

Electoral Corruption and Outcomes of Election in Nigeria, 1999-2015

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Abstract

Democracy is a form of government that promises popular participation, rule of law, impartiality and popular consent; hence, it has increasing recognition and acceptance globally. Essentially, democracy does not work aloof as it is a function of numerous features, one of which is election. Election is one of the finest tools for democratisation, which presents a viable platform for periodic, credible and competitive contest and leadership recruitment. However, the centrality of free, fair and incorruptible electioneering processes in determining election outcomes, consolidation or democracy and enjoyment of legitimacy by democratic governments are not been contested by scholars. Regrettably, most of the third world democracies and Nigeria in particular violates the key tenets of democracy such as rule of law and credible elections. In other words the recruitment processes, elections and the subsequent emergence of political leaders in Nigeria undermines democratic ideals. Concerned by the aforesaid anomalies on Nigeria's political terrain, this study was provoked to examine the nexus between political corruption and election outcomes in Nigeria and to ascertain the implications of electoral corruption on Nigeria's democracy and political system. The tout theory of politics anchored the study whereas secondary data and content analytical design were used for the study, respectively. The paper reveals that electoral corruption is a function of a political system, which is a negation of democratic ideals. It therefore recommends effective and efficient corruption fight, effective and efficient regulation of party funding/spending and drastic reduction on the cost of governance.

Keywords: *Democracy, election, electoral corruption, election outcomes, legitimacy.*

Introduction

Electoral corruption and election outcomes in any given setting, be it a state or an organization, presupposes the existence of democracy (of whichever form) therein. Contestably, most countries of the world claim to be practicing one form of democracy or the other but regrettably, the characterization of some of such self acclaimed democratic countries seems not to accurately define and capture an ideal democracy. Mostly affected by the evils of electoral corruptions are the third world countries of Africa, Latin America, South America, Asia etc. Attesting to these undemocratic practices, tendencies and electoral corruption that

have eaten deep into the fabric of African political terrain and democratisation processes, Professor Patrick Lumumba (2010) opines:

I held 250 town hall meetings. I articulated solutions to our problems in my constituency. My opponent did not campaign at all. He gathered money and showed up one day to elections. He distributed the money. He won. Africans are not moved by ideas, their stomach leads them. Emphatically, Nigeria falls under the category of countries that assume a stupendous cost, great pains and losses in her spirited and dogged effort at presenting an inundated and classical facade of democratic values, culture and orientations such as conducting a free, credible, fair and corruption free elections as well as presenting an election outcomes that shall reflect chiefly on the electoral decisions/choices of electorates. For instance, the collapse of the first and second republics (1960-1966 and 1979-1983) ; the abortion of the third republic as well as the recurring post-election litigations, electoral related brigands and outcry from 1999 till date are not far-fetched from the lacunas precipitated by the electoral corruptions and other anomalies before, during and after elections in Nigeria.

These concerns and lacunas caused by the electoral corruption in Nigeria as noted by Salahu (2015) and other scholars highlights the essence of this paper.

Be that as it may, the imperativeness of this paper is borne out of the desire of the researchers to provide possible panacea to the problem of electoral corruption in Nigeria vis-a-vis the meaning of electoral corruption; factors responsible for electoral corruption in Nigeria; implications of electoral corruptions on the election outcomes in Nigeria ; its challenging effects on Nigeria's nascent democracy and the way forwards with emphasis on Nigeria's fourth republic.

Conceptual Clarifications

Democracy, arguably, is fast becoming a global phenomenon in that it is only few regimes that share and adhere to ideologies, principles and practices of governance different from that of democracy. This stems from the fact that democracy preaches and centralises on popular participations, rule of law, impartiality, respect for fundamental human rights, equal participation, freedom of information, periodic and competitive elections in leadership recruitment and equitable representation, transparency and accountability, etc. While democracy enjoys avalanches of definitions, the one offered by Abraham Lincoln during his presidential speech at Gettysburg conference is mostly glorified, though, not universally accepted. He defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people (Lincoln, 1858). However democracy if well practiced, gives high sense of belonging to the people (both the electorate and citizens), accords them popular sovereignty as advocated by John Locke (1819- 1772) and above all, makes the people the actual determinant of power sharing, power consolidation as well as wealth creation and distribution through one of its most basic tool called election or election process.

