



The 2019 General Elections, Logistics Challenges and Electoral Transparency: the Implications for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The beauty of democracy lies in the sovereign power it confers on the people to make choice of leaders based on popular mandate. The incursion of the military into Nigeria government and politics for more than three decades had been a disaster for the country's democratic governance inherited from British colonial rule. However, after over 20 years of the return of uninterrupted democratic governance in 1999, democratic principles, norms and ethics of free and unfettered electoral processes are yet to be adequately internalized. Several elections organized to effect change of government between 1999-2019 have ended up in charade of electoral irregularities, with each election period gaining more sophistication than the previous one. This paper interrogated the logistic challenges that vitiated the transparency of electoral process in 2019 in view of the introduction of the new electronic device, Card Reader, to forestall electoral frauds. The paper adopted Marxist theory of post-colonial state as adumbrated by Hamza Alvi and others. The study argues that democratic consolidation has become elusive in Nigeria because of high level of electoral manipulations by the political class who are interested in capturing power by all means for primitive accumulation. The study recommends that the rules of the game must be strictly adhered to and all logistic plans put in place to avoid political apathy and advance our electoral process in the subsequent elections.

Introduction

Nigeria embarked on the path of democratic governance at independence in 1960. Unfortunately, this was truncated in 1966 by the advent of the military in Nigeria politics. The military held sway from 1966 for a period not less than a total of 33 years, encompassing seven different military regimes. However, there was a brief interregnum of 1979-1983 before the inception of the current democratic dispensation in 1999. The soldiers are not to be entirely blamed for the military inclusions into politics. The irresponsible ways the politicians of 1st Republic conducted themselves have a lot to do with their intervention. As political competition among the political elites assumed the character of warfare, it paved way for the ascendancy of the specialists of violence, the military. This was further accentuated by the overwhelming power of the state, the premium attached to political power and intense competition and conflicts among ethnic nationalities or ethnic groups, communal and interest groups led by the political elites to capture power. Interestingly, the political class that captured power, who were supposed to act in public interest ended up acting essentially for particular vested interests.

Accordingly, Ake (2016:6) argued that it was not the military that caused military rule in African (Nigeria) by intervening in politics, rather, it was the character of politics that engendered military rule by degenerating into warfare, inevitably propelling the specialists of warfare to the leadership role. However, notwithstanding the capacity of the military to use threat of violence or its actual use, the experience in Nigeria has shown that the citizens have a culture of struggle for democracy and such struggle has, as it appears, produced enduring democratic governance that has lasted for 20 years now since 1999.

Nigeria's efforts towards entrenching democracy and democratic practices have been patterned along the western liberal democracy which features competitive party politics, periodic election, majority rule, popular sovereignty, rule of law among other. This is not surprising as Nigeria was colonized by a western power. Britain, who at independence ensured that the country inherited liberal democracy based on the west-minister parliamentary model. This was later replaced with American presidential model. In practice, however, democracy has neither been fully entrenched in our body politics nor the values that go with a democratic society been fully

internalized in the people's ways of life. This is buttressed by Awa (1993:3) when he stated that "The Nigerian society and political system are not democratic in the modern sense of the term". Democracy in Nigeria can best be described as the "government of the people by the elites essentially in the interest of the elites" (Awa 1996: 13).

Thus, dismissing the authenticity of popular sovereignty via periodic election and majority rules in some Nigerian elections since independence, Awa, in rather pessimistic laden tone declares that:

Universal suffrage has been in operation in the country for a long time but this has little democratic value. For rigging in one form or another had characterized the elections since independence, and severe violence had accompanied some. What this makes clear is that the voters are in fact denied the right to vote for the candidates of their choice. All these mean that those who rule are not truly representatives of the population of the country (Awa. 1996:7)

It is against this background that this paper seeks to interrogate the transparency of the 2019 General election in view of the logistic challenges that led to cancellation of the earlier scheduled date for the elections. The paper is divided into 7 parts viz introduction, conceptual analysis, overview of general elections in Nigeria, theoretical framework, general elections, logistic challenges, transparency of electoral processes and lessons for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Analysis:

1. Democracy

Democracy is, unarguably, one of the popular concepts in the political science literature. Scholars have variously interrogated its evolution, operations and relevance to the organization of human societies. There is a consensus among scholars that it originated from the Greek city-states and it is people oriented. It is generally believed to have emanated from the attempts in the Greek city state of Athens to reform, organize and manage its political community (polis) about two thousand five hundred years ago (Dunns, 1993 cites in Jaga, 2007). According to Dunns.

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something willed and chosen... in a democracy, the people (the demos), its human members, decide what is to be done, and in so deciding, they take their destiny firmly into their own hands. The power and appeal of democracy come from the idea of autonomy of choosing freely for oneself (Dunns, 1993:vi).

The Greeks of Athens practiced collectivized democracy characterized by all inclusive and direct participation of the citizens in an assembly to debate policies, enact laws, and take decision for the general good of the society. The Assembly was attended by all citizens who were in the city state of Athens and able to be present; issues if state policies and legislations were subjected to rigorous debates and decisions taken by a show-of-hand vote. According to Laxar (2010:9) thousands of citizens took part in these meetings, and for certain types of decisions, a minimum of 6,000 citizens had to be in attendance. The exclusion checklist consisted of women, children and slaves. Women and children, though free born citizens, were excluded from participation, perhaps, because they did not belong to property class and never participated in wars; the slaves were denied the right to participate in the Assembly on the ground of lack of free born status. An Administrative council of Five Hundred was constituted each year to implement the Assembly decision and all the members accounted for their actions at the end of their tenure (Enemous 1999).

