Kenya's 2022 General Elections and Nigerian's 2023 General Elections: Any Lessons for Democratic Consolidation in Africa?

Godwin Ojanyi Agbiloko
agbigoddie@gmail.com
&
Gerald Ifeanyi Okafor, Ph.D
jerryanyi@yahoo.co.uk
Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
Abuja-Nigeria

Abstract

Universally, election is the pillar of representative democracy. The health of any democracy, no matter its type or status, depends on a small technical detail: the conduct of elections. Everything else is secondary. A credible election not only confers legitimacy on political leadership, but it is also crucial to the sustenance of democratic order. Paradoxically, the electoral process in Africa has been characterized by violence. In the 21st century, manifestations of electoral violence have assumed an unprecedented magnitude and changing form and character, with negative implications for democratic stability. The level and magnitude of electoral and political violence has risen and the political elites have often converted their foot-soldiers who undermine the electoral process by perpetrating these violent acts. This paper showcases that Kenyans have carved out a roadmap for themselves and democratic reformers across the continent. It further underscores the defining characteristics of the Nigeria's 2023 general elections with confidence in elections as means of making political choices through constitutional reforms and independent judiciary *signposting the salient similarities between the Kenya's and Nigeria's general elections. Therefore, the paper seeks to point some dynamics of Kenya's 2022 as well as highlighting some features in the 2023 elections in Nigeria, which could help in defining democratic governance and democratic consolidation in Africa?*

Keywords: Democratization, Elections, Electoral Violence, Social Conflict, governance.

Introduction

Elections are central to competitive politics of the modern era especially under the "third wave" of democracy (Huntington, 1991; Jega, 2015, 2013; Momah, 2016; Agbiloko & Chiotu, 2021). And during transitional period "elections will be not just a foundation stone but a key generator overtime of further democratic reforms" (Carothers, 2002:8). Some observers have argued that regular elections and the associated political rights and civil liberties being experienced in new democracies like Africa are an indication of democratic progress and optimism (Agbu, 2016; Lindberg, 2099, 2006a,2006b; Lynch and Crawford, 2011). In Africa 'electoral competition is becoming more common' (Weghorst and Lindberg, 2011; 2008). Regular conduct of elections is not only "central to democratization", but also "contributes to the maturization of nascent democratic cultures" (Bratton, 2004:155).For as Lindberg avers, "an uninterrupted series of competitive elections imbues society with certain democratic qualities- namely: participation, competition and legitimacy" (Lindberg, 2006b:139) cited in Mgba (2017:85).

However, free, fair and credible elections have been observed to be far-fetched in developing countries which continues to threaten the very survival of the continent and questions the relevance of democracy (Agbu, 2016:4). Indeed, "the problems associated with elections have direct impact on the performance of democratic institutions" (Wapmuk, 2016:99) cited in Agbiloko & Chiotu (2021). Jega (former Chairman of Nigeria's Election Management Body-INEC) asserts:

> "As series of badly conducted elections could create perpetual political instability and easily reverse the gains of democracatization,,, it can be argued that the consequences of badly conducted elections and poorly managed electoral processes are major contributing factors to military interregnum in Nigeria/Africa's political history" (Jega, 2015:2).

Further highlighting the seriousness and increasing incidences of electoral violence in Africa, Salehyan and Linebarger (2013), observed that from 1990 to 2011, most of the 685 conflict events identified by the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD) across the continent were election-related conflicts. Salehyan and Linebarger (2013) succinctly note that:

> Democracy is more likely to survive when there is a well-developed economy, a robust civic culture, and strong institutions such as an apt judiciary and limits on executive power that are able to channel social conflict by ensuring that political decision makers are held accountable. These additional elements help preserve the integrity of elections and provide assurances to the public that the democratic process will be allowed to take its course.

It is on the light of the above that Saliu (2010) asserts that "anytime an election is to hold in any part of the continent, the world watches with an increasing palpitation because of the needless controversy and disputations that usually follow". It is becoming a tradition that most politicians in African States hardly concede defeat to their opponents when election results are announced. In the contrary, democracy is anchored on the observation of certain principles such as rule of law, equal rights of participation, respect for the rights of the opposition and expression of opposing views, the conduct of a periodic,

free, fair and credible election, transparency, accountability, strong and neutral election management body, etc. This is premised on the fact that it allows for inclusivity, representative and as well affords the people the opportunity to choose people to pilot their affairs, which should therefore empower them to demand for accountability. With this, it has been observed that the best way through which people can enjoy the dividends of democracy is through institutionalization of principles of good governance. These presumed dividends are the basis for the global advocacy for liberal democracy, and the above argument resonates with the observations raised by Ake that the issues of democratization and human rights increasingly became the basis of the world's interest in Africa in order to overcome a legacy of indifference to democracy (Ake, 1991).

