

DEMOCRACY AND 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: QUESTIONING THE UNQUESTIONABLE

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Abstract: *Democracy is a socio- economic and political formation whereby the adult citizens are granted the fair opportunity to participate in governance of their country has indeed become increasingly decimative in both its operation, functionality and other attendant mechanisms for actualizing free and fair political elections in Nigeria. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria had been executed and winners emerged but with some degrees of electoral unprocedurality, hence tagging a very big question of integrity, transparency and responsibility for the election under review. Therefore, this paper examined the 2015 Nigerian general elections in the backdrop of the democratic procedurality and development. Data for this paper where generated from secondary sources of recorded human documents. We adopted the theory of democratic development as our analytical framework. Again, our research design was based ex-post facto modern of analysis. Indeed, the 2015 general elections in Nigeria were legally, technically, institutionally and procedurally negated by some electoral irregularities that generated certain unaddressed questions in the annals of Nigerian political history. These would not only orchestrate developmental inertia but would remain a recurring decimal in Nigeria's electoral history.*

Keywords: Democracy, Election, Governance, Electoral Unprocedurality, Nigeria.

Introduction

The federation of Nigeria came into existence with full legal consideration, on 1st October 1960, and attendantly assumed the status of republicanism in 1963. Between 1963 and later part of 1978; the nation was faced with certain scenario of socio-economic and political quagmire which strongly walled the fragile sovereign integrity of the country (Suleman and Awudu, 2015). Simply put, the country within the period in question was holistically under siege of political brigandage, social acabar and electoral flimflam, manifested both in nature and character of electoral hooliganism, arson, looting and other unwholesome practices (Akindele, 2013). This scenario was negotianal to the modern day democracy as was articulated by Nwanolue (2003). He asserts that democracy democracy has emerge to savage the yearnings and aspirations of common man from the exploitative tendencies of the bourgeoisies.

In agreement with Nwanolue's position, Crick (1993), conceptualized democracy to mean: A system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged; A form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the necessity for qualified public servants or politicians; a system that values equality of opportunity and personal achievement over hierarchy and privilege; A system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities; A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule; A system of government that safeguards the rights and interests of minorities by limiting the influence of the majority; a process for electing public officials that involves a competitive race for popular vote; A form of administration where citizens' interests are served regardless of whether they hold political office There is no doubt the above democratic conceptualization have no bearing in Nigeria's socio-economic and political history, especially since independence to date. According Offiong (2012), the Nigerian political history is a pronounced platform that encourages the circulation of the elites 'where the rich becomes richer and the poor poorer. Political offices are sheared among divergent clannish interest other than recognized sense of professional competence and ideological meritocracy.

In reality, Nigerian democracy is still nascent in nature. It all began in 1999, apart from that of 1979 to 1983, which was regarded as civil rule with hands of the citizen's tide with chains. Between 1999 and 2015, Nigeria has held about four national elections, one of which was the 2015 general elections which is the center point of this paper. Therefore, this paper shall examine Democracy and 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: Questioning the Unquestionable.

Accordingly, it revisits trendy issues such as the evolution of democracy, features of modern democracy, principles of democracy, an overview of political elections in Nigeria, electoral processes and the role of electoral bodies in Nigeria, INEC and 2015 general elections in Nigeria and 2015 Elections: Implications on Nigeria's democracy.

The Evolution of Democracy

Democracy is fundamental in the understanding of ancient, medieval and modern social formation. The origin of democracy cannot gain any sophisticated intellectual preponderance without a holistic alignment with the ancient Greek philosophical history. Robert Dahl (1999) affirms that democracy did not reemerge forcefully until approximately 500 BC, when the Greeks and Romans established systems of government based on popular participation (Idowu, 2009). Hence, the Greek system of governance was more or less directly democratic in the sense of having few intermediary structures between the "people" (with the notable exceptions of women, slaves and others) and their government (Nwanolue, 2003). The Roman system, on the other hand, employed a system of

representative government known as the republic (but also omitting women, slaves and others). Accordingly, after the collapse and demise of the Greek and Roman systems, democracy itself went into a long decline and did not reemerge until early 12th century in the city states of northern Italy. According to Foistah, (2013) and Protte (2013), the early practices of democracy may be traced back not only to the ancient Athenians and Romans but also to the Phoenicians and the Egyptians. The European thinkers of the Enlightenment were not the only, indeed not the first, source of the values that came to be associated with democratic governance. Long before Rousseau and Locke, Arab social philosopher Alfarabi spoke of liberty and equality and of rule on the basis of the consent of the governed. What is notable about these early experiments in democracy is their difference both from one another and from our modern conceptions of representative government. Dominic (2010) argues that they all placed conditions on who could participate in the process and the institutions of democracy were incomplete, unsustainable or rudimentary in terms of representation.

