
THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA DEMOCRACY

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***Abstract:** In the eve of transition from the military authoritarian regime, democracy was packaged by the apostles of democratization, both domestic and international, to Nigerians as a sine qua-non for development. Hence with the return to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the mantra of dividends of democracy which soon fizzled out became the populist political rhetoric. The hope for economic, social and political justice, popular empowerment, development and better life with the advent of democracy provoked was supplanted by injustice, disempowerment, insecurity, maladministration, poverty, indignities, backwardness and under development (Odukoya, 2015). Nigerians have become devalued, underdeveloped and victims of a flawed democracy. Africa is democratizing but the democratization occurring in African does not appear to be in the least emancipator. On the contrary, it is legitimizing the disempowerment of ordinary people who seem to be worse off than they used to be because their political oppression is no longer perceived as a problem inviting solution, but a solution endowed with moral and political legitimacy (Ake, 1994). The 2015 general elections was in several respects a historical watershed in Nigeria. The elections took place against the background of important but debilitating factors namely: The presidency challenge, security threats and election postponement, opposition merger, the expiration of tenure, intemperate political rhetoric, sanctity and independence of the electoral administration/ process, states where incumbents were not returning, proliferations of arms and privatization of security, state capacity to checkmate violence, nomination of candidates etc. These factors are strongly affecting democratic stability and consolidation. The analysis of the above factors is the mainstream of this paper.*

Keywords: Democracy, Election, Electoral Democracy, Democratization.

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INTRODUCTION

Elections are critical aspects of the democratic framework for governing modern political societies. They serve as instrument of political choice, mobilization and accountability (Ighodalo, 2012). In a democratic system where elections are devoid of crisis, long term disputes or political violence, are amicably resolved. Such system enhances the prospect and continuity in governance. But where elections are characterized by violence, thuggery, intimidation, rigging, ballot box snatching and stuffing and other forms of electoral malpractices, they bring to question the very essence of democracy and compromise the nation's security. The Nigeria experience with general elections has shown that the political elite has not fully come to terms with the referents of elections for democratic sustenance and national security. More often than not, the elite has failed to play by the rules of competitive electoral politics which prioritizes politics of tolerance, conflict and consensus, bargaining and compromise. They see elections as warfare, characterized parties which organize for elections are also, like armband of men and women going to war, where it is a sin to lose (Ighodalo, 2012). This dominant pattern of elections and electioneering threatens of tear the nation apart and put its tenuous peace at great risks. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria has come and gone but its aftermath threatens the very existence of the Nigerian state. The political uncertainties in the country creates avenues for aggrieved groups to revive their hither to latent agitations for all manner of things. The most violent of them being the spate of bombing by the Boko Haram Sect. Viewed against the corrosive socio-economic and political inanities that underscored the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, the paper interrogates. The paper also explains why did Nigeria contrary to predictions witnessed post election peace despite the pre-election violence nationwide, hate campaigns, the heightened state of insecurity complicated by the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, the abuse of state power for political advantage, the monetization of politics and corruption of the electoral process, some glaring infelicities on the part of the electoral management body, INEC, before and during the elections, as well as the provocative

postponement of the date of the elections. Finally, the paper argues that the unusual and unexpected outcome of the 2015 general elections was majority a consequence of the resilience of the Nigerian people who had suffered from a convoluted democratic scam through the imposition of an interiorized, sub-standard and tropicalized version of democracy (Momoh, 2006).

DEMOCRACY: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

Like any other terminology employed by social scientists, the concept of democracy is a term that is not amenable to definitional unanimity, more so as there exist several versions of it. Common among the versions are the Athenian classical democracy, liberal democracy, Marxist- Leninist democracy and lately, radical democratic conception to mention a few. Democratic discussion is often embroiled in controversies, over which ideally is true democracy, given scholar's divergence of views on the concept and practice of democracy (Salawu & Hassan, 2011). Therefore, there is no consensus among scholars on the exact definition of democracy. The Athenians of the ancient Greece defined democracy as the government of the people by the people for the people. This simply means the government people freely put up to serve them without any discrimination on the basic of social status (Adagbabis Okolie, 2015). Euripides, a Greek Philosopher ions before plato, share the above view when he described a democratic state as one governed by people's representatives and for the many who have neither property nor birth (Sabine & Thorson, 1973). The Ancient democracy recognized the equality of citizens, but failed to develop a general conception of the equality of mankind. Greek democracy was a brief historical episode which had little direct influence on the theory or practice of modern democratic status (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2015). Mafeji (1995) correctly Opines "..... That all social concepts are historically determined". Democracy is no exception. Democracy is a product of its history as a tragic hero, used by the ancient class to legitimize their hold on power and paradoxically by the new class justificatory for uprooting a decadent ruling class from power (Odukoya, 2015). Democracy is a victim of its appeal and success as an ideal and as the best system of government. Beyond its global historical trajectories of manipulation in the service of different social forces, Mafeji (1995) further conferred legitimacy on theorizing democracy "on the basis of the social history of one country". In other words, democracy must

be historically and culturally specific to be useful (Odukoya, 2015). In an elaboration of the Marxist position, Olorode (1990) opines that "the nature of appropriation of the surplus value is an important consideration in whether a society is democratic or not". Thus, democracy is not a political, hence cannot be reduced to a word whose meaning is specified in the dictionary (Mafeje, 1995), the national and international political economy that condition its realities must be interrogated and analyzed. Why a simplicity conceptualization sees democracy as majority rule, democracy is more than an arithmetic or political majority (Odukoya, 2015). As Kolakowski Leszek (1990) perceptively observed, the principle of majority rule does not by itself constitute democracy, we know of tyrannical regimes that enjoyed the support of a majority, including Nazi Germany and the Iranian theocracy. We do not call not call democratic a regime in which 51 percent of the population may slaughter the remaining 49 percent with impunity". Democracy is only meaningful as the prevalence of regime of rights and majority rule. It is for this reason that Sen (1999), notes that, "democracy is a demanding system, and not just a mechanical condition (like majority rule) taken in isolation". The concept can therefore be regarded as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through elections or through the administration of the accepted policies. It is a government founded on the principle of rule of law which is against arbitrariness, high handedness, dictatorship and also antithesis to military regime (Kwasun, 2013). Whichever way democracy is conceptualized, it is reducible to the question of power in a state. What is the ultimate source of power? To whom is power serve? In whose interest should power be used? And how power is to be controlled? These finds expression in practical typologies of democracy put forward by lively (1975, cited in held, 1996), "