Election and electoral process as well as the election outcomes in the contemporary societies are increasingly occupying a central place in the political discourse. Shively (2002), States that part of the reasons for conducting elections in modern societies is that democracy is a word that comes with respectability; and so, even states that are not democratic wish to appear democratic, they believe that holding elections is one of the easiest way to follow the system. Elections and electoral processes are so clearly tied to the growth and development of

representative democracy in modern societies (Nnoli, 2003). Extrapolating from the above depositions of Shively and Nnoli, electoral process and incorruptible election outcomes sets the base for the smooth running of democracy. Also noted is that electoral corruption and election outcomes are predicated on the existence of election and electoral process in a given democratic setting; without which it ceases to exist.

In other words, election and electoral process in a democratic setting is the precursor to electoral corruption and election outcomes.

Whereas election is the process of choice agreed upon by a group of people, which enables them to select one or few people out of many to occupy one or a number of authority positions according to Nnoli (2003), it is the fact of having been chosen by election according to Okolie (2007). Election is also been defined as a decision making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold formal office (Thompson, 2004). Election summarily, is the procedural processes upon which the people or the electorates choose a candidate out of many other candidates to speak for or represent them in given position, preferably, a political one.

On the other hand, electoral process connotes the deluge of activities or the totality of the activities that is done before, during and after election. These activities include but not limited to delimitation of electoral constituencies, registration of voters, electoral campaigns, voting, votes counting, votes compilation, release or announcement of election result as well as pre and post- election litigations. However, electoral corruption is a democratic cankerworm, particularly in the third world democracies. A Nigerian example suffices. It is not domiciled in Nigeria alone, it features in so many national democratic government, although, more pronounced in Africa. The subversion or manipulation of electoral process 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. It is a violation of the moral ethos to confer personal advantage on self or acquaintances" (Saliu & Aremu, 2004). It is equally the act of being willing to act dishonestly or illegally in return for money or in kind, and/or not following accepted standard of behaviour in the society (Egwu, Ndukwe, Egwu, Oketa, Ezeali, Ajagbo & Otuma, 2009). Electoral corruption can therefore be inferred as all actions or inaction 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 (Salahu, 2015). Corruption has the influencing power of diminishing state capacity to meet its material and welfare obligations to the citizenry; just as electoral corruption succinctly installs, sustains and consolidates bad governance through electoral fraud (Salahu, 2015).

More so, electoral corruption is just a collocation that represent in all intents and purposes; a democratic heresy by desperate politicians aimed at wielding power inordinately and siphoning public treasuries. Put differently, electoral corruption refers to the deliberate application of non-conventional means of political participation such as thuggery, violence, ballot box snatching, monetary inducements, falsification of results, and hijacking of public outfits like the media and the state apparatus by desperate politicians in order to gain power for self or perceived political sons and daughters.

In a similar vein, election outcome is the offshoot of an election or electioneering process and by extension a democratic regime. It is the end - product of every electioneering process. As an outcome, it can be acceptable or not acceptable; positive or negative. It is positive and acceptable when the election is freely and fairly done and its outcome reflecting the people's (electorates') will, choices and decisions while it is said to be negative and unacceptable when it did not represent the will, choices and decisions of the electorate and election not freely and fairly done. Moreover, the enjoyment of legitimacy by any government or administration depends mainly on the acceptability or non- acceptability of the election outcomes or results.