The foundations for democracy as we know it today can be more readily discerned in the evolving governmental structures and revolutions of 18th century Europe and North America. Representative of national and local institutions such as the British House of Commons or local councils in Scandinavia and people-driven revolutions in North America and France advanced the ideas of equality, inalienable rights and government by consent of the governed. Out of these foundations come the institutions and processes most readily identifiable with modern representative democracy—namely, elections, political parties, separation of powers, representative bodies, etc. Essentially, Shehu (2011) explains that the three main systems of democracy to have emerged from Western Europe during this period are the presidential, parliamentary and mixed models of government. Parliamentary system (also referred to as the “Westminster” system for the British version) features a parliament sometimes unicameral and sometimes bicameral from which a Prime Minister is chosen. The Prime Minister is the head of state. The presidential model, the most well-known example of which is United States, features a strong, popularly elected president as the head of country and a unicameral or bicameral legislature that acts as his or her counterweight. The mixed system, of which France is an example, features a strong, popularly elected president who chooses a premier in consultation with and sometimes at the demand of the unicameral or bicameral legislature. Each of these models rests firmly on a foundation of party politics. Recently, however, some developing countries have begun to experiment with party-less politics. In Uganda, for example, political parties were initially banned but civil society organizations were allowed to exist and lobby parliament.

Accordingly, today, for the first time in history, there are more democratic states than non-democratic ones, especially in Africa, in which Nigeria is contend. Indeed, some people believe that the emergence of democracy was one of the most significant historical developments of the 20th century. According to the 2001–2002 Freedom House Freedom in the World study, roughly 65% of the world's population resides in free or largely free States that grant their inhabitants some level of fundamental rights and civil liberties. The survey also revealed that, among the 192 nations in the globe, 121 (or 63% of them) were “electoral democracies.” Compared to 1987, when just 66 out of 167 countries (or 40%) fell into this group, there has been a substantial change. According to the Freedom House report, human liberty has consistently increased over the 20th century, and “when considered from the perspective of the century as a whole, democracy and civil freedoms have made important and dramatic development Bassey” (2015: 19). According to assessments by the UN, 53 military regimes have been replaced by civilian administrations in 81 countries since 1980, which has resulted in substantial progress toward democratization. However, in 2015, States that operate military regime across are of negligible percent. This shows that democracy has gained an over whelming strength amongst nation states in the 21st century global governance.

It is not contestable that democracy is not inimical to any well-organized chosen structure of government. Indeed, Fascism, Nazism, totalitarianism, tyrannism, despotism and dictatorship are some profound enemies of equality, liberty and fraternity which are the symbols of democracy (Nwanolue, 2003). In accordance with this dictum, Nigerian democracy cannot be effectively discussed without being expansive to its core characteristics, as examined below. U.S. Department of State, First, Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens directly or indirectly through their freely elected representatives. Second, Democracy rests upon the principle of majority rule, which means that decisions are made by majority and have to be accepted by all, but minority viewpoints are respected and protected.

Again, Democracies prevent all-encompassing central administrations by decentralizing authority to regional and local levels, realizing that all spheres of government must be as open and receptive to the needs of the populace as feasible. Further, Democracies are aware that one of their main responsibilities is to uphold fundamental human rights like the right to free speech and the freedom of religion, the right to equal protection under the law, and the ability to organize and actively participate in society's political, economic, and cultural life. Okon (2007), further affirms that democracies regularly hold transparent elections that are accessible to all eligible voters. Additionally, citizens in a democracy not only have the right but also the duty to engage in the political processes that defend their freedoms and rights. Lastly, the principles of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise are a cornerstone of democratic societies. (Department of State, USA)

Democracy as a strong foundation for political majoritarianism, operates with certain guiding principles. Most nations that operate democracy hang it on bill of right and entrenched in their constitutions. According to Nwanolue, (2003) such principles do not always vary from state to state, because democracy is such a universal doctrine that speaks one language with multiplicity of interpretation and executing mechanism. Nwanolue and Ojukwu (2012) posits that the rudiments of a true democracy are good governance, fair and legitimate elections, justice, equity, accountability, transparency, responsible leadership, political education of the masses, efficient political institutions and respect for the rule of law. This means that a democratic environment creates an

atmosphere where elections are free and fair, where legislative seats held by parties are as a result of votes received from the most recent elections and not as a result of cross-carpeting and where, if there is no clear majority in the legislature, several parties may come together to form a coalition government. Furthermore, to Hassan (2012), such principles include:

