

AN APPRAISAL OF CORRUPTION IN THE NIGERIA ELECTORAL SYSTEM.

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Abstract

Democracy has been acknowledged as the most widely accepted form of government. But, its institutionalization depend on the successful conduct of credible, free and fair election, which gives democratic government legitimacy. Unfortunately, conduct of credible, free and fair election has been eluding Nigerian nation. Corruption is one of the major impediments to successful conduct of election and entrenchment of democratic values. It is on this note that the paper attempt to examine the conduct of elections in Nigeria. The paper, appraised the factors that promote corruption in the electoral system. It also suggests way out.

Keywords: Corruption, electoral system, Nigeria

Introduction

The lost of sovereignty by various polities that dotted Nigerian landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century and the subsequent amalgamation of 1914 that tried to create a nation out of the multi-cultural and political institutions, the evolution of acceptable government at the centre most especially through free and fair election has been a matter of concern. This has become a matter of debate for individuals, groups, professionals, politicians, academia, and opinion leaders in and outside the country. This stem from the nature and outcome of elections and subsequent collapse of the First Republic (1960 - 1966) and the Second Republic (1979 - 1983), the abortion of the Third Republic and the outcry that has followed the birth of Fourth Republic (1999) and the subsequent elections of 2003 , 2007 and 2011. The outcry, violence and the collapse that greeted electioneering in Nigeria since independence was due to inability of elections to produce outcomes mutually agreeable to all competing social groups which are politically active within a given polity.⁶²

⁶² V. Egwemi and E.K Enojo, "Electoral Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The place of Political Parties and Godfathers". *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*. V.4/5. N. 1&2, 2011 p.116.

In a democratic setting, periodic elections if carefully, freely and fairly undertaken gives legitimacy to the government and holds the promise of stabilizing political institutions most especially in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria⁶³. Election thus became the major acceptable means of getting to power or losing it if properly conducted and votes count. Thus king observed that;

Election may provide means of selecting between competing alternatives and thus make for the smooth transfer or transition of political power from one set of power holder to another.⁶⁴

Despite elections being very fundamental in installation, transition and consolidation of democratic government, it does not guaranty sustainable democratic transition and consolidation. This is so when elections are conducted but peoples' vote does not count, or people have no choice in their representatives and leaders due to subversion or manipulation of the entire electoral process. The subversion or manipulation of electoral process either by individuals, groups, political parties or institutions amount to political corruption or rather electoral corruption. Corruption means many things to many people depending on one's position and perception. In this paper the position of Saliu and Aremu is adopted as "a violation of the moral ethos to confer personal advantage on self or acquaintances."⁶⁵ Electoral corruption can therefore be infer as all actions or in action of individuals, groups or institutions in aiding, abating and subversion of electoral process either by use of words, media (print or not), thugs, violence, money and state apparatus to confer undue advantage on oneself, acquaintance or political party.

As corruption has the influencing power of diminishing state capacity to meet its material and welfare obligations to the citizenry, electoral corruption succinctly installed, sustained and consolidates bad governance through electoral fraud. This has characterized Nigeria system from independence, hence, the paper attempt to appraised corrupt practices in the electoral system.

Reflecting on Elections and Corruption in Electoral System.

The organization and conduct of elections in Nigeria began in 1922 under Clifford constitution as a response to the demand by the nationalist for greater participation in government and later as a process of preparing indigenous political elites for the country's leadership in the future

⁶³ M.L Salahu, Free and Fair Elections and its challenges to the People and Polity of Nigeria in the 21st Century" *Arts and Social Sciences Forum Journal* V.1, N.I, 2003, p22

⁶⁴ M.C King, *Localism and Nation Building*, Ibadan, Spectrum, 1988 p.106.

⁶⁵ H.A. Saliv and F.A Aremu, A Critical Analysis of the Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria *Political science review*, 26 V.3 N.I, 2004.

independent Nigeria.⁶⁶ Since then, Nigerians have cause to visit polls twelve times to elect their representatives and leaders into various political offices most especially at the national level. These elections can be grouped into three. The first being elections held under colonial governments in 1951, 1954 and 1959; the second being elections held under the auspices of civilian or democratic governments in 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007 and 2011, and lastly were those organized and conducted under the supervision of military administrations in 1979, 1991, 1993, 1998 and 1999.