However, Enemou (1999) identified three essential characteristics of democracy in the ancient city state of Athens. Those include:

1. Supreme power was vested in the “ekklesia” the assembly of all male citizens, at which each was entitled to participate by discussion and voting.
2. The system permitted freedom of speech and
3. It made all political offices open to all citizens, who were chosen by lot. Checks and controls where put in place to prevent any individual or group from acquiring excessive power.

It was possible to hold such assembly because of the paucity of the people that inhabited the city state.

However, the size and complexity of modern nation states of the world can not support such an all inclusive assemblage of people of a state in single

gathering to make decisions on matters of state policies. Hence an alternative approach had to be developed to ensure that policy decisions are made as far as possible in accordance with the popular will of the people, hence the practice of representative government was born in Europe in the medieval age. The parliamentary Revolution of 1608, the Bill of Rights of 1698 and Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 which whittle down the absolute power of English monarchy to constitutional monarchy and transferred sovereignty to the people and the parliament elected by them served as the starting point of the modern representative democracy.

The American Revolution of 1776 with its declaration that “we hold as self evident that all men were created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable right; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, right to vote and be voted for and power of government residing with the people as well as the 1789 French Revolutionary Manthra of “Freedom, equality and fraternity” further widened the frontiers of democratization of the globe. Modern democracy is therefore, based on popular sovereignty and representative government. The discourses of political theorists of the 18th and 19th centuries such as Barron Montesquieu, J.J Rousseau, John Locks, Edmund Burke and Mill on how to protect individual liberties and create a social contract binding citizens and government in modern states, provided the philosophical and theoretical contexts for the rise of modern western liberal conception of democracy (Jega, 2007).

However, there were initially contentious views among scholars over characterization of democracy. On one hand, are those who were of the opinion that democracy should be seen as a kind of popular power in which citizens are directly involved in self government and self regulation; while others contended that it is a means of conferring authority on those periodically elected into office (Held, 1993). Thus contributing to this debate, Held (1993) has been able to distill three basic variants or models of democracy. He highlighted them as, first, “the direct or participatory democracy” in which citizens are involved, as in ancient Athens. The second model is the “liberal or representative democracy” embracing elected officials who undertake to represent the interest and aspirations of citizens within the framework of rule of law. The third is the “Marxist model of democracy” which seeks to extend equality

of all citizens beyond political sphere to include both social and economic aspects of life. Nnoli (1986) interpreted Marxist democracy at the economic sphere as that which allows equality of all citizens in the ownership of means of production through nationalization of major enterprises; while equality in the social sphere could be achieved through the institutionalization of rights to education, medical services, employment, pension, mother and child care, and in the enjoyment of leisure. Liberal democracy or representative democracy has emerged as the dominant model of democracy. It is usually what people mean when they now speak of democracy (Enemou, 1999: 143).

And like most social science concepts, it has varied conceptual description. Some of which include:

1. Government of the people by the people and for the people (Abraham Lincoln, Former President of USA)
2. Majoritarian rule in which the majority will have their way and minority their say.
3. A system of elected representation in which the representatives are supposed to be responsible and accountable to the people who elected them (Jega, 2007).
4. Democracy is government by responsible leadership (Plutocracy)
5. A political method or institutional arrangement for arriving at political Legislative and administrative decision (Schumpeter, 1943).

Those who are opposed to modern democratic rule describe it as “mob rule” For example Alexander Pope asserted that democracy is madness of many for the benefits of few. Similarly, a onetime British prime minister said that the greatest hindrance to democracy is political ignorance. Laxer (2010) has argued that the citizens of Athens of ancient time would condemn the system of democracy that exists in contemporary nation states as highly undemocratic. This is because of the deep suspicion that would have trailed the system in which millions of citizens living in a large political community elect professional politicians from competing political parties to represent their interests. To the practitioners of direct democracy such political elites would not be entrusted with so much power for such a long period of tenure of office in their constitutional structures of modern states. On the contrary, (Hughes cited in Lewis n.d) in his speech opined that while democracy must have its organization, controls and setbacks, its vital breath is individual liberty. Coolidge

(cited in Lewis n.d) argued that it would be foolish to assume that politicians cannot make mistakes in democracy. They know it, they pay the penalty; but compared with the mistakes which have been made by every kind of autocracy, they are unimportant. The implication of this statement is that a bad democratic government is better than a good autocratic regime in view of the inherent political freedom and people-orientated characteristics of democracy.

The system thrives on certain established fundamental principal, encapsulated within the framework of institutions of democracy. The presence quality and respect of the institutional frameworks are of great importance for democratization and democratic consolidation in a particular country.

This is because the existence and quality of these institutions are reflected in major political events like elections that in themselves determine the level of democratization. Although, their relative roles may vary among countries, the most institutional frameworks and principles for sustainable democratization include the following:

1. Periodic or regular democratic elections that present the electorate with the opportunity to express support for or against the current political order.
2. Periodic elections are supposed to be free and fair and transparent
3. Elections are to be based on affiliation of political parties on whose platforms candidates canvass for support for election into public offices.
4. An educated electorate that is willing to participate in the political process and is capable of discerning the real motives of power seekers.
5. Functional legislature separate from the executive whose members are able to harmonize their dual roles as constituencies representative and national legislators..
6. An independent judiciary to ensure the rules of law and the protection of human rights.
7. Military subordination to civil authority to ensure the political neutrality of the army and prevent the misuse of brute force for sectional political gains.
8. A constructive opposition with the ultimate or objective of replacing the current political order with a superior alternative.
9. Limited government involvement in direct economic activities (Dinneya, 2005:31)