- a) **Citizens Participation:** Citizenship can be expressed in a variety of ways, including as running for office, casting a ballot, learning about current events, engaging in debates, attending civic or community meetings, joining private nonprofit groups, contributing to the government through taxation, and even protesting. Democracy improves through participation.
 - b) **Equality:** Democratic countries place a strong emphasis on the idea that all persons are equal. All people should be treated equally, given equal chances, and protected from prejudice based on their color, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. This is what equality implies. People and groups still have the freedom to have various cultures, personalities, languages, and religious convictions in democracies.
 - c) **Political Tolerance:** Political tolerance is common in democracies. In a democracy, this means that even while the majority rules, the rights of the minority must be upheld. It is necessary to allow those who are not in authority to organize and speak out. Because they could hold opinions that differ from those of the majority, minorities are frequently referred to as the opposition. Individual residents also need to develop tolerance for one another. A democratic society is frequently made up of individuals who hold opinions that are dissimilar from those of the majority of the community and who come from various cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic groups. Diversity adds value to a democratic society. Democracy is destroyed if the majority suppresses dissent and eliminates the opposition. Choosing the appropriate course of action for the community is one of democracy's objectives. Respect for all individuals and their points of view is necessary for this to happen. If all residents are free to discuss, debate, and challenge decisions, they are more likely to be accepted, even by those who disagree with them.
 - d) **Accountability:** In a democratic society, both elected and appointed leaders must account to the people. They are in charge of what they do. Officials must act in accordance with the wants and desires of the people, not for themselves, when making decisions and carrying out their tasks.
 - e) **Transparency:** In order for the people to hold the government accountable, they must be informed about national affairs. Transparency in government is what is meant by this. A transparent administration invites the public to meetings and holds them in public. In a democracy, information about decisions being made, by whom, and why can be obtained by the press and the general public.
 - f) **Elections that are regular, free, and fair:** One way for citizens to express their will is to elect officials to represent them in government. Democracy requires that these elected officials be chosen and removed from office in a free and fair election. Threats, intimidation, and corruption of citizens during or before an election are all against democratic principles. Elections are held on a regular basis in a democracy every so many years. Election participation should not be based on a citizen's wealth. Most adult citizens should be able to run for government office in order for free and fair elections to take place. Furthermore, obstacles that make voting difficult should be removed.
 - g) **Economic Freedom:** Economic freedom must exist for people in a democracy. In other words, people are free to select their own jobs and labor unions, while the government permits certain private property and business ownership. It is debatable what role the government should play in the economy, although it is widely agreed that democracies should allow for free markets and that the state shouldn't completely dominate it. Some contend that the government need to be more active in nations where there is a significant wealth gap as a result of prior discrimination or other unjust actions.
 - h) **Control of Power Abuse:** In democratic countries, efforts are made to stop any elected official or organization from abusing or misusing their position of authority. Corrupt practices rank among the most prevalent misuse of power. When elected officials abuse their positions of authority or utilize taxpayer money for personal gain, this is corruption. Different strategies have been employed in various nations to guard against these abuses. It is common for the government to be set up in a way that restricts the authority of its branches. For example, there should be independent courts and agencies that have the authority to intervene in cases involving any illegal actions taken by elected officials or other branches of the government. There should also be opportunities for citizen participation and elections.
 - i) **Bill of Rights:** Many democracies opt to establish a bill of rights to safeguard citizens from abuses of authority. A bill of rights is a statement of the freedoms and rights that every citizen of the nation is entitled to. The courts have the authority to uphold a bill of rights once it is incorporated into a nation's constitution. A bill of rights can place restrictions on governmental authority as well as obligations on people and organizations.
 - j) **Accepting Election Results:** There are winners and losers in democratic elections. Election losers frequently refuse to accept the results because they firmly feel that their party or candidate is the better. This violates democratic ideals. Ineffective and unable of making decisions, a government may result from refusing to acknowledge the outcome of an election. Violence, another anti-democratic outcome, could possibly occur.
 - k) **Human Rights:** All democracies work to respect and uphold their citizens' human rights. The principles that uphold respect for human life and dignity are known as human rights. Democracy places a strong emphasis on the worth of every person. Human rights include things like the freedom of speech, the right to equality, the right to assembly, and the freedom of association.
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- l) Multi-Party System: Multiple political parties must run candidates in elections and hold office for there to be a multi-party system to exist. In a multi-party system, there is room for opposition to the winning party. This contributes to the government receiving many points of view on problems. Furthermore, a multiparty system offers voters a selection of candidates, parties, and policies to choose from. A dictatorship has historically resulted when a nation only has one political party.
- m) The Rule of Law: No one is above the law in a democracy, not even a monarch or an elected president. The rule of law is what we call this. It implies that everyone must abide by the law and will face consequences if they do not. Democracy also demands that the law be applied consistently, fairly, and equally. "Due process of law" is another name for this.

