

To cite this article: Jatau Victoria Satu, Nyor, Gabriel Aza, Hassan M. Zitta and Lere B. Ishaku (2022). ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND NIGERIA'S QUEST FOR DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: ANALYSIS OF THE 2015 AND 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND A PROSPECT FOR 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS, International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 5 (4): 362-375

ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND NIGERIA'S QUEST FOR DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: ANALYSIS OF THE 2015 AND 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND A PROSPECT FOR 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Jatau Victoria Satu, Nyor¹, Gabriel Aza², Hassan M. Zitta³ and Lere B. Ishaku⁴

¹Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Sciences, Plateau State University Bokkos, P.M.B.2012, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

²Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Department of Political Science, Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil Kano

^{3,4}Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Sciences, Plateau State University Bokkos, P.M.B.2012, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2022.5426>

ABSTRACT

The impact of election in any democratic setting remains a stronger pillar in which democracy is consolidated. The synergy between election and democracy is highly complementary. This notwithstanding, since Nigeria's returned to political dispensation in 1999 after years of military autocratic regime, election management has been characterised with flaw and manipulations. Interestingly, the 2015 general elections marked a watershed in the annals of electoral administrations in Nigeria. The election was not only applauded by the domestic observers, interestingly, it also received positive remarks from notable international observers and monitors. Nevertheless, the momentum of positivism of Nigeria's electioneering politics was drawn back with the dynamics of the 2019 general elections. In lieu of this, this study analyses the conduct of the 2015 and 2019 elections vis a vis democratic consolidation in Nigeria, and tried to outlined the prospects to a more credible election in 2023. The study embraces 'Structural Functionalism' as a theoretical underpinning. The study adopts qualitative method in its conceptual analysis. With an explicit analysis of the two important elections, the study infers that Nigeria's electoral system is yet to attain the 'huruhuru'. The paper suggests first, the implementation of the Iwu's Committee Report of 2008. Secondly, a robust electoral body that enjoys cooperation of other relevant stakeholders in the administration of free and credible elections in Nigeria. Thirdly, the study also urges all players involved to respect the dictates of electoral laws and any violator (s) deserve stringent punishment to serve as deterrent.

KEYWORDS: Election, Management, Democratic, Consolidation, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The pivotal role of election to democracy prompts Jega's (2014) perception of the former as the heartbeat of the latter. Nigeria's political history has passed different phases of governance and system. The country inherited parliamentary system of government from the colonial master after independence. Nonetheless, the parliamentary style of governance was ousted by the military coup of 1966 with counter coup that led to the emergence of Gowon as the military head of state. As the two coups were ethnically presumed led to the outbreak of civil war that lasted for the period of thirty months. Despite the overthrowing of Gowon's regime in 1976 and subsequent assassination of Murtala Muhammed that paved way for Olusegun Obasanjo leadership in the same year, military dominance in the country's political space continue unabated. Interestingly, Obasanjo's short lived political transition metamorphosed to Nigeria's second republic which started in 1979. Unlike the parliamentary system of the first republic, Nigeria shifted its political affiliation to the American political of presidential structure. This paradigm shift widened the space of electoral democracy in Nigeria as more political offices were created. For instance, there was separation of powers of the executive and legislature. With this rather, the general elections of 1979 were flawed as the 1983 general election was equally marred with violence resulting to another military intervention and termination of the second republic (Osaghae, 2011).

The military political configuration continued with series of coup de 'tat for more than a decade. Though in between there was a general election in 1993, and was believed to be one of the finest election conducted in Nigeria. It is worthy of note that despite the finest of the election, the Babangida regime truncated the outcome by annulling the exercise. Several civil society groups condemned the unpopular act of the military led regime and pressures (domestic and international) forced Babangida to step aside. The annulment of the 1993 elections was synonymous to the abortion of the third republic. Nigerians had to endure undemocratic rule till 1999 that marked a watershed in the political transition of the country. The general elections of 1999 were supervised and conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and ever since, Nigeria's democracy has survived two decades of civilian rule, being the longest the country has experienced. From 1999 till date, INEC has administered 6 general elections leading to power reconfiguration from one democratic regime to another, and in the process of conducting the 7th.