Election

Election, simply put, is the process of choosing those who govern in a democratic polity. It can also be defined as the act or process of choosing people for public offices by voting. It is a formal decision making process by which the citizen of a state choose individuals to hold public offices on their behalf. The Encyclopedia Americana (1996) defined it as a procedure for choosing officers or making binding decisions concerning policy by the vote of those qualified to participate. Similarly, Bain (1964, cited in Osufia, 2006) opined that election is the formal process by which the electorates select officials and determine the issues of state policies submitted them, the process of selection of state policy by election is called Referendum. According to Laxer (2010) election is about the right of the majority to elect the government of their choice while respecting the rights of minorities to hold contrary view. In the same view, Ogbinaka (2002) is of the view that election provides electorates the opportunity to either give or refuse to give their consent, by vote, mandating those they wish to occupy political positions of government. It is a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in positions of authority in a society (Nwachukwu & Uzodi, 2012). The beauty in election is that people are conferred with the right to determine those that govern them, make them accountable for their actions and impose legal commitment to governing authority which guarantee certain rights. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracies have operated since 17th century. It is used to fill-in public offices, especially, in the legislature, executive and sometimes, the judiciary in some societies, at the federal, state and local government levels (Aniob, 2016). Thus, virtually in all democratic societies the world over, the will of the people expressed in periodic, regular and genuine elections has become the basis of enthronement and authority of government. Therefore, those in positions of authority who fail to respect this will are usually shown the way out of office by not re-electing them in the subsequent elections.

The importance of elections in a democratic society cannot be over emphasized. Elections are the core of any functional representative democracy. It provides the opportunity for people to assert their opinion in selection of candidates whose political manifesto and ideas are of utmost interest to them. It is also through periodic election that the masses are

given the opportunity to make the choice which legitimizes the government. Bratton & Posner (1999) are of the view that elections provide the platform for not only orderly change of government but also for the enthronement of responsible and responsive government that is interested in meeting the needs of the people. Election is so much in vogue now because as an essential element of democracy, it elicits responsibility and accountability. In democracy, good government is measured by how government is accountable to the people by provision of social infrastructure. Collier (2009) affirms this view when he asserted that election is the institutional technology of democracy and has the potential to make government both more accountable and legitimate. According to Nwankwo (2018), the most important function of election is the participation of the people in the very process of governance. The participation in governance gives meaning to the ideal in democratic society that sovereignty belongs to the people. By and large, the universal use of elections as tools for selecting representatives in modern democracies is in contrast with the practice of democratic archetype where elections are considered an oligarchic function, and most political offices are filled using allotment, by which office holders are chosen by lot which is undemocratic (Aniobi, 2016).

Generally, scholars of political science discipline have identified four typologies of electoral systems. These include simple majority system requiring candidate with the highest number of votes to win election; Absolute majority system, in which candidate with certain specified number of votes to win election; proportional representation which allocates seats to political parties based on the percentage of electoral success or votes cast in their favour and the electoral college system in which a body of electors is constituted in the interest of the public to elect public office holders. In addition to these, there are specialized elections which are applied when necessary and useful to the advancement of democracy. These include:

1. **Run-off-elections:** This is conducted when there is a tie between two or more candidates in an election or when there is no clear case of a candidate emerging as a winner with absolute majority. A Run-off-election is conducted to break the tie and in the case of absolute majority, the two candidates with

highest number of votes will go for a run-off-election.

2. **By-Elections:** This types of election is conducted to fill a seat in the parliament or political office declared vacant as a result of death or resignation.
3. **Recall Election:** This is used to remove public officers from office before the expiration of their tenure due to misconducts or misappropriation of public funds. This usually begins with public petitions initiated by the members of the constituency of the erring public office holder and then followed by recall election. The provisions for recall members of state legislatures and members of National Assembly of Nigeria are contained in sections 110 and 69 of 1999 constitution (1999 constitution cited in Osuofia, 2006).
4. **Referendum:** This is another special type of election designed to solicit public opinion on policy matters.
5. **Primary Elections:** These are elections conducted by political parties to select their flag bearers in elections. It is usually done before the commencement of general election. The candidate chosen by the party delegates must enjoy the support of the generality of the members of the party and must be eligible to contest with candidates from other parties vying for the same office.

An Overview of General Elections in Nigeria

In Nigeria, elections into the public offices such as the presidency, state governorship, seats in the National Assembly and State Assemblies are conducted through general elections. This implies that the general public, particularly, the eligible voters, are involved in electing the candidates of their choices for public offices in the country. These elections which usually take place simultaneously all over the country are conducted by the electoral management body currently with the name: independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Since independence till date, electoral irregularities have remained the same of Nigeria's democratic experience. The phenomenon has been part of the nation's electoral process and political instability which engulfed the country in the past. It is significant to note that political instability associated with elections and electoral processes in Nigeria started with 1959 Federal Election designed by the departing British colonialists to facilitate the

transition from colonial rule to independence. The problem intensified with the 1964 General Election and 1965 Western Nigeria Election in the Nigeria's First Republic. The election crisis between Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the then Action Group and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, his deputy led to a complete breakdown of law and order in the western region which later snowballed into the famous "wild wild west" before a state of emergency was declared on the region by the federal authority and subsequent military intervention in Nigerian politics and governance.

However attempt by the military authority to transfer power to democratically elected government in 1979 was marred by allegations and counter allegations of electoral irregularities by the three major political parties in the race and their presidential flag bearers, the Unity party of Nigeria (UPN) led by chief Obafemi Awolowo, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Indeed, the situation was so bad that the governors of the six states controlled by the defunct UPN refused to recognize Shehu Shagari, the acclaimed winner of the election, as the president. One of the manifestations of the governor's rejection of Shagari's presidency was brought to the fur when a UPN governor of Bendel state, Ambrose Ali refused to accord official welcome to president Shagari, who was on official visit to the state (Newswatch, Sept. 24th, 2007). The governor was expected, as a mark of honour, to receive the president at the airport but his refusal to do so was an apparent show of protest that the president was acting with stolen mandate.