Theoretical Framework

While democratic states of the world continue in electoral actions that deepen their democracies and encourage voters' participation, African states and indeed Nigeria continue to retrogress. Many theories have been used to explain why either military has been involved in politics or violence has characterized Nigeria elections. But in view of using indigenous solution for peculiar indigenous problem and in view of the fact that no single classical political theory has sufficiently explained the abnormal behavior of Nigerian politicians for electoral gains, Tout theory of politics was considered germane for the study. Onuoha (2019) propounded the theory.

In his work Nigeria's Democratic Experiment and Leadership Question: Interrogating the Tout Theory of Politics, Prof. Jonah tried to look from indigenous prism the political behavior of Nigerian politician and why they behave the way they do. The theory queried among others: why our leaders continued with revere culture of impunity, ballot box snatching, looting of public treasury, engaging in vote buying and disregard for rule of law and other anti-democratic activities. The theory noted among others that there are three psychological traits of an average tout: they are fearless, shameless, and ruthless. They fight for good reasons, bad reasons and for no reasons at all. These traits equally tally with that of a typical Nigerian politician: He/she is fearless, shameless and ruthless. Thus, a typical Nigeria politician is a tout. It further avows that these traits can be acquired by nature or nurture.

The thrust of the theory is that there is circulation of touts in Nigerian politics classified under tout-tout, corporate tout, chief tout and supreme tout and they have been in charge of Nigeria political affairs since 1960 either as conservative or as revolutionary touts. In fact, political touts have little or no regard for education. The less education they have, the better. They are not creative and productive? The theory thus opines that Nigeria is currently practicing toutocracy rather than democracy. Toutocracy is a primitive variance of democracy. It is the government of the touts, by the touts and for the touts. This implies that if you are not a tout, or gentleman, you have no place in Nigerian politics. If you attempt, they will swallow you.

In view of the foregoing, the innate character of a typical Nigerian politician hinges on actions that could maximize their votes whether inimical to subsequent elections or not. They employ all their tout antics, including recruiting their cronies tout-tout and corporate touts who are found in motor parks, unemployed/underemployed graduates in suits or in military uniform. They achieve their aim through brigandry actions of touts; they unleash unimaginable mayhem, even to their people. This is because of Nigeria's political culture of "anything goes". Therefore,

the electoral outcome in Nigeria especially since its fourth republic tends to be shaped by the political bourgeois action which more often use state and non-state actors for electoral gains as the tout way of grabbing political powers so as to be and remain the determiner of who gets what, when and how.

Major Variables and Indicators of Electoral Corruption in Nigeria Reviewed

Godfatherism and money politics: The best way to make sense of godfathers is to see them as service providers, persons who resolve the voter compliance problem facing political parties in their quest to control political power in Nigeria. The godfather is a broker or a go-between, a professional manipulator of information who brings about communication (that is, between political parties and voters) for a profit. The godfather makes merchandise out of other people's expectations, anticipations and hopes (Boisseran, 1974).

Anchoring the godfather's brokerage function is what can be described as the godfather's intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public in the sense of his knowing what appeals and what incentives are most appropriate to each group. He has in his possession knowledge of the sort of incentives most likely to move people with such knowledge being contingent on the kinds of loyalty ties that are most salient to the potential voter and resulting only from an intimate knowledge of the terrain or intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public (Wang & Kurzman, 2007). It is his intuitive grasp of the structure of the voting public that enables the godfather to engage in election voter compliance activities such as:

- i. Compilation of fictitious names on voters registers, illegal compilation of separate voters list, abuse of the voter registration revision exercise, illegal printing of voters cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, collaboration between polling officials and agents to subvert the electoral rules, late or non-supply of election materials to opposition strongholds, delay in opening polling centers located in opposition strongholds (Pre-election voter compliance).
- ii. Stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers, falsification of election results, Illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, stuffing of ballot boxes, under-age voting, multiple voting, illegal printing of electoral result forms (as in the case of Form EC 8 and EC 8A used in collation and declaration of election results in 2003 and 2007 elections), deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas, announcing results in places where no elections were held, unauthorized announcement of election results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, box-switching and inflation of figures and long delays or manipulation of election tribunals to protect stolen verdicts, inducement of voters with food and money, threatening voters with the use of force (FRN, 1986; Kurfi, 2005; Ibrahim, 2006).