An Overview of Political Elections in Nigeria

The first litmus test of the ability of the newly independent Nigeria to organize an election on its own was that of the 1964 federal elections. While the various parties needed it to consolidate their hold on power, the public needed it to express their franchise and elect those that would meet their needs and aspirations. The two main political party coalitions that contested these elections- The Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) composed of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and other smaller parties; and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) made up of the NCNC, AG, NEPU and the UMBC – went about the elections in a manner that generated so much bitterness and violence, electoral officers were beaten while opposition candidates were either killed or maimed (Falola, Mahadi, Uhomoibhi, and Anyanwu, 1991). The bitterness engendered by the experiences of this 1964 episode worsened the scenario in the subsequent 1965 Western regional elections which witnessed a more blatant and massively rigged election than its predecessor.

The elections in the Western Region in 1965 was overshadowed by the experiences of 1964 which revealed the fragile nature of the new republic, where virtually all the organs of government displayed pitiable weaknesses rather than strengths, and those in control of them displayed troubling signs that they were more interested in personal gains. At this time, S.L. Akintola and his Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which controlled the Western regional government, did not hesitate to use incumbency power to win the election (Ofoeze, 2001, p. 166). What emerged as the Western region election, therefore, was "marred by the problem of massive rigging and other irregularities plus widespread violence, giving the impetus for the first military coup in Nigeria on the 15th January, 1966, and the culture of instability that was to beset the country for over three decades" (Owodiong-Idemeko, 2009). According to Tamuano (1998), the notorious pattern of electoral rigging and violence that attended the elections of the 1960s resulted in considerable political instability in Nigeria, creating in its wake a crisis-prone sequence that has continued to plague Nigeria's elections till date. Then came the 1979 election in which Nigeria changed from Parliamentary to Presidential system of government. The election ushered in the second republic led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The elections were contested by five political parties – National Party of Nigeria, Unity Party of Nigeria, Nigerian Peoples Party, Great Nigerian Peoples Party and Peoples Redemption Party. Just like the ones before it, the 1979 election was criticized by foreign observers as having been massively rigged in favor of the victorious NPN. Indeed, the presidential election was decided judicially with the active manipulation of the departing military junta (Ofoeze, 2001, p.168).

In continuation, the 1983 election, like the previous ones, witnessed an unprecedented level of electoral malpractices coupled with high level of violence and disorder in many parts of the country especially in Oyo, Anambra and Ondo, states. It was the dangerous challenge posed by the 1983 elections that resulted in the military Coup d'état of 31st December, 1983, (Sadiq and Umaru, 2008). It has been severally adduced that perhaps the freest and fairest election in the history of Nigeria was the June, 12, 1993 elections of which the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola was alleged to have won, but was annulled by General Ibrahim Babangida. Toyo, (1994, p. 43), posits that the cancellation of this election by Babangida sparked off monumental political crisis attended by violent protests and demonstrations, "massacres by security forces, a split in the SDP, ethnic jingoism, resurgence of regionalism, a threat of secession, a counter threat by the military regime to declare a state of emergency, mass flight of people to their respective districts for safety, civil war psychosis, foreign political intervention etc.

In the same vein, Owodiong-Idemeko (2009), affirms that the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections conducted within this Fourth Republic and within a span of ten years have variously been lampooned by both local and foreign observers as far from being free and fair. Particularly, the April 2007 election was characterized as the worst election ever held in this country due to the indescribable level of irregularities which marred the exercise. The 2011 elections which took place on 16th March, 2011, aroused some controversy over the political idiosyncrasies of the presidential candidate of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). That is the misperception Jonathan's vivid personality contradictions generated objections, intra and inter party oppositions over his candidacy. Widespread violence attended the aftermath of the election sequel to the victory of Goodluck Jonathan over the Muhammadu Buhari (Asogwa, and Eze, 2014). The election was adjudged free and fair, amidst few instances of irregularities.

Similarly, the just concluded 2015 general elections were a considerable improvement from previous experiences. The elections were held as scheduled but with some political misnomer in respect of the Internally Displaced Persons scattered across some States in the Country, of which more than 70% were alienated from their constitutional rights of exercising their franchise. This has remained a recurrent decimal in Nigerian Electoral history, especially in Post-Civil War General Elections conducted in the country, where the issues of IDPs were not adequately addressed and actively executed by the Nation's Electoral body (Okoro and Chukwujekwu, 2015, p. 75).