This is common mainly in developing countries where "poorly conducted elections have become a major cause of the turmoil that has engulfed many countries in recent times" (Jega, 2013:3). Election violence is induced by a number of factors including: irregularities during the electioneering processes, imposition of candidates by political parties, the complicity of security agencies and the election umpire/or management body (Adejumbi, 2007; Ajayi, 2006; Campbell, 2010). It is therefore no wonder that the democratic process in Africa and the third world countries continued to derail and collapse at the altar of bungled elections and electoral process. This is because of the centrality of elections to the whole essence of democratic process and inability of these countries and their electoral bodies to conduct free, fair and credible elections

From the foregoing therefore, this paper interrogates the electoral experiences of Kenya (2022) and Nigeria (2023) with a viewing to identifying the commonalities and highlighting the pathways for democratic consolidation in Africa.

Theoretical discourses

Election constitutes an immutable feature of liberal democracy as it is the constitutional means through which political power is attained, regimes changed and citizens express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction through the instrumentality of the ballot. Alapiki (2004:130) observed that "election is the barometer to measure the political maturity, health, legitimacy and stability of a democratic government. It is generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of democratic government". According to Paki &Inokoba (2006), election as a political phenomenon, signifies institutionalized procedures for choosing political office holders by the electorates of a country. In other words, it is a means through which the electorates choose their representatives into different organs of the government. Conceiving it from the stand point of social contract, Adejumobi (2000:6) notes that:

> *Election symbolizes popular sovereignty and the expression of social pact between the*
> *state and the people, defining the basis of political authority, legitimacy and citizen*
> *obligation. It is the kernel of political accountability and a means of ensuring*
> *reciprocity and exchange between governors and the governed.*

There is at the moment, an increasing clamor for credible election on the continent. This is due to the assumption that its

end-product enhances good governance - that is, the exercise of political power to promote the public good or welfare of the people (Babawale, 2003). The foregoing underscores the fact that election plays a fundamental role in lubricating the social contract between the people and the government. It is expected to compel accountability thereby ensuring social service provision as encapsulated in party manifestoes and campaign promises. In view of this, it serves as a catalyst for the periodic test of the political party's acceptance and popularity.

Furthermore, Okolie (2005:436) observes that election confers legitimacy on public office holders and subject public office holders and political parties to periodic assessment. By doing so, it enhances accountability and good governance. It is in this regard that election is seen as an important starting point for the existence of democracy. It empowers the people to freely choose those in government who are supposedly responsible to them (Joseph, 1987:18). Understanding that it will be difficult to determine and gauge the will of the people in the absence of periodic free and fair electoral contest; Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) highlights some of the basic doctrines of democracy with emphasis that the will of the people should be the basis of government authority, and everyone has the right to take part in the government directly or through freely chosen representatives. This is expressed in periodic and genuine elections with universal suffrage and secret ballot.

To this end, an election is said to be credible when the process and outcome of the contest reflect the choice made by the people at the poll. This way, the process is seen to be free for voters, and fair on the part of contesting candidates and political parties. This suggests that any action and/or inaction by either the state, its agents, individuals, groups, political parties, and especially the Election management body (EMB) that undermines the people's ability to determine which of the competing interests and parties that govern them constitutes a threat to the credibility of the election. When elections are credible, it confers legitimacy on the government, whose primary responsibility is to formulate and implement public policies for societal development.

Therefore, credible election according to Oyeneye (1998) is election conducted without incidence of rigging or electoral fraud, and in which eligible voters are free to vote for the candidates and political parties of their choice without coercion or intimidation. Basically, credible election is characterized by the following:

i. Inclusiveness: Elections that provides equal opportunities for all eligible citizens to participate as voters in selecting their representatives and as candidates for election into government;

ii. Transparency: Elections are said to be credible when each step is open to scrutiny, and stakeholders can independently verify whether the process is conducted honestly and accurately;

iii. Accountability: This implies the rights of citizens with respect to the conduct of other electoral stakeholders including the government, EMB, political parties, candidates and security forces to be held accountable for the outcome of election; and

iv. Competitiveness: This allows for citizens to have reasonable and equitable opportunities to compete to be elected into government offices and ensures that political competition truly reflect the will of the people.

The contribution of election towards good governance is such that it is impossible to recreate the classical democratic order of involving everybody in the governance of human society. It is therefore; through the instrumentality of election that the right and power to govern is vested in and derived from the people. This suggests that election is an avenue for concrete expression of citizen's right to choose, participate and engender political accountability. For this reason, when and wherever election is rigged, choices of the citizens are invariably annulled and the government that emerges cannot represent, protect, and affect the interest and aspirations of the people (Onah, 2010). To this end, the United Nations observed that periodic and genuine elections shall be made universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures (Wanyonyi, 1997: 22). This implies that it is not every election that represents or reflects the will of the people. Hence, it presupposes that elections should be conducted to meet certain criteria. This is to ensure that the elected government will be responsible and responsive to the people as well as allows the governed.