- i. All should govern
- ii. All should be involved in crucial decision making
- iii. Rulers should be accountable to the ruled
- iv. Rulers should be accountable to the representatives of the ruled
- v. Rulers should be chosen by the representatives of the ruled and
- vi. Rulers should act in the interest of the ruled" (Odukoya, 2015).

While these concern is about the power of the ruled, in reality with the ideological hegemony of the ruling class and the socialization process of

social institutions the masses often take for granted the right of the political elite to rule. Society thus promotes popular compliance with the status quo. Mafeje, (1995), "ordinary people only fight when their livelihood is threatened. In other words, they fight in order to guarantee the necessary conditions for their social reproduction". For Piven and Cloward (1979), when people make demand for change, a "major transformation has occurred". Two implications can be inferred from this: first, the power to determine political incumbents in the hand of the people is often not used. Second, it is used when it becomes compelling to struggle for "equitable (not equal) distribution of resources" as a result of failure of those in control of state power to provide basic needs of the people. While the direct capture of state power may not be necessary or possible, the essence is the primacy of the will of the people in decision making as well as the valorization of their power as the political sovereign. This often results in the replacement of decadent political elite with another reformist political elite waiting in the win to snatch power (Odukoya, 2015).

However, the different class interests that have captured democracy for its own project historically has confused and misrepresented democracy, such that its form is now taken for its essence. For instance, America global hegemony since the end of World War II is based on the appropriation of democracy which it promotes as the irreducible desideratum for human progress and development. This finds intellectual apology in Sen, (1999), development as freedom. Presently, democratization and liberal democracy are misconstrued as democracy particularly in countries of the south who were recently pilloried and pressurized to abandon authoritarian governance models by the international financial institutions and governments of the advanced capitalist nations. As a consequence, there is a great confusion as to what democracy is and what it is not. Not only are there multiplication of democracy, it is often reduced to liberal multi-party democracy (Odukoya, 2015). However, according to Ake, (2000), "for a political concept, democracy is uncharacteristically precise. It many mean popular power, or in a famous American version, government of the people, for the people, by the people".

Similarly, Mafeje, (1995), notes that, "since Greek times there has been only one definition of democracy; namely, rule by the demos, i.e; the people.

However, according to Ake, (2000) " for a political concept, democracy is uncharacteristically precise. It many mean population power, or in a famous American version, government of the people, for the people, by the people". Similarly, Mafeje, (1995), notes that, "since Greek times there has been only one definition of democracy, namely, rule by the demos, i.e; the people. But throughout history there have been people and non – people. This fact marks the historicity of the concept of "democracy". The people and non people thus become a relation of power as determined by the social relation of production. The eclipse of the people as a relevant political category under liberal democracy has been institutionalized in most Africa states. In the context of the ascendancy of corporate capital globally, neo-liberalism has transformed democracy into a government of the corporate capital, by corporate hegemony, for corporate profits. In this new 'democracy' prevalent in African, the market and profit has replaced the state and people as the constitution logic of liberal democracy. The possibility of illiberal democracy (Zakaria, 1997) mean that democracy cannot be taken for granted. As Zakaria, (1997) note, while "constitutional liberalism is about the limitation of power, democracy about its accumulation and use or misuse". In this wise liberal democracy is domination by democratic pretense and a kick against the sovereignty of the people (Ake, 2000). As a political doctrine, the individual comes before the collective, just as it makes the people onlookers in decisions that shape their existence.

Ake, (2000) captures this poignantly thus, "instead of the collectivity, liberal democracy focuses on the individual whose claims are ultimately placed above those of the collectivity. It replaces government by the people with government by the consent of the people instead of the sovereignty of the people; it offers the sovereignty of law".

Lumumba – Kasongo, (2005) argues that the deficits of liberal democracy are such that it is an inadequate theoretical basis for social construction. This is particularly so because of its ideological disconnection between the political and economics. Ayelazuno, (2007) correctly notes, this made it possible for the liberal state to depoliticize bread and butter issues as private or economic, and as such not to be interfered with by the state". This negates the utility of democracy of economic empowerment for Africans. According to Ake, (1993), "Ordinary Africans do not separate political democracy from economic democracy or for that matter from economic well-being". By