Electoral Processes and the Role of Electoral Bodies in Nigeria

Elections are critical components in any system of democratic governance because they are regular and direct means of citizen participation in governance. Democratic electoral processes and systems also help to ensure that government is responsive and accountable to the people. Such systems and processes together set the ground rules for a two-way relationship based on participation and accountability between the elected and those they represent (Olubanjo and Adetula, 2013). They provide a mechanism through which competing interests are articulated and debated and policy options identified. Yet, elections as events are not sufficient to make a country democratic. It is the quality of the electoral process that promotes democratic governance. Quality in this context implies multi-party elections, active involvement of civil society organizations, frequency and regularity of elections, and acceptance of elections outcome by the opposition. Also important are the capacity of electoral management bodies as governing institutions to ensure efficient and transparent conduct of elections based on universally recognized standards.

Background to the General Elections of 2015

The 2015 General Elections began on an inauspicious footing. Initially, the elections were supposed to hold in a certain format starting from State Assembly/Gubernatorial to National Parliament/Presidential elections. However, official release from INEC put paid to that and the order of 2015 elections was National Assembly/Presidential and State Assembly/Gubernatorial elections. The former was scheduled to hold on the 28th March, 2015 and the latter to hold on the 11th April, 2015 respectively. Given the history of elections in Nigeria and the distrust between the people and any Electoral Management Body (EMB); the order of 2015 elections and the dates raised a lot of suspicion and distrust as well as generated a lot of arguments and counter arguments, most especially between the political parties and INEC. The controversy revolves around the alleged fear nursed, especially by the then incumbent party (PDP) that, should they lose the National Assembly/Presidential elections, there were tendencies that there would be a bandwagon effect on the vote pattern/outcome of the State Assembly/Gubernatorial elections. The thrust of this argument was therefore, on the grounds that the order of elections could influence the vote pattern/outcome of the 2015 general elections.

But that was just one of the problems that dogged the 2015 general elections at the initial stage. Other problems surfaced among which were voters' apathy, issue of additional polling units and the use of card readers. Voters' apathy was already a known malaise, principally caused by electoral violence, fraud and frequent incidence of votes' manipulation. New and additional polling units created by INEC were discarded given the controversies, legality and cries of marginalization it generated. But of greater significance to political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and INEC was the legality and propriety of the use of card readers. Suffice to say that INEC stuck to its guns citing relevant constitutional provisions including the electoral act to deploy and use its electronic card readers. Of course, it should be noted that the card readers were introduced to eliminate cases of rigging, ballot box snatching and thuggery and ultimately, make each and every vote count.

The issue of a particular order of elections became a major source of disagreement and tension between the protagonists and antagonists of the idea. Another dimension to the issue was to determine who has power between INEC and the National Assembly to set the order of elections. In any case, the issue was resolved in favour of the Presidential, followed by Assembly coming first, and Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections. It should be noted that the order of elections was to position each political party for maximum benefit from a particular order that seems to favour them and avoid a 'bandwagon' effect that is likely to follow such order of elections. This is with the understanding that if the presidential comes first, whichever party that wins that election (presidency) is likely to influence choice of voters in the subsequent elections.

However, in spite of the order of elections, the 2015 elections produced did not conform to the 'normal pattern' of the ruling party winning most, if not all the seats in the National Assembly and the presidency. The presidency was won by the then opposition party (which the incumbent President (Goodluck Jonathan of PDP) lost as well as the Assembly elections which produced results that clearly showed that some factors influenced voters' choice and there is a discernible of voting in both elections which took place within two (2) weeks of each other.

In the build up to 2015 Presidential elections, many factors should be considered which affect voting behaviour of the electorates. The Jonathan government became the most corrupt in the history of the country. Insecurity worsened and other socioeconomic conditions became more terrible than ever before. Many voters from both South and North perceived the manipulation of religion and ethnicity as the tool that lead to bad governance and the poor being the most affected. Poverty level increased with unemployment reaching an unbearable level in addition to other hardship. Educational system was almost grounded.

The electoral body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) became determined to curb rigging of elections result and other electoral irregularities introduced electronic card reader which must be used during the election to screen the voters before they are eligible to vote. The rationale behind this according to INEC Chairman, Professor Atahiru Jega was to avoid inflation of result and rigging. This really played a vital role also in determining the outcome of the result. It was believed that previous elections of 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 had their outcome rigged and inflated by the incumbents. This time around it was minimized.

In addition, the build up to 2015 Presidential election was dominated by issue-based campaign instead of the usual tradition of manipulation of ethnicity and religion; although it was heavily used still, issues such as corruption, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, education etc dominated the campaign slogan most especially by the coalition of opposition which formed All Progressive Congress (APC). Initially, the opposition realized that, they will never defeat the incumbent PDP until they form a coalition. Such an attempt was made in 2011 but it died at the late hours. The most powerful opposition Action Congress of Nigeria

(ACN) headed by Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu from the West or Yoruba land, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) by Muhammadu Buhari, All Nigerian People Party (ANPP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) from the Igbo East, and a faction of disgruntled PDP members called new PDP headed by Alhaji Atiku Abubakar the former Vice President under President Obasanjo and five sitting PDP Governors of Kano, Sokoto, Kwara, Rivers and an APGA Governor in Imo all joined the newly formed APC.