At the expiration of Shagari's first tenure another election was conducted in 1983 to choose a president for the country. The tension that accompanied that election due to electoral malpractices was so palpable that the military had to take over power three months after Shagari began his second term in office. This led to the collapse of the second Republic.

The military having taken over the mantle of leadership banned all forms of political activities and democratic institutions such as the political parties and the parliament and ultimately, put democracy in the dungeon. It was not until 1993 when Ibrahim Babangida, former military president organized political transition, in what was to become Nigeria's third Republic, that elections were conducted for two state sponsored political parties, Social Democratic

party (SDP) with socialist ecological inclination and National Republican convention (NRC) with conservative Ideological orientation. While chief Moshood Abiola emerged the presidential candidate of SDP, Alhaji Bashir Tofa became the candidate of the NRC. The two candidates campaigned appealed to the electorates for their votes based on their political pedigree, anticidents ideologies, and programmes encapsulated in their party manifestoes. The transition time table used by the electoral management body adopted bottom-up approach in the election. That is elections into the states Assemblies, state governorship, National Assembly were conducted and concluded before the presidential election. The presidential election which took place on June 12, 1993 was still being collated with Abiola in the lead when Babangida announced the cancellation of the election results and later annulled the entire transition processes. Though the presidential election was deemed to be the freest and fairest election in the history of the country, it was cancelled on the ground of electoral malpractices. Thus with this cancellation, the Third Republic was aborted and military rule continued to hold sway while democracy returned to the dungeon.

However, with the return of the country to new democratic dispensation 1999, electoral malpractices intensified. The presidential election that year vigorously contested by two parties, people Democratic Party (PDP) with Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired military general, as its candidate and a coalition of parties, Alliance for democracy/All Peoples Party (AD/APP), represented by Chief Olufalac, a retired technocrat, as its presidential flag bearer. Obasanjo won the polls but the AD/APP alleged that the polls were massively rigged in favour of Obanjo who was the preferred candidate of the military authority transiting power to the civilians. The 2003 pools were no less different as both local and international observers openly condemned the results. Soldiers were freely used to rig the election in favour of PDP and its presidential candidate who was running for a second term in office (Akindunde in Newswatch Sept 24, 2016).

As the contest for political offices continued to intensify among political gladiators, the 2007 election witnessed yet another spate of heirodous degree of rigging. The observers of the 2007 presidential election were stating the obvious when they contended that the poll was not “credible” and marred with “irregularities” (Obikeze, et al, 2016). This fact was very much acknowledged by the PDP

candidate that won the election president Yar'Adua who promised to arrest the ugly trend by setting up an Electoral Reform Committee headed by Muhammed Uwais, former chief justice of the Federation, charged with the responsibility of producing a blueprint within 12 months, that would make the whole electoral process in Nigeria meet international standard. The recommendations of Uwais Committee could not arrest the hydra-headed monster of electoral malpractices in the country. In 2011, the polls were considered to be better run but observers reported that massive rigging and fraud still took place. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of PDP won the election, partly on the basis of people's perception that he was “a man of the people, a man of the common man” and partly because “it can hardly be denied that the election victories of PDP presidents during the past 16 years have been partially assisted by electoral malpractices” (Obikeze, etal 2016). The opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari of ANPP accepted defeat after much protest and breakdown of law and order orchestrated by Buhari's supporters in Northern Nigeria who believed that their candidate was robbed of victory.

In 2015, it would seen that the general election of that year were too difficult to rig by the party in power, the (PDP), as usual (Obikeze etal, 2016). But rigging, indeed took place in the form of underaged voting, vote buying, etc by all the parties, with vary degree and intensity. Thus; with cash and carry polities and its attendant monopolistic tendency in Nigeria the APC won the election. However, the independent National Electoral Commission under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega was determined to change the narrative to ensure free and fair election. President Goodluck Jonathan gave Prof. Jega his blessing and created the conducive environment for that critical change by giving Jega the latitude of authority to conduct reform that would bring about credible election. This meant that he would not interfere with the electoral process. Little did President Jonathan know that by his presidential accent to Jega's request, he was unwittingly digging the pit that would lead to the lost of his re-election. Jonathan had false believe that PDP was a mega political party with unparalleled membership and followership and therefore could not lose any election regardless of the reform introduced by INEC. Thus, in view with cash to carry power. It is monopolistic because those with the financial muscle to play politics in Nigeria are few while those who have something to offer but with cash to buy the

electorates are in the majority. The latter is edged out by financial weight of the former. Yinka Pdemakin painted a vivid picture of what usually happens in Nigeria election citing the 2007 election as example:

During the 2007 election, there agents of political parties who were openly canvassing for votes. They carried a lot of money on them. They called them canvassers. They waited in the wings, telling the people, “vote for us get N2,000” and since the voting was in the open, they watch who you vote for. Once you vote for them, you get your N2,000 (Odumakin in News watch, Sept 24, 2016; 25).

The bottom-line of electoral infractions arising from money politics is poverty. Abject poverty underscored by high rate of unemployment and economic stagnation creates room for monetary inducement that makes some electorates to sale their conscience. Thus, the desperate politicians capitalize on poverty and economic hardship in the country to exploit the people to rig election in their favour. The average Nigeria voter is therefore concerned with what he could get from politicians as a matter of Stomach “infrastructure”, something to take care of his immediate need like food and not what the politicians will do for the masses, in the long run, when they get into office as matter of democratic dividends like provision of employment opportunities and social infrastructure. Generally, politicians in Nigeria are not known to keep their promises, hence the electorates will latch on anything that comes their way during election year because politician hardly work in their interest while in office. While some electorates collect the monetary inducement and do almost anything, no matter how unlawful, to make their benefactors win an election; others will accept the monetary inducement and vote according to their conscience.

