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Elections, Electoral Systems, and Election Administration in Nigeria 1999-2015: An Analysis of Democratic Path

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Abstract

Every country's democratic process, including Nigeria's, must include elections, electoral procedures, and election management. Elections play a crucial role in the peaceful transfer of power, accountability, and political representation. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has a diverse political landscape and has made significant strides towards democratic governance since the military regime was overthrown in 1999. With an emphasis on understanding Nigeria's democratic path, this article offers a critical analysis of Nigerian elections, electoral administration, and electoral institutions. It examines electoral systems and procedures, explores the historical context of Nigeria's democratic journey and evaluates the contribution of election administration to the growth of the democratic environment. The study also examines how election administration and electoral processes support political stability, accountability, and inclusivity in Nigeria. The essay also discusses Nigeria's issues and opportunities to improve its democratic processes. The data for this study were collected from a secondary source: a review of literature, including journals, articles on elections and electoral systems, monographs, textbooks, and other periodicals. Through a thorough analysis, this essay aims to shed light on the crucial elements that have contributed to Nigeria's democratic path's success as well as potential areas for development.

Keywords: Elections, Election Administration, Electoral Process, Democracy, Electoral Reforms and Electoral Systems.

Introduction

Nigeria's democratic journey reached a turning point in the late 1990s. The country started its shift to multi-party democracy after years of military rule. After the first democratic elections in 1999, the military government was peacefully replaced by a civilian government. This occasion marked a turning point in Nigeria's democratic journey and demonstrated the nation's dedication to democratic principles and the rule of law. Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has made great strides towards building democracy since leaving military rule in 1999. Elections play a crucial role in shaping the political landscape. According to Bormann and Golder (2013), elections are essential to modern democratic governance. In every nation, elections play a role in determining the course of democratic governance. While highlighting the challenges and developments the country has experienced during its democratic transition, this article provides a comprehensive analysis of Nigerian elections, electoral procedures, and election administration.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous and economically prosperous nation, has had a difficult transition to a stable democratic administration due to its complex past. Since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1960, the country has seen a tumultuous political climate characterised by military coups and under-coups, civil unrest, and rigged elections. Unufe (2019) reaffirmed

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that an apparent lack of confidence in the official declaration of results and the subsequent rejection of those results have marked the Nigerian elections. Hardly had there been an election at any level without resultant electoral litigation. The only exception was the 2015 presidential election, in which the incumbent hastily congratulated the winner before the official declaration of results. However, the congratulatory message could also be viewed from another perspective as a way of dousing the palpable tension that had emerged amid prevailing ideas that the results would be rigged as usual. The author also postulates that the history of democratic experiments in Nigeria demonstrates that elections and electoral politics have generated so much animosity that the country's corporate existence is under serious threat.

Ekundayo (2015) expressed a similar viewpoint, claiming that Nigeria's election history has been turbulent because the way elections are held has always been tainted by malpractice. According to Ogbeidi (2015), Nigerian elections have historically been violent and tense. This scholar believes that violence, fraud, intimidation, manipulation by electoral officials, and falsification of results marred all of the nation's prior elections. According to the records currently available, this scholar went on to say that credible elections are the greatest threat to democracy. The country's democratic process has been severely hampered by the inability to hold elections that meet globally recognised standards (Ogbeidi, 2010). However, Nigeria has made significant strides in recent years towards solidifying its democratic path through a series of electoral reforms and improvements in election administration. To shed light on the challenges faced and the actions taken to support a more robust democratic process, this article explores the evolution of electoral procedures, electoral systems, and election administration in Nigeria.

Historical Overview of Nigerian Elections

Understanding the historical backdrop of Nigerian elections is crucial before getting into the current scenario. Nigeria had passed through periods of democratic administration interspersed with protracted military dictatorships after obtaining independence from British colonial authority in 1960. The general elections of December 12, 1959, could be described as the elections that ushered the country into independence and into rigorous political and democratic practice. Of the 26 registered political parties, three emerged as dominant. The parties were the Northern People's Party (NPC), the Action Group (AG) and the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). The

elections administration body at the time of independence was the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC). The electoral process was abused and, at the same time, characterised by electoral violence. These consequently created constitutional crises which undermined the legitimacy of the new civilian government (Ogbeidi, 2010). The 1964 federal election and the 1965 regional elections both ended in controversy, which was accompanied by violence. The FEC, which was expected to be an unbiased umpire, was enmeshed in crises of partiality: the crises that followed and the attendant worsening of socioeconomic conditions led to military intervention.

