

The Electoral Process and Democratic Development in Nigeria (a Case Study of Inec)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Election in Nigeria is an important part of any democratic process that enables the citizenry determine fairly and freely who should lead them at every level of government periodically and take decisions that would determine their economic, political and social wellbeing; and in case the elected leaders do not perform, they still possess the power through the ballot to recall them or vote them out in the next election through laid down electoral processes. Obakhedo, (2011) aptly defined election thus: Election is a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies. The key to participation in a democracy; and the way of giving consent to government (Dye, 2001); and allowing the governed to choose and pass judgment on office holders who theoretically represent the governed Obakhedo, (2011). In its strict sense, there can never be a democracy without election. Huntington is however quick to point out that,

a political system is democratic 'to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote' (Huntington, 1991). In its proper sense, election is a process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members (Nwolise, 2007). Anifowose(2003) defined elections as the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system, Bamgbose (2012). Elections provide the medium by which the different interest groups within the bourgeois nation state can stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means (Iyayi, 2005). Elections therefore determine the rightful way of ensuring that responsible leaders take over the mantle of power.

An election itself is a procedure by which the electorate, or part of it, choose the people who hold public office and exercise some degree of control over the elected officials. It is the process by which the people select and control their representatives. The implication of this is that without election, there can be no representative government. This assertion is, to a large extent, correct as an election is, probably, the most

reliable means through which both the government and representatives can be made responsible to the people who elect them.

Eya (2003) however, sees election as the selection of a person or persons for office as by ballot and making choice as between alternatives. Ozor (2009) succinctly gives a more encompassing and comprehensive definition of election when he noted that the term connotes the procedure through which qualified adult voters elect their politically preferred representatives to parliament legislature of a county (or any other public positions) for the purpose of farming and running the government of the country. Thus Osumah (2002) elucidates what the basic objective of election is which is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens-interest. Elections, according to him extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system. However, elections in Nigeria has always been marred by violence and heightened sense of national insecurity because of the level of tribal and religion sentiments showed by the country men.

Nigeria's 2016 general elections the fifth since 1999, was scheduled for 14th and 28th February 2016 respectively and later changed to 28th March and 11 April 2016 respectively. All 36 states held presidential, federal

parliament and House of Assemblies (state parliaments) elections. Gubernatorial polls were held in 29 states. General elections in Nigeria have always been turbulent and violent affairs. Indeed, the 2007 election polls was widely condemned as the most violent, poorly and massively rigged in the history of Nigeria's electoral history. Even the winner of the presidential poll, a person of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, conceded flaws. Some analysts and observers considered the April 2011 elections as the most credible since the return to democracy, unlike 2007 elections where over 1,000 people were killed in post-election protests. Nigeria has had a checkered electoral history with successive elections being marred by serious irregularities and controversy- particularly in the conduct of its electoral commission. This has led in some cases to the collapsed of democratic experiments as occurred in 1966 and 1983. The 2007 general elections in Nigeria provided a good opportunity to occasion a break with the past and rekindle public confidence in the electoral and democratic process of the country. However, this was not to be as the elections, according to several local and international observers turned out to be the worst in Nigeria's political history (European Union: 2007, Human Rights Watch: 2007, Transition Monitoring Group: 2007). Like its

predecessors, INEC was accused of not being able to engender public confidence in the electoral process or organize transparent and credible elections. Unfortunately, this position has scarcely been demonstrated in a systematic manner.

March 28th and April 11th 2016 election marked another turn in Nigeria's democratic history as registered voters took to the polls to elect the next set of leaders into the Presidential and National Assembly positions. The elections, conducted in the thirty-six states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory, witnessed the emergence of the opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its candidate. This outcome was also the first time an opposition party would unseat the ruling party, People Democratic Party (PDP) since Nigeria's transition into civil rule in 1999.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The cornerstone of competitive elections and democracy is free and fair election. The credibility and legitimacy accorded an election victory is determined by the extent to which the process is free and fair (Garuba, 2007; Bogaards, 2007). Free and fair election serves the purpose of legitimizing such government. In fact, the quality of elections is part of the criteria for assessing the level of consolidation of new democracies.

Elections are therefore considered as vital and indispensable for determining the democratic nature of a political system and ensuring national security. When an election is not managed quite satisfactorily, it can pave the way for deeper ethnic and regional divisions, loss of legitimacy of elected authorities, protest, violent contestation, social explosion, and doubt about institutions, violence, and instability or even threaten the entire democratization process. In fact, poor management of elections is a real and prolific source of conflicts, violence, insecurity and instability (Hounkpe&Gueye, 2010). Low turnout in the 2016 compared to 2011 may be attributed to some factors. First, it might be an indication that previous election results were inflated.

Second, there was a heightened sense of insecurity among Nigerians, with causes such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the North, the possibility of the incumbent not willing to accept the outcome of the election should it not be in its favour, the effects of the election postponement, Also, there is the perception that 'votes do not count' and that the outcomes have been pre-decided by an elite minority. However, this study is examining the electoral process and national security comparing the 2011 and the 2016 general elections.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of this study:

- a. To examine the relationship between electoral process and democratic development in Nigeria.
- b. To examine the factors that promotes democratic development in an electoral process.
- c. To determine the electoral processes and the level of democratic development in Nigeria.
- d. To determine the role of INEC in promoting electoral processes in Nigeria.
- e. To recommend ways of improving electoral process and democratic development in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What is the relationship between electoral process and democratic development in Nigeria?

- b. What are the factors that promote democratic development in an electoral process?
- c. What are the electoral processes and the level of democratic development in Nigeria?
- d. What is the role of INEC in promoting electoral processes in Nigeria?

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

H₀: There is no significant relationship between electoral process and democratic development in Nigeria.

H_a: There is significant relationship between electoral process and democratic development in Nigeria.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study would be of immense importance to government at all levels, INEC, politicians and political stakeholders in Nigeria as it would reveal electoral process and the level of democratic development in Nigeria. The study would also benefit students, researchers and scholars who are interested in developing further research on the subject matter.

1.7 SCOPE/LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will cover the issues of electoral process and democratic development with focus on INEC.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

Financial constraint- Insufficient fund tends to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant materials, literature or information and in the process of data collection (internet, questionnaire and interview).

Time constraint- The researcher will simultaneously engage in this study with other academic work. This consequently will cut down on the time devoted for the research work.