Considering this backdrop, this paper intends to analyse the management of the 2015 and 2019 elections, and unravel the prospects for a more credible election in 2023. The study asides comparative analogy, it looks at the trend and dynamics of electioneering politics in the country. More importantly, the 2015 general elections were the first that changed power of incumbency at the national and led to electoral turnover that had never been experienced in previous politicking in Nigeria (Omotola, 2015, Sakariyau, 2019). The paper is divided into six sections. The first segment gives required background information on the subject of discourse. The second section dwells on conceptual clarification while the third segment considers the administration of the 2015 and 2019 election. The comparative exploration of the two elections was followed up with the Nigeria's quest

for democratic consolidation as reflection in the fourth section. The fifth segment views the challenges and prospect for a more credible election in 2023, while the concluding remark of the paper surfaces in the sixth section.

Conceptual Review of Election Management

The conceptualisation of election management falls within the divergent phenomenon among scholars and analysts of electoral politics. This places the concept to be contested as applicable to most social concepts. However, election management is basically an exercise saddled with a recognised body or commission in a democratic state expected to conduct free and credible elections. Such assertion clarifies the basic understanding of electioneering administration as responsibility of a constitutionally recognised organ to conduct and supervise some electoral process in the polity. This conforms to the perspective of Agbor (2007) that conceptualises election management as the mechanism through which election is administered to enhance the actualisation of the electorate's consent towards transformation of authoritative and legitimate government. In a similar dimension, the report of Election Administration Centre (2011) captures election management to be synonymous to election activities anchored by the electoral body which include running the poll on 'Election Day', procuring the necessary equipment, recruiting and training poll workers, canvassing the vote, and evaluating and implementing improvements of the electoral process itself. Though this direction was constructively criticised by Sakariyau and Aliu (2014) in their postulation that Nigeria's electoral management is beyond the procedural requirement involved in the conduct of elections, it is determined by the political class and more significantly the 'highest bidder'. This indicates 'what is' rather than 'what ought to be'.

Not only that, election management according to Iwara (2010) can be determined through effective components of elections involving the structure and process. By Structure and process, the bureaucratic organisers of election only require being systematic and working with the rules and regulation of the electoral act that governs the conduct of elections. To buttress this claims, Moveh (2015) perceives election management as the optimal use of both man and human resources in ensuring conduct of credible election. The administration of elections occupies an important and strategic place in the enthronement of democracy. The explanation of Jinadu (2007) revolves around the organization and conduct of elective positions by the electoral commission. The structural arrangement which implies the bureaucratic setting of the electoral body is saddled with the responsibility of daily activities relating to the electoral system. The rules and regulations guiding electioneering exercise such as the establishment of electoral bodies, appointment and selection of electoral officials, voter education, registration of voters, delimitation of constituencies, counting and announcement of votes among others constitute the process of election (Jinadu, 2007, Sakariyau, 2019).

In the final analysis, election management requires stakeholders' complementary role in ensuring credibility and integrity of electoral system. The management of Nigeria's election in the

contemporary era testifies to the engagement of other key players in delivering free and credible elections. Although, the credibility and integrity of Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 elections have been contentious among scholars and analysts (Hakeem, 2015, Omotola, 2019), none has undermined the collaboration of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with other relevant agencies in the improvement of Nigeria's electoral politics. To Fawole (2016), such is a strength to Nigeria's electoral democracy. This explains why proper election management deserves an establishment of a structure, which makes structural functionalism relevant to this study.

The evolution of this theory has been linked to the earlier usage of functionalism in the field of Biological Sciences, Anthropology, Sociology and eventually Political Science. The theory was an offshoot of system models. As obtainable in the system model, the assumption was that parts and pieces organism contribute to the functioning whole of the organism. And any failure from either of the parts has the tendency of affecting the general organism (Chilcott, 1998). From sociological perspective, Emile Durkheim (in Cladis1992) pinpointed the survival of society on 'mechanical solidarity'. This indicates the social bonds in the society based on moral values shared together for societal survival.