This first military incursion into politics was barely six years after the celebrated independence. The military later lifted the ban on political activities after 13 years of ruling on 21st September 1978. A new electoral body, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), was established. To ensure a smooth transition, specific electoral reforms were implemented that required a presidential candidate to poll 25% of the vote in at least 2/3 of the 19 states. During the commencement of the Second Republic, five political parties were registered. The parties were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), and the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP). Though the 1979 presidential election was adjudged peaceful, it was not crisis-free. It was marred by a high level of political apathy, with 25-35% of registered voters participating in the voting exercise (Ogbeidi, 2010). The 1983 general elections were marred by crises, and the electoral body was considered incompetent due to widespread electoral malpractices. This consequently led to military intervention and the end of the Second Republic. The third republic spanned between 1989 and 1993, in which the results of the presidential election were annulled overnight. There were national and international pressures on the military dictator to declare the election winner and subsequently hand over power to that person. Instead of handing over to a democratically elected president, the military Junta headed by General Ibrahim Babangida opted for an Interim Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. General Sanni Abacha, who had already taken an interest, swiftly removed the Interim Government barely six months after its installation. Up until 1999, when the Fourth Republic took office and ushered in a new age of democracy, the nation's political landscape was tarnished by frequent coups and authoritarian administrations.

After gaining independence, Nigeria struggled to maintain stable civilian rule, with numerous military coups undermining democratic transitions and fostering a mistrust of the electoral process. The country's early elections were marked by fraud, voter intimidation, and a lack of transparency, which fuelled a cycle of ineffective institutions and political violence. Majekodunmi and

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Adejuwon (2012) stated unequivocally that past elections were marked by controversy because their results faced crises of legitimacy and credibility. Additionally, it was claimed that since the country's independence in 1960, numerous elections have shown signs of violence, corrupt inducements, fraud, and other widespread state manipulations. These authors went further, stating that the history of elections and democracy in Nigeria represents an open confrontation with the manoeuvres of a repressive and unscrupulous elite. To monetise the electoral process, the political class exploits the socioeconomic conditions of those already severely impoverished.

Electoral Systems in Nigeria

The electoral system, which encompasses the laws governing the process of electing political officials, is regarded as essential to democratic functioning. It refers to any set of regulations in which citizens' votes are used to choose legislators and/or executives. According to academics, there is not a single best electoral system (Bowler et al., 2005). In this sense, a nation's selection of voting systems should take sufficient account of historical, cultural, and other unique endogenous elements. The first step in evaluating any electoral system is to understand its political objectives while considering the nation's unique political and cultural landscape. Horowitz (2003) asserts that no electoral system takes into account voter preferences, political party configurations, or political divisions. The electoral system's only purpose is to compile preferences and produce outcomes. Horowitz (2003) emphasised that the inherent biases in any election system make it impossible for any election system to convert individual choices into collective ones. Nigeria has utilised a variety of election techniques throughout the years. A majoritarian electoral system, also known as first-past-the-post voting, was used in the early years, and the candidate who received the most votes in a constituency was declared the victor. A majoritarian electoral system is one in which the candidate or party with the most votes wins, according to Bormann and Golder (2013). Although this approach was simple, it frequently led to biased representation and hindered minor parties from making a substantial political impact.

In 1979, Nigeria changed to a mixed voting system to promote representation and inclusivity. This method combined elements of first-past-the-post and proportional representation by allocating seats to parties according to their overall vote share. However, this hybrid paradigm did not fully meet the nation's complicated and fragmented political landscape. This is consistent with Ray's (2004) hypothesis that while a nation's electoral laws clearly play a

role in defining its political system, they are not the sole determinant. In addition, a nation's citizens and democratic processes are impacted by other socioeconomic and political issues. Majoritarian and proportional representation are the two main categories for the vast and confusing range of election systems found in modern political systems. Nigeria has a federal system of government, and state and federal elections are held either concurrently or at different times. The majoritarian first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system is used in most of the country's elections, including the presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative ones. Under this method, seats are won by the candidates who receive the most votes, regardless of whether they have an absolute majority.

