



CREDIBILITY OF THE 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In the world over, democratic governance is seen as a sought after and most cherished system of government, but the actual practice appears elusive in the context of the third world countries. As a result, this paper observed that since the adoption of democracy in Nigerian political system, there has been lacuna in the proper democratic processes in Nigerian elections. Therefore, the paper interrogated the nexus between credibility of the 2019 general elections and the growth of democracy in Nigeria. In the course of the study, we generated our data through documentary method of data collection and analyzed it with content analysis. Theoretically, we adopted the game theory as a fulcrum around which this study revolved. The theory maintained among other propositions that the individual actions, both the candidates and the voters in an election are fundamentally determined by the calculated payoffs. Extrapolation from the study is that the 2019 general elections recorded credibility deficit which goes a long way in stunting the growth of democracy in the county. As a way forward however, we suggest that both the candidates and the voters should as a matter of necessity eschew all their electoral activities that negate the fortification and growth of democracy in the country.

Key Words: Candidates, Democracy, Election Credibility, General Election and Voter-Participation.

Introduction

Since the introduction of Elective Principle in Nigerian political system in the year 1922 during colonial administration, the credibility of the elections has been a matter of concern to political scientists. Worthy to note is that the meager colonial elections that were mostly concentrated in Lagos and Calabar consistently recorded slight credibility deficit. Also, the elections of 1964 were marred by untold irregularities, a scenario where the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) declared many candidates unopposed despite the clear and established facts that candidates from the opposition parties had filed their papers (Obi, 2017). The ugly incidence among other socio-political anomalies ignited military incursion in Nigerian political landscape in 1966. Sequel to the inconsistencies, the Second Republican elections of 1979 recorded some elements of credibility because the transition programmes were clearly stated and judiciously followed. However, the result was challenged up to Supreme Court by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who claim that Alhaji Shehu Shagari did not satisfy the section 34 subsection(1)(c)(i) of the Electoral Degree of 1979 (Ojiako, 1981).

Worst still, the 1983 elections that abruptly truncated the Second Republic copiously made a jest of election rules and ethics. In describing the scene, Aderemi (2004) argued that the susceptibility of FEDECO was openly displayed when it was accused to have connived with the NPN to rig the election. The NPN was able to penetrate states which were hitherto exclusive preserve of its opponents with solid assistance from FEDECO. Subsequently, the aborted Third Republic of 1993 was highly immersed in the ugly trappings of credibility deficit. This ranged from highly staggered and unrealistic transition programme to final annulment of President Babangida's regime. The 1999 general elections were characterized by high-stakes bargaining, with the structures of power in the government influencing the process, the way

spectators influence a soccer match’ (Kew, 1999). In 2003, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of over 90 civil society groups, passed a vote of no confidence on the election, and described the events leading to its outcome as fraudulent (Transition Monitoring Group, 2003).

The election of 2007 was programmed to fail due to its features of warfare rather than open and civil competition for political power which it assumed (Transition Monitoring Group, 2007). The outcome of the 2011 election, touted as a marked improvement on the previous polls was followed by large-scale violence and claims of electoral fraud in favour of the incumbent president (Onapajo, 2015). In 2015, the election was remarkably different from the ‘highest bidder wins it’ syndrome characteristic of Nigeria’s previous elections. Its highpoint was the defeat of the erstwhile ruling party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), by the All Progressives Congress (APC), a party put together, 2 years before the 2015 election. This development arguably represents a defining moment for Nigeria, given its history of electoral heist and violence. As a result of the fledgling disposition of electoral process in the country, the growth of democracy is hampered. However, the study is focused on the interrogation of the nexus between the credibility of the 2019 general elections and the growth of democracy in Nigeria. For the purpose of brevity and precision, the study is organized under the following paradigms: introduction, clarification of credible elections and democratic growth, theoretical nexus, electoral processes in Nigeria, 2019 general elections and credibility question in Nigeria, conclusion and prognoses.

Credible Elections

The polemics within the academia appear to account for vagueness of some concepts, to be free from this intellectual obfuscation and conceptual ambiguity, credible elections shall be clarified. To begin with, we shall

demystify the key word in the phrase which is ‘elections’ after which we link it with the adjective which is ‘credible’. Hence, Nnoli (2003) viewed election as the process of choice agreed upon by a group of people. It enables them to select one or a few out of many to occupy one or a number of authority positions. To him, this process of choice usually involves the rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. It is the most modern form of recruitment of personnel into offices and it is deemed to be very crucial aspect of the democratic process irrespective of the type of democracy that is practiced. Generally speaking, elections are not confined to political organization, but apply equally to other organizations ranging from the smallest informal groups such as clubs and industrial firms to the selection of nation-states who wield enormous military, economic and political powers. with specific reference to politics, an election is used by a larger number of people for the selection of a fewer number who exercise the legislative and executive powers of the government.