This is because, what most commentators, analysts and voters often take for granted is the facts that election has consequences, suggesting that the choices that people make during electoral processes largely determine the quality of leadership and character of governance they are likely to experience. Hence, in climes where people elect their representatives on the basis of merit, individual prowess, integrity, party manifesto, and issue-based campaign that reflect the social, economic, political, cultural and environmental realities, the society has a high chance of experiencing good governance, which will in turn protect the people from fear and want. Conversely, where leaders are elected on the basis of mediocrity, parochial sentiments, ethnic-identity politics, and religious consideration as well as commoditized vote, it becomes difficult for the society to develop.

Democratization

The salient issues on democracy concentrate on how it was brought about following the struggle against military rulers in some African states by human rights groups and civil society organizations. According to Jega (2006) democratization is a concept which is distinct from democracy and it connotes the process of bringing about democracy institutionally and attitudinally. It is the ways and means of developing democracy, and entrenching democratic institutions, values and practices over time. Moreover, it is the process by which governance is constitutionally driven in order to attain democratic consolidation. Equally, democratization refers to movement towards democracy in a different, more qualitative political regime and through the expansion of political contestation (competition). In Africa, the clamor for democracy heightened because concerted efforts of stakeholders especially the civil society to overthrow military and despotic regimes. The efforts cumulatively resulted to what is referred to as Third

wave of democratization characterized by dramatic expansion of multiparty competition in African political systems (Schraeder, 2004). Therefore, democratization involves series of transition from autocratic or one-party regime to multi-party system. Therefore, the democratization involves continuous practice and application of the philosophy underlying democracy in all its ramifications. For democratization to succeed, all stakeholders must contribute and participate in engendering the democratic process.

Nigeria's Election Experiences

Nigeria's efforts at democratization have not been an impressive one since independence. It is therefore of little surprise that past efforts at democratization have collapsed at the altar of perverted elections and electoral process. So bad was the situation that election periods have come to be associated with violence and politically motivated crises. Sadly, politics has been converted into money-making venture, and has reinforced the notion that election is a contest that is meant to be won at any possible cost (Okoye, 2021, Gboyega, 1977). This has turned electoral conduct in Nigeria/Africa to a war-like situation. From the outset, the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) of the First Republic to the 4th Republic's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria have not demonstrated the competence required in the discharge of their functions that would guarantee public trust on the electoral process. The reason is that the elections are characterized by wide spread rigging, inefficient electoral management body, intimidation and chaos. Partly, these have made some of the major political parties to boycott the election, thereby creating legitimacy problem. For example, the election of the Western Region in 1964 was marred by irregularities. This wide spread violence gave impetus for the military coup in Nigeria and the culture of instability that beset the country for over three decades. Other elections that took place in Nigeria after the 1964 and 1965 elections have not fare better. The 1979 elections that saw the emergence of Mallam Shehu Shagari as a civilian President was monitored by international observers and were said to be massively rigged. The 1983 election was further marred by corruption, political violence and polling irregularities, providing the basis for the military intervention in 1983.

The inability to effectively manage the administration of electoral process has consistently frustrated the nation's efforts at democratic consolidation. This inefficiency was obvious to the extent that President Musa Yar'Adua, during his swearing in ceremony, acknowledged the flawed nature of the election that brought him into the office in 2007. This acknowledgment was a positive trend in the democratic process in Nigeria, and steps were taken to begin the process of sanitizing the electoral environment.

Yet, Egwu, (2007) noted that political power in Nigeria does not only represent access to wealth but also is a means to security and a guarantee of general well-being. This situation has made every politician to be desperate to win elections at all cost. The ruling party deploys the state infrastructure to its advantage during elections. Unfortunately, this posturing of the ruling party provides the context to understand the role of the state in the fragile and flawed democratic processes in Africa,

and explains the undemocratic practices of the Nigeria's political class to cling to state power. As such, it enthrones a system that enables the profitability of state power for personal rather than public good. This entails that commitment to delivering public service and entrenching good governance becomes ancillary (Leeds, 1981:353).