The FPTP system is criticised for favouring powerful parties, which may occasionally result in the under-representation of minority viewpoints. Additionally, when leaders prioritise winning over their ethnic or regional community over addressing global issues, this may encourage regionalism. Mohammed (2013) noted that the country's electoral system is a contributing cause to the failure of governance in most of the federation's states. The researcher goes on to say that most of the nation's political issues were caused by the voting system in place (Mohammed, 2013). As a result, it is necessary to implement an election system that is acceptable in all operations, free of electoral fraud, and promotes openness and trustworthiness. Such an electoral system may be made more credible by incorporating contemporary technology. Electronic voting is the way of the future and has the potential to increase political engagement, claim Okediran and Ganiyu (2015).

Analysis of the General Elections in Nigeria's Democratic Path: The Missing Gap.

General Elections in Nigeria, the Democratic Path, and "The Missing Gap" — identifying key successes, persistent challenges, and the structural "gaps" that hinder Nigeria's democratic consolidation. Nigeria has held elections regularly since 1999; however, the quality of these elections is sometimes questioned. Nigerian elections frequently fall short of international standards due to a number of anomalies, including vote buying, result fabrication, and overvoting. This study examined how organisational characteristics of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) contribute to the general integrity of Nigerian electoral processes, with a primary focus on the 2023 presidential election. It evaluated INEC's organisational efficiency using information from documents, the Internet, and interviews. We discovered that corruption, disregard for INEC's regulations, and lack of independence are its main obstacles. INEC's operations remain heavily impacted by political

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meddling, making it difficult for the organisation to hold credible elections, even though the new Electoral Act, which the Nigerian president signed into law in 2022, should strengthen the organisation's capacity and independence. Nigeria would be able to institutionalise free, fair, and credible elections if this issue is resolved.

Nigeria has regularly hosted federal and state general elections since the end of military rule in 1999. On paper, competitive elections are a good indicator of democratic practice. However, a key point in conversations about Nigeria's democratic trajectory is that elections alone do not ensure substantive democracy. Elections must be free, fair, and credible, and institutional frameworks must cooperate to uphold democratic ideals. This is the main contention in many scholarly and policy assessments. Election fraud, manipulation, and subpar results continue to be serious problems, including: Election rigging, irregularities, and violence have frequently occurred, undermining credibility and public confidence; technical issues (such as delays and BVAS glitches) have damaged trust and resulted in legal challenges, fuelling perceptions of systemic failure; and post-election disputes and tribunal rulings have occasionally exacerbated discontent rather than resolving conflict. As a result, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is crucial to the management of elections. However, analyses show that Frequent delays and logistical issues that interfere with the electoral schedule, along with technical and planning inefficiencies, undermine timely, credible election conduct and undermine institutional capacity and autonomy. Weak institutions compromise fairness and foster mistrust. Through rent-seeking, candidate imposition, godfatherism, and the monetisation of politics, political actors frequently control elections. Political competition is shallow in the absence of internal party democracy and accountability, and executive defections and elite consolidation undermine opposition and reduce popular choice, undermining representative democracy.

The literature on election administration pays close attention to the role of EMBs in electoral integrity, but it has not examined closely enough how the quality of Nigeria's EMBs affects unfavourable election results. Vote buying (Nwagwu et al., 2022; Olaniyan, 2020; Stockemer & Amaechi, 2023), electoral violence (Orji, 2023; Okpotor, 2020), ethnoreligious factor (Babalola, 2020), and technology (Tunmibi & Olatokun, 2021; Onyekwelu, 2023; Fatai, 2020) and their effects on the integrity of Nigerian elections. Few studies have examined the difficulties the Independent National Electoral Commission