For Obikeze and Obi (2004), elections are means by which the people of a country, organization or union choose and exercise some degree of control over their representatives. It is the way every citizen participates in the election of office holders. It is orderly means of changing governments. This is why power is vested on the people in a real democracy as they wield the right to decide who run the affairs of the state. However, it is at this point that the citizens submit all their demands to the candidates who may be left with no choice than to issue promises of fulfilling them by the time he or she assumes the office. Hence, the people are the determinants of who occupies the offices especially during the election period. Similarly, Okolie (2005) sees elections as the process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by its qualified members.

Indeed, Dunmoye (2010) maintained that elections are the process of selection of one person or more for an office. He stressed further that elections are also a government administered process by which people, whether opposed of or unopposed, seek a political party's nomination for, or election to public offices. In the contemporary world, elections are the legitimate way by which government can claim the right to power. It involves a set of activities leading to the selection of one or more persons out of many to serve in the position of authority in a given nation. It is the process therefore, by which the people select and control their representatives. This implies that elections give the electorate the sovereign power to decide who will govern or represent them (Adeniran, 2012).

However, credible elections imply the trustworthiness, believability and acceptability of elections. These statuses are fundamentally accorded to elections when the laid down rules and democratic processes which revolve around gamut of procedures that enhance mass participation in free and fair election are followed in the selection exercise. Credible elections are elections that are devoid of all sorts of electoral malpractices, intimidations, violence etc. The concept of elections and the corresponding credibility is inexhaustible in the existing literature; hence we shall migrate to the democratic growth.

Democratic Growth

Without mincing words, democratic growth implies the actual improvement on the core ideas and ingredients defining democracy such as participation and accountability; that the people determine who govern them, and that those who govern give account of their stewardship, for instance, periodic election is one of the most important mechanisms for the realization of the objectives of democratization. It is also important to note that, elections are not only meant to ensure, confirm or re-affirm the legitimacy of the governors through a regular consent, but also to provide a fertile ground for democracy to thrive (

Ogundiya & Baba, 2007 in Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). Essentially, Abraham Lincoln in Gauba, (2006) conceived democracy as government of the people by the people and for the people.

Elaborately, democracy in the view of Okolie (2006) denotes a way of life in a society in which each individual is believed to be entitled to an equality of concern as regards to chances of participating freely in the values of that society. In a more limited sense however, it is the opportunity of the members of the society to participate freely in the decisions, which affect their life individually and collectively. The process on the other hands entails theoretical and practical stages, conditions and movements towards realization of the democratic governance (Okonkwo & Unaji, 2016). Democratization can be understood as a process subdivided into three phases: (i) the liberalization phase, when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles; (ii) a transition phase, often culminating when the first competitive elections are held; and (iii) the consolidation phase, when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; Linz & Stepan, 1996).

The concept of democracy can therefore be regarded as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through elections or through the administration of the accepted policies. It is a government founded on the principle of rule of law which is against arbitrariness, highhandedness, dictatorship and also antithesis to military regime (Kwasau, 2013). The conceptualizations of democracy above by different authorities logically centre on participation and accountability. Therefore, democracy growth on the other hand implies all round improvement on the observance, maintenance and sustainability of the fundamental principles of democracy which majorly revolve around participation and accountability. In the same vein, Diamond in Okonkwo &

Unaji, (2016) sees democratic growth as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation of democratic principles such that all significant political actors believe that popular rule is better for their society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. It also connects the act of reducing the probability of the breakdown of the system to the point where democracy can be said that it will persist. It manifest under enhanced economic development, developed democratic culture, stable party system, he also suffices to assert that this cannot be attained in Nigeria until democratic growth and stability is attained. This therefore shows that though under democratic regime, Nigeria is striving for consolidation (Okonkwo, 2015). Unequivocally, there exists plethora of literature on the concept of democratic growth, as a result, it is in exhaustive but the major onus of this study is to interrogate the nexus between democratic growth and credible election in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is carefully structured to revolve around the analytical framework of Games Theory which centers on a body of thought dealing with rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, where each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimize losses (Plano & Riggs, 1973). The theory was originally developed by Emil Borel in the 1920's. Other key proponents of the theory are John Von Neumann (Mathematician) and Oskar Morgenstern (Economist). It was however introduced into Politics and International Relations by Morton Kaplan, William Riker and Thomas Schelling (Varma, 1980). It is a framework or construct for conceiving social situations among competing players. In some respects, game theory is the science of strategies, or at least optimal decision making of independent and competing actors in a strategic setting. It studies

interactive decision- making, where the outcome for each participant or player depends or is contingent on the actions of others.