It is in the light of these abnormalities that Ugwuja (2015) considers that consolidating democracy through the conduct of credible elections has remained an albatross in Nigeria. He argues that the problems confronting conduct of election include irrational behaviours (actions) of the political elites, politics of division, lack of political ideology, corruption and poverty, injustice, exploitation of diversities, among others. These factors have continued to define the character of the Nigerian political class, especially as it relates to infidelity to party politics and their penchant to decamp to the party in power. Democracy thrives in pluralism, strong political ideology and multiparty system. Another serious manifestation in the electoral process in Nigeria is the heavy investment from the private sector in terms of funding prospective winning parties in anticipation of government patronage. Such practices open up opportunities for corrupt practices, economic crimes and money laundering. This huge monetary investment in party politics engenders unconducive political environment and unduly influences electorates. Unregulated election/party financing is considered as a conduit for corrupt government officials to channel looted public resources to the party using proxies (Ugwuja, 2015). The electoral experiences of 2011 and 2015 were not entirely a departure from the identified characteristics of the party politics and electioneering in Nigeria. The only notable departure was the ability of the opposition to oust the ruling party in 2015. This was possible due to many factors such as merger of mega opposition parties to form a new political party- All Progressive Congress (APC), the decampment of politicians from the ruling party-Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the APC, deployment of propaganda, insecurity arising from Boko Haram, external factors occasioned by the disposition of the West to the government in power, among others.

Another contentious issue that generates tension in the democratization process in Nigeria is the issue of zoning of key offices of the political party including the elective positions. It has become a convention in the Nigerian party politics that positions are shared according the regions. For instance, the position of the President of the country is zoned between the North and Southern zones of the country. The essence is to foster inclusion and ensure a sense of inclusion in the governance of the State. Any attempt to jettison this principle is usually seen as a sign of betrayal and could lead to electoral losses. For instance, the 2011 post-election violence was partly a result to the truncation of the zoning arrangement of the office of the President due to the death of President Yar'adua (Northerner) and the emergence of President Goodluck (Southern) as the President. Prior to the election, the North was vehement in its request that the zoning arrangement should be respected, implying that a northerner should be considered to assumedly continue the second tenure of late President Yar'adua. The tension was high, and inflammatory statements and hate speech escalated. Although the 2011 was adjudged

free, fair and credible, the result of the presidential election generated electoral violence with grave consequences.

Looking at the relationship among the political parties during the elections, Ezeibe (2015) argues that politicians elevated hate speech to the status of campaign strategy. There is an obvious exploitation of religious orientations of flag bearers for campaign purposes, and this heightens religious intolerance in the country. Unmindful of the secularity of the Nigerian State, religion plays pivotal role as ethnicity in moderating political behaviours of politicians and political parties during election. According Salawu (cited in Chukwunka, 2019:24), the Nigeria's political climate is gravitating towards ethnic politics. The ethnic criteria include a combination of shared culture, language, religious beliefs, place of residence, race, and collective experiences, past or present (Gurr& Harf cited in Chukwunka, 2019:21-22). It therefore becomes gallery that inter-ethnic rivalries for political power equally define the political climate and democratization experiences in Nigeria. The combination of these factors has led to the incidences of electoral violence evidenced through political assassinations, attacks on party offices and billboards, disruption of political campaigns, destruction of EMB infrastructures, attacks on security institutions and personnel, etc.

It is pertinent to note that successive governments in Nigeria have made efforts to address the inadequacies in the electoral processes especially through legal and institutional framework. Aside the efforts at implementing the Justice Uwais Report on Electoral Reforms and various judicial pronouncements, the 9th National Assembly added value to the political climate with the enactment of the Electoral Act (2022). The salient features of the Act include the introduction of technology which allowed INEC to use the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) to the electoral process. The basic highpoints of BVAS are as follows: It is a device used to register voters; It accredits voters before voting on the election day; it is used in transmitting election results to the INEC viewing portal after voting; it helps to scan the barcode or QR code on the PVC or voter's register before voting; and BVAS does not require internet connectivity during voting, but the internet is required when transmitting election results to the INEC portal. The centrality of BVAS in cleaning the voter register, which had generated controversies in previous elections, cannot be over emphasized. In a similar vein, the IREV is expected to serve the purpose of injecting transparency in the election results collation process by allowing for instant transmission of the election results from the polling units to the central portal where electorates and stakeholders could have direct access. The introduction of this mechanism is envisioned to eliminate the electoral malpractices that occur from the Polling Units to the Collation Centres.

Aside these innovations, the government of President Muhammed Buhari assured the Nigerians and the international community of its readiness to leave a legacy of transparent electoral processes, and further directed public institutions to be fair and professional in discharging their election-related duties. There were several efforts to stabilize the polity by addressing the security concerns in various parts of the country where armed banditry, terrorist and insurgent activities,

separatist agitations, violent conflicts and criminalities were rampant. The issue of election security management was given its due attention, and the assurances from the various security, law enforcement and intelligence agencies further boosted the public confidence on the electoral process in 2022.

