

INEC and the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: Matters Arising

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Abstract

The paper examines the powers and responsibilities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in the conducts of elections in Nigeria; particularly, that of the 2015 general election. Content Analytical Approach was adopted and David Easton's Systems theory was used as theoretical foundation. Despite the general acceptance of the 2015 presidential election as free, fair and transparent, there were observed flaws that bedeviled the election. However, it was indeed, an improvement on past elections in Nigeria. The paper recommends amongst others; that INEC needs to be truly independent in all ramifications to discharge its duties impartially so as to ensure credible elections and enthrone sustainable democracy in the country; the new government should tackle the issues of corruption, security, unemployment and poverty frontally. Instead of dissipating energies chasing those who have defrauded the country in the past, the administration should embark on aggressive reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation of hitherto aggrieved factions; ensure institutional and human capacity development because, development itself, would raise its own armies to fight corruption.

Keywords: INEC, PDP, APC, Election, Challenges, Sustainable democracy.

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria's chequered political history is bedeviled with the gory tales of electoral malpractices which have significantly impacted negatively on the nation's polity. Effective management of the electoral process has therefore, become an imperative political demand so as to ensure the sanctity, transparency and credibility of election results in the nation's democratic setting (Akinboye, 2005). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), is the institutionalized governmental body established, through the instrumentality of law, to manage the nation's electoral process. The INEC, as an instrument of processing democratic ideals and structures, is hopefully, expected to be a truly independent body that personifies the ideals of transparency, impartiality, accountability and responsiveness. This perhaps, informed the popular perception that the body is insulated from partisan politics, and that, it is fully empowered to discharge its avowed duties devoid of any influence whatsoever (Udu, Nkwede et.al 2014).

In reality, there are empirical evidences over the years, that the INEC has not been fully autonomous and non-partisan; neither does it appear to be sufficiently empowered to carry out its assigned duties and responsibilities impartially. However, in the 2015 General elections in Nigeria, despite some pockets of irregularities evidenced in late arrival or non-availability of electoral materials, falsification of election results in some areas, failure of the Card Reader Machines and collusion with politicians and security personnels to subvert the process, the outcome of the 2015 general elections has been generally accepted to be transparent and indeed, an improvement on past elections in the country.

Indeed, foreign intelligence and diplomatic sources had been quoted severally since 2011 to have predicted the end of Nigeria as a country, consequent upon the outcome of the 2015 elections. A former U.S Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. John Campbell is more prominently quoted to have insisted that the country would break up in 2015 because the elections will plunge Nigeria in crisis (Yaqub, 2015). Truly, had the result of the election turned otherwise, many believed that Campbell prediction may have been inevitable. Frankly, Nigerians have desired a change of the Goodluck Jonathan's PDP administration which has been generally accused of inefficiency, corruption, contempt of the people, insecurity etc. Security was brazenly compromised as government security agencies, including the military conducted their responsibilities with clear partisan inclinations that left nobody in doubt that state apparatuses as important as security and military institutions became tools of political vendetta, electoral manipulations and subversion of democratic norms.

In the face of the foregoings coupled with the Nigerian economy which has been clearly dumped in the doldrums, a change of the statusquo has become the aspiration of many Nigerians, particularly those not favoured by the ruling party. The question is: would the defeat of the PDP by the APC bring about the much desired change? What are the implications of the APC victory for the nagging issue of sustainable national development?

Essentially, the objectives of this paper are as follows:

- To examine the INEC Management of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria against the backdrop of its avowed mandates;
- To ascertain the immediate/remote causes of President Jonathan's defeat;
- Establish the challenges facing the PDP as now, an opposition party; and to
- Explore the challenges of APC victory for sustainable National Development.

2.1 Democracy and Election: A Conceptual Perspective

The theory of democracy is rooted in the ancient Greek polity, which classified governance according to the numbers of participants in decision-making process. According to them a government is classified in a continuum which ranges from rule by one person (Monarchy), through rule by few (Oligarchy) to rule by many (democracy). The central focus is the locus of power and how power is exercised in the political system. They contended that the few individuals who control a nation's key financial, industrial and communication institutions, constitute the ruling elites – a small group that govern modern society (Odofin in Momoh et al, 2005).

Conceptually, democracy is complex and means different things to different people. Abraham Lincoln conceptualizes democracy, simply, as government of the people, by the people and, for the people. The implication of this strong and historic definition is that democracy is all about consensus government, freely chosen by the people for the pursuit of the ideals, aspirations, welfare, progress and overall interest of the people. A government of this nature operates at the mercy of the people, who themselves, hold such government accountable through the process of periodic elections. Invariably, it enables the people to govern themselves by means of constant interactions and discussions of issues of common interest, voting in elections and running for public office. Thus, a democratic government is propelled by the collective ideas, energy, wisdom, understanding, knowledge and perceptions of the people rather than the views, opinion and ideas of a single individual who is at the helms.

In the context of the foregoing, Dahl cited by Diamond argues that democracy is:

A system of government that meets three essential conditions: an extensive competition among individuals and groups (especially political parties) for all elective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair election, so that no major (adult) social group is excluded, and a level of civic and political liberties, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Diamond, 1992:14-15).

Hence, democracy clearly requires institutional mechanisms, established procedures and organizations such as political parties, legislatures, interest groups through which public opinion is translated into government policy. The notion of government of the people, by the people and for the people is that, through periodic elections, public officials could be held accountable for their activities and those adjudged to have performed below expectations are defeated at the polls. The threat of defeat, according to Janda (1989), are expected to motivate public officers to be responsible and responsive.

The most important elements encapsulating the democratic agenda are popular participation, equitable representation and accountability. Thus, democracy provides ample opportunities for the citizens to make their inputs in the policy process. In otherwords, democracy affords the citizens the chances to contribute to decisions that affect their lives and environments. It is also an avenue for the creation of the required political infrastructure by means of which diverse interests are aggregated and addressed and the institutionalization of mechanism to hold leaders accountable to the public will as well as providing the means for removal of government from power without resorting to military approach.