(INEC) faces in conducting elections in Nigeria (Onapajo, 2020; Campion & Jega, 2023; Ezeador, 2023). As established by Rose and Shin (2021) and Mozaffar and Schedler (2022), electoral democracies are built on sophisticated institutions (such as EMBs). An effective and efficient electoral umpire, the rule of law, a thriving civil society, a free press, and an impenetrable judiciary are all essential to the institutionalisation of a democracy. Strong institutions in democracies uphold these pillars through norms and legislation. By comprehensively examining how different organisational characteristics of the INEC impact its ability to conduct credible elections with a focus on the 2023 presidential election, this study adds to the body of existing work. In light of the aforementioned, the following research question is put out in this article: In what ways do INEC's organisational characteristics support its ability to conduct credible elections in 2023? The goal of this study is to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge regarding election integrity and management in postcolonial governments.

Since then, a number of electoral reforms have been implemented to raise the standard of elections in the nation. In 2015, an election that was widely hailed as free and fair was held because of these measures (Orji, 2023). For a number of reasons, the election was praised by many Nigerian political watchers. First, the election was mainly judged to be free and fair.⁵ Secondly, it was the first time an opposition candidate had won a Nigerian presidential election. In a continent where many politicians remain in office even after losing legitimacy, it was surprising how quickly the departing president, Goodluck Jonathan, admitted defeat and called the victorious candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, to congratulate him. Many people welcomed the departing President Jonathan as the hero of Nigeria's democracy, and Nigeria emerged as a new example of democratic transition in Africa. Additionally, Nigeria's score on the Economic Intelligence Unit's democracy index increased from 3.76 in 2014 to 4.62 in 2015. However, by failing to address the nation's economic and security issues, the Muhammadu Buhari government that resulted from the legitimately held 2015 presidential election dashed the dreams of those who backed it (Punch Editorial Board 2023). Young Nigerians, who made up the majority of voters, were particularly dissatisfied with Buhari's presidency (Herald, 2024; Asaba, 2024). They had high hopes and expectations for the 2023 presidential election, but the way it was conducted disappointed them. A number of anomalies plagued the 2023 elections. The authority in charge of organising fair elections faced considerable criticisms, including allegations that the election was "unforgivably flawed" and "deliberately rigged" (Adichie, 2023).

The EMB was charged with conspiring to rig the elections with aspirational

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politicians. Only Bola Tinubu of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), Atiku Abubakar of the major opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) stood out among the eighteen contenders on the presidential ballot. In the Nigerian presidential election, the conventional two-horse contest was disrupted by the emergence of Peter Obi's Labour Party as a third force. The majority of young people, who constituted the largest demographic in the 2023 electoral registration, strongly supported Obi's candidacy (Ayinla, 2023b). Often referred to as "the Obidients," Obi's fans believed Peter Obi was the most honourable of all the presidential candidates.

Former vice president Atiku Abubakar, who was seeking the presidency for the sixth time, was one of the other two strong candidates. According to several Nigerian news outlets, including Sahara Reporters (2022a), he bought off party delegates with thousands of dollars to secure the PDP's primary opposition candidate slot. Bola Tinubu, the national leader of the ruling APC, was the other contender. Additionally, he served as governor of Lagos State, Nigeria's economic hub, for eight years. Even after leaving power in 2007, Tinubu remains Lagos State's godfather, influencing the state's government. Tinubu's integrity is frequently questioned. For instance, he took two bullion vans full of cash to his Lagos home on the eve of the 2019 election (Sahara Reporters, 2023). Many think the funds were used to buy votes. In 1993, Tinubu was also accused of forfeiting USD 460,000 to the US government related to heroin trafficking. In court, Tinubu's witness acknowledged that he had really forfeited the money. The school he attended and the date of his birth are likewise contentious. Obi was supported by many young people who considered him the cleanest of the three. Bloomberg (Clowes, 2023), Nextier Polls (Wahab, 2023), and more sources.