reinforcing neo-liberal market fundamentalism within the political sphere, the desire for "dividends of democracy", seen as economic empowerment of the people is jettisoned. The ideology of liberal democracy thus empties democracy of its empowering essence (Odukoya, 2015). This resulted for the victory of global capitalism with the simultaneous fall of the Berlin wall and the ideological liquidation of the Soviet Union. Pye, (1990) argues that the global crisis of authoritarianism in the 1980 was resolved in favour of international capital that imposed its version of democracy on a people brutalized at home by its political elite and from abroad by the dictate of global market imperatives. Joseph, (1990) sees the product of this process as virtual democracy; another name tag for liberal democracy. A democracy without substance characterized by: formal citizen rule without popular participation; fraudulent election to achieve forced legitimacy; narrow choices and outcomes support for election to preserve the status quo and interest of domestic and international capital (Joseph, 1990). These are the legacy of democratization in Africa. Democratization is not the same as democracy (Ake, 1996; Momoh, 2006; 2015). It is possible to democratize yet be undemocratic. Though the two concepts may transverse similar route, they have different destinations and implications. This is particularly so as Joseph, (1990) argues, "Authoritarian regimes (imposed market driven multi-party democracies) mastered the script of contemporary democratization while finding ways to neutralize and disable its transformative mechanisms". Young (1999) also made a similar assertion that the African patrimonial autocracy finds continued accommodation and seeks dubious legitimacy within liberal democracy with implications for identity politics, corruption, electoral violence, flawed election, state crisis and de-politicization of the people and de-democratization. It is in this respect that Ake, (1994) implicates democratization as a mechanism for mass disempowerment. In other words, democratization promotes exploitation by other means.

Mkandawire, (1999) argues that democracy has suffered trivialization under the liberal democracy project which has brought the concept to an all time low as the political correlate of capitalism with all the anti democratic implications. First, is the powerlessness of elected officials to provide for the social welfare of citizens in the face of transnational capital. Second the reduction of democracy to an instrument of expropriation and expropriation

by transnational capital (Mkandawire, 1999). This sort of democracy cannot serve as a bulwark against the ills of global capitalism in peripheral social formations like Nigeria. In this regard, Plattner (2010) notes that modern democracy has a dual character it is itself, in this sense, a kind of hybrid regime, one that tempers popular rule with anti-majoritarian features. For while it seeks to ensure the ultimate sovereignty of the people, at the same time it limits the day to day rule of the majority so that it does not infringe upon the rights of individuals or minorities". Liberal democracy has created problems and becomes a political liability for democracy with the eclipse of the people. This is reflected in democratic disengagements even in leading western democracies. The determination of major domestic issues by actors dispersed in the global space (Dalh, 1994) and the externalization of political accountability engendered by neo-liberal globalization has compounded the citizens powerlessness under liberal democracy. This informs Plattner, (2010) submission that, "the solution to the problems of democracy cannot simply be more democracy because liberal democracy is in tension with itself". Thus since liberal democracy is the problem, administering more will only compound the problem. Britain, (1975) calls attention to another deficit of liberal democracy, the negative effects of group's self interestedness, rather than the collectives. For this reason Ake, (1993) argues that "in order for African democracy to be relevant and sustainable it will have to be radically different from liberal democracy. For one thing, it will have to de-emphasize abstract political rights and stress concrete economic rights, because the demand for democracy in Africa draws much of its impetus from the prevailing economic conditions within (Odukoya, 2015).

To serve as an instrument for freedom and empowerment, Lumumba – Kasongo, (1998) cited in Lumumba – Kasongo (2005) opines that, "Democracy should be a struggle against social inequality, injustices, exploitation, and social opportunities for the citizenry. It is a corrective process in which a given society, especially a formerly colonized society, is born again". To qualify as democracy in this sense certain attributes must be discernable consent of the governed, formal political equality, inalienable human rights including rights to political participation, accountability of power to the governed and the rule of law (Ake, 2000).

SELECTED ISSUES IN THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

The 2015 general elections provided another opportunity for the people to mobilize for change of what they considered a bankrupt and anti people leadership. Though election was alien to democracy at its inception and only became essential to it with the emergence of the nation state and the concomitant representation, election is the heart and soul of any democracy. Election gives people the ultimate power to determine how government is constituted. An election is the symbol of the collective will of the people, infringing on it, therefore, and means violating the rights of the people to determine their own destiny. Under ideal democracy conditions, good governance and political accountability are rewarded while poor stewardship is sectioned through denial of a return mandate at the next poll. Peaceful succession and organized political change resulting from election promote political stability and system health (Odukoya, 2015). The 2015 general election was the closest electoral contest since the country's post 1999 transition to multi-party democracy (International Republican Institute, 2015). The election is the most politically engaged in the history of electoral democracy in Nigeria. Huge resources were used for the elections including 120 billion naira expended by INEC, 750,000 ad-hoc election staff with over 360,000 security personnel. The presidential election was contested by fourteen candidates from different political parties. However, the candidates of the PDP (Good luck Jonathan) and APC (General Muhammadu Buhari) were the major contenders in the election. The 2015 general election was the fifth general elections since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. Nigerians went into the general elections with renewed determination to exercise their voting rights and stood stoutly to monitor and protect their votes with anything any everything (Momodu, 2015).

Though, the 2015 general election has come and gone. The elections was bedeviled with issues that almost denied Nigeria and Nigerians the opportunity of voting in their representatives in government for another four years. These issues almost affected the integrity, quality and management of the election. Indeed, quality election management is crucial to the sustenance of democracy (Alebiosu, 2015). This is because, if the citizenry does not believe in the fairness, accuracy, openness, and basic integrity of election process, the very basis of any democratic society might be threatened. This implies that public faith in the integrity of election

system is a cornerstone of democratic government (Alvarez & Hall, 2008). Therefore, a legitimate electoral process and public confidence in democratic governance depends on both the actual and perceived integrity of an election (International Foundation for Electoral System, 2015). Therefore, the 2015 general elections subsisted on some issues that cannot be ignored. These issues were the presidency challenge, security threats and election postponement, opposition merger, the expiration of tenure, intemperate political rhetoric, sanctity and independence of the electoral administration/process, state where incumbents were not returning, proliferations of arms and privatization of security, state capacity to checkmate violence and nomination of candidates.

