A STUDY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA: A LESSON OF EUROPEAN UNION

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ABSTRACT
The focus of this paper is to explore the contributions of European Union. EU on Electoral system in Nigeria with particular reference to 2015 general election, to identify the challenges faced by European Union EU during the monitoring of the conduct of Nigerian general election and to offer alternative recommendations on how European Union EU would strengthening election monitoring in the Republic of Nigeria, particularly during the 2015 general election. The paper adopted qualitative method of data collection and content analysis was used to analysed the data more so, the paper also relied mainly on the secondary source of data drawn from websites, international agencies, documents report, journals, article in newspapers, magazines and books. The paper also unveils that the European Union electoral support has contributed to the deployment in Nigeria of the fact-finding missions as election observers to enhance the integrity of election. The paper however, discovered that most of the electoral assistance that was given to Nigeria and Independent National Electoral Commission INEC as an institution that is in charge of electoral activities in order to have fair and credible electoral system were given with the aim for Independent National Electoral Commission INEC to increase its capacity to deliver more professional electoral activities, and despite this the European Union EU officials that are sent are not enough to cover the monitoring of elections in the entire nation. The paper therefore recommended that in order for electoral system to be free, fair, credible and internationally accepted, some things need to be done. Government must to place priority on voter education and Independent National Electoral Commission INEC should be more independent, its source of fund should not be from executive arm of government. Adequate funds should be provided

at the appropriate time, these will lead to free, fair, credible and transparency in the electoral process.

1.1 Introduction

The necessity for continental regional and sub-regional, international governmental organization to strengthen electoral system in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized this has made countries Nigeria inclusive to allow international governmental organization for effective intervention without necessarily compromising the national interest of each state. However, electoral system in Nigeria is bedeviled by a number of challenges which hinders the smooth conduct of elections in Nigeria, the manifestation of such challenges ranging from technical, financial, logistical, operational, and administrative weakness culminate to produce undesirable outcome during elections, this perhaps and orders made international governmental organization to provide support and assistance to countries Nigeria inclusive to ensure smooth, free, fair credible and transparent elections.

Election is one of the prerequisite of democratic governance and the building block of democratic consolidation. Electoral system is one of the hall mark of democracy in any modern society. The aim of electoral management body therefore, should be endanger a free and fair election that would guarantee the emergence of credible leader's. Good management of election can make government to be both responsible and responsive to the needs of the people. Free, fair and credible elections have been observed to be improbable in developing countries because of the institutional weakness on the election management.

The demise of military rule in the Nigerian 1999 (Fourth Republic) ushered in a new era for democratically elected government to steer the course of the Nigerian people. There were seven elections (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and the recent 2023 general election. Since the country return to democratic dispensation in 1999. However, the ability of the country to conduct transparent and credible elections has become a mirage. The 1999, 2003 and 2007 election has been considered as the most controversial. There was continual degeneration in the conduct of these elections as a result of fragile election management, logistic deficiencies, rampant electoral rigging and lack of transparency in the system every election conducted tended to be worse than the previous one. This more or less negates the quality of these elections to meet international standards. The 2007 election marked the first successful transition of leadership by an elected government to another (Ibrahim and Ibeapnu, 2009). So also the second transition of leadership by leading party to an opposition party in 2015.

This paper therefore, seeks to explore the contributions of European Union EU on electoral system in Nigeria with particular reference to 2015 general election, to identify the challenges faced by European Union EU during monitoring the conduct of the elections and to offer alternative recommendations on how European Union EU would strengthening election monitoring in Nigeria.

1.2 Methodology

Secondary sources were used which includes related literature reviewed such as, Books, Journals, Scholarly Article Magazines, Newspapers, Websites, International Agencies & Documents Reports. However, the Paper also adopted Content Analysis as a Systematic Techniques used to interpret textual data.

1.3 Literature Review and Conceptual Clarifications

International Governmental Organizations

Held (1995), maintained that decisions made by quasi-regional or quasi supranational organizations (IGOs) such as EU, the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) diminish the range of decision open to given national majorities. The idea of a community which rightly governs itself and determines its own future as an idea at the very heart of democratic polity itself is accordingly today deeply problematic.