After about nine decades of electoral experiences, irregularity of democratic elections notwithstanding, the elections based on the principles of liberal democracy could not be described as free and fair. More so, the elections conducted in the post-colonial Nigeria were beset with corrupt practices.

Elections Under Colonial Rule.

The 1922 Clifford constitution provided for four elected seats; three allocated to Lagos and one for Calabar as unofficial members of legislative council. The elective principle though limited to two cities, government thought of future extension of elections to the backward parts of the Protectorate.⁶⁷ The elections held under this provision in 1923, 1928 and 1933 were won in Lagos by Herbert Macaulay's Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP).

The elections despite its limitation to two urban centres awakened political consciousness and activities. The condition of twelve months residency and gross income of ₦100 per annum made politics and contest to be elitist affairs.

The Macpherson constitution of 1951 expanded the elective principle to all parts of the country. Apart from providing for the majority in the House of Representatives, Regional Houses of Assembly were introduced. Election was open to all adult tax payers but procedures differ from region to region.⁶⁸ Elections into the House of Representatives were done through Electoral College. This election contested most especially in the north by associations changed the face of politics. For instance, the successes attained in political victories by Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) contributed to the transformation of the *Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa* to

⁶⁶ M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, London, Faber and Faber, p.256.

⁶⁷ M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, London, Faber and Faber, p.256.

⁶⁸ For detail see A.A Ujo, *Free and Fair Election in Nigeria: Unresolved Agenda*. S. Dauda and A. Liman (eds). *Issues in Nigeria's Political and Economic Development* Abuja, Zumunta Publishers, 2005 p.132.

Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) as a party on October 1st, 1951.⁶⁹ In the southwest, electoral victories of NCNC members of obtaining 31 out of 80 seats in addition to firm control of the eastern region seats made her elected members of the southwest to cross carpet to Action Group (AG)⁷⁰ which metamorphous from cultural organization. The cross-carpeting was not in national interest but on tribal sentiments targeted at denying Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who had won election in Lagos of being chosen to the central House of Representatives.

The Littleton constitution of 1954 could be described as a watershed in the electoral process and administration. The constitution made Nigeria a federation of three regions with a provision for national legislative and regional Houses of Assembly. Elections were conducted on regional bases and through Electoral College. Electoral system varied from one region to another. Elections into the House of Representatives was regulated by federal law while those into regional houses by regional laws.⁷¹ The three major parties NPC, NCNC and AG dominated elections in their respective regions of domicile.

The 1954 elections like that of 1951/52 in the southwest saw the decamping of politicians such as Chief Adeleke Adedoyin moving from NCNC to Action Group. Later in 1957 Chief A.M Akinloye led others to AG following that year's regional election.⁷² In the north, the strong hand of Native Authority was visible in the electoral process.⁷³

The 1959 general election was a critical election in the Nigeria electoral history. The election was critical being a transitory election that aimed at ending colonial rule and electing indigenous political leadership for the independent Nigeria due for October, 1960. In preparation for election, a bicameral legislature was introduced at the centre; Senate and House of Representatives. A uniform guideline was used for the conduct of election and direct electoral system operated under the watchful eyes of the established Federal Electoral Commission. The Commission was chaired by

⁶⁹ M. T. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, Abuja, Spectrum Books 1993 p.7

⁷⁰ Crowder, *op.cit* p.282

⁷¹ Ujo, *op.cit* p.132

⁷² E. K Enojo, Elections in Nigeria from 1999-2009. Issues and challenges in V. Egwemi (ed). *A Decade of Democracy in Nigeria, 1999-2009: Issues, Challenges and Prospects of Consolidation*, Makudi, Aboki, 2010 p. 87

⁷³ C.S. Whitaker Jr. *The Politics of Tradition Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria 1946 – 1966* New Jersey, Princeton 1970

Mr.R.E Wracth with representatives from the regions.⁷⁴ Voting age was fixed at 21 years and above.