Finally, through the democratic process, principles of accountability are institutionalized and through these principles, leaders are held accountable for their actions and inactions in the public realm by the collectivity of the citizenry acting indirectly through the competition and co-operation of their elected representatives (Noam, 1991).

From the foregoing, it would have been clear that democracy consists not only in “winning elections” but also and, more importantly, in establishing organic relations with the people and allowing them to control their leaders by holding them to account (Odofin, 2005). This may sound abstract, particularly in Nigeria, where the political gladiators who conversed and solicited for votes from the electorates soon afterwards, abandoned the electorates as they assumed office claiming as most often has been the case, that their political fortune was divine and not challengeable by any human institution. In situations like this, elections become ritualistic and formalistic, incapable of changing anything. The ritual of elections, cannot possibly guarantee democracy to a people who face undemocratic courts, the police, bureaucrats every day (Amuwo, 1992). These tendencies have continued to erode the significance of elections in Nigerian democratic project.

For democracy to be sustained in any society, certain conditions are necessary among which the economic condition is regarded as predominant. Hence, political democracy and liberty would become realistic only when they are supported by economic and social democracy. Thus, extreme differences in wealth distribution and authoritative allocation of resources constitute the greatest obstacles to sustainable democracy.

Unless democracy is used as means of responding to the acute needs of the people such as food, security, shelter and clothing, the people are unlikely to be strong enough to support democracy. This is what gave rise to a new term in democracy referred to as “stomach infrastructure” (Udu, 2014). Hence, democracy makes sense only when it guarantees freedom, liberty and economic emancipation. Conversely, when democracy cannot be translated into tangible things that touch on the lives and survival of the people, the apparent freedom and liberty which democracy purports to promote is exploited for violence (Odojin, 2015). For instance, it has been shown overtime that the material poverty of majority of Nigerians is at the root of sporadic outburst of ethno-religious conflicts and crisis in the country (Egwu, 2002).

Democracy makes sense when it is used as a continuous process for promoting equal access to the good things of life and the promotion of fundamental human rights including, most importantly, the right to dignity; when it is used for combating poverty, investing heavily in healthcare facilities, education and human capacity building so that the people, not only would participate in democracy but would be enabled to defend it when necessary (Ntalaja, 2000).

The conditions for democracy therefore, include a high standard of living and reasonable spread of income which tend to diminish social unrest. On the other hand, poverty, illiteracy, hunger and disease, ignorance; etc, all serve to render a country unlikely to sustain democracy. In this context, the institutionalization of democracy in Nigeria faces enormous difficulties; moreover, as the political elites continue to manipulate divisive and destructive forces to block national integration and good governance.

In accordance with the universal principles of governance examined above, elections are regarded as key institutional mechanism of democratic governance, though definitional consensus about election is a matter of intellectual supposition. However, elections generally, represent a means of measuring political expression and the exercise of state power legitimized and accepted as being derived from the people’s consent. According to Hugh Bone and Austin Ranney,

In a democratic nation... periodic elections of executives and legislators constitute the principal institutional device for making sure that government shall derive its just power from the consent of the governed.(Bone & Ranney, 1971:1).

Essentially, elections are legitimate means through which the citizens of a country choose their representatives in conformity with the dictates of modern democracy. W.J.M Mackenzie alluded to this when he asserts that elections are “rituals of choice” and that their binding character are “derived from the participation of the individual as a chooser in a social act which confers legitimate authority on the person chosen” (Mackenzie, 1968). Similarly, Adejumbi situates the symbolism of elections within the context of popular sovereignty and the expression of the social pact between the states and the people. To him, “it is the Kernel of political accountability and means of ensuring reciprocity and exchange between the governors and the governed” (Adejumbi, 1998:31).

The centrality of elections in a democratic polity cannot be over-emphasized. Momoh and Adejumbi underscored this quite poignantly:

Elections occupy a central place in the democratic process through the animating force they provide for representative government. On the one hand, they serve as an instrument of legitimization for the state and those who manage the reins of state power, while on the other, they ensure political accountability to the people (Momo & Adejumbi, 1999:142).

Sharing the same view, Obi and Abutudu posit that “...elections offer the electorate the freedom of choice, the power to hold elected leaders accountable and provide protection against perpetuation of arbitrary rule” (Obi and Abutudu, 1999:285). Bratton perceptively submits that in spite of the clear distinction between elections and democracy, elections remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments but also and more significantly, as a necessary requisite for broader democratic consolidation (Bratton, 1999). Breytenbach, in his submission, which is similarly germane, allude that although elections are insufficient to guarantee democracies, their symbolism is quite powerful and they are crucially important in measuring public support (Breytenbach, 1997).

Be that as it may, the imperative of a free and fair election as a means of ensuring acceptable electoral outcome is indeed, essential and all-pervading. Hence, Larry Diamond advocates “a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, least through regular, free and fair elections such that no major social group is excluded (Diamond, 1990). Adele Jinadu in the same vein, insists that “the future of democratic politics... is inextricably bound up with the conduct of free and fair elections and a responsible party system (Jinadu, 2003).

Since elections must be free and fair before their outcome can be said to represent the popular will, the question that arises is: How then can the conduct of free and fair elections be assured in a democratic polity?

W.J.M Mackenzie provides this answer when he sums up that elections can only be free and fair in an environment where there exists:

- (i) An independent judiciary to interpret electoral law;
- (ii) An honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections;
- (iii) A developed system of political parties, well organized to put their policies, traditions and teams of candidates before the elections as alternatives between which to choose; and,
- (iv) A general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rather than vague rules of the game which limits the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiments that if the rules are not observed more or less faithfully, the games itself will disappear (Mackenzie, 1954:56).

This paper alludes to Mackenzie's submission, particularly, the second condition which emphasizes the existence of "an honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections" and, it is on this premise, that the administration of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria would be assessed.