THE PRESIDENCY CHALLENGES

The uncommon challenge to the presidency already weakened as a consequence of internal fragmentation and defections from the ruling people's Democratic party (PDP), coupled with erosion of legitimacy as a result of massive corruption, inept leadership, mal-governance and mal-administration complicated matters. In the context of the political economy of Nigeria's rentier state, presidential power within the overarching tenor of Nigeria's distributive federalism is the best price any politician, social force or political party can hope to have. Losing such power by the Nigerian politicians is like losing a life. The challenge of the presidency has two dimensions: the northern quest for "return" to power in the context of resistant by the south, and opposition gang-up. The essence of the rotational presidency and zoning is to ensure "equitable access" to this enriching opportunity through equitable access by all to the common wealth is not an issue. The emergence of Goodluck Jonathan from the south – south as president following the uncompleted northern presidency as a consequence of president Umaru Yar'Adua's death, the electoral routing of Alhaji Abubakar Atiku the northern consensus candidate in the PDP primary in run-up to the 2011 presidential elections, and Muhammadu Buhari in the presidential polls, created political bad blood. The result was the massive post – election violence in the North in 2011 in which over 800 lives were lost. The 2015 general elections present another opportunity for the north to attempt to regain power at the presidential race; having contested either primaries or presidential elections at least three times since the return to civil rule were in a way desperate for power. Both, particularly Buhari have wide

northern support amongst the lumpen elements easily predisposed and mobilized for violence. At the 2011 presidential election, Buhari garnered over twelve million votes. Not a few were of the opinion that the post – election violence in most parts of the north was on account of his losing to president Good luck Jonathan. In the south- south region where president Jonathan is from, the ex-militant, Asari Dokuleo, with millions of dollars from pipelines security contact and arm purchase for the deferral government insisted that it was either Jonathan get a second term through fair or foul means, or Nigeria witness Armageddon (Odukoya, 2015).

SECURITY THREATS AND ELECTION POSTPONEMENT

The 2015 general election was conducted amidst security threats and challenges especially the Boko Haram insurgency. The Boko Haram insurgents had engaged in kidnapping, massive killings and wanton destruction of properties. The terrorist group had also captured some territories (about twenty local government areas) in Nigeria which was effectively under their control. Furthermore, the insurgents had also threatened to disrupt the 2015 general elections and intend to ensure that the election was not held. Against this background, the 2015 general elections which was schedule to hold on February 14 and 28, 2015 was postponed by INEC to March 28 and April 11, 2015. The National Security Adviser (NSA), Col. Dasuki had claimed in a statement that the general elections as schedule for February, 2015 cannot be guaranteed in view of the security threats and challenges across the country. According to him, this was because most of the men of the Nigerian Army are engaged in Nigeria's north east, confronting the Boko Haram insurgents.

He therefore contended that the six weeks postponement of the general elections will enable the armed forces to subdue and reclaimed the territories under the effective control of Boko Haram. Prior to this poll shift, INEC had repeatedly assured Nigerians of its readiness to conduct the general elections. The postponement was received with mixed feelings. Some individuals, group and political parties especially the people Democratic Party (PDP) supported and hailed the decisions of the poll shift. Supporters of the general elections postponement were of the believed that the period of the election rescheduling will guarantee peace and security across the country. Meanwhile, other individuals, groups and political parties particularly the All

Progressive Congress (APC) outrightly rejected the rescheduling of the 2015 general election. Some of the political parties including the APC accused the PDP led federal government of deliberately allowing insurgency in the north – east, an opposition strong hold, to fester so it can in on it get re-elected. Chimamanda Adichie argued that the postponement was a flailing act of desperation by Dr Good luck Jonathan (Nigeria President, 2011-2015 and PDP presidential candidate in the 2015 general elections) not to lose the election. Similarly, chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigeria president (1999-2007) described the poll shift as PDP presidential candidate grand plans to win the election by all means. Clement Nwankwo believed that the intention of the election rescheduling that the undermine the democratic process and to stop the growing support for the APC in the country (Alebiosu, 2015).

No doubt, INEC was arm – twisted by the security apparatus of the Nigerian state in rescheduling the 2015 general elections, and this singular act embarrassed Nigeria and Nigerians indeed, the postponement of the general election appears to almost erode public credibility and confidence in the elections. It must also be stated that billion of naira of public fund had been expended towards preparations of the election but the truth remains that the Boko Haram insurgents are effective control of some territories (which size is up to Belgium) where elections needed to be conducted. Considering the security threats and challenges, how can men, materials and other logistical arrangements be effectively distributed and managed for a violent free election during or after the poll? The contention by some stakeholders in the 2015 election that the territories under the captive of the poll appears to me as irrational. The question would be; are these groups of people not Nigerians? Had these categories of people excluded in the 2015 general elections, it would have amounted to a breach of their democratic and fundamental human rights. This may have led to legal actions that would have impacted on the general elections negatively.

Some of the 2015 general election stakeholders were also quick to mention that countries like Afghanistan and Iraq successfully held elections even though they were in a state of war. Again, this is completely untrue of the true situations in these countries. However, let me very quickly state that the security of an election is unique to the circumstances in which are different

– even if it is held periodically in the same country – due to the changing forces that shape the national interest and corresponding political agenda (Dunne, 2006).

Let it be categorically stated that none of the two of Afghanistan and Iraq had any of their territories under the effective control of the terrorist groups (Taliban in AFGHANISTAN; Islamic state of Iraq and levant in IRAQ) operating in these countries as at when their general elections were conducted in April, 2014. What the terror groups in these countries usually embarked upon were suicide bombing and attacks. In fact, forty eight hours to their respective general elections, security personnel and civilians lives and properties were destroyed (Alebiosu, 2015). Unarguably, security is a critical component of electoral democracy. Indeed, security is part of the measures for credible and transparent election. Ensuring a fairly secure environment for voters and sensitive materials on Election Day in all areas of the country is a necessary condition for holding democratic elections. The absence of basic security measures will jeopardize, if not severely harm, the acceptability of the results (Lopez – Pintor, 2010). To ensure the integrity of the electoral systems, (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2015). Indeed, the assurance of equitable security during an electoral process is essential to retaining the participants confidence and commitment to an election. Consequently security is both integrat to the goal of an electoral process (Dunne, 2006).