The elections were contested by the major political parties that had evolved along with minors. As the election was to usher in independent government, it was characterized by stiff competition in the struggle to control the centre. The elections thus came to be won and lost on ethnic/regional platforms with NPC having 43% of the seats, a relative majority that made coalition government inevitable.⁷⁵

Considering the critical nature of 1959 elections above earlier ones conducted under colonial rule, it could be used for analysis of corrupt practices in the electoral system.

Using our working definition of electoral corruption, though no violence was recorded, tribal affiliation, regionalism and community leaders influenced the electoral process and outcome. Firstly, the euphoria of independence and the struggle for the control of centre made political parties and politics to be involved in political education and mobilization. This accounted for massive turnout of voters in which 79.5% was recorded.⁷⁶ Secondly, apart from intrigues at the parties' primary elections; prospective candidates of opposition parties were denied opportunity of filling their nomination papers. The electoral officers were force to abscond from their offices once they received nomination from the major parties. The situation attracted comment that;

So flagrantly was electoral procedure abused that at close of nominations some 88 out of total of 174 NPC candidates in the north had their candidates unopposed. In the west, above 30 percent of the NNDP were supposed to have been unopposed.

The situation in the east was not much different.⁷⁷

Elections Under Civilian Government.

Elections conducted under civil government were transiting elections meant to re-elect where the incumbent is contesting or elect a new set of leadership. The elections under this were those conducted in 1964, 1983, 2003, 2007 and 2011. Unlike the earlier set of elections, these were far from being free and fair. They were beset by manipulation, violence and litigation.

⁷⁴ Other member of the commission were Alhaji Makama Kano representing North, Mr. K.A. Bola, Cameroon, Mr. Aniagolu, East, Mr. H.Orishojolomi, West and Mr. M.A. Sho-Silva. Lagos. See Ujo, *op.cit* p.135

⁷⁵ Salahu, *op.cit* p.23

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ B. Dudley, *Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics* Bloomington, Indiana Unweely press, 1982 p37

Prior to the elections of 1964/5, Nigeria became a federation of four regions following the creation of Mid-Western Region and Nigeria became a Republic in 1963. The unholy alliance of NPC/NCNC could not be sustained. Action Group was faced with internal crises that threatened the survival of the party, while NPC that controlled the government was in a stronger position for the elections. This resulted into re-alignment among the major political parties, and the minority parties struggle for recognition. From the factious A.G, Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) emerged.

The entire election process was characterized by human rights abuse, assault, intimidation and subversion of procedures in favour of the ruling party or leading party at the regions.⁷⁸ Voting patterns reflected official position of regionalism and ethnicity.

1983 election was conducted under a presidential constitution that allowed for direct election of president and governors. Like in the previous elections political parties could not maintain united front hence intra- party crises, defections and eclipse of opposition even within a political party. For instance Arthur Nzeribe cross-carpeted from Nigeria People's Party (NPP) to National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and Deputy Governors of Oyo and Ondo defected from Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) to NPN.⁷⁹ Like in 1964, the ruling party using its position extended its lead including the capturing of Ondo state. The fraudulent abuse of electoral procedures and outcry that followed the election led to the premature termination of the second phase of the Second Republic.

After about two decades, Nigerians in 2003 came into terms with another transition elections following return to democracy in 1999. In preparation for the election number of political parties increased from three to thirty. This reduced their competitiveness and opposition to the ruling party, People's Democratic Party (PDP). Internal crises and defection from one party to another became a major feature of all parties in preparatory to elections. The administration of election procedure by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) suggests that the ruling party was more favored than other political parties. Similarly, PDP using its federal controlled government manipulated all necessary agencies and resources to its favour. Thus, at the end of the election the result was the extension of PDP conquering posture including world record of 100% voters' turn out in election in some states. Thus Awoniyi commented that;

⁷⁸ For detail see Leo Dare, the 1964 Elections and the Collapse of the First Republic in Nigeria since Independence. V.5. p116

⁷⁹ Enojo, *op.cit* p.87

The 2003 elections is the worst held in the nation's history, the rigging that characterized the election was global, total and brazen that not a little element of good can be expected out of it.⁸⁰

The 2007 general elections was another critical election in the Fourth Republic. It was critical firstly, because the attempted tenure elongation of the then incumbent President, Olusegun Obasanjo was thwarted. Secondly, the primary election of the ruling party was marred with irregularities including suspension of the then incumbent vice president, Atiku Abubakar and subsequently screened out from the contest.