Furthermore, political mobilization was intense with the reawakening of the youths, and the emergence of third force in the political space. Unlike the traditional two political party race especially at the Presidential and National Assembly elections, which had always limited the choices of the electorates, Nigerians witnessed the sudden entry of other political parties such as the Labor Party (LP), and the New Nigeria Democratic Party (NNDP) with strong followership. Furthermore, social media played a formidable role in shaping political discussion and popularizing candidates. This was an innovation that redefined the political culture in Nigeria and afforded the youth, which are important demography of the voters, the opportunity to be active in the political space. The huge investments on the 2022 general elections in Nigeria yielded outcomes that could be argued to have improved the process of democratic consolidation. Although, there are mixed reactions especially with the Presidential election arising from issues such as voter intimidation, late arrival of voting materials, failure of INEC to upload election results from the polling units to IREV, among others, nonetheless, there are milestones that have achieved. While religion and ethnicity have been weaponized during the precious elections in Nigeria, there were evidences of active support of candidates and political parties by Nigerians of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. As such, many Christians and Muslims from different ethnic groups publicly support their preferred candidates irrespective of the differences in religion and ethnicity. This development is central to engendering peaceful co-existence and fostering an effective diversity management.

The Kenya's Elections History

After independence, a number of problems confronted Kenya's politics and its elections. Though the Independence Constitution was strongly federalist, a series of political schemes and constitutional amendments resulted in the abolition of the federal system (which came to be known as majimbo) by the time Kenya became a republic in 1964 (Orobator, 2008).First, negative ethnicity (which began in the pre-independence competition for supremacy among African elites) progressively developed and ultimately became a major factor in national politics. Ethnic tensions particularly affected the structure of access to economic opportunities and redistribution of some of the land formerly owned by white settlers (Holland, 2008). Gradually, instead of elections being merely a contest for political power, they became an arena for either settling ethnic scores or a device through which political protection for ethnic groups could be assured or gained (Wolf, 2006). At the resumption of multiparty politics in the early 1990s, state-sponsored ethnic clashes were part of the official response to political competition. This cycle was repeated in the 1997 general election and, ultimately, the 2007 elections and the post-election violence in early 2008 in which nearly 1,300 people lost their lives.

As the country tries to come to terms with the structural causes for its violent elections, it will be important to interrogate the

extent to which electoral reforms also provide a structural solution to the realities of a deeply divided society (Weber, 2009).The country's electoral system, which has all along been first-past-the-post, also gradually entrenched winner-take-all politics in which winning was a zero-sum game. Coupled with the fact that the presidency eventually became the highest position of political patronage, this further worsened interethnic rivalry over land. Remarkably, as various analyses and successful election petitions show, Kenya's elections have also been historically polluted by electoral frauds and have been problematic in terms of both substantive electoral justice and public trust in the electoral process. It is these political problems that, over the years, reforms constitutionally, legally and administratively have sought to either remedy or balance (Anderson, 2005).

The climax of long history of electoral violence in Kenya manifested in the International Criminal Court indictment of two of the main presidential candidates Uhuru and Ruto – for crimes against humanity. In the wake of the 2007 post-election violence – in which over 1,000 people lost their lives and almost 700,000 were displaced – peace negotiators, international donors, political leaders, civil society groups, academics and ordinary citizens turned their attention to the question of how such events could be prevented from ever happening again.

Dynamics of Kenya 2022 General Elections

The Kenya's 2022 general election has not followed the trajectory of voters exercising their civic duty only to helplessly sit back and watch their votes manipulated. Rather, Kenyans have attempted to correct this through comprehensive constitutional reforms, an active and vigilant citizenry, and an increasingly independent judiciary. In the process, Kenyans have carved out a roadmap for themselves, and democratic reformers across the continent could learn to enhance the integrity and legitimacy of the electoral processes in Africa.

It is essential to dissect the reasons for the improved electoral process in the Kenya's 2022 elections. One reason for the relative peace was that the main presidential candidates adhered to issue-based campaigns unlike the past experiences that had ethnic-based politicking. The socio-economic challenges bedeviling the country such as unemployment and the rising cost of living were in the front burner of political debates, and the candidates provided diverse ideas on how to tackle those problems.

Secondly, the tenacity of the civil society and professional groups to engage the political class and disposition to ensuring that politicians are held accountable for any political malfeasance was instructive and instrumental to the improved political culture in Kenya. Particularly, the Law Society of Kenya was key to the ground-breaking constitutional petitions dating back to the 2017 elections. This, in turn, benefited greatly from a judicial branch that has demonstrated an increasing willingness to assert its independence and make judicial pronouncements devoid of pecuniary interest but for public good.