In games theory, players are supposed to be engaged in choosing alternatives. Each player in the game has to decide his choice after taking the point of view or move of other opponents or competitors. In other words, each player has to base his decision on his expectations of what the other players are likely to do. The theory is therefore a special construct which helps us in analyzing decisions in conflict or competitive situations, coalition behavior, diplomacy, warfare, elections and party politics. It has “a wide range of applications including psychology, evolutionary biology, war, politics, economics and business”. (Hayes, 2019).

Generally, it can be said that:

The theory of games or game theory as it is popularly called, owes its genesis to parlour games, like chess, chicken, porker or bridge, with obvious elements of conflict, decision-making and co-operation, played between two or more players, where the decisions of each player are contingent upon the decisions of others, and the central point , therefore is the inter-dependence among the decisions of the different players participating in the game....The crux of the parlour games is that it is not possible for any one player to make a choice: whatever choice he makes depends inextricably on the choice or the choices made by the other players, (Varma, 1980:341).

From the 1960's, the theory was used to study the power games or strategy of each of the Super Powers (USA and USSR), to counteract each other's move in their rivalry or competition and this popularized it.

The theory is based on certain assumptions some of which are described by Varma, (1980), as inbuilt features of the theory. These include:

- 1) At least two players competing but could be many depending on the game.

- 2) Perfect rationality- decision makers are perfectly rational in their choice of alternative courses of action.
- 3) Perfect information availability- each player has at its disposal, knowledge of all possible prospects and strategies open to him at any point in time in the game, competition or bargain.
- 4) Amoral decision making- decision makers are amoral in their decisions. They are not interested in ethics. The player, according to Fletcher, (1966, in Varma, 1980, p. 351), is “concerned with outcomes and not with intermediate processes, with the strategy his partner is likely to choose and not why he chooses that particular strategy...Motives and attitudes are kept out of consideration. Lying, murder, abortion, suicide or violence is to be judged by their consequences and not in terms of absolute laws”.

By a way of application, we find the games theory apt as theoretical framework in this study. In the first place, elections fall into the category of competitive games. It involves individuals, groups and even political parties and umpires in contests where each seeks to maximize gains- pay-offs, and minimize loses. Additionally, elections are supposed to be a game and not a war. It is like every other game with players, umpire, and rules of the game. It has outcomes, pay-offs, strategies and involves decision making in which participants or players are expected to play by the rules; and most of the moves are contingent upon the strategies exhibited by opponents. It is equally essential that the concepts, jargons or terms of the theory are similar to those of politics and elections. Such concepts as players, strategy, outcomes, pay-offs, resources, rules of the game, prospects information, equilibrium are all applicable and relevant for analyses in the study.

Finally, in an election, the spirit of give and take, characteristic of sportsmanship is supposed to predominate, particularly in liberal democracy. Election should not be seen as do or die affair. Unfortunately, the Nigeria general elections “which was supposed to be like a football match, turned out to be a war in which opposing groups engaged each other in gun battles,

(Punch, February 26, 2019). All these intolerance, suppression of civil liberties and excessive brigandage observed, certainly vitiate the credibility of the elections and adversely affect the growth of democracy in Nigeria.

In this study, the concern with credibility of the processes and outcome of the 2019 General Elections is how to ensure that the government at all levels are constituted by the people, of the people and for the people. It is only reasonable that to be accountable and responsible, it should be truly by the people in free, fair and credible processes that meet international best practices or standards

FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTES OF CREDIBLE LECTIONS

Like we have established in the preceding segment of the study, elections are said to be credible when the laid down rules and democratic processes are judiciously followed. Those electoral processes are the responsibilities of players in the election exercise such as INEC, security agencies, political parties, electorate and the government. for clarity sake, their functions shall be demonstrated below.

A. For the INEC:

Voter Register Integrity, covering correct and updated voters register, continuous registration, the rate and ease of Private Voter Card (PVC) collection, adequate training of both permanent and ad-hoc staff, as well as their commitment to credible polls, administrative and operational efficiency as exhibited in timely delivery of election materials, sufficient provisions of materials, the functionality of such materials like the Card Reader and their rate of failure, fixing of dates and time for the various polls, proper and timely identification of Observers and Journalists and so on.

B. Security Agencies:

Insurance of safe and secure environment for polls, absence of unwarranted intimidation, harassment and impeding of movement or access to polling units, freedom to campaign, freedom of the Press and for Media coverage, prevention of disruption of polls in certain polling areas by hired Thugs including snatching of Ballot Boxes, and avoidance of a display of partisanship among others.

C. Political Parties:

Tolerance of opposition, responsible opposition, avoidance of violence and its sponsorship, promotion of intra party democracy in terms of equity, equal opportunity to the members wishing to vie for positions or offices, proper collation of results at the Ward level, for purposes of compares with the official releases of INEC, non discrimination on gender basis and generally, playing by the rules.

D. The Electorates:

Willingness to discharge civic responsibilities measured in terms of Voter turn-out, rate of voter registration and PVC collection, tolerance of dissenting or opposing views.