Thirdly, the ruling party in alliance with INEC registered more political parties to weaken the opposition. Lastly, President Olusegun Obasano declared 2007 elections as a matter of “do or die affair” and INEC show of unpreparedness and support for the ruling party.

The election was held in April but voters' turnout was not better than that of 2003 election. The ruling party, PDP continued with her unprecedented winning magic. The questionable success was attained through rigging, ballot box stuffing, falsification of results, intimidation of opposition and voters, direct assault on people and declaration of results where election did not take place. The outcome of the election was not that surprising considering Obasanjo's submission that “this election is a do or die affairs for PDP. We have a reform programme which we have started, we want those who we will handover to, to continue the reforms....⁸¹

The 2011 transitional election was dicier than the 2007 elections. This was based on the issue of zoning formula and the interest of President Goodluck Jonathan to contest. Earlier, PDP had zone the presidency to alternate between the north and the south. The arrangement was thwarted in its second phase following the death of Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'dua and accession of his vice, Goodluck Jonathan. As against the zoning formula and expectation, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was encouraged, coarse and anointed by all sort of groups including expired politicians and political prostitutes. This set the stage for election as it became a major contest between PDP and the newly registered Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) of General Muhammadu Buhari.

The election was held in April, 2011. The outcome was not that different from the previous ones. The election was marred with irregularities, fraudulent practices, flagrant use of money, vote buying and godfathering. These acts were carried out by godfathers, hired thugs, politicians, security

⁸⁰ See S.M. Lawal and A.A. Wushishi, Politics and Political Parties in the Fourth Republic, Reflections on the Peoples Democratic Party “T.N. Sunday and T.Wuam (eds) *Parties and Politics in Nigeria, 1999-2009*, Makurdi, Aboki, 2010 p.116

⁸¹ See V. Egwemi, A Decade of Political Party Activities in Nigeria, 1999-2009: The Road to a One Party State (?) V. Egwemi (ed) *A Decade of Democracy...* p.25

agencies, civil servants including INEC ad hoc and career staff. John Campbell said of 2011 presidential elections:

There appears to have been substantial election rigging, not so much at polling stations where international observers were often present but at the collation centre where monitors were usually absent...In twelve state one-third of the total possible voter turnout was suspiciously high. The national voter turnout average was 53percent. In the twelve identified states, the turn out range from 62percent to 84 percent.⁸²

The Military Administration Elections.

After about thirteen years of military rule, Nigeria was returned to democratic governance in 1979. In preparation for the election, the British parliamentary system was replaced with USA Presidential system. Five political parties were registered and contested election, namely, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP) Nigeria Peoples Party NPP and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP). At the end of the elections there was voter's apathy as only 33.64% casted their votes.⁸³ The Election was violent free and declared free and fair, pattern of voting reflects regional, ethnic and party leadership block vote.

As earlier observed, the Second Republic was short lived following the military intervention at the end of 1983. Between 1991 and 1993, Nigerians went to polls to elect their representatives and national leaders. After several shift of the polls, the presidential election was held on June 12, 1993 but annulled. Some five years later, attempt was made again under the leadership of General Sani Abacha. The election process was highly policed and manipulated most especially the presidential election due to General Abacha's interest of self succession. His death on June 8, 1998 and succession of General Abdulsalam Abubakar put an end to the transition and democratic structure put in place. This brought attempt at Third Republic to an end.