In view of this, INEC could not have continued with the 2015 general elections, if the security agencies cannot guarantee the safety of lives and properties before, during and after the elections. This however, calls to question the primary responsibility of government which is to provide security and welfare for its citizens as enshrined in section 14 (b) of the 1999 constitution (as amended) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Furthermore, the 2015 general election rescheduling was still under the constitutionally stipulated period for the conduct of the elections by INEC. The 1999 constitution (as amended) stipulated that elections into the offices of the president and Vice President; Governors and Deputy Governors; membership of the National Assembly and Houses of Assembly shall hold not earlier than one hundred and fifty (150) days and not later than thirty (30) days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder. In addition,

section 25 of the electoral Act (as amended) further empowers INEC to appoint date not earlier than one hundred and fifty (150) days but not later than thirty (30) days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder. It is important to state the section 26 of the electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) empowers INEC to postpone elections where there is reason to believe that a serious breach of the peace would occur if the election hold on a said date. Therefore, the postponement of the election is within the purview of INEC'S powers following security concerns raised by the NSA (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015). It is therefore my opinion that the postponement of the 2015 general elections was not in breach of Dung law in Nigeria. Consequently, the rescheduling of the election was in order considering the fact that may 29, 2015 (sixty three days from March 28, 2015) was the handover date; and because the Nigeria armed forces was able to reclaimed the territories during the period of postponement and subsequently went onto integrally involved the military under a special arrangement in the 2015 general elections (Alebiosu, 2015). However, the deployment of the military for the 2015 elections generated controversy among stake holders in the election to the extent that court judgment was delivered on the issue. Femi Falana, a human right activist argued that the military involvement in providing security for the elections was unconstitutional. He maintained that INEC was wrong to insist that only the military could guarantee security the 2015 general elections. He noted that the obligation to provide security and maintain law and order during the election rests on the police and not the military. The deployment of the military in the 2015 general elections became an issue in view of the massive deployment of the military in the Ekiti and Osun state Government elections 2014, wherein some of the political parties accused the military of playing out a script in the elections. However, let me categorically state that the military were not directly involved in the 2015 general elections. The roles of the military in the elections were very limited (Alebiosu, 2015). No military officer was posted to any polling booth. They were deployed to major roads for security checks in order to prevent security breach during and after the elections. While the issue of security, deployment of the military and postponement of the 2015 general elections was still generating controversy among the election stake holders, the sudden debate on the expiration of tenure of the INEC chairman and sub sequent call for his removal almost disrupts the elections.

OPPOSITION MERGER:

The merger of major opposition parties in the All progressive Congress (APC), a rare political phenomenon in Nigerian politics introduced a different political calculation and complication to the 2015 general election. The merger lacking any ideological basis reflected the desperation of parties and politicians that have been shut out of power since the return to civil rule on May 29, 1999, to snatch federal power from the PDP. On its part, the ruling PDP made no pretense of its desire to be in power by hook or crook. The 2015 general elections provided the first opportunity for the opposition merger to attempt taking power from the PDP. The scale of violence attendant to the governorship elections between the APC and PDP in Ekiti and Osun states as well as the by election for the house of Representatives in Niger state were dress rehearsals for the 2015 general elections (Odukoya, 2015).

EXPIRATION OF TENURE

In the midst of issue calling for attention among the 2015 general elections stakeholders came the speculation that the INEC chairman might be asked to proceed on a terminal leave in March, 2015 before the expiration of his tenure in June, 2015. This issue further compounded the fears in some quarters that the 2015 general elections might not hold after its rescheduling. The PDP led federal government was accused of plotting this in ordinator agenda. Various individuals and groups including the movement for the Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB), the Oodua people's congress (OPC), the Afenifere Renewal Group (ARG) as well as some former militants in the Niger Delta and even some state governors (e.g. Ekiti state Governor, Ayo Fayose) call for the sack of the INEC boss (Ebhomele, 2015). Other groups and individuals kicked against the removal of Prof Jega. Let me however state that INEC is a body established by law by virtue of section 153 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) of Nigeria. Further more, section 157 categorically states that for the removal of the INEC boss, two – thirds majority of the senate must support the prayer of Mr. President. This must however be as a result of the inability of the chairman to discharge the functions of its office (whether arising from infirmity of mind or body or any other cause) or for misconduct. Has the chairman of INEC been declared medically unfit? Has the INEC boss failed to discharge his duties for any reason? Has he engaged in any misconduct while

carrying out his responsibilities? These questions are fundamental to the ongoing discussion in order to put the issue in perspective. That, the INEC boss predecessor, Prof Iwu was removed illegally in a manner that was undemocratic and was not challenged, call to question the practice of rule of law and constitutionalism in Nigeria's democratic process. The hullabaloo about the removal of the INEC boss appears to me as an attempt to coerce him to rescind from some of the reforms he embarked upon in the Nigerian electoral democracy towards the preparation for the 2015 general elections. Prof Jega is the first Nigeria to over conduct two consecutive general elections (2011 and 2015) in Nigeria. His appointment came at a time when the democratization process was bedeviled by badly conducted elections that left Nigerians frustrated and questioning the value and validity of electoral democracy (Jega, 2013). To address this ugly situation, Prof Jega started series of reforms in order to deepen Nigeria's electoral democracy. Chief among these reforms was the introduction of the smart card reader for the 2015 general elections (Alebiosu, 2015).