E. The Governments:

Avoidance of abuse of incumbency powers, non manipulation of the Security Agencies, non intimidation of other Arms of the government, independence of the Judiciary and credible Election Petition Tribunals, provision of adequate legal framework, the existence of opportunities for dissent, and the provision of a level playing ground for all, including Press freedom.

2019 GENERAL ELECTION PROCESSES

Nigeria's 2019 presidential election featured 73 presidential candidates, across 91 registered political parties. However, there were only two main contenders

– the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar who ran on the platform of the main opposition party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Buhari, a former Head of State (in 1983) was first elected in 2015, having defeated the then incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. Buhari’s campaign manifesto leaned towards a populist/welfarist ideology, and he premised his re-election on his widely perceived incorruptibility. Atiku Abubakar, on the other hand, was a two-time Vice-President (1999–2007), whose campaign slogan/manifesto (though relatively capitalism inclined), appealed more to the middle class and the elite, but he had an integrity doubt attached to his candidacy. Essentially, the campaign rhetoric for the 2019 election was premised on three fundamental issues – economy, security and corruption. Under Buhari, Nigeria has literally been on its edge in terms of economic growth and development (The Economist, 30 May, 2019).

Also, unemployment figures have been at an all-time high, rising in each year of his presidency. For example, in July 2018, the unemployment figures in Nigeria stood at 23.1%, compared to 10% in July 2016 (CNBC Africa, December 20, 2018). To this group, therefore, the Nigerian economy is yet to make full recovery from the recession it was plunged into shortly after Buhari’s emergence, and that based on his government’s response to the economic downturn, there is nothing to suggest that he deserves a second term in office. (The Economist, 30 May 2019). The first major test for the process came barely 5 hours before the polls were to open when its electoral monitoring board, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) postponed the Presidential and National Assembly elections from 16 February to 23 February 2019, citing logistics and operational issues. Mahmood Yakubu, the commission chairman had argued that ‘proceeding with the election as scheduled is no longer feasible, and that the difficult decision to

postpone was needed to ensure a free and fair vote’ (BBC News, 16 February, 2019).

Indeed, the initial disbelief which surrounded the postponement was followed by anger, frustration and resignation, with each side of the political divide accusing the INEC of attempting to swing momentum in favour of the other (BBC News, 16 February 2019). The last-minute cancellation surprised the country and inconvenienced thousands of Nigerians who had travelled a long way to cast their votes; analysts argued that the postponement cost the economy about 1.5 billion USD (BBC News, 20 February 2019). The second key issue of interest focused on security, with one school of thought arguing that the initial euphoria which heralded the gains made by the Buhari administration in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency was overtaken by a much bigger problem – herdsmen attacks and banditry (International Crisis Group, 2018). In particular, there were strong concerns in some quarters of an alleged ‘soft’ stance by Buhari’s government on the herdsmen crisis, with some attributing his perceived poor handling of the imbroglio to his affinity with the group, who are mostly from his Fulani-ethnic stock. (International Crisis Group, 2018).

Furthermore, the third issue of interest dwelt on the administration’s war against corruption, with some arguing that the war on corruption had achieved nothing, but witch-hunts, deliberately targeted at members of the opposition (The Punch, 8 September 2018). In assessing the administration’s performance in the fight against corruption, observers have noted that, though some progress has been made in the repatriation and seizure of assets suspected to have been proceeds of illicit funds, ‘public perceptions of Buhari’s anti-corruption drive remain poor’ (Control Risks, 11 October, 2019). As they contend, ‘despite several high-profile prosecutions in the early days of the Buhari administration, investigations have seldom led to

significant convictions, as the slow pace of court cases, and financial settlements made by wealthy individuals and entities outside of the courtroom have impeded successful prosecutions’ (Control Risks, 11 October 2019). Perhaps, a clear departure in terms of issues of interest in the 2019 elections, compared to previous elections was that religion and ethnicity were less important in deciding who to support given that the two leading candidates – Buhari of the APC and Atiku of the PDP were from the same religious and ethnic background. This development was unique: with the exception of the 1999 polls (where the main candidates – Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP, and Olu Falae, the joint candidate of the Alliance for Democracy and the All Peoples Party were both Christians and also from the South), religious and ethnic leanings of the leading candidates mattered less in deciding who to vote for. Only the 2007 presidential elections featured a similar scenario where the two leading candidates – Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Umaru Musa Yar’Adua of the PDP, were both from the North and of the same religion (Transition Monitoring Group, 2007).