2.2 Evolution of the INEC

One of the fundamental pre-requisites for a truly free and fair democratic election contest as demonstrated by Derbyshire and Derbyshire relates to an election supervision in which "the campaign and vote counting should be supervised by an impartial administration, with an independent body available to adjudicate in electoral disputes" (Derbyshire and Derbyshire, 1993:130, cited in Akinboye, 2005). In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, constitutes the independent agency entrusted with the responsibility of re-engineering the political process, conducting elections and implementing the various regulations devised to prevent every imaginable form of electoral misconduct. The establishment of the electoral body has an antecedent deserving broader explication.

In the very first place, the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established by the then colonial administration to conduct the 1959 general elections. The first post-independent electoral agency, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC), was established in 1960 by the Balewa regime to conduct the 1964 and 1965 general and regional elections, respectively. The body was dissolved upon the military coup d'état of 1966 (Akinboye in Momoh, 2005). Consequently, a new electoral body, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), was constituted by the regime of General Obasanjo in 1978 to organize the 1979 general elections which, heralded the Second Republic under Alhaji Shehu Shagari's leadership. The body also conducted the 1983 general elections before it was dissolved later that year when the military again seized power. The Babangida military administration, in 1987, established the National Electoral Commission (NEC), which conducted the general elections of 1993, including the controversial/annulled June 12 presidential elections. On assumption of office, General Sani Abacha in 1993 dissolved the NEC and set up a new electoral body, the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), in December, 1995. The body conducted series of elections, aborted by Abacha's sudden death in June, 1998. This resultantly, led to the dissolution of NECON and the emergence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in August, 1998 to organize the transitional elections that ushered in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999. Hence, the INEC was established by Decree 17 of 1998 and was inaugurated by the then Head of State, General Abudulsalami Abubakar on August 11, 1998. The legal existence of the electoral body was incorporated into the 1999 constitution which became operational on May 29, 1999. Section 14 of the 3rd schedule of the constitution provides for the membership of INEC. The electoral body is managed by a commission headed by a chairman who is the chief Electoral Officer and 13 other members who are to be men and women of proven character and unquestionable integrity. They were appointed by the president with confirmation of the Senate. Each state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory has a Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), who heads the INEC's office there. It is instructive that a policy decision emanating from the INEC's headquarters is usually channeled through the state's REC who directs the implementation of such policy at the state level (INEC, 2015).

2.2.1 Mandates of the INEC

The mandates of the INEC are as stipulated in part 1 of the third schedule of the 1999 constitution and well-documented by INEC in its reports of activities (1998 – 1999) as follows:

- (i) Organize, undertake and supervise all the elections to the offices of the President and Vice-president, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a state, and to the membership of the senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each state of the federation;
- (ii) Register political parties in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and an Act of the National Assembly;
- (iii) Monitor the organization and operation of the political parties, including their finances;
- (iv) Arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts for political parties, and publish a report on each examination and audit for public information;

- (v) Arrange and conduct registration of persons qualified to vote, and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under this constitution;
- (vi) Monitor political campaigns and provide rules and regulations which shall govern the political parties;
- (vii) Ensure that all Electoral commissioners, Electoral and Returning officers take and subscribe to the oath of office prescribed by law;
- (viii) Delegate any of its powers to any Resident Electoral Commissioners; and
- (ix) Carry out such other functions as may be conferred upon it by an Act of the National Assembly (INEC, 2015).

While inaugurating INEC on August 12, 1998, Gen. Abubakar reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to allow the electoral umpire to operate independently; so did president Goodluck Jonathan while appointing the present INEC Chairman Professor Attahiru Jega in 2011. As a neutral, non-partisan electoral agency, INEC is expected to exhibit unalloyed impartiality and transparency in its conducts of elections in Nigeria. Since its inception, INEC has conducted many general elections in the country: the 2003, 2007, 2011 and the 2015 general elections under its incumbent chairman, Prof. Jega, it is therefore, considered imperative to examine its activities, particularly the management of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

2.3 Theoretical Framework of Analysis

David Easton was the first political scientist to develop a system framework for political analysis (Ball, 1983; Offiong, 1996). Extrapolated from the biological sciences, a system can be seen as a set of interrelated elements or a set of inter-dependent variables; while a political system on the other hand, can be seen as a “system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made” (Bell, 1983, cited in Epelle, 2003).

What can be gleaned from the above expose is that a typical system has certain peculiarities: first, a system is composed of elements or parts (sub-systems), that function as a whole; in other words, there is an organic unity and interdependence between component parts of a system such that any change in one part, causes a change in the other parts and by extension, the entire system; second, a system has identifiable boundaries distinguishing it from the Macrocosm within which it operates; hence, a system can be international or domestic, though both categories are sometimes, not mutually exclusive but complimentary and reciprocal. The impart of this is that, though a system may convey the notion of self-sufficiency, yet inter-and intra-system relations must exist. However, where these cooperative and harmonious relations are lost and/or denied, as in the Nigerian political system, then systemic breakdown would be inevitable.

According to the theory, a political system is an activity in which input from the environment are converted into outputs through the authoritative allocation of values. Consequently, as delineated by Easton, there are four (4) main processes involved in a typical political system: the input process; output process; the conversion and the feedback processes. This is perhaps, why Edosa (1996), dubbed the system theory as “input-output analysis”.

According to Easton (1965), while the inputs give the political system its dynamic character as it consists of: (i) demands (the raw materials that the political system is called upon to process), and (ii) support (favourable orientations and activity on the part of the people towards the political system and serving as the energy to process demands); outputs on the other hand, refers to those values that have been authoritatively allocated for all of society. Hence, other elements of the political system include the conversion process which portrays how the various demands are converted into outputs expressed in form of public policies and programmes; and, the feedback process that provides information to policy makers on the impact of their policies on environment.