Thus, the opposition became more stronger than even the ruling party as it took over the control of the leadership of the House of Representatives as the Speaker Aminu Waziri Tambawul defected to APC from the ruling PDP. The electorates from all parts of the country became more socialized and determine to vote based on credibility of the candidate rather than the ethnic and religious sentiments. The ruling party, PDP which used to carry all along became a regional and ethnic party dominated by Ijaw and Igbo the President Jonathan's kinsmen. Such seclusion made even top members of the party to work against the party and committed anti-party activities. This further weakened the party and strengthened opposition.

While the opposition party was busy campaigning on burning national issues, the ruling PDP resorted to blackmail and black-paint of the opposition contestant Muhammadu Buhari as Islamic extremist, as a Northern Hausa/Fulani Muslims oligarch agenda of controlling Nigeria by all means. President kept on manipulating Christians and Christianity going from one church to another campaigning and organizing dinners with eminent pastors while courting minority Northern Christians to support him. The campaign became full of tension that the opposition contestant was tagged ill with terminal disease, he has no minimum certificate requirement, is old and tired and all sorts of blackmail but he kept on gathering large crowd and followers in return. This was as a result of the socioeconomic hardship that all Nigerians from each geopolitical zone suffered alike which changed their perception that a credible candidate is what the country need and an ethnic or religious chauvinist could not solve these problems.

The Presidential election was fixed on 23 March 2015 but when the ruling PDP sensed inevitable defeat shifted the election to 14 April under the pretext of insecurity of Boko Haram in Northeast. It was alleged that the shift in three weeks led to dollar rain as the ruling PDP was estimated to have spent more than N 2 trillion in three weeks. However, this did not save PDP from the impending failure as the result shows below.

Table 4: Showing result of 2015 Presidential Election between APC and PDP only

State	APC	PDP	Total	Winner
Abia	13,394(3.51 %)	368, 303(96.49 %)	381, 697	PDP
Adamawa	374, 701(59.82 %)	251, 664(40.18 %)	626, 365	APC
Akwalbo	58, 411 (5.77 %)	953, 304 (94.23 %)	1, 011, 715	PDP
Anambra	17, 926 (2.64 %)	660, 762 (97.36 %)	678, 688	PDP
Bauchi	931, 598 (91.54 %)	86, 085 (8.46 %)	1, 017, 683	APC
Bayelsa	5, 194 (1.42 %)	361, 209 (98.58 %)	366, 403	PDP
Benue	373, 961 (55.18 %)	303, 737 (44.82 %)	677, 698	APC
Borno	473, 543 (94.86 %)	25, 640 (5.14 %)	499, 183	APC
Cross	28, 368 (6.40 %)	414, 863 (93.60 %)	443, 231	PDP
River	48, 910 (3.88 %)	1, 211,405(96.12%)	1, 260, 315	PDP
Delta	19, 518 (5.69 %)	323, 653 (94.31 %)	343, 171	PDP
Ebonyi	208, 469 (42.09 %)	286, 869 (57.91 %)	495, 338	PDP
Edo	120, 331 (40.54 %)	176, 466 (59.46 %)	296, 797	PDP
Ekiti	14, 157 (2.50 %)	553, 003 (97.50 %)	567, 160	PDP
Enugu	361, 245 (78.85 %)	96, 873 (21.15 %)	458, 118	APC
Gombe	133, 253 (19.24 %)	559, 185 (80.76 %)	692, 438	PDP
Imo				

Jigawa	885, 988 (86.11%)	142, 904 (13.89 %)	1, 028, 892	APC
Kaduna	1, 127, 760(69. 97%)	484, 085 (30. 03 %)	1, 611, 845	APC
Kano	1, 903 999 (89.82%)	215, 779 (10.18 %)	2, 119, 778	APC
Katsina	1,345, 441 (93. 15%)	98, 937 (6.85 %)	1, 444, 378	APC
Kebbi	567, 883 (84.90 %)	100, 972 (15.10 %)	668, 855	APC
Kogi	264, 851 (63. 84 %)	149, 987 (36.16 %)	414, 838	APC
Kwara	302, 146 69.50 %)	132, 602 (30.50 %)	434, 748	APC
Lagos	792, 460 (55.62 %)	632, 327 (44.38 %)	1, 424, 787	APC
Nassarawa	236, 838 (46.41 %)	273, 460 (53.59 %)	510, 298	PDP
Niger	657, 678 (81.51 %)	149, 222 (18.49 %)	806, 900	APC
Ogun	308, 290 (59.72 %)	207, 950 (40.28 %)	516, 240	APC
Ondo	299, 889 (54.40 %)	251, 368 (45.60 %)	551, 257	APC
Osun	383, 603 (60.55 %)	249, 929 (39.45 %)	633, 532	APC
Oyo	528, 620 (63. 54 %)	303, 376 (36. 46 %)	831, 996	APC
Plateau	429, 140 (43. 85 %)	549, 615 (56.15 %)	978, 755	PDP
Rivers	69, 238 (4.45 %)	1,487,075(95. 55%)	1, 556, 313	PDP
Sokoto	671, 926 (81.53 %)	152, 199 (18.47 %)	824, 125	APC
Taraba	261, 326 (45.68 %)	310, 800 (54.32 %)	572, 126	PDP
Yobe	446, 265 (94.60 %)	25, 526 (5.40 %)	471, 791	APC
Zamfara	612, 202 (80.87 %)	144, 833 (19.13 %)	757, 035	APC
FCT	146, 399 (48.22 %)	157, 195 (51.78 %)	303, 594	PDP
Total	15,424,921(54.55 %)	12,853,162(45.45 %)	28,278,08 3	