The Credibility of the 2019 General Elections

The 2019 presidential election recorded 15.2 m votes for Muhammadu Buhari of the APC against the 11.3 m votes secured by Atiku Abubakar of the PDP. The election recorded a turnout of 35.66%, compared to the 44% turnout witnessed in the 2015 presidential election (The Guardian UK, 27 February, 2019). By implication, there was a considerable degree of voter apathy in the election, more than that of 2015. For example, at least 11.2 million Permanent Voter Cards, out of the available 84 million issues were not collected, thus more than 13% of all registered voters were either unable or unwilling to vote (The Commonwealth Elections Observers Report 2019a). This makes the voter-turnout rate in the polls the lowest since Nigeria’s democratic transition in 1999 (IRI/NDI Elections observer research, 2019). While the elections went

well in most of the 120,000 polling units across Nigeria's 774 local governments, there were allegations of deliberate sabotage, disguised through the late arrival of election materials in opposition strongholds (Premium Times, 23 February 2019). In many ways, the 2019 general election was one of the most expensive in the history of elections in Nigeria. Conservative estimates indicate, for example, that the elections cost Nigerian tax payers the sum of N242.45bn (approximately USD 672.35 m), a sharp increase from the USD 625 m spent by INEC on the 67 m registered voters during the 2015 elections (Daily Trust, 3 August 2019).

Secondly, the elections also mirrored Nigeria's violent electoral trajectory, with at least 39 lives lost to election-related violence, and another 128 individuals arrested for election-related offences including homicide, theft of ballot boxes and vote fraud (Reuters, 24 February 2019). These figures arguably qualify the election as one of the most violent, after that of 2007 and 2011, and lead us to ask how credible were the 2019 elections? While the environment was tense and there were instances of violence, overall, fundamental freedoms of association, expression, assembly and movement were generally respected. Our overall conclusion is that the voting, closing and counting processes at polling units were transparent, and offered Nigerians, for the most part, the opportunity to express their will and exercise their franchise (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2019a).

According to the group, issues such as better youth participation increase in the number of women presidential candidates, and introduction of relevant legislative provisions were implemented to enhance the participation of people with disabilities in the electoral process (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2019a). Our collective, according to the group, is that 'there were considerable organizational, logistical and technical difficulties with these elections, which we trust that the Independent National Electoral Commission

(INEC) and other national stakeholders will wish to address’ (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2019b.). A similar stamp of credibility was also reflected in the report submitted by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) delegation, led by former Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegne (The Sun, 26 February 2019). According to the group, ‘although Nigeria’s 2019 elections, were marred by overcrowding and interference by voters and party agents during the counting process, logistical challenges, incidences of election-related violence, and intimidation, the overall political climate remained largely peaceful and conducive for the conduct of democratic elections’ (The Sun, 26 February 2019).

These challenges notwithstanding, the AUEOM submitted that Election Day operations were administered in a manner that allowed the free expression of the will of the voters (The Sun, 26 February 2019). In the view of YIAGA AFRICA, a non-partisan Civil Society Organisation (CSO) committed to deepening electoral integrity and citizens’ participation in elections in Africa, Nigeria’s 2019 presidential election ‘was characterised by similar shortcomings that marred previous national elections in Nigeria. As in past elections, logistical challenges faced by INEC that resulted in widespread late opening of polling units and malfeasance by political parties compromised the ability of citizens to vote and undermined public confidence in the process’ (YIAGA AFRICA, 2019). In the 2019 presidential election, though the official turnout rate, rejected ballots figure and results announced by INEC appear consistent with YIAGA AFRICA’s Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) results estimates, ‘the YIAGA AFRICA PVT findings revealed certain lapses and reports of malfeasance which impacted on the quality of the process in some polling units and states. The PVT also revealed possible incidents of vote suppression as reflected in the percentage of cancelled ballots in some states like Rivers, Nassarawa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Plateau, Kogi, Benue and Kaduna states’ (YIAGA AFRICA 2019).



On the one hand, while these cancellations were not significant enough to affect the overall outcome of the election, it arguably led to the disenfranchisement of the electorates, whose votes were not made to count in the results. Nigeria, as the group noted, ‘lost an opportunity to improve the quality of its elections as compared to the 2015 national elections. These were not the elections Nigerians expected neither is it the elections Nigerians deserved’ (YIAGA AFRICA, 2019). These scathing remarks notwithstanding, YIAGA Africa’s overall assessment of the polls was positive. Judging from the report of its 3,030 observer teams deployed in pairs to a random statistical sample of 1,515 polling units across Nigeria, the group submitted that the issues noticed during the elections, were insufficient to undermine the overall credibility of the process (YIAGA AFRICA, 2019). Empirically, the table below demonstrated the willingness of the electorate to participate in the election through PVC registrations and collections.