Chief Jimi Agbaje, a governorship candidate of the Democratic People’s Alliance (DPA) in the 2007 gubernatorial election in Lagos state has distilled 18 different ways through which elections are rigged in Nigeria by politicians. These include compilation of fictitious names on voters registers;

illegal compilation of separate voters list, abuse of voters cards, illegal printing of voters cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, falsifications of electoral results, illegal thumb printing of ballot papers, voting by under-aged children and illegal printing of forms used for the collation and declaration of election results. The other methods are the deliberate refusal to supply election materials to strongholds of the opponents, announcing results in places where no elections were held, unauthorized announcement of election results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, inducement of electoral officials, misuse of security agents to aid the party in power and the use of incumbency power to alter figures (News watch, Sept 24, 2016).

Theoretical perspective

This paper is anchored on the theory of post-colonial state as the basic analytical tool to explore the logistic challenges and transparency of electoral process in Nigeria with special reference to the 2019 general elections. The theory was propounded by Marxist scholars like Hamza Alvi and others. It is generally agreed that the political hegemony of the colonial authorities was a critical factor in the under development of Africa’s social formations. According to Alvi’s influential article on the state in post colonial society, the original base of the post colonial state apparatus lies in the class forces existing in the colonial era metropolis. The colonial state apparatus subordinated all the indigenous classes in the colony. Rather than rely on these classes, the colonial power established highly developed military and bureaucracy to control these classes (<http://www.ukessays.com/essays/history/post-colonial> society-hamza-alvi history-essay. php?vref=1). Hence neo-colonial African states are incapable of auto centric development (Ake 1981),

Also, in order to secure their economic interests, the colonial governments discouraged the emergence of a strong indigenous capitalist class. Thus, the new indigenous bourgeoisie that inherited control over the neo-colonial state apparatus had a weak economic base and hence relied on this control for its own capital accumulation and self reproduction (Okolie, 2009). He further notes that the character of the state in Africa rules a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the volatile nature of the electoral contests is as a result of the

attractive nature of the state and perception of nature of state power makes the capture of power of the state irresistibly attractive. The attraction of state power in primitive capitalist accumulation becomes a tool used by social classes, especially the indigenous bourgeois to appropriate as large a share of the surplus of the state capital as their political power will permit (Miliband, 1969; Ake, 1981, Nnoli 1986). Nigeria having being under British colonial tutelage for several decades before independence inherited the characteristics of post-colonial state form her erstwhile colonial master. The characteristics of post-colonial states include but are not limited to the following:

1. Relatively low level of state autonomy because of neo-colonial relationship with satellite states and weak political institutions.
2. The political class willful use of the state apparatuses for primitive accumulation
3. Emasculation and personalization of political institutions for primitive accumulation
4. Impoverishment of the citizens
5. Weak and under developed indigenous bourgeoisie

In Nigeria, “the prospects for capital appropriation through political power are therefore so attractive that people seek their fortune by going into politics” (Ake, 1981:126). There is thus struggle to gain control of it. And a critical focus of this struggle is the control of government which is the formal access to state powers. According to Onuoha (2008), the true position is that whoever captures the state power wins the day. Karl Mark also noted that the state is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class. Thus, its capture becomes inevitable. Heltman, Jones and Janfman (2000) are of the view that:

In the decades of transition, fear of a Leviathan state.... Is giving way to increased focus on oligarches who capture the state
(Hellman etal cited in Onuoha, 2008:11)

Access to power in Nigeria is the prime determinant of how much resources of the state would be allocated to a given person or group of individuals. A wielder of state power is thus shrouded in glorious splendor and wealth (Odey, 2003). Those in office do all they can to perpetuate their hold on it and those out of office do all they can to get it (Ake, 1981), and with a highly fractions ruling class, the battle for

control of government becomes intense, hence, the struggle for political office is a do-or-die affair. This explains why the political elites who hold political and economic power tried to perpetuate themselves in office through elections fraught with irregularities and outright attempt to void the constitution or the electoral law in 2019 general election

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

Nigerian has a constitutional provision to hold period elections every 4 years into elective offices at the levels of two out of three tiers of government - National and state levels, except local government. Historically, Nigeria has had 14 different general elections since 1951. The last in the series of general elections being the 2019 general elections mid-wifed by Independent National Electoral Commissions (INEC). The 2019 general elections-were preceded by the release of the electoral guidelines (Time Table) by (INEC) which provided the arrangements and order of elections at national and state levels. The electoral umpire under the chairmanship of Prof. Mohamood Yakubu, adopted top to button approach instead of button-up-approach (i.e. National elections involving Presidential and National Assembly Elections to be held before governorship and state assembly elections) against the provision of Electoral Bill passed by the National Assembly which the President refused assent.

Nigeria being the most populous country in Africa with a population of about 190 million people registered 84 million by INEC to vote, represents about 44% of the entire population. To be able to cast one's vote, a registered voter was expected to present his voter's card get authenticated by a card reader (a new technology introduced by INEC) to cast his vote; quite significantly, 73 million were able to collect their voter's cards while 11 million could not access their voter's cards and hence were disenfranchised. (INEC official Report on NTA). The election, which was scheduled for Saturday February 16, was postponed to Saturday February 23, at midnight, five hours before the polls were to resume. The chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission while addressing Nigerians on National Television Authority (NTA) maintained that the decision to postpone the election was informed by logistic challenges. Nigerian reacted with confusion and anger over the sudden

postponement of the elections. The political parties condemned the last minute election cancellation by INEC. The frontline political parties- the APC and PDP accused each other of colluding with INEC in attempt to influence the outcome of the elections.