The pre and post election activities of the godfathers effectively ensure that voters keep their contract with political parties and that political party and politicians gain control of political power. But in the process of carrying out his broker activities, the godfather engages on behalf of political parties and politicians, in activities that constitute electoral corruption because they are illegal interference with the process of election.

The link between the godfather and electoral corruption is a dynamic one, one that is subject to the changes that occur in nature of relations between the godfather and his clients: the political parties and politicians. The godfather is a broker, a middle-man who offers to political parties and politicians seeking to control political power his ability to enforce voter compliance based on his intuitive grasp of voting structure in return for economic profit.

The godfather is therefore an active mediator between two social units who benefit from such mediation in the form of contracts and political appointments. Such rewards from political parties define the dependent status of the godfather as someone whose existence entails a nurturing of strategic contacts with actors who control what Boissevain (Bierschenk et al, 2002) has called first degree resources (land, money, work force)-the politicians or the patrons. He is therefore totally dependent on the goodwill of politicians and political parties (patrons) for his continued existence and relevance. His connection with the controllers or custodians of key electoral materials and resources is of fundamental importance to his existence as a broker; he requires it to nourish and extend his knowledge and control of the structure of the voting public. As such, knowledge and control of the structure of the voting public is the basis of his ability to act as a broker, the resources he gains as reward for his actions on behalf of political parties and politicians is of crucial importance to him.

The position of the godfather is therefore a very unstable one. For example, in his bid to hijack control of political parties he engages in acts, which are flagrant violation of electoral laws in Nigeria. Such acts include making a declaration that those entitled to vote must support one candidate and other aspirants must withdraw. Since these people are very powerful and feared in their communities, their declarations carry much weight; engaging in zoning and other procedures that exclude unwanted candidates by moving the party zone out of the seat or position in question to an area where the excluded candidate is not local; deploying violence by thugs or protégées personnel against candidates who oppose the godfathers protégés and Money, a significant factor in party primaries, is used to bribe officials and induce voters to support particular candidates. Since the godfather generally has more money than the independent candidate does, many of the latter are eliminated because they cannot match his spending.

Acknowledged in Nigeria's fourth republic is the devastating effects of godfather/patron-client politics as seen in Kwara state between Olusola Saraki and his protégé Admiral Mohammed Lawal (1999-2003), Anambra state between Chinwoke Mbadinuju/Emeka Offor (1999-2003) as well as Chris Ngige and their political godfathers (2003), and more recently in Edo state between Adams Oshiomole and his political son Godwin Obaseke (2019-2020) just as it raged in Abia state between Orji Uzor Kalu and his political son, T.A. Orji (2007-2010). Worrisome is that the tensions and friction that exist between these political godfathers and their godsons rarely give peace a chance nor enabling atmosphere ever in full supply for democratic dividend to be enjoyed by the electorates.

Political Parties, Politicians and Electoral Corruption in Nigeria

The Clifford's Constitution of 1922 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 describes political party as an association of persons whose activities include canvassing for votes in support of a candidate for election to the office. 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 coerce others to join. The party's philosophy, ideology and activities thus center and are influenced by the mission of its founders and influential members. Winning elections often become a life and death struggle, which tend to justify all means, fair and foul.

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 Fourth 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. 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. 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.

This unrestrained funding means increases in the political corruption in the electoral system as only the rich and the political entrepreneurs can contest elections. 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, ideologically 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 (2008) to conclude that only a hundred or so are genuine politicians in Nigeria. This is because many of them were into politics for selfish reasons driven by greed for money, lust for power, affluence and to remain ever relevant in the corridors of power.