That is why David (1995), assets that, it is based upon the recognition that democracy within a particular community and democratic relations among communities are interlocked, absolutely inseparable and those new organizational binding mechanisms must be created if democracy is to develop in the decades ahead. He further argued that although it is important to separate out arguments about transforming the organizational form of the state from arguments about the pertinence of the concept of modern state itself. The recognition that some of the duties and functions of the state are and most be performed at and across different political levels, local national, regional and international does not entail the idea of the state itself as wholly defunct.it entails that this idea must be adapted to stretch across borders. Therefore, an international governmental organization is an organization composed primarily of sovereign states, or other intergovernmental organizations. International governmental organizations are established by treaty or other agreement that acts as a charter creating the group. E.g., United Nation UN, African Union AU, World Bank and the European Union EU.

The role of international governmental organizations as seen from democratic peace researchers is that they alter state behavior; this indicates that international governmental organizations either bring conflict or peace in electoral process. However, Law (2007), maintains that international governmental organizations are considerable; they have also come to be seen as actors in their own right. An international governmental organization can give legitimacy to an undertaking that a state cannot act alone. This is mostly common to the United Nation UN, but it is equally true of almost any other international governmental organizations.

Robert Dahl cited in (Shapiro and hacker 1990) shares similar perspective with Law, because he indicates that an international governmental organization are organization that are necessary to many needs and goals that advocate for democracy contend that are best served by democratic governments. He also further maintains that they can sometimes assist a non-democratic country to make difficult transition from a highly undemocratic to a more democratic government. However, international governmental organization can help to expand human rights and the rule of law which happens to be among the important aspect democracy.

Electoral System

Emphasis will also be made on electoral system, an election according to the (Hutchinons: encyclopedia), is the process of appointing or selecting a person to public offices or a political party to govern by voting. It is indeed a vital political right of expression of choice. In line with the above, Godwin and Norton 1992 cited by (Oddih in Jega and Ibeanu 2007), election is a formal process of selecting a person for public offices or accepting or registering a political position by voting. They further that an election is one of the means by which a society may organize itself and make specified formal decisions, adding that where voting is free, it acts simultaneously as a system for making certain decisions regarding the power relations in a society.

Igbuzor (2011) assert that election are crucial because they give the procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it.in any democratic system, it is crucial that elections be free and fair, Mackenzie (1967) identified four conditions for the conduct of free and fair election namely:

a) An independent judiciary to interpret the electoral laws.

b) An honest, competent nonpartisan electoral body to manage the elections

c) A developed system of political parties.

d) A general acceptance by the political community of the rules of the game.

Having achieving these can be said that a countries electoral system is in a progressive state. Andrew (2005), is of the view that electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy; this means it is a fundamental political process, at a more basic level; electoral systems translate the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates.

Here electoral system is an important aspect of election because political institution shape the rules of the game under which democracy is practiced, and it is often argued that the easiest political institution to manipulate for good or for bad, is the electoral system. In translating the votes casts in a general election into seats in the

legislature, the choice of electoral system can effectively determine who is elected and which party gains power, while many aspects of a country political framework are often specified in the constitution and can also influence the way parties campaign and the way political elites behave, thus helping to determine the broader political climate, they may encourage or retard the forgoing of alliances between parties and they can provide incentives for parties and groups to be broadly based and accommodating, or to base themselves on narrow appeals to ethnicity or kinship ties.

King (2000) went further to state that electoral system can be divided into three general types; there is the plurality electoral system, majority electoral system and also proportional representation.

The choice of electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy, this also show that electoral system for example in Nigeria defines and structure the rules of political game, they help determine who is elected, how is fought, the role of political parties and most importantly, who governs.

For Chukwu (2007), an electoral system is a system which includes election observation and verification of activities carried out by local and international bodies or both. It also includes the establishment of institutions and structures that will mobilize the populace towards involvement in the electoral process and provides the rules.