Abdulsalam led military administration organized transitions that gave birth to Fourth Republic. Within eleven months, political parties were formed, registered, campaigned undertaken and elections held from the local government level to the presidency. Though no case of violence, arson, or thuggery was reported, irregularities were observed that gave undue advantage to one of the party's candidate. Thus Jimmy Carter, a former U.S President and international observer said:

⁸² John Campbell, *The Politico*, N. 10, May 9, 2011.

⁸³ Salahu *op.cit* p.25

In some cases, after only a few voters were observed at polling stations, more than 80% were later alleged to have voted and votes cast were overwhelmingly in favour of one of the two candidates.⁸⁴

Despite the violence free of elections conducted under military administration evidence of corrupt practices from the organization to conduct of elections made them not to be free and fair.

Appraising Corruption in the Electoral System.

In an attempt to appraise corruption in the Nigeria electoral system, effort would be made to examine the activities of stakeholders and institutions in the democratic process. Focus shall be on political parties and politicians,electoral body and traditional rulers corrupt practices in the electoral system.

Political Parties and Politicians and Corruption in the Electoral System

In Nigeria, the emergence of political parties dated back to the 1922 Clifford constitution that provided for limited franchise. Since then, and in response to constitutional development and democratic process, many more political parties have been formed. Political Parties are more or less organized group of individual supporting a political programme and its leaders who aspire to become public officer. The 1999 constitution described political party as ‘an association of persons whose activities include canvassing for votes in support of a candidate for election to the office.....’⁸⁵.

Suffice to say therefore political parties have the responsibility of recruiting competent individuals for political leadership through periodic elections, education of the masses, dissemination of information and articulation of the interest of the people. In Nigeria, political parties are formed and nurtured by elites who then invite, conscripts or coarsen others to join. The parties’ philosophy, ideology and activities thus centered and influenced by the mission of its founders and influential members. This view was clearly stated by Isa Kaita as;

When politics came, in view of what was happening in the whole country, we did not have the choice, we were all conscripted into politics to fight for the north and to defend her interest against southern domination.⁸⁶

This made political parties not only of the First Republic but even that of the Fourth Republic philosophy and ideology not to be articulate

⁸⁴ For the quotation see *Ibid* p.25

⁸⁵ The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

⁸⁶ Kukah, *op.cit* p.6

enough. The parties' missions and activities became personalised, regionalized and ethnicised that reflect voting patterns.

The personalization, regionalization or ethnicisation of political parties has been responsible for the voting pattern in Nigeria elections. Thus, A.G and successor party

UPN and A.G whose foundation were laid by Awolowo always received block votes from Yoruba land; NPC and successor parties NPN and PDP received much votes from the north while NCNC, NPP and APGA for the Igbos. In the process of ensuring block votes, ethnicity and other vices were used to swindle votes to their favour. In describing voting patterns, Okadigbo pointed out that 1954, 1959, 1964,1979 and even subsequent elections depicted the Nigerian attitude to vote for the party of the 'son of the soil'.⁸⁷ This negates the decree, electoral act and the constitution that say:

The name, emblem or motto of the Association has no ethnic or religion connotation, and does not give the appearance that the association activities are confined to a part of the geographical area of Nigeria⁸⁸.

Political parties therefore became a plat form of perpetuation of corruption in the electoral system using ethnicity or regions and sometimes religion. This made Murtala in 1976 to described political parties as:

.....were in fact little more than armies organized for fighting election in the regions for the Regional and Federal Legislature. Winning elections became a life and death struggle which justified all means fair and foul.⁸⁹

Success and consolidation of democracy is precipitated on well functioning political parties. A well functioning political party depends on internal democracy in terms of its decision making process and nomination of candidates for elections and political appointments. All political parties of the Forth Republic lack internal democracy as decision making process, resources allocation and the nomination of candidate for political appointment are dominated by a few rich and influential members.⁹⁰ For instance at party primaries of the leading parties of the Fourth Republic, nomination to contest elections depends on the support or anointment by party leaders or influential members.