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 2015.

It should be noted that not only APC and PDP that contested for 2015 elections. The implication is that the total number of political parties' recorded insignificant result that will influence the original outcome.

The result above so far shows that, although still ethnic and religious sentiments played a great role in determining the voting behaviour, it was less influential than the previous Presidential elections in the history of the country. APC, the party represented by Muhammadu Buhari from the North swept away almost all the Northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. Still, in the North, states that have significant number of Christians voted for PDP candidate who is a Christian against the Northern candidate of APC including Nassarawa, Taraba and Plateau.

The change trend in the voting pattern shows that Western states that never voted for a Northern candidate in the history of Nigeria voted for APC this time around since APC won in Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun and Ondo states while the party lost in Ekiti.

However, the Eastern states of especially Niger-Delta and Igbo states voted for President Jonathan but the rate of rigging was minimized especially in Imo and Edo states controlled by APC states as compared to the results of 2011 elections.

The nature of voting behaviour in Nigeria has remained constant from First Republic with only little changes from 1999. From hitherto voting behavior, Nigerians' choices were determined by ethnicity, tribalism, regionalism and religious affiliations. Nigerians, however, totally commercialized politics starting in 1999, and money-politics influenced their voting habits as their ballots were sold to the highest bidder. This political threat is a product of poverty, a lack of democratic consciousness, and the rigged character of elections. Some fundamental causes, which we will examine in our previous discussion, forced Nigerians to change from this marketed voting practice. Voting for candidates that can change their socioeconomic and political status quo and actually represent them is the new voting behavior. Nigerians refused to vote during this time period due to concerns about money, religion, regional issues, or tribal issues (even though some did). This was evident in the way that Nigerians, regardless of their country of origin, age, religion, region, or line of work, chose to vote out President Jonathan's administration in the 2015 presidential elections and elect the opposition party (APC) led by Muhammad Buhari, who is charismatic and popular on the political scene, to lead the nation of Nigeria. However, other intervening factors, including the issue of insecurity and the high degree of tension and suspicion within the polity, have had an impact on political non-conventional involvement, even with the changes in Nigerians' voting behavior. The result was a poor voter turnout in the 2015 general elections, the lowest (in percentage terms) since the presidential elections of 1979.

INEC and 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

The establishment of the body responsible for the conduct of general elections in Nigeria dates back to the period before Independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was formed to conduct 1959 elections. Olumide, and Ogunjobi, (2015) assert that The federal and provincial elections for governments in 1964 and 1965 were managed by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), which was founded in 1960. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was established by the General Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 1978 after it was overthrown in a military coup in 1966. The National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) was founded in December 1995 by General Sani Abacha's military regime in place of the National Electoral Commission (NEC). In 1998, the administration of General Abdulsalam Abubakar disbanded NECON and established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The Nigerian Fourth Republic was inaugurated on May 29, 1999, following the organization of the transitional elections. Subsequent elections were conducted in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015. Accordingly, the INEC had been saddled with the responsibilities of giving the Electorates a sense of belonging in the just concluded 2015 elections. Whether such efforts yielded some political fruition or not, would form some of the basis of our analysis. In a bid to alleviate their plight, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) constituted a Task Force whose responsibilities were to come up with modalities to ensure that the Nigerians exercise their franchise in the 2015 General Election.

The Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states were among the ten members of the task group, whose membership was authorized by INEC. Equally included were: the Director, Electoral Operations; Ag. Director Legal Services; the Director Voter Registry; Chief Technical Adviser to the Chairman; and Special Assistant to the Chairman, as well as the Director Planning and Monitoring, who served as the Secretary of the committee.