Theoretical Framework

Given the focus of this paper, which is to examine the extent of contributions by the EU as an international governmental organization in strengthening electoral system in Nigeria, Institutionalism theory will serve as a theoretical guide.

The core of his contribution to this view of the world has been to explore how international institutions operate and its emphasis on the significance of institutions in the context of interdependence. But his exploration of institution and interdependence has taken place in the context of an awareness of how they are affected by others, broader factors. Hence, they did not assume that institutions and interdependence are the most important aspects of contemporary world politics that they somehow contain the unique key history. Indeed, they only make sense if they are fit into the larger puzzle. Keohane and Nye (1972) build their theory by focusing on how economic interdependence affected arrangement for governance, pioneered by Ernst B. Haas 1958 and thereby begin with a special theme of international organizational on transnational relations.

Power and interdependence contained an incipient theory of institutions in the form of what Nye and Keohane called an intergovernmental organization model of regime change. That power and interdependence was a puzzle of why state establishes international regimes-rule-oriented institutions that limit their member's legal freedom of action.

The major assumption of the theory is that institution performs important tasks for state enabling them to cooperate. In particular, institutions reduce the costs of making, monitoring and enforcing rules, transaction cost, provide information, and facilitate the making of credible commitments are reciprocity. The relationship between institutional theory and the paper is that, the theory relates to the paper intergovernmental organizations plays the role of power and interdependence in a state which enable the Nigerian state to cooperate so as to strengthen the electoral system of the country.

1.4 Discussion of Findings

Traditional paradigms in the world politics offer hard contrasting interpretations of the role of international governmental organizations (IGOs). Liberal institutional theory argues that IGOs foster nonviolent conflict resolution and constrain the advent of disputes, functionalists conceive IGOs as capable of transforming state preferences and promoting pacific global relations.

The IGOs influence on the democratization process mostly could be found in the electoral support or electoral assistance which covers a wide range of activities. It may include (funding) support for the design of an electoral system, determination of electoral boundaries, voter registration, voter education, voter education, voter training for political parties and the media. It usually includes building the capacity of an electoral management body EMB and making a contribution to its administrative costs.

Starting from the end of 1990s, election monitoring bodies (EMBs) and their operational partners turned to another key challenge: building trust across the various stakeholders involved in the electoral system process, in particular the electorate, political parties domestics, regional and international observers, civil society organizations and the media (Bargiacchi et al 2011.4) focus shifted from acquiring basic operational activities to organize electoral event which had in the previous decade undermined the EMBs work to solving political, financial and logistical constraints undermining credibility of the EMBs.

Although, electoral system is one of the major pillars of democratic governance which receives considerable attention from international agencies (IGOs), therefore it is an undeniable fact that election is one of the most significant aspects of democratic governance. Furthermore, the development and implementation of electoral cycle approach represent a critical shift in international electoral assistance from short term event-based support to longer term comprehensive assistance with increased focus on sustainability i.e. through capacity development of assistance efforts (Bargiachi, 2011). Therefore, the data yield that, since 1999 Nigeria's development partners have been active in supporting election. Donors programs have collaborated with a wide range of Nigerians stakeholders, supported institutional reforms necessary to facilitate the electoral process and provided assistance to strengthen accountability mechanism to improve electoral system. (Nigeria's electoral assessment team 2010.6).

Election pose extremely complex logistical challenges, these include printing voting materials, equipping voting stations, training large numbers of temporary staff, establishing secure method for country tabulating and communicating results and establishing procedures for dispute resolution(ICAI, 2012) cited in Maduagwu (2016).

Since election in Nigeria have been regarded as flawed by both Nigerians and the international community, with each poll progressively worse than the last, i.e. according to many domestic and international observers, then what has changed during this wave (4th republic) is the normative weight given to human rights and to democracy as a human right- in international discourse, treaties, law and collective actions. The old conception of sovereignty is grooming under the weight of international scrutiny of domestic governance (Maduagwu, 2016.2). The world community is increasingly embracing a share normative expectation that all states seeking international legitimacy should manifestly "govern with the consent of the governed"- in essence. A "right to democratic governance" is seen as a legal entitlement (Franck, 1992) cited in Maduagwu (2016).