⁸⁷ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension 1987 p.85

⁸⁸ The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

⁸⁹ Murtala Mohammed Opening address to the Constitution Drafting Committee Report V.I p. xiii 1976

⁹⁰ V.A.O. Adetula, Internal Democracy, Transparency in Party Administration and the Implications for effective Monitoring of Party Finance. *"The Nigeria Election Journal V.3 N.I July 2009 p.20*

The constitution provided for the funding of the political parties from the federation accounts which even if given, fall short of running electioneering in Nigeria. This made political parties to source for fund from members and private organization through fund raising, registration of party members and even purchase of eligibility form to contest for positions in the party.⁹¹ This unrestrained funding means increases in the political corruption in the electoral system as only the rich and the political entrepreneurs can contest elections.⁹²

An individual who has registered his name with a political party is seen as a politician in Nigeria. This card carrying member may be literate or not, morally sound or not, ideological driven or not, genuine or fake and above all with conscience or not. To most of them, political parties are mere platform to achieve desirable goal; goal to contest election or be part of government. This made Mahadi to conclude that only a hundred or so are genuine politicians in Nigeria.⁹³ This is because many of them were\ are into politics for selfish reasons driven by greed for money, lust for power and affluence and to remain ever relevant in the corridor of power. Thus politics and electioneering process is seen as a means according to Eskor Toyo to have access to wealth and maintain themselves in power.

The lust for power, money and to remain ever relevant in the corridor of power made politicians employed divisive means and other primordial tendencies like religion, regionalism and ethnicity in the electioneering process. To this end most Nigerian politicians firstly appeal to their immediate cacoon for support. Where this proved difficult money and other vices including intimidation become read made weapon in the electoral system. This often account for stiff competition, thuggery and electoral fraud in Nigeria and indeed in many of developing countries. Walter Schwarz in kurfi hence observed that:

Politics in developing countries is concerned with sharing out a pitifully small national cake. The government is the only substantial employer and the output of school leavers continually outstrips the number of new jobs available.

This makes politics ruthless. Office means a livelihood not only for a politician but for his extended family and beyond that his village, town and tribe.⁹⁴

⁹¹ M.L. Salahu and H.K. Ali, Political Party Primaries: Issues and Challenges to the Nigeria Polity in 21st Century. *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences Kontagora* V.6 N.1 2008

⁹² Adetula, *op.cit* p.28

⁹³ See Mahadi, A. Who is Afraid of History? *Gombe Studies: Journal of Gombe State University* V.I.N.I. December, 2008 p.19

⁹⁴ See A. Kurfi, *The Nigerian General Election, 1959 and 1979 and the Aftermath*, Lagos, Mamillen, 1983 p.180

Among the politicians, business partners and party faithful their emerged powerful individuals known in Nigeria politics as godfather. Godfather refers to an individual of wealth and followership who financed politicians in election and even manipulated the result to get their candidate into position. Egwemi and Enojo described them as individuals who possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who get party ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest.⁹⁵ Though this may not be new in Nigeria politics what is new in the Fourth Republic is that such individuals manipulate the system to suit their own self interest, usually at the expense of the ordinary citizens. To achieve their self interest, they employed money, thugs, and violence and even blindfold the state apparatus to ensure electoral victory for their godson. At the end, politics became an enterprise to be invested in with the hope of reaping the gain as the godson become a tenant while the godfather became landlord hence the rent-seeking behavior of the political elites and the political parties.⁹⁶

As the political parties became landlords in the Nigeria politics, the party leadership and the elected officers most especially to the office of the president and governors used their offices to perpetuate political corruption. The use of incumbency factor became glaring in the funding of their political parties activities. The state resources, police and security personnel, media and other institutions were employed to promote electoral victory chances of the parties in states they control. This they do by intimidating voters, arrest of oppositions or use judiciary to disqualify opposition candidates. The ruling party in the Fourth Republic since 2003 has been using the incumbency factor to extend her domineering position in the electoral system. While political parties such as ANPP and AD\AC among others use their positions in the state they control to dominate local government polls.

Electoral Body and Corruption in the Electoral System.