The contemporary society looks at the complexity of the modern polity in a functional and sustainable perspective. This is a routine reflection of collaboration and support among the members of the society. Such contention and stance of Durkheim got further explanation through the findings of Talcott Parsons. According to Parsons (1975), social system from the actions of individuals and that each individual within the society expects reactions to his own behaviour. These expectations (if successful) are usually guided by norms and values of the society. The influence of individual's behaviour towards societal function cannot be over-emphasised. The approach of functionalism in this context considers social structure vis a vis social function and that the former is set-up to enhance the latter.

The import of the structural functionalism to the study of political phenomenon became necessary in the 1960s. This was prompted by some scholars in the United States of America to explore new theoretical gap that could suit analysis of the American and European political system. Historically, the Structural Functionalism could be traced to the work of Gabriel Almond and James Coleman 'The Politics of the Developing Areas'. This was further elaborated critically by Powell and Almond (1966) in their 'Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach' which later was reviewed by Herbert Spiro (1967). Gabriel Almond claims that political functions exist in all political system on the basis of input and output.

Within the political context, the theory assumes that states exist and are being surrounded by different structures. The functionality of the state is determined by the contribution of different available structures. The nagging question is, what does a structure do within the political system? The answer reveals the role of the structures towards the survival of the states. According to Olaniyi (2001), the

structures perform divergent and complementary functions that enhance the sustainability of the entire system (state). He clarifies that better understanding of the structures could give clearer pictures of the state as the former justifies the existence of the latter.

Narrowing the Structural Functionalism to the comparative analysis of the 2015 and 2019 elections, the outcome of the general elections was largely influenced by the contributions of other sub structures. The electoral umpire as a structure collaborated and partnered with different other relevant bodies which vital actions dictated the tune of the electoral exercise. The applaud of the 2015 general elections by both domestic and international observers acknowledged the impact of relevant agencies (sub- structures) during the conduct of the elections. The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) engaged few other agencies in the management of the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

The Conduct of Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 General Elections

This segment assesses the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, closely reviewing the main issues influencing the polls, the major electoral outcomes and the crucial post-election issues posed by the results. The analyses of these two consecutive elections are discussed independently in this section. Given the massive irregularities that attended the previous elections' cycle in the country's fourth republic and the consequent legitimacy crisis they engendered (Suberu, 2007), the 2015 and 2019 elections require serious attention in the bid of the country's democratisation process. Indeed, the 2015 elections may be seen as a significant step towards consolidating democracy in Nigeria. The elections allowed the country to achieve presidential inter-party alternation for the first time in its electoral history. In line with democratic theorists, alternation of power is a crucial stride in the process of democratic consolidation (Omotola, 2015; Przeworski et al. 2000; Huntington, 1991).

Nigeria's democratic credentials were seriously dented by the fourth republic elections, especially with particular reference to the 2007 elections, due to the national and international criticism they elicited. Consequently, conducting a free, fair and credible elections was no longer in doubt, thus, there was compelling need to embark on electoral reforms. The INEC under Attahiru Jega (who was the erstwhile chairman), for its part, took a number of internal steps to restore the confidence of the general public in the electoral process (Kuris 2012). Both of these initiatives have led to the relative victories of the general elections of 2015 and partly snowballing into the 2019 general elections. In his view, Professor Jega passionately ensured that the 2015 elections were significantly different from the previous ones (Jega, 2015).

Consequent upon the efforts of the former chairman to make poorly conducted elections in Nigeria a thing of the past, the level of successes of Nigeria's 2015 general elections were unprecedentedly high. The key challenges to the smooth conduct of the elections, according to Orji (2015), include the severe security challenge posed by the Boko Haram insurgency, the conflicting claims of northern

and southern politicians to the presidency, a highly disputed electioneering campaign arrangements tarnished by inflammatory messages and severe electoral preparatory breaches.