Election Administration and Challenges

Elections are an essential part of democracy because they give voters the chance to exercise their right to vote and give decision-makers some credibility. Compared with other approaches, it fosters political awareness and sensitivity to political rights. The thousands of people who volunteer their time to administer this vital public service are essential to the administration of elections, according to Clark and James (2021). For electoral laws to be administered and implemented effectively, electoral officials are essential (Clark & James, 2021). There are frequent issues that compromise the conduct, administration, and execution of elections. These issues centre on

electoral integrity and malfeasance, which typically lead to legal disputes. Election administration is therefore essential to maintaining democratic practices and preventing voter apathy in every nation.

The framework and procedures used by an impartial electoral authority to choose candidates for public office comprise election administration (Osabiya, 2014). While processes refer to the rules and procedures set forth in electoral legislation, structure refers to the electoral body primarily responsible for conducting elections. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the body responsible for planning and supervising elections in Nigeria. INEC is vital to the transparency and integrity of the election process. To administer elections, electoral administration entails adhering to electoral regulations and hiring and training specialists and non-specialists on a permanent or ad hoc basis. Additionally, polling places must be identified and provided with sufficient voting materials, and the electoral register must be compliant and kept current. The counting and tabulation process is carried out safely and openly, although the election administration is not complete until the polls shut (Clark, 2016). Election administration is the art of maintaining election integrity and advancing transparency to deter potential manipulation. It was unequivocally stated that amid stressful political circumstances, the electoral process's impartiality, integrity, and transparency may be questioned (Clark, 2016). Over the years, INEC has attempted to enhance its operations and boost public trust through a variety of election reforms. However, the political class's schemes and dishonest election officials have prevented the electoral reforms from producing the desired outcomes. Majekodunmi and Adejuwon (2012) believe that Nigeria's democratic consolidation is hindered by the election administration body's (INEC) evident misconduct. Essentially, the sustainability of democracy depends on the management of elections.

INEC also faces several challenges, such as budgetary constraints, political interference, and logistical issues. These challenges have occasionally compromised the legitimacy and efficacy of the electoral process. According to Osabiya (2014), the history of election administration and the failure to establish democracy are linearly related. This is an intriguing topic that requires more investigation. Nigerians' sensitivity to tribal and ethnic politics has been exacerbated by the nation's cultural variety, undermining the electoral process and weakening the administration. Nigeria's electoral administration has faced numerous challenges over the years, notwithstanding its accomplishments. Electoral malpractices, such as voter fraud, ballot box theft, and vote manipulation, have long harmed the integrity of elections. Election violence and irregularities are among the significant problems Nigeria's voting institutions face. Vote rigging, ballot stuffing, and voter intimidation incidents

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have been documented in several elections, which have caused residents' confidence in the democratic process to decline.

Furthermore, questions have been raised about the political process's impartiality and inclusivity, due to the prominence of money politics and the influence of affluent individuals in elections. Unufe (2019) alluded to factors such as irregularities during the electoral process, imposition of candidates, and complicity by security agencies. There is frequently an unfair advantage for wealthy political candidates over their less wealthy rivals, creating an unlevel playing field. Furthermore, insufficient electoral infrastructure, a lack of voter education, and logistical challenges in holding elections across wide, diverse areas have all posed substantial obstacles to the democratic process.

Furthermore, other issues were noted by Bello-Imam (2010), Dahida & Akangbe (2013), in Okibe and Mokuye (2019) as the cause of the country's democratisation process' underdevelopment. These include a long period of military rule, a lack of credible elections, a lack of freedom of speech and publication, a refusal to accept defeat (in an election) by political gladiators, corruption and the attitude of some political office holders to corner the nation's wealth for themselves, and a disregard for the rule of law. In all honesty, Nigeria is one of the top nations in this rubble. The majority of these recurring problems are electoral reform topics covered in the Report of the Uwais' Commission on Electoral Reforms in Nigeria. It acknowledges that free, fair, and credible elections are the cornerstone of democracy, lending legitimacy to a ruling government, instilling value in national public institutions, and lending credibility to the leadership succession process. Nigeria is far from implementing the suggested reform, nonetheless.

Poor Conduct of Elections

Parties compete in elections, and only one wins a certain office. Leaders in Nigeria follow the rules of the game and seldom accept defeat. That is a component of the country's military vices, which placed a high value on creating a cult of loyalists among the civil class, supporting them in running for office and winning by any means necessary. It influences a nation's political development and encourages corruption.