When the dust raised by the postponement had settle, Nigerians mustarded the courage to go the polls. The general elections were held on 23rd February 2019 to elect the President, Vice President, members of House of Representative and senate into the National Assembly. The presidential and the National Assembly elections were premised on electoral systems of absolute majority and simple majority respectively in Nigeria electoral law. For a candidate to emerge as president, he must be able to secure a majority vote and over 25% of the votes *in* at least 24 of the 36 states. If no candidate is able to meet this constitutional requirement, there will be a run-off election. On the other hand, the members of the National Assembly are to be elected by simple majority system (first-past-the post system} in single member constituencies (Punch Newspaper. 25th February 2019). The elections were contested by a bewildering number of political parties. About 90 parties were registered, 78 fielded presidential candidates (Nigerian Elections Debate Group (NEDG, 2019).

According to INEC chairman, the returning officer of presidential election, at the conclusion of the presidential election the incumbent president Mohammad Buhari of APC polled 15,191,847, votes, representing 55.60% to win the election while Atiku Abubakar of PDP polled 11,202,978 representing 41.22 percent of the votes cast to place second. The other aspirant got not too significant votes to quality them to enjoy the booth of office. On the whole, the total number of votes cast was 28,614,190. out of 84 million registered voters and 73million PVC carriers (Punch Newspaper). This is an obvious indication that the voters turn out was very poor, voters apathy registering about 53 percent. The 109 members of the senate and 360 members of the House of Representatives were elected on the platforms of different political parties with APC controlling majority in the senate with 64 seats and PDP relegated to main opposition party with 41 seats, Young Progressive Party one seat while 3 seats were contested in court for adjudication (Stear Election Center, 2019). For House of Representative APC secured majority seats of 217, PDP 115, APGA 9, other parties got between 3-1 to complete the number

of seats in the house. The pertinent questions are: 1. what were the logistic challenges that led to the cancellation of the elections? 2. Were these challenges addressed before the elections were eventually held on 23rd of February?

THE LOGISTIC CHALLENGES OF THE GENERAL ELECTION

According to Dictionary of Contemporary English, logistics simply refers to planning and organization that are needed to carry out any large scale and difficult operation. Logistic also means an extensive planning and process designed to execute a gigantic project. It usually involves mobilization of 3ms men materials and money to achieve a set goal. A better way to understand logistic is to draw an analogy from a social function like wedding. The programmes could include selecting; date, for the wedding, preparation for the clothes of bride and bridegroom, invitation of the invitees, Planning for the number of the guests to be entertained, payment for venue of reception, provision of canopies, and sound system. Where most of these items are not done the wedding will be flawed. He, who fails to plan, plans to fail. Electoral logistics are the whole gamut of planning and operational issues associated with election. It included printing ballot papers, provision of polling centres, ballot boxes, vehicles, staff, etc.

The INEC Chairman Prof, Yakubu. postponed the elections initially scheduled for 16 February to 23rd February, citing logistics challenges in getting electoral materials to polling stations on time. The challenges included difficulties in transporting electoral materials in some areas, security of Adhoc staff and materials, financially handicap. Yet INEC had four years of planning and preparation for the elections. The elections have been adjudged us the most expensive ever held in Nigerian history, having gulped N69 billion, timely approved by the National Assembly and disbursed to INEC by the executive arm of government. The INEC had no justifiable reason for postponing the election. The lame excuses given by the electoral umpire were hatchet plans to implement the bidding of the incumbent president in manner characteristic of post-colonial Africa state where incumbent presidents perpetuate themselves in office by all means. This was evident in the fact that when the election eventually took place, the logistic challenges were glaringly seen

everywhere in the country.

This is further buttressed by CODEs Report on 2019 General Election observation. The Non-governmental organization CODEs report on 2019 general elections observation asserted that “logistic and operational issues were prevalent despite the fact that they were the reason for the postponement of elections”. The report recorded 137 cases of logistics and operational challenges at many polling units across the country. For example, INEC officials and materials in some state in the south -east and south-west did not arrive the polling stations until 12 noon and commencement of voting stalled until 2pm and 4pm in some state like Akwo-Ibom. There were also reported cases of missing stamp, Card Reader issues of malfunctioning, delay of voting processes which compelled INEC to extend voting till the following day to make up for the lost ground (CODE, 2019),.

Also, inspite of INEC postponement to ensure security of electorates, electoral official and materials, security issues were rampant during the elections. CODE (2019) and international observers reported poor level of preparedness by INEC in the conduct of a violence free election, despite week-long, postponement of the election to allow for adequate logistic and security readiness. This was in view of violent killing of electorates in states like kogi, Bayelsa and 16 persons in Rivers while many people sustained varying degrees of injuries. The West African Network of Peace Building, an NGO), in partnership with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and African Union (AU) that observed the election reported at least 38 violent incidents during the election of which 36 of them were fatal (Sun Newapaper, Feb. 25, 2019). According to the reports of the 114 international observers deployed across the country, there was a high level of electoral irregularities. Prof Isaac Albert, chairman of the Eminent persons Group, said this was occasioned by ballot box snatching, intimidations and armed attacks. The observers warned that if not checked, electoral violence could lead to voter's apathy in subsequent elections in the country.