A detailed discussion of this is not necessary here but it is instructive to note that Easton (1965), also drew attention to a salient feature that is critical in a political system maintaining homeostatic equilibrium, and that is the ability of the political system to meet the demands from its environment. Accordingly, while too many demands can pull down a system, yet unfulfilled demands, particularly when they are genuine, is capable of spelling doom for the political system as those whose genuine aspirations are side-tracked or traded off, are most likely to withdraw their supports for the political system; hence, occasioning stress.

Liberal democracy entails unfettered access to the greatest number of citizens in the determination of their national affairs. Consequently, when this privilege is hijacked by an oligarchy or subtly withdrawn from the masses like was prominent with the PDP dominated government in the country, the political system is bound to experience instability and disaffection.

The above scenario serves as a platform to posit that the osmotic take-over of the political landscape of the country by the then ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); dovetailing in some unfulfilled demands by the citizens of Nigeria for a viable oppositional alternative to realize their political objectives and make their inputs with the political conversion box is potentially destructive both for the party and for the society at large. The outcome of the Nigerian general elections 2015, has proved this ascertain beyond reasonable doubts.

3. Methodology

The paper adopted a Content Analytical Approach. It is predominantly based on data derived from secondary sources. Thus data were collected through the review of relevant texts, journals, magazines, newspapers, official publications particularly information from INEC official documents/publications, direct observation, media commentaries, structured interviews of political analysts and from scholarly writings on elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. These assisted us in gaining insight into the origins and development of the INEC, its performances in previous elections in Nigeria and more importantly, its conduct/administration of the 2015 general elections under reference.

4.1 The 2015 Election Conduct/Administration

The problem, inherent in elections conduct and administration constitutes a central factor in the annals of democratic rule in Nigeria any in many sub-saharan African states (Momoh and Adejumbi, 1998; cited in Akinboye, 2005). Although the integrity of elections is fundamentally germane to the sustenance of a truly representative form of government, election conduct in Nigeria over the years, has been incredible and unsatisfactory as the umpires have consistently performed below expectation. Evidently, successive electoral commissions in the country have been either pro-ruling party or engaged in the manipulation of election results in favour of the highest bidding contestants. Consequently, the outcome of such electoral manipulation had been absolutely disastrous as evidenced, for instance, by the 1983 election violence in Anambra, Ondo and Oyo states where the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN), allegedly masterminded the fraudulent rigging of the peoples' electoral verdict (Ajayi, 2003). The same is true of subsequent elections, such as the 2003 and the 2007 general elections in Nigeria.

Be that as it may, the 2015 general elections in Nigeria has been adjudged to be an improvement on the statusquo as many have described it as free, fair and transparent. The success of the 2015 election may well be attributed to the innovations of the INEC chairman Professor Jega, evidenced in the introduction of the PVC and the card reading machine, aimed at checkmating rigging, impersonation and related electoral malpractices. Despite the general acceptance of the outcome of the election, particularly the presidential election, there are still pockets of dissentments making their round that the elections were flawed. For instance, Hassan Zaggi (2015), in a media article, titled: "Transparent but flawed presidential election" posit that:

Some of the noticeable faults of the presidential elections, as observed on the day of the election at the polling units monitored, include: late arrival of electoral materials; malfunctioning of Card Readers; insufficient and, in some cases, none availability of electoral materials; overcrowding in polling units, and voting throughout the night which exposed the voters to high risk. Those many faults according to findings, have ended up disenfranchising many voters in many parts of the country. (Citizens' Advocate, April 19, 2015:18)

Evidently, the electoral body was confronted with logistic problems including the late arrival of its officials, inadequacy of both the officials and election materials in some units, lack of proper arrangement for conveying officials and materials to polling stations in view of the restrictions of vehicular movements, and lateness in commencement of elections.

Inspite of this, the elections took place on March 28, 2015 with the presidential and National Assembly polls while the gubernatorial elections and that of the State Assembly took place on April 11, 2015. Below is the tabulated outcome of the presidential election, table 1; while that of the gubernatorial election is presented in table 2.

Table 1: 2015 Presidential Election Result.

2015 Presidential Election Results				
States	APC	PDP	% APC	% PDP
1. ABIA	13,394	368,303	3.51	96.49
2. ADAMAWA	374,701	251,664	59.07	40.93
3. AKWA-IBOM	58,411	953,304	5.77	94.23
4. ANAMBRA	17,926	660,762	2.64	97.36
5. BAUCHI	931,961	86,085	93.42	6.58
6. BAYELSA	5,194	361,209	1.36	98.64
7. BENUE	373,961	303,737	52.89	47.11
8. BORNO	473,543	25,640	94.01	5.02
9. CR. RIVERS	28,368	414,863	5.26	94.74
10. DELTA	48,910	1211,405	2.18	97.82
11. EBONYI	19,518	323,653	6.96	93.04
12. EDO	208,469	286,869	41.48	58.52
13. EKITI	120,331	176,466	40.02	58.69
14. ENUGU	14,157	553,003	3.95	96.48
15. FCT	146,399	157,195	47.72	51.24
16. GOMBE	361,245	96,873	78.85	21.15
17. IMO	133,253	559,185	19.24	80.76
18. JIGAWA	885,988	142,904	85.39	13.77
19. KADUNA	1,127,760	484,805	71.56	28.44
20. KANO	1,906,999	215,775	89.82	10.18
21. KATSINA	1,345,441	98,937	92.83	6.85
22. KEBBI	567,883	100,972	85.39	14.61
23. KOGI	264,851	149,987	62.86	35.10
24. KWARA	302,146	132,602	69.50	30.50
25. LAGOS	792,460	632,327	55.65	44.35
26. NASARAWA	236,838	273,460	46.30	53.46
27. NIGER	657,678	149,222	81.43	18.57
28. OGUN	308,290	207,950	57.82	39.00
29. ONDO	299,889	251,368	53.45	44.80
30. OSUN	383,603	249,929	59.69	38.89
31. OYO	528,620	303,376	59.98	34.42
32. PLATEAU	429,140	549,615	43.85	56.15
33. RIVERS	69,238	1,487,075	3.89	96.11
34. SOKOTO	671,926	152,199	81.53	18.47
35. TARABA	261,326	310,800	48.21	52.79
36. YOBE	446,265	25,526	95.41	4.59
37. ZAMFARA	612,202	144,833	86.24	13.76
Total	15,424,683	12,853,162	53.96	44.96

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission

Source: Daily Independent Newspaper, Wednesday, April 1, 2015:I.