Corruption, the Bane of Democracy in Nigeria

The type, extent, issue, causes, and difficulties of corruption in Nigeria are described in a brief analysis of the relationship between corruption and development (Bello-Imam, 2010; Dahida & Akangbe, 2023). From an analytical perspective, it presents corruption and development as a clear

context for understanding the connection between corruption and a country's political and socioeconomic advancement. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) and other religious organisations' National Ethics Program, which is meant to be a tool for character development and a weapon against recurrent instances of corruption, may be questioned in light of the matrix and prevalence of corrupt practices. According to Ayinla (2023), corruption, particularly the kind that has been pervasive in Nigeria over the years, makes it impossible for government and development initiatives to be transparent and accountable. Development initiatives are often derailed by corruption. Claims, accusations, and counter-allegations against alleged former regimes and individuals have been devastating and, for the most part, unsupported. These accusations do not absolve or absolve any accuser of corrupt activities of their sins. Through the institutions of accountability in stewardship, openness in the administration of public affairs, and inclusivity in the creation and execution of policies, democracy detests corruption. Ayinla (2023a) goes on to say that corruption creates major obstacles to growth. It weakens political processes, which is detrimental to democracy and good government. Election corruption undermines representation and accountability in policymaking; it suspends the rule of law in the courts and leads to unequal allocation of public services. It is implied that corruption has become so widespread in our society that it appears to be nearly universal. Police officers on the road, EFCC, ICPC, FRSC, customs officers, immigration officers, and local government rate collectors.

Prospects of Democratisation in Nigeria

Nigeria possesses all the necessary elements to be both an international power and a developed, thriving democracy. Its ranking among the world's poorest countries poses a problem. If there is no paradigm change, those who extol the virtues of democracy but detest its methods of government will only benefit from the current state of affairs. Democratisation is hampered by some of the country's leaders and other public servants who exploit the country's resources to profit themselves. In their entirety, that idea and practice are dishonest, immoral, and undemocratic. Serving the public interest is the aim of democracy. It encapsulates the core of the social compact that binds the governed and the governors together in the pursuit of a society's common good.

Electoral Reforms

The political class and other stakeholders in Nigeria have long been deeply concerned about the possibility of manipulation and the integrity of the election process. After realising the need for comprehensive election changes,

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the Nigerian government and many stakeholders have taken action to improve the democratic process. An important step towards enhancing the independence and legitimacy of election administration was the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1998. INEC was to oversee and regulate all Nigerian election procedures. Electoral reform was implemented in 2010 in response to the untrustworthy 2007 elections, leading to significant changes to the voting process. Biometric voter registration, electronic voter card scanners, and result collation technologies were implemented to improve transparency and reduce election fraud. There were many irregularities and violence during the 2007 and 2011 general elections. According to Omotola (2011), there was a perception that the quality of Nigeria's elections was steadily declining. Electoral changes encourage real political competition and political leaders' accountability. Without a commitment to implement electoral changes, the number of electoral lawsuits could rise, undermining public confidence in the electoral process and raising concerns about the sustainability of Nigeria's democracy. Nigeria has dramatically improved its voting processes despite the challenges. With the introduction of electronic voter cards and biometric identification, which have reduced incidents of multiple voting and impersonation, election legitimacy has been somewhat enhanced. Additionally, there were encouraging signs that the 2015 and 2019 general elections were conducted differently. Most of the polls were peaceful, and INEC should be commended for its efforts to inform and involve voters. With the expectation that results will be transmitted electronically in real-time, the 2023 general election was expected to avoid the anomalies that marked the previous elections. Many Nigerians praised INEC's innovations as significant improvements to the electoral process. Nigerians' hopes were dashed when it became clear that the electoral authority was not committed to following the rules correctly. According to Omotola (2011), electoral reform increases public confidence in the voting system. Therefore, to increase public trust, a comparable shift in mindset should accompany electoral reform. To improve the election process, reforms must continue. Promoting civic education, reducing voter apathy, and strengthening INEC's independence are among the concerns that require immediate attention.