Soon after the polls in 2011, plans for the 2015 elections began. The preparation for the 2015 elections was activated in August 2011, when the INEC inaugurated a committee, known as the Registration and Election Review Committee (RERC), to review the 2011 registration of electors and general elections and recommend ways to improve the operations of the body. The committee's recommendations created a framework for the 2015 elections and broader electoral reforms, which sought to reorganize and reposition the commission (Orji, 2015). The INEC adopted wide-ranging reforms on the basis of the plan, including a thorough overhaul of its administration, the creation of a detailed electoral project plan, the formulation of a business process map and the introduction of new communication and gender policies (Aleyomi and Bakar, 2018; Omotola & Nyuykonge, 2015)

Nigeria's 2015 general election was special in engendering power alternation. This remarkable feat has generally been eulogized as potentially signalling the country's final advent of democracy (Omotola, 2015). Such a reading is understandable as it has been stressed that electoral turnover is one of the cornerstones and signifiers of positive democratization in any democracy. Indeed, many were shocked by the peaceful and successful result of the 2015 elections, despite the challenging political and security climate in which the elections were held. Key to this security climate during the elections was the severe security danger the country faced in the hands of Boko Haram insurgents.

With the relative success of the general elections in 2015, unfortunately, the 2019 general elections reveal serious shortcomings which challenged the exercise's legitimacy, and the conduct and outcomes fell below the expected thresholds for credible elections (NCSSR, 2019). Operations at INEC fell short of their intended position and responsibilities as set out for credible elections. Indeed, the conduct of the 2019 elections was marred by technical and organizational problems. The first indication of this weakness occurred on Saturday, February 16, 2019, with the sudden postponement of the elections in the early hours of the very day they were about to begin.

Corroborating the above, the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2019), maintains that postponing voting at the start of polling for about six hours shows how unprepared INEC was, thereby dampened the national excitement built up for the elections. It stopped those who had travelled earlier from voting in their constituencies from making a second trip, exacerbating voter apathy, which has been progressively increased in each electoral cycle since 2003. Besides, the fact that the election was illogically postponed, another major weakness of the 2019 Nigerian elections was the collation of results. Virtually all the national and international observers reported obvious interference with the process and often with the active involvement of INEC officials. A respondent (RN 02) observes that there were several glaring discrepancies of data in the voters' register as well as results' figures declared by INEC in many polling units.

Although, there were significant efforts by the INEC to create an accurate and inclusive registry through its continuous registration of voters, the audit of the public register and the issuance of voting cards were serious testament to the level of preparedness of the election management body. Nevertheless, during the elections a consensus observes and identifies some problems such as long queues and a lengthy procedure, which made registration and PVC collection a daunting experience for the electorate. Most political parties out of the 73 that contested for the presidency failed to maintain internal democracy. While a few of the parties conducted primaries to select their candidates, most failed to conduct and some who attempted primaries did not conduct transparent primaries, leading to allegations of imposition of candidates.

The 2019 elections recorded very robust campaigns with some of the parties which had candidates on the ballot did not demonstrate that they were competing seriously at the elections. This indicates the two major political forces – the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the main opposition party – the People Democratic Party (PDP) to control the campaigns. According to the NCSSR (2019), there were blatant unruly behaviours to electoral laws by the PDP and the APC, which included the purchase of votes from the voters either by intimidation or willingness of the voters to sell their civic rights, among other electoral vices like the use of hate speech and fake news (Onuoha & Ojo, 2018).

There are concerns about the position of the government, especially the executive arm and other state bodies; including the Soldiers, Police, Civil Defense Corps, State Security Services (SSS) and their deleterious impact on election credibility. Whatever the ostensible reasons given by the executive, the decision of President Buhari to remove Chief Justice of Nigeria – Justice Walter Onnoghen and replace him with Justice Tanko, just some few weeks before the commencement of the general election instigated the polity a big boost and cast a shadow of suspicion over the electoral process, despite the role that the judges (including the bar and the bench) play in adjudicating elections (CLEEN Foundation, 2019). All these among other factors, like the partisan and bossily domineering roles of the security agents, militated against the credibility of the conduct of the 2019 elections