Thus, politics and electioneering process is seen as a means according to Toyo (2007) 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 employ divisive means and other primordial tendencies like religion, regionalism and ethnicity in the electioneering process as well as tout tactics to win elections. To this end, most Nigerian politicians firstly appeal to their immediate cocoon for support. Where this proved difficult, money and other vices including intimidation becomes readymade weapon in the electoral system. This often accounts for stiff competition, thuggery and electoral fraud in Nigeria and indeed in many of developing countries. Hence, the observation by Kurfi (2005) 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 and tribe.

Among the politicians, business partners and party faithful, there 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. 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. 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 and very recently APC and PDP among others use their positions in the state they control to dominate local government polls

INEC, Electoral Process and Electoral Corruption in Nigeria

Successful conduct of elections in liberal democracy depends on the efficacy of electoral governance. Electoral governance refers to a set of activities that creates and maintains the broad institutional framework in which voting and electoral competition take place. In Nigeria since the inauguration of maiden commission in 1935 under Mr. Wraith's 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 electoral body is responsible 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. 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, the president and his agents who appoint them easily manipulate members. Where such commissioners show uncompromising attitude, they get removed, irrespective of the statutory provision of five years tenure. 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 who were card-carrying members of the ruling party.

In a similar note, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) became partisan when it involved itself in disqualification of opposition candidates to create room for elective victory of PDP (Odey, 2007). 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 party members. The sanctity and security of ballot papers became suspicious as people were reported having access to the ballot papers and boxes prior to election period. Such individuals as Chief Adedibu of Oyo politics was an example. The recently concluded 2018 gubernatorial elections in Ekiti State had records of multiple voting, intimidation and thuggery against voters supporting the opposition and snatching of ballot boxes (Sun News Online, 2018).

Analysis of Electoral Corruption and Outcome in Nigeria

Corruption plays important roles in the winning and losing of elections in Nigeria. The impact of corruption on electoral outcome cannot be neglected. The manifestation of corruption in election is seen in form of under-aged voters, financial inducement of voters, pre-election rigging (ie, when all parties are not given a level-playing ground, it means there is partiality), use of security agents to scare away oppositions and writing of wrong result by the government in power after voting (Odey, 2007). Morality in the politics of today is dead and any political leader whose principles of leadership are bereft of morality ends up a dictator (Uzorma, 2018; Odey, 2003).

Political corruption in Nigeria today is pervasive than ever before. Today, many in political positions are very ostentatious and extravagant. Many live above their normal income and are sometimes seen pasting currency notes on the forehead of traditional dancers who entertain and welcome them to their different constituencies. A situation where a contractor will bribe his way through before getting a contract is a bugaboo. Today, despite the well-meaning effort by EFCC, ICPC and other security agencies, political corruption is on the high side (Uzorma, 2018).

The impact of electoral corruption was made visible in the July 14, 2018 Ekiti State and 2020 Kogi state governorship elections. In these elections, the APC government in power at the federal level used state apparatus (state Money and security agencies) to intermediate

opposition political parties and their supporters. There was wide report of security agencies intimidating opposition political parties. Also there was reports of using monetary inducement of N5,000 to convince voters to vote for APC in the polling unit. Iroegbu (2018) noted that:

Four years ago, when he ran against the incumbent governor, Ayo Fayose, and lost, the present Governor-elect, Kayode Fayemi, accused the former of having bought the electorate cheaply with a few grains of rice. His accusation gave rise to the catch phrase, Stomach Infrastructure. Today, with the result announced, and based on what obtained before and during the election, it is quite evident that the governor-elect learned not a few lessons, which motivated his perfection of the system and getting the electorate, carried along by the rules of the game. As it is, Fayemi has clearly demonstrated that he has learned the ropes and has been able to conquer with an arsenal more lethal and effective than Fayoses few cups of rice.