4.2 Declaration of Results.

In the 2015 presidential election, General Mohammadu Buhari (rt) scored a total of 15,424,683, representing 53.96 per cent of the total votes cast to defeat the incumbent president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who pooled 12,853,162 votes (44.96 per cent).

Analysis of the results released by the INEC, as evidenced in table 1, show that both leading candidates met the minimum requirement of 25 per cent votes cast in 24 states. However, APC candidate, Gen. Buhari defeated president Jonathan of the PDP with about three million votes in a historic election that saw a Nigerian leader conceding electoral defeat, for the first time in its history.

In the governorship election results, APC, won in 18 states and PDP won in only 7 states with 4 states inconclusive at the time of writing this paper.

4.3 Matters Arising From the 2015 Election

4.3.1 INEC and Post-Election Assessment

Despite the acceptance of the outcome of the presidential election and the subsequent and historic concession of defeat by the incumbent president; the 2015 election like its predecessors witnessed some documented electoral flaws. Some of these deficiencies in INEC Management of the election included but not restricted to: late arrival of election materials, overcrowding, failure of the card reader, result manipulation and voting of under-aged in some units in the Northern part of the country. As noted by Hassan Zaggi, while monitoring the election in some parts of the FCT, and neighbouring towns, it was discovered that electoral materials arrived late at the polling stations. This unavoidably, led to late accreditation of voters and commencement of the voting process itself (Hassan, 2015). In addition, while the Card Readers aided in keeping away fake voters, it however had its faults as in most of the polling units visited, especially in the finger print identification. Incredibly, the Card Reader was also reported to have failed Mr. President himself while standing for accreditation in his polling unit at Bayelsa State.

Similarly, the issue of overcrowding in some polling units also encumbered the electoral process. For instance, as observed by the Daily Independent, many voting points were located in one major primary school which inevitably caused a measure of overcrowding with the attendant security risk. Evidently, some voters, on

sighting the mammoth crowd at the polling centres refused to stand in the place for fear of terrorist attack; thereby leading to many voters not being able to cast their votes at the end of the exercise.

Table 2: Governorship Election Results.

Governorship Election Results at a Glance					
1.	Abia	Alex Otti Nyere Anyim Okezie Ikpeazu	APGA APC PDP	Inconclusive	
2.	Adamawa	Jibrilla Bindo Markus Gundiri Nuhu Ribadu	APC SDP PDP	206,576 124,326 46,519	Elected
3.	Akwa Ibom	Udom Emmanuel Umana Umana Samuel Akpan	PDP APC AP	996,071 89,865 10,598	Elected
4.	Rivers	Nyesom Wike Dakuku Peterside Tonye Princewill	PDP APC LP	1,029,102 124,896 10,142	Elected
5.	Plateau	Simon Lalong Gyang Pwajok	APC PDP	564,913 520,627	Elected
6.	Jigawa	Badaru Abubakar Aminu Ringim	APC PDP	648,045 479,447	Elected
7.	Gombe	Ibrahim Dankwambo Inuwa Yahya	PDP APC	285,369 205,132	Re-elected
8.	Ogun	Ibikunle Amosun Gboyega Isiaka Akin Odunsi	APC PDP SDP	306,988 201,440 25,826	Re-Elected
9.	Oyo	Abiola Ajimobi Rasheed Ladoja Alao Akala Teslim Folarin	APC AP LP PDP	327,310 254,520 184,111 79,019	Re-elected
10.	Enugu	Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi Okey Ezea Kanayo Oguakwa	PDP APC PDC	482,227 43,839 4,814	Elected
11.	Lagos	Akinwunmi Ambode Jimi Agbaje	APC PDP	811,994 659,788	Elected
12.	Delta	Ifeanyi Okowa Great Ogboru O'tega Emerhor	PDP LP APC	724,680 130,028 67,825	Elected
13.	Bauchi	Mohammed Abubakar Auwal Jatau	APC PDP	654,934 282,650	Elected
14.	Katsina	Aminu Masari Musa Nashuni Yakubu Lado	APC PDP PDM	943,085 476,768 50,361	Elected
15.	Kaduna	Nasir el-Rufai Ramallan Yero	APC PDP	1,117,635 485,833	Elected
16.	Kwara	Abdulfatah Ahmed Simeon Ajibola	APC PDP	295,832 115,220	Re-elected
17.	Kano	Umar Ganduje Sagiri Takai	APC PDP	1,546,434 509,726	Elected
18.	Sokoto	Aminu Tambuwal Abdalla Wali	APC PDP	647,609 269,007	Elected
19.	Zamfara	AbdulAziz Yari Mamuda Shinkafi Sani Shinkafi	APC PDP APGA	716,964 201,938 2,385	Re-elected
20.	Ebonyi	Dave Umahi Edward Nkwegu	PDP LP	289,867 124,817	Elected
21.	Niger	Sani Bello Umar Nasko	APC PDP	593,702 239,772	Elected
22.	Nasarawa	Tanko Al-makura Labaran Maku	APC APGA	309,746 178,983	Re-elected
23.	Borno	Kashim Shettima Alhaji Gambo Lawan	APC PDP	Inconclusive	
24.	Benue	Samuel Ortom Terhemem Tarzoor	APC PDP	422,932 313,878	Elected
25.	Cross River	Ben Ayade Odey Ochicha	PDP APC	342,016 53,983	Elected
26.	Imo	Rochas Okorochoa Emeka Ihedioha	APC PDP	Inconclusive	
27.	Taraba	Aisha Jumei Al-hasan Dickson Ishaku	APC PDP	Inconclusive	
28.	Yobe	Ibrahim Gaidam Adamu Waziri	APC PDP	334,847 179,700	Elected
29.	Kebbi	Atiku Bagudu Sarkin-Yaki Bello	APC PDP	477,376 293,443	Elected
APC – 18 states PDP – 7 states Inconclusive – 4 states Total – 29 states					