Thirdly, it has almost become a tradition in Africa that the ruling parties tend to tacitly make the EMBs to become an extension of the Executive branch of the government in order

to ensure constant victory at the polls. However, there was an obvious departure of this trend in Kenya during the 2022 elections as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) operated in ways that restored public trust and confidence. This enabled the conduct of free, fair and credible election, and ensured adherence to the provisions of the constitution and the electoral laws.

Fourthly, the mature disposition of Kenyans during the elections was commendable and central to the improved democratic culture that was recorded during the 2022 general election. For instance, despite the tension witnessed in August 15, 2022 when politicians and party agents clashed at the Tallying Centre, there were no reported instances of communal violence. Most people went about their ordinary business, ignoring the pitched elite quarrels which are a clear departure from the past when people tend to view electoral contests via primordial lens.

Fifthly, social media played a critical role in political mobilization and further helped in agenda setting for political discussions. This enabled the political parties to remain focused on issues that would help in social re-engineering and national development.

Sixthly, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya introduced devolution which intended to bring government closer to the people by devolving political and economic resources to Kenya's 47 county governments in order to effectively address the local needs of Kenyans. Thus, this constitutional provision helped to reduce the tensions associated with political competition by giving marginalized groups a stake in the political system. It is viewed that devolution generates a robust system of government that is not simply an extension of central control and therefore represents a credible opportunity for a broader range of leaders and communities to play a role in the political system. This resulted in a relatively genuine political competition and opposition parties were able to win significant representations.

Seventhly, it is noteworthy that the Kenya's EMB introduced innovation in the electoral proceduresto ensures transparency and credibility. For the first time in Kenya—and possibly Africa—IEBC was releasing election results from the polling stations to the central portal that was accessible to the public. This allowed Kenyan media to run their own tallies and release provisional election results 72 hours before the IEBC finally announced the outcome of the election. Therefore, the steady streaming of election results allowed the political parties, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens to concurrently track the unfolding results of the election. One important revelation from this innovation is that, contrary to widely held expectations of politics and ethnicity, Kenya's largest and most economically influential community, the Kikuyu, voted overwhelmingly for William Ruto, a Kalenjin. This contributed to his victory against his main rival, Uhuru Kenyatta, who was his former close ally of over 20 years. According to Kenyan political scientist, Macharia Munene, "people are turning away from that (ethnicity), saying they are no longer going to be taken for granted".

To their credit and despite the tight race, both leading candidates showed restraint in inciting their supporters to

violence during the electoral process. Raila Odinga, in particular, demonstrated leadership and a commitment to the democratic process when, in the days after the election results were announced by the IEBC and his supporters were ready to take laws into their own hands, he said he would take his case to the courts. Rather than opting for violence to enhance his leverage or cause distraction, he told his supporters to go home while he worked through the judicial system. He invoked the same principle by accepting the court's unanimous verdict, even though he disagreed with it.

It is pertinent to note that this courageous leadership must not be taken for granted. Kenyans of all political persuasions should honor this act of public service where the interests of the nation are put ahead of those of the individual. It is a standard to be upheld in future elections. Similar acts of political magnanimity were observed down the ticket. Concession speeches by those who lost gubernatorial or local races, similarly, came in early and often. This created what Kenyan political commentator Patrick Gathara called "an un-Kenyan election," a sharp contrast with previous elections that were filled with glaring malpractices and violence.

Interestingly, this is the first time in Kenya's electoral history that a presidential candidate wins the presidency at the first attempt. William Ruto, is Kenya's fifth president. He campaigned on economic relief pledges and policies that appeal to the low-income earners in the society, including offering to establish a Sh50 billion annual hustlers' fund that would allow small-scale business owners to borrow capital from the government. His key challenger Odinga, who is 77 years old, has unsuccessfully vied for president on five occasions – 1997, 2007, 2013, 2017 and 2022.Despite being the current deputy president, Mr. Ruto was not backed by the outgoing President, Uhuru Kenyatta, who instead campaigned for his former rival, Mr. Odinga. But Mr. Ruto said he would be speaking to both men shortly and promised that his government would look after them in retirement. He asserted that "we are not enemies, we are Kenyans. Let us unite to make Kenya a nation of which everyone shall be proud to call home,"

The swiftness with which the Kenyan judiciary dispensed the electoral matters deserves commendable. The judiciary understood that the centrality of its roles in the stability of the political system especially in a plural society. To this end, the former Deputy National Publicity Secretary of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) Ambassador to East Africa and Middle East, Comrade Timi Frank (2022) aptly reacts thus:

> *The Kenyan Judiciary deserved accolades for demonstrating courage, firmness and transparency in its ruling on the petition that challenged the victory of Ruto by opposition leader, Raila Odinga. He however called on the Judiciary; Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria and indeed Africa to learn from Kenyan Judiciary by ensuring justice at all times without minding the whims and caprices of the establishment or ruling political parties.*