INTEMPERATE POLITICAL RHETORIC

The desperation for political power by all means possible finds expression in the rhetoric of politicians. Rather than engaging issues, the focus was on personalities. At the formal declaration of Muhammadu Buhari for president, governor of rivers state, Rotimi Amaechi said, "They will fight with their lives". Though politicians strive to rule all Nigerians, the language of most Nigerian politicians either in government or opposition, was divisive, intemperate, selfish, provocative, partisan and unnationalistic. This extreme of this was the death wish of Buhari by the governor of Ekiti state, Ayodele Fayose. Intemperate political rhetoric, particularly by dominant political parties generated tension and ignited violence across the country. Rather than put the nation first, proffer alternatives course of developmental action, the opposition indulges in unnecessary recriminations while the government busies itself with the blame game and shadow boxing. These antagonistic and confrontational politics of incumbent and oppositional parties set a negative political tenor that encouraged violence throughout the elections. This was because politicians, as Olurode and Jega (2011), noted are involved in "desperate struggle to be at the center and not at the periphery, indeed not the wrong side of politics become rational". The height of this was the hate campaign sponsored by the PDP against the persons of the APC presidential

candidates, Mohammadu Buhari and its National leader, Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the African independence Television (AIT) and Silverbird Television. Patience Jonathan, wife of the president also called on the PDP supporters to stone those calling for change (Odukoya, 2015). The hate campaign was not limited to those contesting in the 2015 general elections, the integrity of the INEC chairman, Attahiru Jega and the institutional reputation of INEC were smeared and called to question by the PDP. This was on account of the insistent of INEC that card readers would be used to enhance the electoral integrity of the 2015 general elections. The Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), and the movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign state of Biafra (MOSSOB), two banned militia organizations resurrected out of desperation by president Jonathan staged violent protests in the western and eastern parts of the country respectively against the use of the card reader for the elections, and for the removal of Jega as INEC chairman.

SANCTITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION/ PROCESS

Recent experience in Nigeria has shown that the efficiency and effectiveness of the electoral process as well as the adjudication of electoral cases are strong factors in either engendering or preventing violence before, during and after elections. As Inadu (2011) notes, though an election is uncertain by nature, for the credibility of its outcomes, it demands a fidelity to a certainty of the procedure from those who manage the electoral process. While the electoral management body, INEC, strived to maintain and jealously guide its independence, insist and applied the electoral act to all parties and candidate without fear or favour, INEC displayed helplessness in the face of the flagrant violations of the electoral Act by politicians campaigning and pasting posters before the permissible time allowed by law, as well as the challenge of prosecuting electoral offenders. Similarly, its management of the distributions of the permanent voters cards (PVC) left much to be desired. There were reported cases of stolen PVC, missing data, non – printing and late printing of PVC, difficulties in locating where to collect PVC, non-availability of officials at venues of PVC collection, demand for monetary inducement by ad hoc staff before releasing PVC amongst other. As a result, several Nigerians would have been disenfranchised were it not for the six weeks postponement of the elections. Even at that, some 18 percent Nigerians did not collect their PVC for whatever reason. The voters

education regarding the use of the card readers which was to be used to authenticate voters and curb election rigging was inadequate. But for the change in date of the elections, INEC would not have tested ran the new technology of card reader it planned to deploy for such tension soaked elections.

STATES WHERE INCUMBENTS WERE NOT RETURNING

Incumbency in Nigerian politics means unlimited resources it terms of financial and the state power which can be misused to confer unmerited and unquestionable political advantage unquestionably. In the 2015 general elections, incumbent governors in six state; Enugu, Lagos, Plateau, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Delta and Cross-Rivers did not run having served out their constitutionally allowed two terms. The political situation in these states was a form of open market operation as evidence by the number of political gladiators that showed interest to succeed the incumbent governors (Odukoya, 2015). Paradoxically, most of these governors were not prepared to be statement and neutral in the choice of their successors. Rather, they openly endorsed candidates that would take over from them. The implication of this was that state resources and power were recklessly and unconscionably deployed to the advantage of some candidates against the others. In Nigeria, incumbent misuse state power to defend and advance the electoral interests of self and party. Contesting against an incumbent of their anointed candidates is sees as confronting the state. The result was the exacerbation of for violence. Added to this, was the PDP determined attempt to take over the southwest, a move buoyed by its success in the Ekiti upset of the APC on the eve of the 2015 general elections.

PROLIFERATIONS OF ARMS AND PRIVATIZATION OF SECURITY

A major fallout of the several conflicts in the last two decades in the West African region, the Niger Delta crisis, and Boko Haram insurgency is the proliferation of small arms all over the country. Given the war-like nature of politics in Nigeria and the failure of the state to guarantee the safety of life and property, the 2015 general elections benefitted from these arms. The first duty for any "serious" politician interested in power and desirous to stay alive is to organize his or her own "standing army" (muscle men). The two requirements other than money that are needed, arms and a mass of "lumpen" youth are available in abundance (Odukoya, 2015). Huge financial

investment in politics increased politicians' desperation and resort to violence and explains the logic of politicians need for "standing armies" to counter-balance the terror of the opposition. Rather than building their support base, politicians during the 2015 general elections were more concerned with building standing armies. This as Olurode and Jega (2011) argued, was to be able "to first regulate political contest on one's term, and second, keep others ('intruders') at bay".