Source: Tell, April 20, 2015:21

Similarly, Femi Aribisala in a media article, titled: “How Jega Executed Jonathan’s Fall,” asserts vehemently, that Buhari prevailed as a result of a deliberate disenfranchisement of the Igbo by INEC through the manipulation of the PVC distribution and the failure of the Card Reader in the South-East and the South-South zones of the country (Citizens’ Advocate, April 19, 2015:11). According to the report, INEC ensured that, far more disproportionately and relative to other geopolitical zones, millions of South-East voters disappeared from the voters’ register, between 2011 and 2015 to pave way for the emergence of a Northern presidential candidate. For instance, the failed attempt to create 29,000 additional polling units; allocating 21,000 of these to the north

and only 8,000 to the entire south. Had this arrangement been successful, it would have meant that more additional polling units were allocated to Abuja alone than the entire South-East. The failure of the polling units proposal however, gave rise to another alternative game plan evidenced in the bogus and lopsided, distribution of the PVCs, apparently skewed against the south where only 7.6 million were registered and 5.6 million PVCs collected, comparable to the war-torn North-East with 9.1 million registered voters and 7.4 million PVCs collected (Aribisala, 2015). However, the most outrageous were the figures recorded in the North-West, where 17.6 million registrations took place and 15.1 million PVCs collection was recorded, much more than the entire South-East and South-South combined. The implications of all these is the disenfranchisement of voters in the South in favour of the North.

A further analysis of the above scenario show that over 2.4 million South-East voters were successfully disenfranchised. For instance, in the 2011 presidential election, 38 million Nigerians voted for Buhari and president Jonathan while in 2015, this figure dropped drastically to 28 million. While the vote of the South-West remained virtually constant evidenced by 4.6 million in 2011 and 4.2 million in the 2015 election, that of the South-East staggered from 5 million in 2011 to only 2.6 million in the 2015 presidential election. This is obviously a drastic drop as while the north was posting its traditional homogeneous figures, the south posted relatively disappointing figures due to the above documented scheming by the INEC under Jega's leadership.

One must note that, there is no human system that is ever completely debugged; and, despite the observed flaws and the attendant analysis, the 2015 presidential election, has been generally accepted by Nigerians, the historic concession of defeat by the incumbent president, Jonathan, commended and above, all, any dispassionate mind might agree that the Nigerian 2015 general elections indeed, were improvement on past elections in the country.

4.3.2 Immediate /Remote Causes Of Jonathan's Defeat

A combination of the factors discussed earlier culminated in the president's defeat. However, for purpose of emphasis, this section would be devoted to pinpoint these causes in their various degrees and intensity.

- **The Economy**

The Nigerian economy has been said to have improved by the minister of finance, Okonjo Iweala; unfortunately, at this same time, the wealth of the nation is apparently concentrated in a few hands. Coupled with a combination of a fall in oil price and rising foreign exchange rate and as poverty level continued to rise among Nigerian citizens, the perception, real or imagined is that the president has unwittingly encouraged corruption and its adverse effects on the people. This factor, truly aggrieved Nigerians, who desired a change at all cost.

- **The Looming Anarchy in the Country**

The threat of Boko Haram insurgency and the seeming inability of the federal government to deal decisively with the menace was another cause of loss of faith with the Jonathan led-administration. With the Boko Haram hostility, over 20,000 lives of innocent Nigerians have been lost coupled with the Chibok girls that have been in captivity for over a year. The growing perception was that Jonathan's government was too weak or indecisive to ensure security of lives and property of the citizens. The Federal Government efforts to address these issues in a couple of weeks before the presidential election was too belated to have changed the minds of many Nigerians who have made up their minds against the government.

- **Division within the Ruling Party (PDP).**

Intra-party grievances caused by unfair treatment of some party loyalists, imposition of unpopular candidates on the people, lack of internal democracy amongst others, caused disaffection among influential party chieftains such as governors: Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers state; Rebiu Kwankwaso, Kano; Murtala Nyako; Adamawa; Abdulfatah Ahmed, Kwara; and, Tanko Al Makura, Nasarawa; who dumped the party for APC (Daily Independent Newspaper, April 1, 2015). The defection of these governors to APC, obviously affected the fortunes of the PDP; a situation that was worsened by the abandonment of the party by its godfather, former president Obasanjo in the most despicable manner.

- **APC Formidable Opposition**

The coalition that gave birth to the All Progressive Congress (APC), provided a formidable match for the PDP in the polls. The coalition meant victory for the APC due to the instrumentality of the South-West coupled with pockets of loyalists in other states within the South-East; Imo state for example.

- **The Card Reader Innovation.**

The immediate cause of Jonathan's defeat was the introduction of the Biometric Card Reader and the Permanent Voters Card (PVC), in the 2015 election which, in spite of its malfunction in some places, ensured that the incidences of rigging and related electoral fraud were greatly minimized.

4.3.3 The PDP as an Opposition Party

Since 1999, 16 years now, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) has ruled this nation. In the February, 1999 presidential election, its candidate, Olusegun Obasanjo with Atiku as running mate won with 62.6 per cent

of the votes (Onabanjo, 2015). In the legislative polls of April 12, 2003, PDP won with 54.5 per cent and 223 of 360 seats in the House of Representatives; and, 76 out of 109 seats in the Senate. Similarly, president Obasanjo's the PDP flag-bearer, was re-elected in the April 19, 2003 with 61.9 per cent of the votes. In 2007, late president Umaru Yar'Adua, its presidential candidate was declared winner, sworn in on May 29, 2007 despite widespread outcry of electoral fraud. In the National Assembly elections of that year, PDP won 260 out of 360 seats and 85 out of 109 seats in the House of Representatives and Senate, respectively.