INEC had at its disposal the Nigerian police force mandated by law to protect the electorates and electoral materials, in addition to other security agents drafted to protect the process in 119, 973 polling units for the election. However, it is disheartening to note that many polling units have only one security officer attached to it, and in some cases, there were none. Thus in the event of outbreak of violence in a polling unit the security agent became incapacitated to deal with the situation. Thus from the forgoing analysis, the postponement of elections from 16th February to 23rd February failed to address the logistic challenges raised by INEC. This leads us to the transparency or credibility of the elections. In view of the obvious logistics problem, were the elections transparent, credible free and fair?

TRANSPARENCY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Elections in Nigeria since independence, have never been hitch free and trouble free, credible and transparent. The only one that came close to being free and fair was the June 12, 1993 General election which was adjudged as the most credible election in Nigerian history. Each of the General elections has its own peculiarities of inconsistency and lack of transparency of the electoral process. I make bold to state here that the 2019 General Elections were seriously flawed.

Perhaps, it will be pertinent to start our analysis of the transparency, question of the 2019 elections by going back in time to look at the appointment of the chairman of the INEC by the president. According to the Electoral Act it is the responsibility of the president to appoint the INEC chairman, subject to the ratification of the senate. One of the criteria for the appointment of INEC chief is that the selection of the candidate for the office must alternate with the geo-political zone of the incumbent president. The expectations of the free and fair elections was dampened by the perception among many Nigerians of bias by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), whose neutrality had been a key factor in the success of the 2015 elections. This suspicion was fueled by the fact that against already established convention, President Muhammad Buhari appointed a person from his own region as INEC chairman, which was seen to have serious implications for the

autonomy and independent action of the head of the electoral body (Ukiwo2019). There were speculations in so main quarters Nigerian that the eleventh hour cancellation of the election schedule,; for the 16th February by the INEC chief, predicated on logistic problem, was actually an order from the incumbent president and APC chieftains in attempt to perfect their rigging strategies. After all as the popular saying goes "he who pays the piper dictates the tune".

Secondly the body language and utterances of the president and APC chieftain Adams Oshiomole tended to demonstrate to perceptive observers that the elections were not going to be transparent, free and fair. The incumbent president Buhari. while presenting the 2019 Appropriation Bill to the National Assembly, and exercise usually carried out in the last month of out-going years for the incoming years, alluded to the 2019 budget as "Budget for the Next level" a phrase which later become the APC campaign slogan. On the day of election, 23rd February the president and his wife drove to the voting center near to the ASO rock residence to cast their votes. After voting the president was asked by a journalist "Assuming, your opponent the PDP, presidential flag bearer, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar wins the election, will you congratulate him?". The president retorted sharply with this answer, "No, I will not congratulate him because; I am going to win." Obviously the president was being optimistic. There is nothing wrong with president's optimism. But politics is a game, and like all games, there is no certainty but probability of the eventually outcome that was why the journalist posed the question. The logical corollary from his response was that the result of presidential election was a foregone conclusion in favour of the ruling party. In addition the chairman of APC paraded himself as if the nation is his estate and APC as the party to beat.

On the Election Day, voting counting, screening, announcement of result and declaration of winner were serious flawed. As a matter of fact the general elections were characterized by the following.

1. INEC officials compromised in their duty as umpires of the electoral process. Some INEC commissioners, adhoc and permanent staff colluded with politicians to rig the Presidential and National Assembly Elections. This was admitted by the INEC boss, Prof. Yakubu. in a press conference and INEC spokes person, Mr. Festus Okoye on NTA press briefing

were they note that culprits were few bad eggs in the commission.

2. Similarly, some armed military officials who were deployed to flash points to provide security on the day of election, were invoked in the electoral malpractices in an obvious violation of the Electoral Act An independent election observer group. Center for Transparency Advocacy (CTA) noted that it received the report of involvement of armed personnel or hood him in military uniforms and promptly followed a up and therefore confirmed their conspicuous involvement in the election process in Rivers, Bayelsa and Yobe state.
3. The cancellation of the general election earlier scheduled for 16th February provided opportunities for politicians to collude with self seeking INEC staff both permanent and adhoc who were already at the RATCH centers before the cancellation at mid-night, to influence the election result. Suffice it to say that money exchanged hands.
4. In spite of the effort to enhance the functionality of the smart card reader. (SCRs), there were technical hitches in some locations which affected the voting process and created opportunities for manipulation. There were places where voting could not take place as a result of the failure of the SCRs and INEC officials do not allow people to vote manually. But in some other parts of the country, people were allowed to vote manually and it was accepted by the electoral body (Vanguard Newspaper, 27, February, 2019).
5. The ballot paper is a coat of many colours with colour riot, the electorates could not distinguish between some parties by their logos.
6. The column provided for thumb printing or voting is very small due to large number of political parties thereby causing some voters to vole or thumb print across the line, leading to thousands of voided votes.
7. There were several incidents of vote buying (openingly) despite claims of enough security to stop such practices
8. Intimidation of voters by political thugs despite claim of security presence by INEC to protect the process.
9. Ballot box snatching another case of logistic

failure.

10. Under age voting in violation of the electoral law
11. In conclusive elections in some locations in order to influence the outcome
12. The case of INEC server being shut down to prevent further transmission of result from the states favourably disposed to be the strong hold of the main opposition's party.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Nigeria has witnessed 20 years of uninterrupted democracy since the inception of the present political dispensation described in our political lexicon as the 4th republic. The 2015 presidential election was a watershed in the political history of Nigeria, for the first time an incumbent president,

Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of PDP lost his re-election and peacefully surrendered power to Mohammed Buhari of the APC as the winner. Many Nigerians thought that sanity had returned to our electoral process where election will be free and fair and winner will be magnanimous in victory while losers will accept defeat in the spirit of sportsmanship. Rather than improve on this we started retrogressing again to the precipice of electoral fraud. This retrogression is evident in the 2019 general elections. There is no gum saying the fact that the election was a sham: the processes were seriously flawed as could be seen from our analysis of the transparency of the processes. This scenario does not augur well for the consolidation of democracy in the country.