Election Management and Nigeria's Quest for Democratic Consolidation

Apparently, election is an essential and an unavoidable aspect of at least all liberal democracies (Bogaards, 2013). For some, it is the democratic institution that empowers the individuals to actualise self-government (Przeworski, 2010) and to some, a credible election ensures peaceful transition and enhances democratic consolidation (Lindberg, 2009). The clamour for credible election and its endorsement as the best process for accessing political power is a clear indication that there cannot be democracy without real, good, genuine or credible elections. While there is a general acceptance of election as a legitimate route to power, increasing evidence from different parts of the globe continue to question the reliability of the democratising effects of elections (Lindberg, 2006). Although on the other hand, Bogaards (2013) opines that repeated elections could lead to democratization. This suggests that the frequency and continuous electioneering cycles is a critical tool for democratic consolidation. However, the evidence from Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 elections

seemed not to have followed this pattern and hence, the need for the systematic review of the argument especially in the case of Nigeria suffices.

Indeed, a country acceptance of elections as the legitimate means to power had little influence on compliance with democratic values (Bratton, 2013). Thus, instead of making people the ultimate source of authority, some elections tend to recycle existing ruling elites (Schedler, 2002). Election is logically constrained as it is conducted within the realm of established procedures. By default, voting is conducted and managed under established rules and regulations often set up by incumbent who has an interest in the outcome (Przeworski, 2010). The constant demand to hold a periodically unbroken cycle of election, on a free, fair and credible basis, saddled on the principle of 'one-person, one-vote' indicating the intrinsic importance of democratic consolidation. Individual voters, Birch suggested have to have equal, adequate, and accurate access to information about the policy proposals and performance of the options on the ballot paper so as to make an informed choice (Birch, 2011:23).

This suggests that the ballots cast shall have equal weight. This is to count, and the outcome of each vote must be correct and based on the real true votes cast. The calculation formula for the votes against the seats must be impartial and clear so that no contestant – candidate or party – is short-changed. Birch appeared by this conception to be the first to attempt a connection between the voting act and the government. This viewpoint appears workable, however, the requirements for equal and accurate information about policy options limits its applicability in Nigeria's fourth republic elections. For example, citizens could conflate good policy goals with personal, tribal or group interests, making such choices subjective. Also, the political orientation of elites in many developing democracies, particularly in Nigeria, is that of adopting various strategies to hold on to power, including the use of ethno-religious and clientele politics as against policy proposals (Bratton, 2013).

Consequent upon the foregoing, this may explain the lack of policy concerns in many of the major political party and candidate's manifestos in Nigeria's election cycle. In fact, Sani (2013) have argued that there is no political party in the country with a single unit or department devoted to research, policy and development. This was corroborated by a respondent during an interview conducted in January 2020. Analytically, to determine effective political participation, there is need to look beyond the key indicators such as the right to vote, opportunity to vote and the right to stand for elections, which clearly expressed basis for governmental inclusivity and popular participation (Birch, 2011). Thus, Nigeria needs Electoral Integrity Project that focuses on why elections fail and what can be done about this. Failure of election management vis-à-vis voter turnout is contingent on other factors such as abuse of incumbency which is prevalent in Nigeria (Elischer, 2013).

Expectedly, democratic contests are participatory because each person is given an equal opportunity to take part not only in an election but also in governance (public affairs via legitimacy) without any form of prejudice. If an election fails to give individual citizens the opportunity to register as prospective voters, their ability to participate has been compromised (Kart, 1997, 69-70). Likewise,

in a compromised country as Nigeria where a person is allowed to vote only legally when registered as an elector and the party agents or hoodlums know he or she will vote in their favour. This is what Kartz (1997) opines as dimensions of participation which are on higher frequency and intensity. In such, controlling the registration process means regulating the frequency and intensity of participation of citizens. For instance, it is reported that among those registered there were names like Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela and the commission did nothing to clean these inconsistencies besides the cases of multiple and underage registrants (LDC, 2009; NCSSR, 2019).

In addition, available evidence shows that the 2015 elections had stronger equipment for registration and created a more detailed national voter register. That confirms the view that a good democratic election gives citizens the basic right to participate in public affairs. The 2015 presidential elections seem much better. In fact, it is in great variance with its predecessors, giving INEC the boldness to report more than 80% success (Orji, 2015). The biometric cross match has drastically reduced the frequency of double, multiple and underage registrations. Thus, authenticating the national voter list and by extension enhanced popular confidence on election results. It could be argued that getting all eligible voters on a national voters list does not account for frequency of participation except when voters present at the polling booth cast their votes.