Lessons from the Kenya's 2022 Elections and Nigeria's 2023 General Elections for Democratic Consolidation in Africa

The electoral outcomes in Kenya and Nigeria have some lessons that will help in the process of democratic consolidation in Africa. The lessons are as follows:

- Ethnicity is becoming a secondary consideration in sub-Saharan African politics. Evidence, Kenyatta is from the dominant tribe, Kikuyu. He played the ethnic card to try and secure the victory for Odinga who is a Luo but the people are more interested in honesty and competence than tribal considerations. Similarly, the Nigeria's 2023 general election noted an improvement in the way in which factors such as ethnicity and religion did not substantially influence voters' choices;
- Having influential Godfathers with power of incumbency can no longer guarantee electoral success. This shows in Kenya where Mr. Raila Odinga lost the election. In Nigeria, godfatherism was not pronounced in the elections as evidenced from the electoral victories achieved by politicians without any godfather;
- Political alliances of old foes are now viewed with suspicion by today's electorates in Africa unlike what obtained in the past. For instance, Odinga was a bitter rib and critic of President Kenyatta. People saw them in their new alliance as strange bed fellows. Thus, political alignments and realignments are no more guarantee for electoral victory. Rather issues such as capacity, integrity, competence, credibility, among others are becoming factors that influence voters during elections;
- Money politics and corruption have ruled Kenyan and Nigerian politics over years. However, abject poverty, high youth unemployment, untold hardship and unfulfilled promises have woken the masses from political slumber to reject money and vote wisely. This is a good development in the democratization process in Africa, and will ultimately engender transparency and accountability in governance;
- The social media was very powerful in swinging the victory to the side of Mr. Ruto. It featured well in the Nigeria's general election and helped to shape political discussions. Therefore, politicians who still underrate the power of social media in modern Africa politics should have a rethink considering that the youths are dominant in the space;
- The age of contestants has become a key factor in African politics. Voters are now rejecting old, recycled candidates in preference for youthfulness. At 55, Ruto was the youngest of the 4 major contestants. He defeated the older and much experienced Raila Odinga who is 77 and a former Prime Minister. The other two major candidates are also in their 60s;
- The judiciary in the case of Kenya demonstrated capacity and forthrightness in delivery judgement in the presidential elections. This is a good direction towards the independence of the judiciary in Africa;
- The EMB needs to be firm and eschew influences from the politicians to enable it deliver free, fair and credible elections as seen in the Kenya's case. This

gives confidence to the electorates and could make electoral outcomes easily acceptable as the true reflection of the wishes of the people; and

- Forgiveness heals all wounds and has the capacity to deepen peaceful coexistence as demonstrated by Kenyans leaders. Nevertheless, this is tenable in a situation where the electoral process is not compromised;

Conclusion

Africa has witnessed significant democratic progress both normatively and in practice over the past two decades. Kenya's 2022 general election has not followed the familiar script of voters exercising their civic duty only to helplessly sit back and watch their votes are manipulated. Kenyans have attempted to correct this through comprehensive constitutional reforms, an active and vigilant citizenry, and an increasingly independent judiciary. In the process, Kenyans have carved out a roadmap for themselves and democratic reformers across the continent. Also, there are some political gains that came from the Nigeria's 2023 general election especially the dramatic changes recorded in the political landscape of the country with the emergence of new political parties such as the Labor Party with new political ideology and mantra. These developments show that citizens are gradually reclaiming their enviable position in the electoral process in Africa. It is an indication that political power truly belongs to the people, and it is the mainstay of democracy and democratic governance.

References

Adejumobi, S. (2000). "Reconstructing the Future: Africa and the Challenges of Democracy and Good Governance in the 21st Century", Development and socio-economic progress. Issue 75(1&2): 34-51.

Agbiloko, G.O. and Chiotu, N. (2021). Management of Electoral Conflict in Africa: Comparative analysis of Nigeria and Ghana. Perspective on Conflict Prevention, Management & Resolution in Africa, Abuja: Institute for Peace & Conflict Resolution

Agbu, O. (2016). Introduction in Osita Agbu (ed) Elections and Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, CODESRIA National Working Group, pp.1-8

Ake, C. (1991). Rethinking African Democracy, Journal of Democracy, Vol. 2, No. 1

Akinbobola, A. (2002). Trends of Democratisation in Africa: An Analysis of the Challenge of Political Institutionalisation in The Constitution, A Journal of Constitutional Development, Vol. 3, No. 2:5

Anderson, D (2005). Histories of the hanged: the dirty war in Kenya and the end of empire. W.W. Norton, New York