State Capacity to Checkmate Violence

Since the return to civil rule on May 29, 1999, the states monopoly of the means of physical coercion have been successfully challenged across the country. Successful and unresolved high-profile political assassination of Chief Bola Ige, then the Attorney-General of the federation and Minister of Justice, Engineer Funsho Williams gubernatorial candidate of the People Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos State, and Harry Marshall, a leader of the PDP in Rivers State amongst several others exposed the state as incapable of enforcing law and order. This ugly trend has not abated particularly due to the state complicity or indifference in some of these incidences. The violation of the hallowed temple of justice by thugs of the then Governor-elect of Ekiti State, Mr. Ayo Fayose depicts the lawlessness that was the norm has the nation approached the 2015 elections. The widely reported cases of leakage operational secrets to the Boko Haram sect and footage of Nigeria soldiers running from the sect were similarly not confidence enhancing of citizens believe in the capacity of the state to combat violence in Nigeria. The escalation in the incidence of small arms and non-Nigerians involvement in violence and criminality are due to the failure of our border management by the customs and immigration services. The period before and during the 2015 general elections witnessed the lowest point of state incapacity to contain violence in Nigeria (Odukoya, 2015).

Nomination of Candidates

The nomination process has proven to be the Achilles of the electoral process in Nigeria. The process which should otherwise be a peaceful affair amongst members of the same political brotherhood is often marred by corruption, arm-twisting, manipulation, and assassination. Most unresolved cases of political assassination in Nigeria were connected with party nominations. The violence associated with intra-party nominations in most cases is far

more than during general elections. Political 'godfathers' who would do anything to ensure that their anointed political 'godsons' get the party tickets complicates and makes the nomination process violence prone during the 2015 general elections. The problems associated with party nominations feeds on the lack of internal democracy within the parties to enhance the credibility of candidate's selection and their acceptance of the outcomes. Most of the parties are operating like secret cults. The internal conflict resolution mechanisms of these parties, which are more of platforms for seeking political power, are very weak. With the judicial process of prosecuting electoral cases especially arising from, party primaries often encumbered by technical landmines, and deemed to be the internal affairs of the parties, the resort to self-help through violence was very common during the 2015 general elections (Odukoya, 2015).

The E-Day

Despite the fears and anxieties that proceeded the 2015 general elections, the Presidential and National Assembly elections witnessed mass turnout of voters on the new date of March 28, 2015. Nigerians across the country came out in their thousands to exercise their civil right to vote. However, there were complaints in several polling units of non-functioning of the card readers. While in some cases it took a longtime before the problems with the card readers were rectified, in others the problems experienced was due to lack of familiarity with the equipment. For instance, there were many cases of non-functioning card readers that were due to the failure to remove the protective cover was one of the reasons for the Card Readers problem which called to question the training of personnel deployed for the elections. Also, the few card readers that had to do with network problems were quickly resolved with the change to another network provider. Non-appearance of pictures on Card Readers were common. Similarly, some card readers with inadequately charged batteries had the batteries substituted. There were few instances where the card readers failed to work at all or read fingerprints and those concerned had to go home without voting after waiting in vain for the whole day. Voting in some parts of Kosofe and Somolu Local Governments in Lagos State started very late in the day on because of Card Readers problems. A major explanation for this was that there were insufficient technical hands to attend to the card readers that had problems despite INEC claim to the contrary. In most parts of the South East and South-South were

the PDP that had vigorously campaigned against the use of the Card Readers held Sway, the card readers were jettisoned. Contrary to the position of INEC, manual accreditations were used in the two political zones. These Card Readers problems were largely reduced during the April 11 governorship and State house Assembly elections (Odukoya, 2015). During the March 28 presidential and National Assembly elections, there were logistic problems associated with the movement of materials and electoral personnel in several places nationwide. This led to voters waiting for long time for accreditation and voting. There were, however, few instances where accreditation commenced before the approved time of 8.00 am for the exercise (Observation Report, 2015). Voting could not take place for various reasons in 300 of the 150,000 polling units across Nigeria. Of these figures 90 polling units spread across five local governments in Lagos were involved. Though there were reports of juvenile voting in some parts of the North, there were reports of wanton electoral malfeasance in the South-east and South-South. In Imo State, for instance, the state governor, Rochas Okorocha of the APC took to the mass media to condemn the fraudulent election in his state. Also, the INEC Headquarter in Calabar had to be sealed up in the face of electoral violence. Reports of intimidation were documented in Ekiti as well as violence in Bauchi resulting in the imposition of curfew in Bauchi, Alkaleri, and Kirfi local governments.

The Situation Room (2015) Reports on Incidences that Occurred during the Elections thus:

Situation Room flagged some and wishes to draw attention to the following concerns and reservations as observed during the elections, which raise issues about the creditability of the elections in some states. Information obtained from our networks of field observers and partners indicate the following: numerous cases of electoral misconduct-disorderly conduct at polling units- in Akwalbom (10 reports received), Katsina (17) and Sokoto (18); Many cases of process violations in Sokoto (15 reports received); Adamawa (6), Delta (7) and Katsina states(9); polling logistics problems in Akwalbom (14), Delta (9), Katsina (8), Rivers(11), Adamawa (6) and Sokoto (12) States; cases of election-related violence in Akwalbom (18), Abia (9), Anambra(7), Delta (9), Imo (6), Rivers (16), Benue (6), Katisina (17), Sokoto (17) and Kano States (7); killings in Rivers state where seven people (including a police officer) were killed as well as in Akwalbom (3), Delta (2), Katsina (2).

Situation Room is further concerned about the overall conduct of the elections in Rivers and the Akwaibom States; where there are good grounds to question the credibility of the elections results in both states. In River State, historically deep-rooted political animosities played out in a brazen, violent and naked manner to subvert the electoral process in many local governments in the state. In Akwaibom, there were also serious questions about the veracity of the results because of reports of active and direct partisan interference with the elections. There are also concerns about Abia State, which recorded multiple cases of electoral misconduct. We note that INEC has had to cancel elections in polling units in some states because of election-related violence and other irregularities; while in others it has commenced investigations. The situation room hereby calls on INEC to urgently take steps to clinically scrutinize the final collected results from these states (rivers, Akwaibom and Abia) against the polling unit results and make a reasoned judgment about them (Odukoya, 2015).