Considering the rate of turnout of voter for the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections (43.65% and 34.75% respectively), it is difficult to argue for any significant differences towards election management and democratic consolidation. In addition, it is reported that the incumbent president in 2015 instantly accepted defeat and called to congratulate the winner. While the reversed was the case in the 2019 elections outcomes that resulted into protracted litigations of several irregularities. A careful examination of the last two successive elections in Nigeria (2015 and 2019) indicates a more competitive, compared to the former. For example, the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections had formidable contenders than the 2011 presidential election. On the contrary, the 2015 elections proved to be extra credible and very competitive.

The measure of effective competition clearly indicates a tie among contestants that is closer to perfect competition. The same conclusion could not be drawn in respect to the 2019 elections. Lastly, a democratic election needs to be perceived as legitimate. Evidence indicates that both the 2015 and 2019 elections were more peaceful and well administered than the previously conducted elections. This judgmental observation does not in any way serves as pointer to Nigeria's quest for democratic consolidation.

Problems and Prospects of Election Management in Nigeria

Having seen the transparency of the 2015 general election which was a plus to the consolidation process of democracy in Nigeria, and having seen how this great feat was not maintained during the 2019 general election, thus, a retrogressive of the positive achievement in 2015. What is the fate of the fourth-coming 2023 general election? How prepared is the INEC to manage the election in order

to overcome the challenges that married the 2019 election given the current state of Nigeria's insecurity?

In the words of The INEC Chairman, Prof. Yakubu Mahmood, "Preparations for 2023 elections must be different from previous elections". He said that "the commission is committed to raising the bar of standards set in previous elections". The Chairman has also stated that engagement with stakeholders on the proposed expansion of voter's access to polling units will be reviewed as well as preparation to continuous voter's registration exercise inter alia (<https://inecnigeria.org/news-all/preparations-for2023-general-elections...>)

For INEC to succeed in conducting a credible election in 2023 that will be meaningful to the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy, the commission must be ready to address most of the reoccurring issues regarding logistics; it must be prepared to ensure violence is avoided because Nigerian elections have witnessed consistent voters' apathy as a result of electoral violence.

As a way of emphasis, Nigerian indeed is faced with multiple issues and obstacles in terms of the voting and democratic process. Nigeria's electoral process is faulted with the politician's ability to exploit by any means that does not think of the general public's welfare. While the ruling party wants to have life control of power because of personal interest, political elites prepare their strategies to manipulate the election outcome by hook or crook, and see politics as do or die affairs. To be credible, every election requires a high degree of impartiality, vigilance, and assurance from security officials to monitor the situation and ensure the safety of the voters, election materials, and aspirants. Again, in order to achieve credible elections in Nigeria, there is a need to go back to the recommendations made by the Uwai's Committee. The retired Chief Justice of the Federation, Mohammed Uwai, headed a committee known as the Uwai's Committee Electoral Reform Committee (ERC). The Committee was set up by late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua and was saddled with the responsibility of drafting a document that could improve Nigeria's electoral system. The Committee worked assiduously and came up with series of recommendations ranging from appointment of retired judge as INEC Chairman, financing general elections directly from the federation consolidated accounts, appointment of non-party members as National Electoral Commissioners and many others (Sakariyau & Lawal, 2014) Unfortunately, the Uwais led Committee report is yet to attract political will for proper implementation.

No doubt, election management is a notoriously difficult task, given the plethora of activities and events that are involved. However, the legitimacy of the electoral process and of the post-election regime is heavily contingent on the fairness and transparency of the transition process. Drawing concrete insights from the 2015 Nigerian elections, which provided the possible impact of the reform on the democratisation process, the reform process holds some promise of consolidation but does not go far enough as evident in the 2019 elections. While institutional designs matter for successful structural reengineering of democratic governance without corresponding reform of attitude and

behaviour, the political parties and other stakeholders' strategic decisions is an added advantage of the institutional reform process within legally permissible limits. They are significant key to restoring reputation and publicity.

