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RESEARCH ARTICLE

2023 NIGERIA'S ELECTION AND ITS TWISTS

***Dr. Elekwa, U. A.**

Department of Political Science, Abia State University Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria

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*Corresponding author:

Dr. Elekwa, U. A.

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ABSTRACT

Democracy, government by the people and for the people, has lost its flavor as its processes are being thwarted. Considering the 2023 Nigerian Election its obvious its oligarchy not democracy that rolled out. The rich few took over the polity. It was not about competence and capacity but about economic power. It was characterized with vote buying in dollars, intimidation, thuggery and falsification of results. Prejudice was obviously noticed as the umpire in the election failed or performed below expectation. Despite the huge sum of money invested. The Independent National Electoral Commission Result Viewing Point (IREV) was not functional during the Presidential election. The provision of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BIVAS) not only raised the hopes of the citizens for a credible election but contributed to the influx of voters at the polling station. However, the money bags dictated the tune of the elections. INEC not only failed. Thugs took over polling stations outright intimidation of voters and xenophobic attack on the Igbo in Lagos.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Organization made democracy one of its core values and principles as the attributes of a democratic government has respect for fundamental human rights, freedom of speech, periodic election (Free and Fair elections) No intimidation of voters etc. As such the right to vote is indispensable and the pivot upon which democracy rests. The Human Rights adopted unanimously by the United Nation General Assembly in 1948 recognizes the integrated role that transparent and open election play in ensuring the fundamental Right to Participatory government

The universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article (21) State

"Everyone has right to take part in the government of his or her Country. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government. This will, shall be Expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be held by equivalent free voting procedures".

This is the democracy we should practice in Nigeria and the essence of the periodic Elections. However the right of peaceful Assembly and Association section. 40 of the Nigerian Constitution states.

"Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons and he may form or belong to any political party, Trade Union or any other association for the protection of his interest"

The 2023 General Election in Nigeria was a keenly contested one with its peculiarities. The Presidential primaries of the political parties especially the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) that led to the emergence of the party flag bearers was absolutely characterized with vote buying in dollar. A wrong foundation that brought about discrepancies in the major political parties Vanguard a Nigeria daily recorded it thus

"The just concluded Presidential Primaries of the People's Democratic party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) have been adjudged as a show of shame and mockery"

The Internal Coalition for Democracy and Good Governance (ICDEG) described it thus

"The primaries exhibited lack of the very essence of democracy. The standard bearers were not elected based on merit – competence and capacity"

An Unhealthy Development for a fragile democracy. This means that citizens with unknown source of wealth can take over the polity, unexpectedly, the APC standard Bearer Ahmed Bola Tinubu a Muslim picked up another Muslim as a running mate. (Kashim Shettina). It worsened the situation as Nigerians reacted to the muslim ticket. The first of its kind in Nigeria. Mohammed Auwa saw it from this perspective.

"A Supremacy of Islam"

He told his people in kano to vote massively for (APC) the All Progressive Congress. The Muslim – Muslim ticket caused a hubbub in the Nineteen Northern states as the APC Northern Christian political leaders disagreed to it including Bola Tinubu

Close associate Babachir lawal secretary to the Government of the federation (2015-2017).

They stated:

"As Christians within APC, we cannot in all fairness go with consciences and faith goes to our various constituencies to campaign for a Muslim – Muslim ticket".

They also stated that it is against the APC party constitution. The APC party constitution preamble states'

"Will guarantee equal opportunity for all mutual and peaceful co-existence, respect and understanding eliminating all forms of discrimination, social injustice among Nigerians"

The Muslim – Muslim ticket led to the resignation of most of the high profile Christians in APC across the states of the Federation 'A RUMPUS indeed'

Crises also rocked (PDP) the people's Democratic Party as the G -5 Governors were aggrieved after Atiku Abubakar emerged as the people's Democratic party flag bearer. The G -5 is an integrity group

Okezie Ikpeazu Abia State
Samuel Orton Benue State
Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi Enugu state
Seyi Makinde Oyo State
Nyesom Wike Rivers State

They demanded that the National chairman of the party Iyorchia Ayu should step down as a precondition to support the Presidential candidate of the party who is also from the North. They actually stated that it was unfair for the North to be the Chairman of the party since the standard bearer is from the Northern part of the country.

A PDP Chieftain, Chief Bode George said:

"Atiku lost the Election because the PDP manager felt the Southern region of the country does not matter and having denied the Southern part of the Country Presidential ticket and other key positions in the party, they decided to withdraw their support".

EQUITY and FAIR PLAY essential ingredients of any association.