The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, introduced the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BIVAS), which is an electronic device designed to read permanent voter cards. Additionally, initiatives have been undertaken to improve civic participation and voter education, enabling residents to take an active role in the election process and hold politicians

responsible. Greater openness and scrutiny have also resulted from increased participation by media outlets, foreign observers, and civil society groups in election monitoring. The innovations introduced into the electoral process were intended to increase voter confidence. However, it remains a long journey to improve the quality and depth of the electoral process in Nigeria, due to the prevalence of open intimidation of voters and the high level of vote-buying.

Conclusion

Elections, electoral processes, and election management are essential elements of Nigeria's democratic development. Since gaining its independence, the nation has made significant progress, and the current advancements are admirable. To guarantee free, fair, and credible elections in the nation, problems still exist; thus, further efforts are required. Nigeria may develop a stronger democratic foundation by addressing concerns with election violence, money politics, and political meddling, ensuring that the people's will continues to be the primary factor informing its government. The active involvement of individuals, a dedication to democratic ideals, and a sincere desire to enhance the election process will be crucial in determining Nigeria's democratic course for the better as the country continues to develop.

Nigeria's path towards a stable and strong democratic government has been difficult, fraught with obstacles and failures. Nevertheless, the nation has made substantial strides recently due to the adoption of electoral reforms, enhanced election administration, and a commitment to bolstering democratic institutions. The government and the populace must not waver in their efforts to safeguard the values of democracy, the rule of law, and good governance, even as Nigeria continues to experience challenges on its route to democracy. Only by ongoing discussion, inclusion, and the shared commitment to build a stronger, more open, and more responsible democratic Nigeria will lasting progress be made. Steps must be taken to develop a functional electoral system that promotes competitiveness, participation, inclusiveness, and confidence-building, with a focus on democratic sustainability through free, fair, and credible elections.

It is undeniable that a country needs considerable time to achieve a stable, advanced democracy. America, the current paradigm of modern democracy, endured hardships in the past, but it persisted, concentrated, and was resolved to do things correctly. Nigeria's democratisation project is being challenged by numerous forces. The system is not trusted even by its operators. A typical American is motivated by national interest and considers what he would do for the country. Nigerians still don't think that way. The things that separate us appear to be given more weight than the things that bring us together. This

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covers things like language, religion, race, and ownership claims to resources. Most Nigerians nowadays aspire to travel abroad in search of better opportunities. They usually relocate to the Americas, Europe, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, and even neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Ghana, and Gabon. However, the governments and citizens of those nations had to be wise, make sacrifices, and work hard to instil democracy and good governance in their systems. Nigeria's democratisation process makes it quite clear that the nation is not headed towards democratic advancement. Regardless of how such desperation might impact the system, it appears from every angle that everyone is eager to seize the national cake.

Recommendations

To move from the simple conceptual fascination with democracy as a fantastical system to real action in day-to-day administration and endeavours in national integration, corporate life, and nation-building, the study offers a range of recommendations.

Based on the findings of the discussion, there should be a reorientation of values. Nigerians will develop a sense of moral rectitude through value reorientation. Additionally, because of the large benefits that come from corruption, it will make politics less profitable and discourage professionals such as doctors, engineers, architects, accountants, estate surveyors, and university professors from engaging in politics.

All eligible persons who wish to vote or be voted for in an election should have equal opportunity, internal party democracy, and widespread engagement. They should be independent and not emasculated by hidden agendas in all the organisations that oversee the daily management of public policy.

The importance of ethnicity, religion, tribe, and dialect should be diminished. Instead of discriminating against anyone, democracy brings people together in order to achieve justice, equity, and fairness in a political system. The concept and practice of democracy are supported by national identity, which is not fostered by such particularistic identification patterns.

To ensure democratic practice and sound governance, elections should be strengthened. Election procedures should be transparent, and the election management body should be independent. Both winners and losers should accept the election results without filing a lawsuit when they are announced.

Leadership ought to be outstanding. It ought to provide the standard for others to follow. Followers should also consider how they may support the development of their country.

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