Despite notable advancement in the areas of electoral reforms in 2015 in the management of future elections, the 2019 is noted with outstanding reservations about the democratic qualities of the elections in terms of competitiveness, participation and legitimacy. For instance, there were allegations that there was no equal level playing field during the 2019 elections. Yet, the elections were allegedly marked by various forms of fraud and violence, most notably suspected falsification of results in collation centres, harassment of voters, arrest and detention by security officers of domestic election observers until after the elections, hijacking and stuffing of ballots among other electoral frauds (NCSSR, 2019).

Be it as it may, the prospects of election management in Nigeria rest upon the amelioration of the challenges associated with elections in Nigeria. No doubt, the recurrent lack of credibility in election results presupposes the failure of governance and the absence of political culture among both the political elites and the electorates. Arguably, the electorates' perception of the neutrality of the electoral body and its preparedness for election is germane to the management and success of election. More importantly, the electoral officials, both permanent and ad hoc should rebuff and reject all forms of inducement by political elites. In doing these will assist in fighting against any form of electoral corruption and as well ensure the prospect and the credibility of 2023 general elections and beyond. The uncoordinated approaches taken by agencies in the fight against corruption have contributed to the challenges of election management Nigeria.

One of the main problems that is going to affect 2023 general election performance is the insecurity that is causing instability across the world. Continuing uncertainty could influence the vote itself, which would certainly be a big problem on the campaign trail. Consequently, there is need for concerted efforts to mitigate the high degree of vulnerability. In fact, the social media environment in Nigeria is typically highly vulnerable to exploitation by powerful individuals with special interests and no sense of political ethics. To serve their own ends they are ready to confuse or divide people along racial, religious or other lines (Premium Times, April 1, 2018). Those with enough capital in 2019 also solicited the services of international firms to directly or indirectly interfere in Nigeria's election with records of employing questionable methods. This should stop and thus social media should play a major and positive role in Nigeria's election.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, election management in Nigeria has always been a keenly contested issue. In fact, since the country's return to democracy in 1999, election tribunals keep on attending to high petitions on election dispute matters. The number of election petitions rose from 677 in 2015 to 811 in 2019. This simply indicates lack of satisfactions on the conduct of the elections. As pinpointed earlier, the 2015

was remarkable nonetheless the experience of the 2019 general elections questioned the readiness of the country to fully consolidate democracy. The 2019 elections came with some shortcomings that dented the improved electoral system as experienced in the 2015 elections. By and large, Nigeria's electoral democracy like every other democratic states needs improvement. This paper recommends full implementation of the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) prepared and submitted in 2008. Most of the lacuna in Nigeria's electioneering politics would have been dazed if the Uwais led committee report is implemented. Though, there is no perfect election in the world, Nigeria's hybrid democracy deserves better election management as a mechanism to consolidate its longest democratic transition.

Statements and declarations

The corresponding author on behalf of the authors wish to state and declare that in course of writing this article the was no conflicting interest and there is going to be none even in future, so we declared.

REFERENCES

- Agbor, U. (2007) 'The Independent National Electoral Commission as an(im)partial Umpire in the Conduct of the 2007 Elections' *Journal of African Elections*. 6 (2)
- Aleyomi, M. B., and Bakar, M. Z. A. (2018). Political leadership and Nigeria's image crisis. *Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 14(4), 287-298
- Birch, S. (2011). *Electoral Malpractice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bogaards, M. (2013). Reexamining African Elections. *Journal of Democracy*, 151-160.
- Bratton, M. (2013). *Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa*. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Chilcott, J. (1998) Structural Functionalism as a Heuristic Device. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. 29(1) pp 103-111
- Cladis, M. S. (1992). *A communitarian defense of liberalism: Emile Durkheim and contemporary social theory*. Stanford University Press.
- CLEEN Foundation (2019), "Post-Election Statement On The 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections", 24 February. Available at: <https://cleen.org/2019/02/24/cleen-foundations-post-election-statement-on-the-2019-presidential-and-national-assembly-elections/> (accessed on 24 March, 2020)
- Elischer, S. (2013). *Political Parties in Africa: Ethnicity and Party Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hakeem, O. (2015) *How Credible were the Nigerian 2015 General Elections? An 'Electoral Integrity' Framework of Analysis* Paper Presented at the Electoral Institute, Abuja.
- Herbert, S. (1967) *Patterns of African Development* Cambridge: Prentice Hall