Elections depend on the exercise of political right by citizens and political competitors , they are in important test of the integrity of democratic institution (INEC) just as genuine credible elections are prerequisite for achieving democratic governance (NDI.2008) despite the growing IGOs interest in facilitating democratic activities (strengthening electoral system) in transitional countries (as it was in 1999 at the dawn of the Nigeria's fourth republic up till now) the dynamic of international institutions are poorly understood.

To ensure electoral integrity, electoral support initiatives cover a broad range of activities to meet a myriad of electoral and socio-economic challenges and ECOWAS address these challenges through development cooperation with both the European union (EU) and (AU). The support of the EU and AU is critical to the success of the future initiatives of ECOWAS and to the enhancement of the quality of election in ECOWA member state.

An electoral assistance, EU assistance support has contributed to the deployment of fact-finding missions as election observers to enhance the integrity of elections which Nigerian has been a prime beneficiary Maduagwu, (2016).

European Union Intervention in Nigerians General Elections

Guiding Principles for Electoral Assistance

Electoral assistance donor and implementation organizations have governed substantial experience in the implementation of project based on the electoral cycle approach. It has then become possible to evaluate the key lessons learnt in order to make future electoral assistance more effective. To this end, the European commission, DFID-UKAID and the United Nations development program have commission external evaluations carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011 and 2015 (currently in progress. (IDEA, 2016). (Democracy in

Development Global Consultations on the E U's role in Democracy Building).

Promoting Synergy between Election Observers and Electoral Assistance

Whereas electoral assistance means "technical or material support given to electoral system", electoral observation entails "the purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process, and the making of informed judgments on the conducts of such a process on the basis of the information collected by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the system. Assistance and observation represent complementary activities and when coordinated, can create opportunities for the maximization of election support.

During the period under investigation one hundred (100) EU observers came to Nigeria to monitor the elections and they were distributed to six (6) geo-political zones of the country. Some of the issues discovered during the writing of this paper include:

- delimitation of electoral boundaries
- Financing of Campaigns
- Cost of Election
- Media Access
- Voter registration (Including Audit of Voter Based on Biometric and Automated Finger Prints Identification System)
- Results Aggregation
- Electoral Violence
- Electoral Disputes Resolution Mechanism (INEC 2015 General Election Report).

Similarly, the total support from development partners for 2015 general election was 5,207,260,433.55 (five billion two hundred and seven million, two hundred and sixty thousand, four hundred- and thirty-three-naira, fifty-five kobo). (INEC 2015). It was essentially provided through the sponsorship of workshops, seminars, conferences, enlightment programs and the engagement of consultants as well as technical aids in the office of the chairman, INEC. This facilitated the reviews, promotions and delivery of electoral services towards the successful conduct of the 2015 general election as reported in the INEC repot 2015. So therefore, the data yielded that the funding's of EU specifically which was granted through UNDP and DGD in sum of 1,525,129,488.88. (One billion, five hundred and twenty-five million, one hundred and twenty-nine thousand, four hundred and eighty-eight naira. Eighty-eight kobo was used by the institution (INEC) to support the activity of voter education and enlighten as also adapted from (INEC 2015 general election report).

A number of components were identified by this paper which helped in achieving the objective;

Promoting Credible, Transparent and Sustainable Electoral System

- Strategic planning, policy and operational capacities of INEC were strengthened.
- Electoral system,(voter registration and voter education) were improved through information and communication technology (ICT)
- Professional capacity of INEC electoral institute and INEC are improved.
- Professional capacity of and collaboration between INEC and SEIC including collaboration with INEC are improved.
- Capacity parties is strengthened (INEC 2015 general election report)

Enhancing Participation by Women, Youth and other Marginalized Groups

- Legal reforms and women's empowerment initiative to promote affirmative and women's empowerment in politics and elections were undertaken.
- Pool of women aspirants for elective offices at various levels enlarged.