At the death of Yar'Adua in 2010, president Jonathan, who was then the Vice-president, took over power and, in the April 2011 election, won over 22 million (58.89%) of the votes to defeat Buhari who scored 12.8 million (43.67%). Evidently, the PDP was in clear majority with 208 lawmakers in the House of Representatives and 58 in the Senate as at 2011.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the PDP started its decline from 2013 with the coalition of four parties to form the APC. Consequently, the defection of its influential members following the loss of Aminu Tambuwal, the House of Representative Speaker and 37 others to the APC. Thus, by the 2015 general elections, the PDP members in the House had dropped to 162 as against APC with 179, thereby putting it in the minority position in the nation's House of Representative.

Essentially, with the 2015 elections, the PDP shall assume the status of opposition with 45 Senators as against APC 64 in the 109 – member chamber (Tell, April 20, 2015:16). In the same vein, the party will also be in the minority in the Lower House with 125 lawmakers as against APC's 214 in the 360-member House; the same will be true with the Federal Executive Council for the same reason that PDP's governors have dropped drastically in favour of the dominating APC's.

As noted earlier, PDP's defeat resulted from poor management of its internal crisis, inability to tame unbridled ambitions of its members, lack of internal democracy, corruption and the unmitigated imposition of unpopular candidates among others. However, can the PDP stem the tide of becoming a formidable opposition to the APC? This is the question that agitates the dispassionate minds to which there is no consensus answer. Two possibilities are presented by political commentators.

1. Due to interests, many will, and in fact, are defecting to the APC already with a tendency that such defecting members of the PDP would ultimately corrupt the APC;
2. The PDP has a chance of reforming itself; else, APC populism could decline into a one-party dictatorship. At any rate, if the PDP "is able to rethink and strategize as an opposition, play the role of effective opposition and continue to offer itself as an alternative government and rebuild itself so as to offer credible opposition and regain power in some subsequent elections... then it can retain some measures of credibility as a credible alternative to APC" (Abutudu, 2015).

4.3.4 APC's Victory: The Challenges Ahead

Over the years, successive governments in Nigeria had grappled with the challenges of poverty, corruption, unstable economy and very recently, the issue of security evidenced in the gory tales of the Boko Haram insurgency. For instance, the indices for measuring national development as reported in Udu and Nkwede, et al (2014), include but not in anyway, restricted to: quality of democratic governance, institutional and human capacities which by extension include: literacy level, gross domestic product per capita, employment level, poverty, life expectancy and so on. Evidently, these are low in Nigeria as low life expectancy which manifest in the form of massive illiteracy, parity in purchasing power, low gross domestic product per capita, unemployment, hunger, disease, malnutrition and in fact, mortality are unfortunately high in the country (Udu & Nkwede et al, 2014).

Expectedly, considering the foregoing vis-à-vis security threat and rising exchange rate, the expectation of Nigerians from the APC incoming administration is very high; particularly, in view of the apparent failure of government to tackle these issues frontally. These notwithstanding, the first and foremost challenge of the APC, perhaps, is how to interpret the victory. For instance, the nature of General Buhari's victory in the north and the reactions to this victory by the core northern parts of Nigeria is warrisome as noted in Kukah (2015). The interpretation is that, APC's victory is victory for moslems; a chance to regain the government which has hitherto been lost to the South. Similarly, Christians all over the country, particularly in the north heaved a sigh of relief as the victory meant a saving grace from a perceived looming doom. All these, have negative implications for the unity of the country.

Similarly, how to embark on the policy of reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation would pose a challenge of its own. For instance, how to unpack the racketeering which tended to have reduced the Boko Haram insurgency into a highly lucrative venture, how to respond to the perceived interpretations of the victory especially, within the various instructions, networks and interest groups particularly in the north, are challenges to be contended with. As noted in Kukah (2015), the APC Federal Government has to contain with traditional rulers, various ideological strands within Islam; such as Kaeliriyya, Tinjaniyya, Izala, Ansar, Boko Haram; etc.,

which have divergent interests under the banner of Islam. Each of these groups in their respective perception, believe that Buhari's victory is victory for Islam.

Another challenge would be to watch carefully the intentions and ambitions of the demagogue who have ulterior motives for democracy. Kukah (2015), captured this succinctly when he illustrates that: Adolf Hitler came to power not through a coup but through a democratic process so did the brotherhood in Egypt riding on the crest of the Arab spring which opened them up for democracy. Kukah contends that the ambition/intentions of those in the wings if not carefully watched can scuttle democracy; hence, to guide the precious prize of free and fair election, ought to predominant the euphoria of having achieved credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria.

Finally, there is the challenge of managing the egos of those who believe that now is their turn to eat (Wrong, 2009). Ego, according to Professor Ake, is indeed a great challenge to democracy in Africa. He spoke of men and women with large egos who had tended to manipulate democracy for other non-democratic means (Ake, 2000). Accordingly, Kukah (2015), contends that Nigeria's greatest challenge is not so much the popular idea of fighting corruption, rather to see that corruption is the symptom of the cancerous ailment of a society that has lost its soul. Hence, to rebuild the common humanity of Nigerians, restore their trust in government, is perhaps, one of the greatest challenge of the incoming Buhari regime.

5. Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it's clear that the expectation of Nigerian from the incoming Buhari's administration is high; the challenges ahead are quite enormous. The needed reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation to restore the confidence of Nigerians in government, so as to foster the required unity to collectively fight corruption in the country and hence, put the economy on sound footing, requires uncommon will and commitment of government.