"A divided house is a defeated house"

Constitution is the bedrock of any organization as chief Bode George rightly pointed out.

"The arrogance, evil raintina and lack lustre attitude exhibited by them to forget about the tenets established by the founding fathers didn't help the party and I said to them "if you don't change this, I will not vote for him (Atiku)"

The agitation of the G-5 Governors and some of the People's Democratic Party members led to their states not voting for PDP in the Presidential Election held on the 25th of February 2023.

Abia State Labour Party (won)
Benue state APC (won)
Enugu State Labour Party (won)
Oyo State APC (won)
Rivers State APC (won)

A BROKEN JINX: Unbelievable yet it is true that Bola Ahmed Tinubu the APC flag bearer lost in the most populous state in Nigeria (Lagos – State) where he has so much political influence. Mr. Peter

Obi of the Labour Party garnered 582,454 votes while Bola Tinubu his closest rival or challenger scored 572,606 votes and Atiku a former vice president of Nigeria married to a Yoruba woman (Titi Abubakar) was third with only 75,750 votes. A total of 1,347,152 citizens of Nigeria were accredited in Lagos for this electoral exercise,

"The result has been described by many analysts as a demystification of Mr. Tinubu"

A woman, Aishat Dahiru of the All Progressive Congress seat of Adamawa State. Although the Election on the 18th of May 2023 was declared inconclusive by the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) the Nations' Umpire

"INEC declare Adamawa election way involve Aisha Binani, Ahmed Fintri inconclusive ----- sake of di margin of votes"

However, Aishatu Dahiru aka Binani pulled 390,273 votes while Ahmed Fintri (PDP) scored 421,544 votes in keenly contested election. A rare fit for a woman to have come thin fair in a moslem dominated Environment.

"THE ADAMAWA DRAMA"

The supplementary election was fixed for the 15th of April 2023 In the process of coalition of results a drama erupted as the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) Hudu Yunusa-Ari declared senator Aishat Ahmed Dahiru (Binani) the candidate of the All Progressive Congress as the winner of the gubernatorial race on the 16th of April 2023

"Yunusa Ari reportedly came with some security officials and without record of collated data of votes at about 9 am and gleefully announced that Binani has won the election"

Notwithstanding the resumption of collation of results was to commence at 11 am Hudu Yunusa-Ari took over the work of the INEC's Returning officer Prof. Mela Mohammed to announce the result on that fateful day.

Amazing!!..... INSOLENT. The Independent National Electoral commission's Spokesman Festus Okoye, addressed the issue and declared it NULL and VOID.

He Quipped

"The action of the REC is a usurpation of power of the Returning officer. It is null and void of no effect ----"

He reiterated

"When the process has clearly not been concluded"

Barr. Hudu Yunusa-Ari was summoned to Abuja for his actions. An infamous incident. John Gabriel penned thus

"--- He did not regret his decision to announce the result and denied receiving a 2 billion naira kickback".

Good radiance to Bad rubbish as the incutribent Governor Ahmadu Fintri clinched the position again with 430,861 votes

"Mr. Frinti pulled a total of 430,861 votes to defeat mrs Dahiru who got 398,788 votes"

SWIVELS: Despite the Ostentatious display of wealth by the affluent Presidential Aspirants Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party and Bola Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the Presidential Horse Race, Nigeria Youth Yearning for a change formed a movement using Mr. Peter Obi's name, the standard bearer of the

Labour Party called "OBIDIENT". A strong movement cut across ethnicity and religion.

"Young Nigerians who say they have grown tired of the older Politicians are mobilizing behind a candidate they consider more youthful and who promises real solution to their problems".

However Femi Fani Kayode saw obedient from this perspective.

"They are worthy of my attention only because their rise and relevance in the political Configuration of our Nation just in a matter of weeks has been meteoric and phenomenal. They may not have structures or elected representatives in the Legislature and executive arms of Government but they have IDEAS and VISIONS Coupled with a clear ideological and Philosophical bent which can and will endure for longer than mere political platforms and structure

An idea whose time has come cannot be stopped"

No Nigeria has had a followership cut across tribe and Religion like this. A TWIST that made Nigerians to vote who they want although most votes did not count as INEC disappointed the Citizens of Nigeria by Falsifying results. The Labour Party won 35 seats in the House of Representative, 8 seats in the Upper chamber (Senate) one governor, Dr Alex Otti of Abia State, A Great Feat within eight months.

THE UMPIRE

Nigerians were disappointed with the electoral Umpire. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The INEC Chairman was alleged to have favoured the APC standard bearer BOLA Ahmed Tinubu.