Babawale, T. (2003) 'The State, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Governance in Post-military Nigeria,' in T, Babawale (1st ed.) Urban Violence, Ethnic Militia

and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. Lagos: Malthouse

Press Ltd, pp.202-211.Carother, Thomas (2002). The End of the Transition

Paradigm, Journal of Democracy, Vol.13, No. 1, pp.5-21, January

Campbell, John. (2010). Electoral Violence in Nigeria, Contingency Planning Memorandum

No. 9 September, The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)

Ezeibe, C.C. (2015). Hate speech and post electoral violence in Africa, Africa Renaissance

10 (2 & 4): 75- 87

Holland H (2008). Post-poll violence halves Kenya Q1 tourism revenues. Reuters,

May, 2 Independent Electoral & Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

Handbook on Elective Positions in Kenya

Huntington, Samuel (1991). The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth

Century. London: University of Oklahoma Press

Inokoba, P. K. &Kumokor, I. (2011) 'Electoral, Crisis, Governance and Democratic

Consolidation in Nigeria,' Journal of Social Sciences 27(2): 139-148.

Jega, A.M, (2006). Democratisation in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects. Being text of a Lecture delivered on the 28 February, 2006 at the 8th Claude Ake

Memorial Lecture, held at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos:6

Jega, A.M. (2013). Improving Elections in Nigeria: Lessons from 2011 and Looking to 2015. Africa Programmes Meeting Summary. London: Chatham House

Joseph, R. (2010) Elections and Democracy in Africa: Restoring Nigerian. Leadership, Delivered at the Shehu Yar"Adua Centre, Abuja, and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 5 and 7 October. Leeds, C.A. (1981). Political Studies. Macdonald & Evans Ltd.

Mgba, C. (2917). Electoral Management Body and the Challenges of Conducting Credible Elections in Nigeria, America International Journal of Social Science, Vol.3, September, pp.54-67

Momah, Pamela (2016). Electoral Commissions and the Conduct of Elections in Nigeria: The Role of INEC, in Osita Agbu (ed) Elections and Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, CODESRA, Dakar, Senegal, pp.37-52

Nwagwu, E.J. (2009). Poverty, Unemployment and Poverty Alleviation/Eradication

Programmes in Nigeria, 1999—2004. University of Nigeria Journal

of Political Economy, Vol.3, Nos. 1 & 2

Okolie, A.M.N. (2005) 'Electoral Fraud and the Future of Elections in Nigeria,' in G.O.

Onu & A Momoh (eds.) Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria.

A Publication of the Nigerian Political Science Association

Okoye, A. C., Oyinmiebe, P.T. Credible Elections, Good Governance and Human

Security in Nigeria, The Tragedy of a Nation Insights into the Dynamics

of Conflict and Insecurity in Nigeria.

Onah, F. N. (2010). 'The Electoral Process and Succession Challenges in Nigeria:

The Case of 2007 General Election in Enugu State,' Nigerian Journal

of Political Economy, 4(1&2): 76 -94.

Orobator AE (2008). A tale of two elephants: overcoming the postelection crisis

in Kenya. America

Oyeneye, I. (1998). Round up Government: A Complete Guide. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Ltd.

Paki, F. &Inokoba, P. (2006). An Invitation to Political Science. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Kemuela Publications

Rwigwema, P.C. (2022). The Pros and Cons of Elections: Kenya General Election. The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management. Vol. 9, Issue 3, pp. 397—446 (www.strategicjournals.com)

Salehyan, I. & Linebarger, C. (2013). Elections and Social Conflict in Africa. Climate Change and African Political Stability [CCAPS], Research Brief, 6

Saliu, A.H. (2010). Democracy, Governance and International Relations. Ibadan: College Press & Publishers, City University: 83

Schraeder, J.P. (2004). African Politic and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation. Wadsworth: Centage Learning

Straus, S. & Taylor, C. (2012). "Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2008." In Bekoe, D. A. (Ed.). Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, D.C.: USIP Press.

The Nordic Africa Institute. (2012/3). Electoral Violence in Africa. The Nordic Africa Institute. Policy Notes 2013/3. Available at:http://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:556709/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Timi, F. (2022). Williams Ruto's Victory: Timi Frank urges Nigeria's Judiciary to learn

fromKenyan's Supreme Court.

https://www.tracknews.ng/2022/09/kenyas-supreme-court-declares-william-rutos- election-as-valid.html

Weber A (2009). The causes of politicization of ethnicity: a comparative case study of Kenya

and Tanzania. Working paper 47. Centre for Comparative and International

Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and Zurich University, Zürich.

Wolf TP (2006). Immunity or accountability? Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi: Kenya's first retired

president. In: Legacies of power. Leadership change and former Presidents in

African politics. NordiskaAfrikainstitutet, Uppsala, pp 197–232

.

.