Development Capacity of CSOs Involved in the Electoral Process

- Zonal network and individuals CSOs were strengthened.
- CSOs are present in all the 6 geopolitical zones and adopt a rigorous methodological approach that ensures that observation reports are credible, independent and effectively harmonized.
- Civil society capacity to carry out election observation is enhanced which main activities were
    1. Support CSO effort to undertake election observations, including thorough training, data collection and analysis during election
    2. Support documentation and analysis of lesion learnt from election observation
    3. Support the review, design and implementation of voter/ civic education working closely with INEC, the national orientation agency, CSO and the media.
    4. Establish an innovative small medium grants scheme available to CSO community based organizations non-governmental and associations to conduct voter education and public information activities on Deeping democratic values and principles. Priority will be given to women-based groups to ensure women's participation in all aspect of electoral process.
    5. Enhance CSO collaboration with INEC and other actors on civic and voters education including development of materials based on various channels of communication and targeting a broad spectrum of voters, more specifically women, people with disabilities and first term voters.
    6. Provide institutional support and training of CSOs to undertake media monitoring during elections
    7. Support media-based initiatives, including training, to promote self-regulation in relation to the coverage of elections. (EU Annex 2014).

European Union (EU) and the Challenges of Electoral Process in Nigeria

Domestic observers put much reliance on the international governmental organization especially EU which has been widely known for wide capacity of monitoring across the length and breadth of the world. And the fact that EU observers are not adequate to monitor the entre 774 local governments in Nigeria cannot compile a comprehensive report.

On the other hand, INEC claimed that, in its capacity to ensure accreditation of international observers during the general elections, it takes some series of guidelines which cover such things as the process of selection and accreditation of observers, code of conduct, responsibilities of both observers and INEC, as well as detailed description of political parties and electoral system in Nigeria in order to ensure transparency and accountably in the electoral process as well as delay and absence of election materials in some places had led to delay in the start of the election on time in many places which created conflict among supporters of different political parties.

Another challenge faced by the EU in the monitoring of election in Nigeria during the period was insecurity, this is very clear particularly in the North East and South-South of Nigeria where terrorist prevented the smooth conduct of the election, Borno state is an example.

Another challenge faced by the EU representatives during the conduct of the elections was absence of networks in many part of the country particularly the rural areas which militates against the smooth monitoring and dissemination of information.

Lack of electricity in the rural areas made the EU observers reluctant in staying for a very long time in the rural areas to effectively monitor the elections.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected and the reports from the international governmental organization on the role they played in strengthening electoral system in Nigeria confirms the relevance and importance of their interference in Nigeria's electoral system during the 2015 general elections are the most relevant elections in the fourth republic, however, it has been observed that overreliance on the data and reports from the international governmental organization has been as the most notable challenge that I have been able to identify in terms of electoral activities in Nigeria that hinders the smooth progress of electoral system in Nigeria, although election observers are likely to adopt more aggressive attitude to a country's election and its managers in early post authoritarian election but yet the domestic observers put much reliance on the international governmental organization especially EU which has been widely known for wide capacity of monitoring across the length and breadth of the world.

Recommendations

1. INEC to organize elections more professionally as well as to ensure the independence of electoral bodies, which will also help in ensuring the transparency and accountability of the accreditation of international governmental organization, and ward off undue influence from undemocratic government or external players.
2. Election materials should be adequate and delivered to every Centre on time in order to commence the process of the elections as scheduled.
3. Adequate security measure should put in place to enable the EU observers fell secured everywhere in the country during the conduct of an election, this would give them the peace in mind to discharge their monitoring task effectively.
4. This paper also recommends that, there should be effective internet networks connectivity across all the polling centers of the country, this can be achieved in collaboration with government and private telecommunication companies.
5. Electricity was also recommended by this paper of to be provided in all the remote area in order to enhance EU election monitoring.
6. Independent national electoral commission must enforce the provision of the law and that is one sure way of getting criminal elements masquerading as party agent off the street and off the polling units. INEC must make it clear to the political parties that any party agents that are not accredited and found near any polling units on election day will be arrested and prosecuted and the prosecution should be ensured.

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