Barry Andrews Head of the European Union Election Observers said.

"Throughout the mission we saw that Nigerians have a great appetite

For democracy and are keen to engage in various civic activities public Confidence and trust in INEC was severely damaged on February 25 due to lack of transparency and operational failure in the conduct of the Federal level polls. INEC Continuous abstain in providing information to a few press release and ceremonial statement hence failing to address public grievances and rebuild confidence in the electoral process"

Astonishing, Bola Ahmed Tinubu won the Presidential election although he did not get 25 percent of the votes and in the Federal capital territory Abuja. He pulled 8, 794,726 votes to win "THE FOUR HORSE RACE".

In the sense that despite having 18 contestants from 18 registered political parties only 4 people were absolutely in the race dividing the Nation into Tribes and Religion forces.

Ahmed Bola Tinubu of APC

Atiku Abubakar of PDP

Peter Obi of Labour Party

Rabiu Kwakwanso of New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP)

With a total of 1760,606 polling Units in Nigeria and 87.2 million voters with the Permanent Voters Card (PVC).

EFFECTS OF ATTITUDE OF INEC ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DAY

- Voter Apathy
- High Level of Electoral violence and intimidation (thuggery)
- Vote buying
- Falsification of Figures and Results.

Voter's Apathy: Low turn-out of voters was recorded on the 18th of March. Election for governorship and House of Assembly in all the

States as polling units were empty compared to the crowd that trooped out to exercise their franchise on the Presidential election day. In Bayelsa State for instance a popular market called "TOMBIA Market" was swing. When the channels television correspondent interviewed them, they shouted in response.

"Our Votes did not count in the Presidential election "

In Edo State, the turn-out was equally very low but Governor Obaseki attributed it to the

"Overlming Presence of the security men".

In Lagos State, the (APC) All Progressive Congress took their relationship with the (INEC) Independent National Electoral Commission Chairman for granted and oppressed Igbo citizens in Lagos. Realising an Igbo vote is a Labour Party vote invariably the gubernatorial candidate of the Labour Party will sweep the votes in Lagos State, if allowed to vote. Taking into cognizance that the Labour Party Standard bearer Mr. Peter Obi defeated Bola Ahmed Tinubu in Lagos. Omoyele Sowore, the Presidential Candidate of the African Action Congress(AAC) in his tweet reacted to the xenophobic attacks on the Igbos in Lagos.

"After all the xenophobic attacks on Igbos in Lagos during last weekend charade called election. Isn't Funny that the only person in police custody is a young guy, a social media influencer not a single person in Lagos arrested for attempted murder, conduct likely to breach public peace, vote buying, election rigging, arson affray".

The Lagos State 2023 gubernatorial elections was marred by a high level of violence and intimidation. Obviously most of the attacks on voters and electoral material were done in the presence of the security agents as thugs were seen on viral videos and as the election observers rightly said, creating fears, threatening, forcing residents to either vote for APC or go back to their houses.

"Nnamdi Kanu's Lawyer Aloy Ejimikor referred it to as a mini genocide" "Dear Yoruba Leaders I demand that you immediately halt the anti-Igbo violence raging in Lagos. It is a mini Genocide and your silence makes you complicit when time for reckoning comes"

Reuben Abati, former President Goodluck Jonathan's aide said even Masquerades voted.

"What happened in Nigeria? An election or burlesque? Even Masquerades voted. Touts and thugs replaced the electoral commission and took charge. Shame on INEC and the security agencies for turning our country into a comedy station of the World".

ABUSE OF POWER! It is unbelievable.

Quest for power at the detriment of life. Can we ever have the likes of President Goodluck Jonathan who pledged a free and fair election to Nigerians and conceded to victory, affirming his words.

"Nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian"

Are people still after the unity, stability and peace of our dear country Nigeria. Nothing is more important than UNITY for where there is UNITY, there is PROGRESS.

TWISTS

A beautiful twist in Abia State although, it was a very long and dreadful battle but the "Obidients" stood their ground as some slept at the INEC collation centers for days to make sure their votes counted.

The European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission's head Barry Andrews rightly said about the polling units on the 18th of March 2023.

"Polling on election day was disrupted by multiple incidents of thuggery and intimidation of voters, polling officials observers and journalists. Unfortunately there were many casualties and fatalities observed by the EU, EOM...."