Iroegbu (2018) further stated that; in all this, it might be easy to miss out the point with respect to who the true winners and losers are. The people are the winner if we must factor in the quite significant reality that they are now wiser than they used to be in matters pertaining to the fight against corruption. Not every Ekiti electorate needs be told what fighting corruption meant because they are firsthand witnesses to the process, which would usher in the man who would have the programme domiciled in their state. It is a win-win situation for the people and the elected.

The elected won his mandate but the people are never the losers, after all, every voter got richer by N5,000 or N20,000. Now that it is possible to transfer or switch voting points, with adequate permutations, a shrewd electorate should hazard a guess as to how best to make more money through their choice of voting points. Conversely, the nation is the loser. Nigeria is the loser because her leadership has once again failed her. The nation has been failed because her leadership has chosen rather to perpetuate the practice of perfidy in relation to elections. This failure would, no doubt, affect all other facets of the socio-economic life of the people.

Above all, the actual result of the election was said to be influenced in favour of APC. Thus, there exists corrupt practice in all stages of election in Nigeria and these corrupt practices affect the results of elections.

Challenges of Electoral Corruption and Outcomes of Election to Nigeria's Democracy

From the discourse, it suggests that Nigeria's electoral system over time, especially since 1999, 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 people's wish from the votes are not guaranteed, voters turn out from 2003 continue to decline as reported due to lose 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 political parties to grow in their structure and administration, which invariably affects sustainable democracy. This often leads to collapse of the civil administration with colossal lost.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Political corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into Africa and Nigeria's politics and government with its attendant encumbering and bedevilling influence on the election outcomes, which is a negation of democratic principles and practices. Political corruption allows for non-conventional participation in Nigerian politics such as vote buying, money politics, thuggery, and imposition of candidates for elective positions, intimidation, maiming and killings (Nkwede, 2014; Onuoha, 2019). These non-conventional practices lead to subversion of the electoral process by individuals who are greedy and neck-deep for personal enrichment that electoral success underwrites in Nigeria.

Given the unabated existence of godfatherism, the zero-sum context of Nigerian politics (winner takes all syndrome), the spontaneous riches and glory that political positions offers as well as the access it grants to politicians/leaders to siphon public treasuries (Okorie, 2007), political corruption can only become more entrenched and consolidated in Nigeria. These largely account for the socio-political, economic and ethno religious unrest challenging the nations sovereignty. No right is more precious in a free country than that of having the freedom to make uninfluenced decision to choose who represents you in leadership position as guaranteed by democracy. Other rights, even the most basic are illusory if the right to vote is undermined (U.S Supreme Court, 1964).

Hillary Belloc also teaches us that democratic heresy is the dislocation of some complete and self-supporting scheme by the introduction of a novel denial of some essential parts therein. These and more are sharp pointers to the dangers of electoral corruption and outcomes, which misrepresent the people's mandate and wishes. Recognizing the challenges of electoral corruption in Nigeria, the paper recommends the following:

1. Establishment of special court to try issues relating to electoral corruption with the needed urgency just as the election tribunals. This perhaps will not be the end itself but a means to ending incessant corruption cases and overspending in Nigeria political landscape.
2. Urgent review of Nigeria's penal and criminal laws to ensure that offences whether politically related or otherwise are booked and culprits legally punished irrespective of their status.
3. The paper advocates drastic reduction in the cost of governance. This is owing to the fact that there is a clear nexus between the huge amount and skyrocketing wealth of politicians and the insatiable urge to sit tight in power and share in the national cake by incumbents and potential politicians respectively.
4. Placing high premium on the enforcement of political party financing and campaign expenditure regulations by the INEC to ensure that the politicians stick to the regulations.
5. Public reward and honour of prudent, transparent and accountable societal leaders/politicians devoid of any corruption case(s) under his/her watch as a means of reorienting incumbents and potential leaders psychologically.

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