Successful conduct of elections in liberal democracy depends on the efficacy of electoral governance. Electoral governance refers to a set of activities that create and maintains the broad institutional framework in which voting and electoral competition take place.⁹⁷ In Nigeria since the inauguration of maiden commission in 1935 under Mr. Wraith leadership, the body has been renamed and reconstituted several times. The current board was put in place in 2010 under the chairmanship of Professor Attahiru Jega. The body is concerned with organization and conduct of elections

⁹⁵ Egwemi and Enojo, *op.cit* p.119

⁹⁶ Adetola, *op.cit* p.28

⁹⁷ S. Mozaffar and A. Schedler, The Comparative Study of Electoral Governance Introduction. *International Political Science Review*. V.23. No. 1, 2002 p.7

which Jega described to have continuous to be poorly organized, conflict ridden with restricted or obstructed participation and very unfair out come⁹⁸.

The electoral body is responsibility for the registration of political parties, delimitation of electoral constituency and polling units, printing and security of ballot papers and boxes, printing and security of other electoral sensitive materials and conduct of elections. To ensure accountability, the electoral body needs to be independent in terms of its structure, composition, funding and activities that will guaranty their non-partisanship in the electoral administration. Since independence, this has not been achieved and the activities of the body leave room for fraudulent activities due to some challenges.

The appointment of the chairman and members of the commission is an exclusive prerogative of the president with tacit consultation of the Council of States.⁹⁹ As the president appoints he has the power to terminate such appointment. Thus, for the sake of appointment and security of tenure of the commission, members are easily manipulated by the president and his agents who appoint them. Where such commissioners show uncompromising attitude, irrespective of the statutory provision of five years tenure got removed. This has been responsible for constant reconstitution of the body. More so, some of the appointees are card carrying members of the president's party or in other way got appointed through an influential individual. For instance Dr. Goubardia and Professor Maurice Iwu led commissions in preparation for 2003 and 2007 elections had many of its commissioners to be card carrying members of the ruling party.¹⁰⁰ In a similar note, INEC became partisan when it involved itself in disqualification of opposition candidates to create room for elective victory of PDP.

The constitution provided for the funding of the electoral body through the executive arm of government. As the electoral body received its funding from the presidency, apart from affecting the organization of elections, it gives room for manipulation of the electoral process. Of recent in preparation for the 2003 and 2011 elections INEC was manipulated by the presidency in re-organization of the election procedure. In the process, the presidency and the national legislative members were involved in cross-accusation in fear of outcome of election and more to ensure their electoral victory.

In the conduct of election, INEC in connivance with the government and influential members sited polling units in residential houses of powerful

⁹⁸ A. M. Jega, *The Fourth Republic in Nigeria: A Decade of Democratic Review*

⁹⁹ See Section 153 (3) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigerian

¹⁰⁰ Salahu, *op.cit* p.29

party members. The sanctity and security of ballot papers became suspicious as it was reported of people having access to the ballot papers and boxes prior to election period.

Such individuals as Chief Adedibu of Oyo politics was an example and were left scourge free.¹⁰¹

Traditional Rulers and Corruption in the Electoral System.

Traditional rulers refer to an individual endowed with a title who rules on the basis of traditional authority. Traditional authority means the form of domination that rests on routine behavior which have over the years come to be regarded as inviolable norm of conduct or upon piety for what actually, allegedly or presumably has always existed.¹⁰² They are potentates in their domain with executive functions. Apart from being removed from the main stream administration they are exempted from partisan politics to secure their sanctity and neutrality.

Prior to their ban from partisan politics, traditional rulers had good romance with the First Republic politicians who used their machinery to win and retain political power. Considering their fatherly position, being closer to the people and serving as link between the government and people in implementation of government policies, they became stake holders in the democratic process. In pursuance of this, they contributed in one way or the other to corruption in the electoral process. In this process according to Gyampo¹⁰³ traditional rulers influence the outcome of election in two ways; Patronage by Restriction of Competitors (PRC) and Patronage by Mobilization of the Electorate (PME).