The waiting of obidients outside the INEC office was not in vain hosting a "Block Style Party with a Disc Jockey to entertain people. Alex Otti was declared winner having garnered a total of 175,466 votes to defeat his closest rival PDP Okechukwu Ahaiwe, who polled 88,526 votes. In Kano State, the New Nigerian People's Party swept the polls on the 18th of March as the incumbent Governor, Abudullahi Ganduje was not able to install his successor. It was a great change. The NNPP governorship candidate Abba Yusuf scored 1,019,602 while APC's Yusuf Gawuna Ganduje's deputy Governor garnered 890,705 votes.

The wishes of Ganduje "Faded away like the morning dew kissed by the sun".

According to Idayat Hassan, a good society top Notcher. The Kano citizens were resolute despite all odds as they guarded their votes even the late hours they were taken to the collation center. The March 18th Victory sparked off celebration in Kano and Dusk to Dawn curfew was imposed by the Kano State Government as Ada Onome the (AIT) African Independent Television Correspondent said. There was jubilation. A welcome Change. Taraba State House of Assembly polls made the Nigerian women to roll out drums as two women made their way into the Hallowed chambers. Hajiya Batula Mohammed (APC) representing Gashaka Constituency and Bornica Alhassan of PDP representing Bali Constituency.

A welcome development. However an Igbo man Barrister Nelson Len was elected into the Taraba State House of Assembly to represent Nguroje Constituency having defeated an indigene and a serving member Barrister Bappe Mohammed. 26 years old Rukayat Shittu won the Owode/Onire Constituency in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State in the House of Assembly Polls contesting on the platform of APC garnered a total of 7521 votes while her closest rival got 6957 votes. A great feat indeed.

THE SHOCKERS

This election came with its astonishing events as seven governors were not able to either make it to the senate as it has become a touch stone that they retire to the senate.

The likes of
Governor Okezie Ikpeazu Abia State,
Governor Samuel Ortom Benue State,
Governor Lanlong Plateau State,
Governor Abudulahi Ganduje Kano State.

It was a Tsunami for the Plateau State Governor, Governor Lanlong (APC) as he not only lost his senatorial bid but also lost imposing a successor. Caleb Musfwang garnered 525,299 votes to clinch the seat. An irony of life, the Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council could not deliver his state. This implies you must not belong to the ruling party to win elections as Governor Ganduje head the same experience losing to the "Kwakwasiya movement". The "Kwakwasiya's (NNPP) New Nigerian People's Party won 17 out of 24 House of representative seats. Governor Ganduje's son Abba Umara Ganduje also lost his House of Representative bid.

It was an absolute rejection of personalities not parties. A strong Advocate of the Bola Tinubu's "Muslim-Muslim" Ticket, could not deliver his state in the presidential elections as Rabiu Kwankwanso the NNPP standard bearer won in Kano State.

INEC OF 2023 ELECTIONS

The independent elections commission disappointed Nigerians with a Budget of 355 Billion Naira ; they were not prepared for the Presidential elections as there were a lot of flaws.

A London based financial times said INEC failed

"Nigeria's Election Badly Flawed INEC Failed"

The European Union Observers had this to say

"The trust in INEC was seen to further reduce due to delayed polling processes and information gaps related to much anticipated access to results on its results viewing portal (IREV)".

Barry Andrews European Union Chief Obvserer opined

"Fundamental freedom of assembly and movement were largely respected yet the full enjoyment of the latter was impeded by insufficient planning insecurity and the prevailing Naira and Fuel shortages.

Abuse of incumbency by various political office holders distorted the playing field and there were widespread allegations of vote buying..... Attacks on INEC premises including just days before polling, hindered preparations in affected area while insulting fear in voters"

(BIVAS) Bimodal Voters Accreditation System and IREV was seen as positive steps to a credible result was marred with irregularities. Sonnie Ekwawusi pernned.

"A brazen and barbaric display of impunity by INEC while ought to be an unbiased umpire in an electoral contest".

"The February 25th Election is the most rigged and most robbed presidential election in Nigeria".

INEC indeed failed as they did not abide by the rules as stated in the constitution.

Section 60(5) of the Electoral Act of 2023 states

"On conclusion of voting the presiding officer shall transfer the results including the total number of accredited voters and results of the ballot in a manner prescribed by the commission".

Which is the BIVAS. Paragraph 38 states.

"On completion of all polling unit voting and result procedures, the presiding officer shall

- *Electronically transmit or transfer the results of the polling unit directly to the collation system as prescribed by the commission.*
- *Use of BIVAS to upload a scanned copy of the ESCA to the INEC Result Viewing Point (IREV).....".*

INEC should be held responsible or such a chaotic 2023 election in Nigeria despite the sum of money, time and trust.

INEC disappointed the citizens of Nigeria.

IN GOD WE TRUST

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