Table 1: The Number/Percentage of Registered, Collected and Uncollected PVC in 36 States of the Federation

	State	No of Registered Voters	No of Collected PVCs as at 11/02/2019	No of Uncollected PVCs	Percentage of Collected PVCs to Registered voters
1	Abia	1,932,892	1,729,943	202,949	89.50
2	Adamawa	1,973,083	1,788,706	184,377	90.66
3	Akwa Ibom	2,119,727	1,933,362	186,365	91.21
4	Anambra	2,447,996	2,071,714	376,282	84.63
5	Bauchi	2,462,843	2,335,717	127,126	94.84
6	Bayelsa	923,182	769,509	153,673	83.35
7	Benue	2,480,131	2,244,376	235,755	90.49
8	Borno	2,315,956	2,000,228	315,728	86.37
9	Cross River	1,527,289	1,387,314	139,975	90.84
10	Delta	2,845,274	2,470,924	374,350	86.84
11	Ebonyi	1,459,933	1,299,048	160,885	88.98
12	Edo	2,210,534	1,726,738	483,796	78.11
13	Ekiti	909,967	666,591	243,376	73.25
14	Enugu	1,944,016	1,787,537	156,479	91.95
15	FCT	1,344,856	1,026,920	317,936	76.36
16	Gombe	1,394,393	1,335,223	59,170	95.76
17	Imo	2,272,293	1,702,178	570,115	74.91
18	Jigawa	2,111,106	1,625,721	485,385	77.01
19	Kaduna	3,932,492	3,648,831	283,661	92.79
20	Kano	5,457,747	4,696,747	761,000	86.06
21	Katsina	3,230,230	3,187,988	42,242	98.69
22	Kebbi	1,806,231	1,718,180	88,051	95.13
23	Kogi	1,646,350	1,435,751	210,599	87.21
24	Kwara	1,406,457	1,149,969	256,488	81.76
25	Lagos	6,570,291	5,531,389	1,038,902	84.19
26	Nasarawa	1,617,786	1,442,184	175,602	89.15
27	Niger	2,390,035	2,173,204	216,831	90.93
28	Ogun	2,375,003	1,694,867	680,136	71.36
29	Ondo	1,822,346	1,478,460	343,886	81.13
30	Osun	1,680,498	1,266,587	413,911	75.37
31	Oyo	2,934,107	2,176,352	757,755	74.17
32	Plateau	2,480,455	2,095,409	385,046	84.48
33	Rivers	3,215,273	2,833,101	382,172	88.11
34	Sokoto	1,903,166	1,726,887	176,279	90.74
35	Taraba	1,777,105	1,729,094	48,011	97.30
36	Yobe	1,365,913	1,261,914	103,999	92.39
37	Zamfara	1,717,128	1,626,839	90,289	94.74
	TOTAL	84,004,084	72,775,502	11,228,582	86.63

Source: Adapted from The DailyTrust Newspaper February 21

<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/here-are-the-states-with-highest-pvc-collection-full-list.html>. Accessed on December 20, 2019.

Decipherable from the table one above is that out of more than 84million citizens that registered for the exercise, it was about 72 million persons that collected their PVC while more than 11million persons did not collect theirs. As a result, about 11million persons were unable to vote in the election. Percentage wise, the table disclosed 86 percent of the eligible voters.

Table 2: Collated Results from All the States for the Five Main Parties

STATE	APC	PDP	PCP	ADC	APGA
Abia	85,058		1,489	336	9,638
Adamawa	378,078		3,670	3,989	159
Akwa Ibom	175,429		1,902	230	61
Anambra	33,298		4,374	227	30,034
Bauchi		209,313	2,104	296	149
Bayelsa	118,821		1,584	1,078	53
Benue	347,668		2,793	554	4,582
Borno		71,788	1,563	301	187
Cross River	117,302		2,033	326	43
Delta	221,292		2,753	1,075	145
Ebonyi	90,726		1,637	213	222
Edo	267,842		3,526	850	143
Ekiti		154,032	2,299	406	39
Enugu	54,423		2,337	348	1,618
FCT	152,224		2,921	246	255
Gombe		138,484	1,679	248	124
Imo	140,463		4,883	541	10,880
Jigawa		289,895	2,761	261	140
Kaduna		649,612	4,027	558	749
Kano		391,593	3,568	591	549
Katsina		308,056	2,399	237	331
Kebbi		154,282	1,794	285	228
Kogi		218,207	2,207	4,369	318
Kwara		138,184	2,108	456	89
Lagos		448,015	8,458	2,915	499
Nasarawa		283,847	1,868	339	1,523
Niger		218,052	2,855	588	389
Ogun		194,655	3,563	25,283	222
Ondo	241,769		4,829	6,296	90
Osun		337,377	4,888	1,525	73
Oyo	365,229		5,352	40,830	197
Plateau	468,555		4,276	590	160

Rivers	150,710		2,954	597	614
Sokoto		361,604	2,630	331	313
Taraba	324,906		321	211	1,071
Yobe		50,763	2,107	162	226
Zamfara		125,423	774	186	738
Total:	15,191,847	11,262,978	107,286	97,874	66,851

Source: Culled from BBC News February 26, 2019

<https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/resources/idt-57851b9b-078b-4e8e-956b-80e984630ff2>.