Patronage by Restriction of Competitors (PRC) entails a situation where traditional rulers got there preferred candidate elected unopposed by persuading or coarsing prospective rival candidate to step down from the contest. In the First Republic most especially in the north, NPC through traditional rulers got most of its candidates unopposed or those that were formally defeated in the primary elections found their way to the top through the Native Authorities.¹⁰⁴ In some instances through the machinery of the N.A. oppositions were harassed and sometime intimidated to submission¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰¹ Salahu, *op.cit* p.29

¹⁰² See M.L Salahu, Democracy and Good Governance: The Relevance of Traditional Rulers in Nigeria, Salahu, M.L and Yisa, J.N (eds) *Contemporary Nigerian Issues and Challenges*, Minna, Department of History, C.O.E. 2006 p.20

¹⁰³ R.E Gyampo, Chiefs and Electoral Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic, *Journal of Intra-African Studies* 2009 p.96

¹⁰⁴ See Ujo, *op.cit* p.133

¹⁰⁵ In Bida, Abubakar Dzukogi of NEPU was intimidated, harassed and even sentenced to two weeks imprisonment; see R.B Ziri, *The History of Bida Emirate in the 20th Century: A*

However, in the Fourth Republic their presence was not felt much as they used go-between to get their wish done.

Secondly, traditional rulers contribute to the electoral fortune of the ruling party through patronage by mobilization of electorate. In the study of Ghana politics Gyampo shows that when traditional rulers are unable to get their candidates into position through PRC, they mobilized sub-chiefs and subjects to vote for the alternative preferred candidates of his⁴⁴. From the First Republic through to the Fourth Republic of Nigeria democratic experience, quite a number of traditional rulers have been visible in mobilizing their subjects in support of the ruling parties' candidates across election strata. Due to partisanship of traditional rulers, party candidates' have made it a habit to pay visit on them during electioneering campaign. In the 2011 elections, the outcome of the election made electorate vent their anger on some of perceived chiefs who uses their position to canvass for votes for opposition.

Implications of Corruption in the Electoral System.

From the discourse, it suggests that Nigeria electoral system over time has been clouded by corrupt practices. The fraudulent subversion of electoral process has made it difficult for the conduct of participatory, competitive and acceptable conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Secondly the alarming rate of sharp practices in the elections has made nonsense of peoples votes. As peoples wish from the votes are not guaranteed, voters turn out from 1999 continue to decline as reported due to decline in public confidence of the electoral system.

Thirdly, the institution of an illegal regime through ballot theft can be linked to bad governance and mismanagement of state resource. The instituted government leadership along with their patrons and influential individuals loot the government treasury and care less for the masses.

Lastly, it does not allow for political parties to grow in their structure and administration which invariably affects sustainable democracy. This often led to collapse of the civil administration with colossal lost.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Consolidation and survival of democracy depends on the periodic conduct of acceptable and competitive free and fair elections. The conduct of such elections rest on the institutional framework put in place to guaranty compliance in the activities of the stake holders. Among such stake holders are the political parties and politicians; electoral management body, INEC,

and the traditional rulers who are believe to be custodian of people’s culture and tradition. However, studies have shown that the activities of these stake holders have been beset by corrupt actions that put constraint to free elections.

Despite the continuous poor organization and conduct of elections due to corrupt practices, all hope is not lost in getting it right in the future conduct. However the following are suggested to minimize corrupt practices towards credible election.

- The composition of electoral management body (INEC) should be removed from the executive to the judiciary.
- The tenure of office of the chairman and commissioners be constitutional guaranteed and not tie to term. A justice of the Court of Appeal can be appointed as its chairman and hold forth till retirement.
- The funding of the electoral body should not be tied to the executive but provisionally provided in the consolidated fund from the constitution.
- The number of political parties should be reduced to two to avoid ethnic, religion or regional politics.
- Funding of political parties should be regulated. Donation from individuals and cooperate organisations to political parties be pegged.
- Internal democracy among the political parties should be encouraged to avoid clientage system.
- Traditional rulers who wish to be partisan should be encouraged to resign and go into politics.

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