According to INEC, the committee had terms of reference which among other ones, included: the organization and conduct of a successful national elections, the void of any form of violence, fraud and or malpractices of any kind.

Implications for the Democracy of Nigeria

Despite the incumbent party conceding a loss to the opposition, the aftermath of the 2015 general elections has sparked controversy in some places. A number of consequences have been proposed that could help to strengthen our shaky democracy. The first is the significance of the opposition taking the majority of seats in the federal and state legislatures and winning the center of the country's elections in Nigeria. In the views of Obiagwu (2015), for the first time in Nigeria, the population voted massively for the opposition despite considerable social infrastructural achievements of the incumbent. Any political system where voters support the opposition does so because the incumbent has fallen short of public expectations. Support for the opposition in 2015 was not simply a way for people to voice their displeasure with the status quo, but also a widespread statement of hope and a desire for change. It is widely acknowledged that Nigerians voted against the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and not for the All Peoples Congress on March 28, 2015. (APC). The inference is that the Buhari administration, which was elected, is under pressure to avoid repeating the missteps of the outlawed ruling party. In its first 100 days of office, on the short term, and in its first year, on the medium term, the new regime's main responsibility was to manage this expectation. Political experience has shown us that when citizens have such high expectations for defeating opposition, they are frequently let down. With the national revenue in decline, this became more significance and consequence.

Furthermore, the results of the elections have demonstrated the critical and immediate need for broad-based electoral changes. The 2015 election was said to have cost more than 4 trillion naira. PDP reportedly spent 2 trillion naira in unreported expenditures alone, while the opposition APC also received significant political funding. The large financial inflow into the campaign offices of the political parties, especially PDP, and the overall petroleum subsidy management have been linked to the corruption rot in various government departments. Reports of significant budgetary allocations being diverted to both major parties were

widespread just before the election campaigns. Both parties were implicated in suspected widespread vote buying, according to empirical findings from election observers and monitors. The amount of money spent on campaign advertisements, attracting traditional leaders, and political road shows was completely unregulated, costing billions of Naira (Obiagwu, 2015). Nigeria's economy was completely depleted, and a full recovery would need several months, especially given the declining inflow of foreign investment. Election laws set restrictions on campaign donations, but there was simply no political will on the part of the regulators to keep track of political finance. As a result, it is possible to conclude that money had considerable influence on the results of the election, particularly with regard to other seats except the presidency.

Once more, the Buhari administration is urged to establish precise guidelines and binding rules for financing political campaigns. The Electoral Act's Section 93 specifies the maximum individual contributions to campaign money as well as the maximum amount that political candidates may spend on their campaigns. Political Parties are required to keep meticulous records of the funds they receive, their sources, and the costs associated with their campaigns. Since 1999, this clause has been followed in violation. Since INEC typically finds itself in a precarious electoral environment during every election semester, it is not anticipated that it will be tasked with the technical responsibility of monitoring political fundraising (Obiagwu, 2015).

Conclusion

Prior to Nigeria's general elections in 2015, the nation has been passing through all manner of political instability, arising from certain democratic problematic, such as electioneering bickering, hooliganism, nepotism, favoritism, poor observation of rule of law, orchestrated economic crunch, excruciating social disorder and different varieties of mismanagement of public fund, including electoral fraud and acute sense of political sit-tightism (Nwanolue, 2003). All these were the scenario that characterized Nigeria before the conduct of 2015 general elections. Hence, the peaceful outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was no doubt a surprise even to the most optimistic believer in Nigeria. There are certainly no single factors to explain the peaceful political fortune of the nation. Amongst the contributory factors were the acceptance of defeat and congratulation of the APC by Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the role of the Abdulsalaam Abubakar Peace Committee and the intervention of friendly nations such as United States of America and United Kingdom. Equally included was the collective Northernization principle that galvanized the electoral activity of the Hausa Fulani political emirate into pulling block votes, in favour of their APC led brother Mahamadu Buhari.

Above all, the peaceful outcome of the 2015 general elections in which an incumbent president lost power to an opposition candidate was a credit to the resilience of the Nigerian people who trooped to the street expressing happiness on the outcome of the election. Having achieved a largely pan-Nigeria desire to bring about change in the government of the country and ensure that people's vote counts, the people voted against political violence. That was indeed questioning the unquestionable.

It must however be noted that the change of Jonathan's government to Buhari's was merely a means to an end, which is the enthronement of citizens' democracy. This determined push to end maladministration, insecurity, injustice, impunity and corruption in the affairs of the nation and bring about social progress, justice, popular empowerment as well as development is still incomplete in the present day Nigerian democratic building. There is no other means these anomalies could be corrected other than through democratically socked general elections. When all these are done, Nigeria would be moved to the next level of democratic stability, sustainable development and effective nation building.

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