One of the obvious lessons of the flawed process for democratic consolidation is that people will begin to lose interest in our election with obvious consequence of poor voters turnout. According to INEC records, 84 registered to vote 73 million collected voters card, out of which 28 million people actually voted. This is a clear demonstration of political apathy. Voters turnout in this election was the lowest recorded number in Nigerian electoral history only 35.6% of those who collected their PVCs voted compared to 43.7% of Nigerian eligible voters who voted in 2015 general elections. One obvious reason for the political apathy witnessed during the election was the sudden postponement of the election from 16th to 23th February 2019. Some electorates, obviously, entertained fear that votes would not count at the end of exercise.

Furthermore, people are becoming atrophied and lethargic with Nigerian elections. This mistrust is fuelled by lack of sanctity in the process. The political actors operate within a political environment which largely determines their orientation and behaviour. As far as these political actors are concerned; political activities are geared toward wealth accumulation and social services appears incidental in their programmes. The control of government brings instant wealth and in abundance and the office seeker is prepared to get into office by fair or foul means. This state of affairs explains why political contest is seen as do or die affair (Amucheazi, 2015). This position was echoed by Labour Electoral Monitoring Team in 2003 Nigeria election about still prevalent in 2019 election which noted that:

These days many politicians seek power with the aim of promoting primitive accumulation. Politics is now seen as vehicle for making quick and easy money. This rent seeking and rent collection mentality of politicians can be seen from the desperation of incumbents to hold on to power by any means. The counterweight to this is the determination and desperation of the elites outside to get into power by any means necessary. To these elites, the end result of getting control of political power is justified by whatever means employed. This means includes violence (LEMT, 2003 cited in Eleagu, 2010: 3).

Hence they perpetuate various forms of electoral malpractices which make the electorates feel disappointed and lose interest in the process. Therefore to state that the 2019 general elections in Nigeria were characterized by monumental fraud in which could make the electorates feel alienated from political participation is stating the obvious.

The most intriguing and disturbing fact about the election which has obvious negative consequence for the advancement of our democracy is rampant political violence and killing. The media were abashed with cases of brutal mining, murder of innocent Nigerians by armed political thugs and security agents during the elections. The fear of phenomenal rises in electoral violence could lead to alienation of the electorates in our democratic elections, thus making it impossible for our

democracy to truly reflect and demonstrate the will of the people. The majoritarian principle which is the hallmark of democracy is ultimately on the part of being jettisoned for the government enthroned by political miscreants and hoodlums. This is because the reports of violence and deaths, ballot box snatching and various forms of voter's intimidation witnessed in several locations during the presidential and National Assembly Elections could cause voters' apathy in the subsequent elections in 2023.

CONCLUSION

The paper explored the effects of the logistic challenges that led to the postponement of 2019 General Election beyond the initial election date on the transparency of the eventual election on 23rd February 2019. The study notes that electoral infractions have been a recurrent decimal in the history of Nigerian general elections since independence and the 2019 General elections was not spared the ugly trend of electoral fraud prevalent in the country. The study notes that Nigerian electorates have lost interest and confidence in the use of electoral process to effect change of leadership in the polity. Since electorates votes no longer determines the outcome of electoral contest, elections in Nigeria are generally believed to be nothing but mere selection exercise by political elites who manipulate the process. Electoral Malpractices are not only anti-democratic but also constitute debilitating full-blown-cancer to our democratic consolidation.

However, the introduction of Electronic voting system in 2019 General Elections could not change the ugly narrative, as the electronic device, Card Reader failed to function properly in some polling centres due to technical hitches or human errors in handling the devices. In spite of all efforts to make the politicians to play the rules of the game so as to have acceptable and reliable elections, the process was still fraught with irregularities due to desperation for power. Furthermore, the election management body INEC could not put its house in order to build confidence in the election hence the logistic challenges that led to the cancellation of the earlier scheduled date for the presidential and National Assembly elections. The cancellation was an obvious indication of lack of efficiency, effectiveness, credibility and transparency in electoral process. As far as the political gladiators are concerned, the lapses in the logistic arrangement offered then the simple opportunities to manipulate the election activities to capture power for the

purpose of wealth accumulation. The party with the strongest manipulative strategies coupled with its control of the state apparatus as the party in power APC outmaneuvered the main opposition party, PDP, to retain power. Even though, the Supreme Court verdict on the electoral petition instituted by Atiku Abubakar of PDP declared Mohammadu Buhari of APC as the winner of presidential election based on legal technicalities, it does not vitiate the fact that the election was a sham.

Thus, as Nigeria prepares for 2023 General Election, the electoral body INEC needs to put its house in order to avoid another logistic problems, the number of political parties has to be scaled down to barest minimum to avoid coat of many colours that was the lot of 2019 general elections where 93 party logos appeared on the ballot paper. The Smart Card Reader Malfunctionality made a mess of the 2019 General Election in some polling centers where INEC officials has to resort to manual accreditation and voting. We do appreciate the new Electoral Act, 2022 which has given INEC the authority to replace Card Reader with another electronic voting device necessary for credible election, the Bimodal voter Accreditation system (BVAS) and to transmit results online with polling Unit workers uploading results directly to the INEC Results portal. The recommendations of Electoral Act must be strictly applied in the electoral process to make it creditable free and fair. Election observers, both local and international who monitor election must run parallel vote tabulation to confirm the accuracy of the results transmitted to the portal to ensure legitimacy of the process. This will help to improve the electoral process, build confidence on the future elections in the country and advance our democracy.

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