Huntington, S. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Iwara, E. (2010) Election and Electoral Matter in Nigeria since Independence in Bello Imam (ed) *50 years of the Nigeria Project: Challenges and Prospects*, Ibadan: College Press

Jega, A (2014). Stakeholders and the Electoral Process in Nigeria. Being a Paper Delivered at the *Annual Conference of the Department of Sociology*, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Pp.7-20

Jega, A. (2015) *Election Management in Nigeria: The Evolution of the Nigerian Electoral Process*. Ibadan: Safari Publisher

Jinadu., A. (1997) Matters Arising: African Elections and The Problem of Electoral Administration. *African Journal of Political Science* 2(1), p1-11.

Katz, R. (1997). *Democracy and Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kuris, G. (2012) *Towards a Second Independence: Repairing Nigeria's Electoral Commission, 2010-2011* Princeton University Innovations for Successful Societies. Online

LDC (2009). *Democracy by Court Order: An Analytical Evaluation of the 2007 Election Petition Tribunals in Nigeria*. Lagos: Legal Defense Centre.

Lindberg, S. I. (2006). *Democracy and Elections in Africa*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Lindberg, S. I. (2009). A Theory of Elections as a Mode of Transition. In S. I. Lindberg, *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition* (pp. 314 - 341). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Moveh, D. (2015) *INEC and the Administration of Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The 2015 General Elections in Perspective* Being a Paper Delivered at Electoral Institute, Abuja.

Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room - NCSSR (2019). Report of Nigeria's 2019 General Elections, Retrieved from http://www.placng.org/situation_room/sr/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Report-on-Nigerias-2019-General-Elections.pdf (accessed on 22 March, 2020)

Olaniyi, J. (2001) *Introduction to Contemporary Political Analysis* Tonad Publisher: Ilorin

Omotola, J. S. (2015). Opposition Merger, Electoral Turnover and Democratisation in Nigeria. *Electoral Institute*.

Omotola, J. S. and C. Nyuykonge, 2015, Nigeria's 2015 general elections: Challenges and opportunities, ACCORD Policy and Practice Brief (PPB) No. 33, Durban, South Africa,

March; available at <http://www.accord.org.za/images/downloads/brief/ACCORD-policypractice-brief-33.pdf> (accessed on 24 March, 2020).

Onuoha, F.C., and Ojo, J. (2018). Practice and perils of vote buying in Nigeria's recent elections. *Conflict Trends*, 3, 21-29.

Orji, N. (2015), The 2015 Nigerian General Elections. *Africa Spectrum*, 50(2), 73–85.

Osaghae, E. (2011) *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence* John Archers: Ibadan

Parsons, T. (1975) Moral Freedom through Understanding of Durkhem. *American Sociological Review* 40(1) Pp 106-111.

Powell, G and Almond, G. (1966) *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* Little, Brown and Company.

Przeworski, A. (2010) *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government*. United States of America: Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, A., Alvarez, R. M., Alvarez, M. E., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sakariyau, R. (2019) Election Management and the Survival of Nigeria's Hybrid Democracy: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Political Inquiry* 4(1) Pp 1-15.

Sakariyau, R. And Aliu, A. (2014) A Comparative Analysis of the 2007 and 2011 General Elections in Nigeria *Political Science Review* Vol 6 No 1 pp 149 -165.

Sani, I. (2013). Political Parties and Governance in Nigeria: Explaining the Misfortune of the Fourth Republic. *Mambayya House Journal of Democratic Studies*, 5(2), 23-46.

Schedler, A. (2002). The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 36-50.

Suberu, Rotimi (2007), Nigeria's Muddled Elections. *Journal of Democracy* 18(4), 95–110.

(<https://inecnigeria.org/news-all/preparations-for2023-general-elections...>)