institute, Summer, 1999; retrieved from <https://www.cartercentre.org> 10/8/2018.
- Odozi, E (2018) - "Electoral Participation and Media Responsibility in Nigeria: Issues in Electoral Reporting"- in S.M. Omodia (Ed) Managing Elections in Nigeria, Keffi, Onaivi Press, pp56-75.
- Odusote, A (2014) - "Nigerian Democracy and Electoral Process since Amalgamation: Lesson from Turbulent Past"- Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 9.10. 25-37 retrieved from www.iosejournals.org 10/10/2018.
- Omojuwa, K.A. (2008) - "The Elite and the Struggle for Democratic Rule in Nigeria"- in ABU Political Scientist. Journal of National Association of Political Science Students, Ahamdu Bello University Zaria; 1.2007/2008 160-174.
- On the Prevention of Election Violence (nd). United States Institute of Peace, retrieved from <https://www.usip.org> 11/17/2018.
- Onwe, S.O, Nwogbaga, D.M.E and Ogbu, M.O (2015) - "Effects of Electoral Fraud and Violence on Nigeria Democracy: Lessons from 2011 Presidential Election"- Journal of Humanities and Social Science; 20.4.10-15; retrieved from www.iosrjournals.org 11/17/2018.
- Osabiya, B.J (2014) - "Nigeria and Democratic Elections"- Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa 2.3.53-64; retrieved from www.rcmss.com-jggsda 10/10/2018.
- Peralta, A (nd) - "The Impact of Election Fraud on Government Performance"- Texas A and M University; retrieved from <http://www.aeqweb.org> 11/17/2018.
- Sha, D.P (2006) - "The Conduct of Elections and Democratization in Nigeria"- in M.O. Maduagwu and A.S. Mohammed (Ed) Challenges and Prospects of Democratization in Nigeria. Kuru, National Institute Press, pp97-110
- Tar, U.A and Zack-Williams, A.B (2007) - "Nigeria: Contested Elections and an Unstable Democracy"- Review of African Political Economy, 34.113.540-548 retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org> 11/12/2018.
- Usman, Y.B. (1987) The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria. Kaduna, M.O. Press.
- Willis, J (2017) - "The Changing Face of Electoral Manipulation in Africa"- retrieved from <https://www.nomadit.co.uk> 11/12/2018.
- Yamma, A.M. (2008) - "Elections in Post-Colonial Civilian Regimes in Nigeria"- in S.M. Omodia (Ed) Managing Elections in Nigeria, I. Keffi, Onaivi Press, pp18-27.

Zimako, O.Z (2009) Face of a Nation: Democracy in Nigeria, Foreign Relations and National Image. Thompson Press.