Accessed on December 20, 2019

Extrapolation from the table two is that the minor political parties such as PCP, ADC and APGA have votes in the whole 36 states no matter the number of votes while two major rival parties APC and PDP secured zero votes in some states. For instance, the APC that won the Presidential election did not have single vote in 19 states which include: Bauchi, Borno, Ekiti, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Osun, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. In as much as we practice first pass the post which simple majority, it is noticeable that the growth of democracy is still deficient.

In the assessment, considerable weight is given to the published Reports of the various accredited Election Observer Groups that monitored the Polls, which are summarized below:

Updated Voter Register and Registration:

The evidence in this sphere was that voter registration and the Register were replete with numerous flaws. Up to the very week of voting, many eligible registered voters could not collect their PVC, despite spirited efforts to so do. INEC could only give update on collected PVCs on 21st February, \after the originally scheduled date for commencement of the Polls (16th February). Surprisingly, some states in the North relatively had very high rates of 94% to 98%, thus raising suspicions of possible collection by proxy. On the Voting

days, there were confusions as many Voters with their PVCs were unable to find their names in the Voter Register. Some Voter Registers were completely misplaced, thus automatically disenfranchising eligible voters who were eager to do their civic duty. These lapses which were part of what the EU EOM described as Systemic failings, certainly affected the credibility of the elections (Sun 16th February).

Freedom from Intimidation, Violence, and impeded movement:

This was one of the worst spheres with very low scores with respect to performance and credibility. Sponsored or orchestrated violence were very high in many parts of the polity. The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, confirmed that, “at least 626 people were killed across Nigeria between the start of the election campaigns and the final election in March 2019” (Sanni, 2019). Their conclusion was that the elections lacked credibility. Similarly, the Punch Opinion (February 26, 2019), lamented that,

...the deaths and violence that trailed the 2019 elections left a sour taste in the mouth. It was both demoralizing and embarrassing... the dead included civilians shot by soldiers, civilians shot by political thugs and unknown assassins, one was said to be an Adhoc Electoral Officer recruited from the National Youth Service Corps...including a 19 year old Daniel Usman, a student of Kogi State University, who reportedly was shot while voting for the first time. Hours before his death he had posted on the Facebook “vote not fight, respect yourself and stay out of trouble.

As regards intimidation of voters and opponents, that was common. Many voters could not step out to exercise their civic responsibility out of outright threats by hired political thugs, as political brigandage was rife. Onwuka (2019), reported that,

...in Lagos State, thugs invaded areas that are dominated by another ethnic group and destroyed electoral materials, telling

the voters to go back to their States of origin to vote...In Akwa-Ibom, electoral officers were abducted; many of them were members of the NYSC...An election which was supposed to be like a football match, turned out to be a war in which opposing groups engaged each other in Gun battles..

An examination of the operational and administrative efficiency of the umpire (INEC) reveals numerous lapses or failings to borrow from the EU, EOM. Initially, INEC scheduled the elections to commence on 16th February, 2019 and despite repeated assurances to the nation that it had had everything under control; it made an embarrassing postponement of the election a few hours to the scheduled commencement of the Polls. This was not only demoralizing but the excitement and enthusiasm of a considerable number of the electorate, who had travelled from far places to their place of registration for the Polls returned to their places of abode disenchanted and were never again able to exercise their franchise; further affecting the credibility of the exercise. As was further observed, actual polling witnessed late arrival of INEC officials, insufficient electoral materials, which in some cases ridiculously included ink and ink-pad. Other failings were high rate of Card Reader failure in some areas, visible partisanship by some adhoc staff. In some Polling Centers (even close to INEC State headquarters like Awka), Polling could not start before 12noon. All these Systemic failings, as the EU, EOM described it, had negative impact on the credibility of the elections (the Punch, 18th March 2019)

With regard to intra-party democracy, intra-party primaries were excessively rancorous and more often than not, hijacked by money bags or the highest bidder. There was visible lack of level playing ground particularly in the main contending Parties, resulting in excessive litigation and party defections not based on any ideology. Allegations of vote buying, intimidation and abuse of incumbency powers, particularly at the State levels were rife. All these impinged negatively on the credibility of the General Elections. As for

collation of results, there were obvious and embarrassing delays. Collation took many days unlike in 2015, though this time collation was fully televised nationally. Collation was however, manually done instead of electronically as in other climes including African neighbours like Senegal and Ghana. All these gave room for suspicion and mistrust, again adversely affecting the credibility of the elections. The partisanship of Security Agents was another minus on the credibility of the elections. There was a very high level of military involvement particularly in Rivers State. Incidences of Soldiers shooting and intimidating civilians and voters were reported. Human Rights Watch (2019) found that “Despite police claims of increased security measures to ensure peaceful voting, there seems to have been little or no police response to reports of threats and acts of violence by hired political thugs and soldiers against voters and election officials On March 15, the INEC spokesperson, Festus Okoye, accused Soldiers of intimidation and unlawful arrest of election officials in Rivers State. Besides, in many reported cases, Security officials stood passively by, as hired political thugs disrupted polling in some areas of opponents and in some cases even aided and abated malpractices. Punch Opinion (Feb. 26, 2019) had remarked,