We need to collectively renew our commitment to democracy and seek to place our country on an irreversible path of democratic governance. The INEC need to be strengthened to be truly independent to discharge its duties impartially. Democracy as Amartya (1999), argued guarantees freedom and development and is indeed, the sure antidote to war and hunger. The plausibility of democracy and its correlation with qualitative human development is evidenced in the World Bank (1989) study which discovered that out of 24 richest countries in the world, only 3 of them were not democratic and out of 42 of the poorest world countries, only 2 of them had never experienced democracy. Hence, the visible correlation between democracy, wealth creation and security has made democracy attractive to the world (Kukah, 2015). For instance, in 1973, only 32 per cent of the world's population lived in free, democratic societies. Between 1990 and 1994, the member soared between 38 and 58 per cent; today, the statistics hover between 60 and 70 per cent consequent of China population.

The essence of democracy is competition, inclusiveness and civil liberties. Democracy will die if it fails to serve as a platform for creating opportunities, managing diversities and encouraging the attainment of the common good. Over the years, Nigeria has been apparently defined in terms of Christianity, Islam, Northerners, minorities et.c, but General Buhari's victory at the 2015 general elections has shown clearly that coalition and consensus building is imperative to election success and that no group can achieve it all alone.

The position of this paper is that, instead of dissipating energies on chasing those who have defrauded the country through corruptive acquisition at the collective expenses of the masses, the government should embark on human and institutional capacity development. Development itself, would raise its own formidable armies to fight corruption.

6. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing expositions, the followings are recommended:

- Although, INEC is portrayed to be autonomous, it is in reality a quasi-autonomous body. Its dependent nature on the executives as encapsulated in the constitution clearly underscores this as evidenced in section 154(1) of the 1999 constitution. This section, expressly confers the power to appoint INEC chairman, members of the commission and Resident Electoral Commissioners from the states and the Federal Capital Territory, (FCT), on the president. The implications of this on autonomy and the critical issue of funding is great. On this note, this paper recommends that the power to appoint the Chairman and commission members should be constitutionally vested on the Council of states considering its composition and reflection of federal character. In this way, INEC would be truly independent and better positioned to conduct free and fair elections in the country uninterrupted overtly or covertly. This is the situation in South Africa evidenced in the South African Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which was truly independent and conducted the third post-apartheid general elections in South Africa.
- On the issue of funding, INEC should be granted fiscal autonomy. Rather than channeling its funding through the presidency, it should be charged to the consolidated revenue fund. Thus, the annual financial

allocation to the commission should be reflected in the appropriation bill; while its approved budgetary allocations, should be disbursed directly to INEC by the Federation Account Allocation Committee via the first charge line under the consolidated Revenue Funds of the Federal Government. Alternatively, a National Election Fund could be established and the approved budgetary allocations of the commission, disbursed directly to INEC. This will, undoubtedly, further assure INEC's financial autonomy and prevent it from undue manipulation by the executive.

- On the 2015 General election administration specifically, it was discovered that the Card Reader failed in some places in the country. To assuage this situation in future elections, it is pertinent that INEC organizes extensive and result-based training for polling officers on the efficient use of the Card Reader.
- Equally, commendable in addition to the introduction of the Card Readers is the use of Permanent Voters Cards, PVCs, at the 2015 election. However, the distribution of this was adjudged to be poor in many places particularly in the South-Eastern parts of the country; a situation, many perceived to be a calculated strategy to disenfranchise voters in these areas. To ensure adequate and even distributions of the PVCs in future elections, sufficient time for this exercise is expedient and its collection/distributions made efficient and time-saving to avoid the initial apathy witnessed in this regard.
- Similarly, there is need for INEC to address the issue of overcrowding observed in many polling units during the general elections. This can be done by selecting polling units and voting points at locations of an appropriate size for both security reasons as well as for INEC officials to expeditiously handle anticipated crowd flow.
- One of the greatest weapon used against president goodluck was the political slogan of "change". Evidently, Nigerians have grown wary of ordinary ways of addressing the myriad problems of the country such as corruption, unemployment, security and poverty, to be precise. The new government needs to tackle these critical issues frontly. In the very first place, corruption can be addressed, not necessarily by chasing those who have looted the nation's treasury but by embarking on aggressive institutional and human capacity development. Our schools, colleges and tertiary institutions deserve to be transformed to meet the demand of the ICT age, economy requires diversification from dependency on oil to, for instance, harnessing our agricultural abundance to run our factories and fuel the economy to ultimately reduce inflation rate in the country, and in addition create job opportunities for our teeming youths.
- There is need to reduce cost of governance in Nigeria. This can be achieved by doing away with multiplicity of ministries, into mini-ministries that end up competing for budgetary allocations. The seating allowances of government functionaries such as the legislators can be reduced to save cost for other essential amenities and thus make politics less attractive.
- Furthermore, to restore public confidence in government and in politics in Nigeria, there is need to assuage the perception that Buhari's victory is victory for APC or for Islam. The choices the president makes would make or mar public trust in the government. Thus, the president need to move away from seeing assembling a team as a period of sharing carcass, a typical characteristics of governments in Nigeria. By the election; Nigerians have demonstrated a significant trust in Buhari's judgment and integrity; hence, the expectations from him is high. The level of commitment to addressing these high expectations, should preoccupy the new administration.
- The new administration of APC, should learn from the mistakes of the defeated PDP. The belief of many Nigerians is that the APC has no track records, is more or less a conglomerate of defecting PDP members; and hence, tantamount to the proverbial statement of an old Adam in a new suit. Thus, to move the nation forward, the APC government should run an inclusive government; ensure internal democracy and checkmate undue influences of the 'wolves politician' who have ulterior motives for defecting from the PDP and, are quite capable of turning the hard-won victory into undemocratic means.
- Similarly, members of the PDP should, rather than decamping to the victorious APC, look inwards to effect necessary corrective measures in the areas of observed flaws. The party should put its house in order and cultivate ways of being an effective opposition party to the ruling APC. Defections can at best, prove that the party has indeed, no ideology and, if left to continue, might ultimately result to a one-party dictatorship which would not be in the interest of the nation.
- Finally, the historic concession of defeat by President Goodluck Jonathan, is commendable and is recommended to Nigerian political leaders to consciously emulate for the growth and unity of this country.

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