The Day-After

Posting of results on the social media started before the conclusion of voting. Expectedly, these results were largely conflicting and created unnecessary anxieties. The PDP issued a press statement accusing the APC of circulating fake results. The situation was not helped as INEC was unable to honour its promise to declare the result of the presidential and National Assembly elections within forty-eight hours. While the counting was on-going at National Collation Centre, Abuja, the nation, and they would waited with berated breath. No one was sure of what happen after the final results are declared. Not a few believed that the country would be engulfed in violence irrespective whosoever of the two leading candidates wins. The appearance of Elder peter Gods will Crubebe, former minister of Niger Delta, after announcement of eighteen states with the PDP trailing behind the APC, in what appeared as a planned action to truncate the announcement of the 2015 presidential elections moved the nation dangerously close to violence. He accused the INEC Chairman of bias, tribalism, selective, partial and compromised. He also claimed that the results that were still being counted have been printed by Jega and the APC. He insisted that the collation of result would not continue until Jega set-up committees to investigate the elections in Kano, Katsina and Kaduna where the APC had seriously defeated the PDP. This expectedly put the nation on edge and almost confirmed the

doomsday predictions on the country (Odukoya, 2015). Miraculously before the declaration of the final result, the unexpected and unimaginable happened. President Goodluck Jonathan called Mohamadu Buhari and conceded defeat. There were calm and joy all-over the nation. When the result was finally announced and Buhari declared the winner, jubilation was witnessed across the nation. How come the nation was not consumed by the election? What explained the sudden decision of President Jonathan and his party to concede defeat and congratulate Buhari, how do we account for the defeat of a seating president for the first time in Nigeria history.

SOME OF THE RIGGING METHODS USED IN THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

It is necessary to itemize some of the despicable methods utilized by some politicians in subverting the popular will of the Nigerian people as follows:

1. Use of under-aged children as voters to which INEC officials and the police are indifferent.
2. Use of police and security operatives to terrorize opponents and rival party agents.
3. Use of armed thugs to harass and intimidate opponents and rival party agents
4. Falsification of results and forgery of figure both at polling units and collation centers.
5. Recognition of non-existing polling units by INEC and allocation of voting materials to same.
6. Bribing of INEC officials, the police and security agents with irresistible amounts to perpetrate election rigging.
7. Unannounced and sudden change of location of polling stations and collation centers.
8. Replacement or exchange of official ballot boxes with unofficial ballot boxes containing unofficial thumb-printed ballot papers.
9. Addition of unofficial ballot boxes to official ballot boxes containing already thumb-printed ballot papers
10. Forcing some party agents at gunpoint to sign forged election results.
11. Use of looted public money to bribe voters
12. Sales of mandate to the highest bidder.

13. Distribution of foodstuffs and soup ingredients such as rice, beans, garri, groundnut oil, maggi, and other items like sugar, slippers, roofing sheet, clothing materials, etc to induce voters.
14. Canvassing for votes at polling centers with impunity.
15. Ruling parties compromising agents of newly registered parties by offering them bribe.
16. Thumb-printing of ballot papers by INEC Officials.
17. Thumb-printing of ballot papers by security agents.
18. Printing and use of fake election results sheets with same numbers as authentic results sheets.
19. Posting of false results by INEC on its website for internet consumption that had borne with results emanating from polling centers.
20. Party members of the ruling parties bearing INEC tags on polling days to facilitate moving from polling station to polling station and from one collation center to another with a view to rigging elections.
21. Dressing up party agents in police uniforms to intimidate opponents at polling and collation centers.
22. Use of party agents as surveyors of voters cards to facilitate impersonation and multiple voting.
23. Refusing to count and discarding of ballot papers identified as thumb-printed for political parties that are not favoured.
24. Accumulation and use of illegally acquired voting cards to vote on election days.
25. Thumb-printing of ballot papers by some domestic monitors.

CONCLUSION

Democracy was welcomed in Nigeria with high expectation and enthusiasm since it has the capacity of ensuring political stability and socio-economic development. But this hope was soon dashed as the political landscape of the nation was turn to a battle ground not for national survival but for extending self centric and elitist agenda (Kwasau, 2013). The system today lacks an agenda for the masses and their rights terribly suppressed. Instead of peace, stability, development and an egalitarian society, the nation is now characterized and marred by political instability. Elections are important part of representative democracy. Individuals and groups have to compete in an

open contest for the people's votes. Where this done fairly and creditably, the wishes of the people would easily prevail. But the country's practice of democracy with its emphasis on multi-party elections has produced socio-economic decay and a recurring political cauldron in the country. Mere reform of the country's political economy will not resolve the crises which have often threatened the very existence of the Nigerian States (Ighodalo, 2012). The first major step toward resolving endemic problem of electoral conflicts and crises within the Nigerian state is to enthrone genuine democracy based on the people cultural values which contain what has been described as the universal ideals of democracy. Once this is realized, it will empower the people to bring to bear on the polity their innate potentials for development in various spheres of life and the frustration they presently experienced will be a thing of the past. 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 are the acceptance of defeat and congratulation of the APC by Former President Goodluck Jonathan, the role of the Abdulsalaam Abubakar peace Committee and the intervention of friendly nations such as United States of America and United Kingdom (Odukoya, 2015). The people with their actions before, during and after the election made it clear that they wanted change. 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. It must however be noted that the change of government 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. There is a categorical imperative to bring together the civil society and political society as a platform for mobilization of the Nigerians for the enthronement of genuine democracy, empowerment and development.

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