...that the soldiers and police deployed to keep peace in these elections could not stop political thugs from intimidating voters, burning voting materials and even killing and maiming voters in different parts of the Nation is unfortunate...This failure will encourage more thugs to disrupt future elections in areas where they believe they will lose, so as to reduce the number of votes of their opponents.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

It is our conclusion that the 2019 General elections in Nigeria was flawed in several respects as have been demonstrated and proved by various observations in this study. We agree with the EU, EOM, and indeed other independent non-partisan observers, all of which undoubtedly mean well for

Nigeria, that there were many visible and recorded systemic failures. These failures range from administrative and operational lapses, logistics, abuse of incumbency powers by all levels of government, use of hired political thugs to disrupt elections in perceived opponents stronghold and even outright assassinations of political opponents including INEC Staff, excessive loss of lives (626 as of the last count) in the 2019 exercise alone, Low turnout of voters, intimidation and obstruction of voters, deliberate disenfranchisement of eligible voters, last minute postponement of scheduled elections and general intolerance among others. These various lapses, failings and unacceptable shortcomings or avoidable pitfalls greatly vitiated the credibility and integrity of the 2019 General Elections. The verdict by independent non-partisan observers is that, the elections fall far short of the standards in 2015. In other words, 2019 represents no improvement on 2015, instead retrogression in standards, credibility and by extension, the growth of democracy in the Nigerian polity.

Given the observed lapses and failings as discussed in this study, and its deleterious impact on the credibility of the 2019 exercise; with associated implications for the growth of democracy in Nigeria, we thoughtfully advance the following recommendations for the amelioration of the sad situation and the promotion of liberal democratic growth in the Nigerian polity.

The Integrity of the Voter register and the Registration Processes should never be compromised. Updating of the Register and the Registration of eligible voters, should be a conscientious and continuous process. As new voters mature every year and some registered voters inevitably change their residence, INEC must make adequate plans on a continuous basis, backed by appropriate logistics to accommodate all eligible voters with all necessary adjustments that may arise in the intervals or intervening period before the elections. All efforts should be consciously made to avoid the kind of Fire-

Brigade approach usually witnessed, when the election is near. Adequate time should be given for the collection of PVC by the electorate and the rules on collection should not only be uniform throughout the Federation but must be uniformly enforced to ensure that credibility is not in any way compromised. Registered voters must not be allowed to collect through proxies in some areas whereas in others there is insistence on physical and personal collection. Moreover, there is need for sustained enlightenment of the people on the tenets of democracy and the expected role of the people for the growth of democracy. This will be with a view to raising the voter turnout during elections. Conscious efforts should be made to disabuse their minds from some of the ills of the past elections which may have served as deterrents on their enthusiasm to exercise their franchise. Governments need to reassure the citizenry of their safety and freedom from harassment during elections. More importantly, INEC has a great responsibility to demonstrate that Votes will be properly counted and will count.

With respect to intimidation, excessive violence occasioning deaths and impeding of movement, we recommend that all stakeholders should make every effort to curb violence and deaths during elections in Nigeria. It is indeed very shameful that much smaller neighbours like Ghana, Senegal and even Tunisia would record minimal or no loss of lives but Nigeria witnessed a blood bath, (626 deaths in 2019 alone), with opposing Parties engaging in gun battles. As former President Goodluck Jonathan posited, “no politicians ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian citizen” (This hallowed liberal principle should be the mantra of all politicians, political parties and their cohorts. Political Parties owe it a duty to the Nation to reign in their supporters and not sponsor political brigandage.

For practical purposes, we further recommend the establishment of a Political and Electoral Offences Commission. At present, people commit heinous



political and electoral offences like snatching of Ballot Boxes and other electoral materials, rigging and disruption of elections and get away with it. No punishment is given to those who rig themselves into office, use public money to hire reputable Lawyers (tens of SANs), to defend them and when found guilty, they only vacate office to contest again. The Commission, like the present Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, should be able to pick such proven offenders, even after the court processes and to now prosecute and punish them for electoral and political offences. Such culprits should get outright ban from participation for a considerable period not less than ten (10) years depending on the gravity of offence committed. This should serve as effective deterrent on would be offenders and also profoundly promote the growth of democratic ethos.

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