

Stand Alone Election In Nigeria: The 2018 Gubernatorial Election In Osun State.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines issues and challenges of stand-alone election in the 22nd September 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun state. It is essential to interrogate some issues on the process, conduct and outcomes of the Osun state Stand-alone gubernatorial election of 22nd September 2018. This study is a departure from the various views and writings on election malpractices, election security management and the conduct of political parties during elections. In the recent times, inconclusive and stand-alone elections have become issues in Nigeria's electoral process. Therefore, the major focus of this study was to interrogate the concept of stand-alone elections; to investigate the causes of a stand-alone election in Osun State; to discuss the challenges of stand-alone elections on democracy; to examine the possible effects of stand-alone elections on democratic consolidation; and to suggest solutions to the identified challenges. Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources, primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews with purposively selected respondents in selected local government areas of the state, representing the three senatorial districts of the state. While secondary data was gathered from related literatures, text books, newspaper publications and internet materials. Data gathered was analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study showed that the 22nd September 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was conducted solely with a predetermined conclusion. There were series of criticism, pressure and agitations from observers and the electorates who were intimidated, that the electoral umpire should allow the will of the people prevail in elections rather than seeking all means of forcing the will of government on the people. The process was over militarized, opposition party members were arrested, ballot stuffing and unrest, and the manipulation of election processes; the result was an inconclusive election that led to the conduct of rerun election of 27th September 2018. The study revealed that there was peaceful electioneering process, until the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared the election inconclusive. The study concludes that the 2018 stand-alone election in Osun state Nigeria was not conducted in a democratic manner that would be adjudged as free and fair.

Keywords: Election, stand Alone election, gubernatorial, Democratic consolidation, rerun election.

INTRODUCTION

Election as one of the fundamental principles of democracy is generally regarded as a major tenet of representative democracy anywhere in the world. Election is a process of validating or invalidating the acceptance of policy or leadership in a democracy. Ojo (2007) describes election as the heart of democratic order and hallmark of democracy. Awofeso and Odeyemi (2016) submit that, election is generally conceived as the process through which public office holders are selected periodically by a fraction of a country's population otherwise referred to as the electorate. They both argued that election is a selection process which elevates a group of persons to positions of authority with the power to direct the affairs of the state. Election in this regard can be defined as a method for selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by the electorate. It is the medium whereby people freely elect their representatives to administer the machinery of governance on their behalf and as well reject those they do not want to be governed by or leaders who have not governed them well.

According to Egwemi (2015) elections are a major component of the democratic enterprise. Regular, free, fair and transparent elections are the hallmarks of genuine democracy. Stressing further, Ejumudo (2013) opine that elections are the technical means or instruments of ensuring popular participation in governance by citizens who choose their representatives in conformity with the dictates of modern democracy and a hallmark of legitimacy. More importantly, elections are crucial to democracy in the sense that no society can be regarded as democratic without conducting periodic elections. In the view of Anifowose and Enemu (2015), election remains an actual variable that separate old democracies from emerging democracies when it is conducted freely, fairly and credibly.

Elections in Nigeria can be traced to the era of colonial administration cum nationalist agitation for self-government. In preparation for an independent Nigeria, general elections were conducted on 12 December, 1959 into local councils, Regional and Federal Legislature. Odusote (2014) submits that in the 1959 election, voting was by secret ballot; all registered adults in Western, and Eastern Nigeria were eligible to vote. He further submits that, in Northern Nigeria, only registered adult males were eligible to vote; three regional and ethnic based political parties emerged as the dominant parties, Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC).

Nigeria has held eleven general elections namely as follows; 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. The fewness of general elections is a product of long years of military rule. However, since 1999 when Nigeria embraced democratic governance after military disengagement from politics, it has held six general elections with five of them organized by democratically elected governments. Election is an important component of democratic governance; in fact, a major determinant of how democratically-compliant a country or society is. The more a state adheres to, and incorporates the core principles of elections, which are freeness, fairness, and credibility, the more it is adjudged democratic (Nwankwo, 2006).

Elections in Nigeria since independence have been facing a serious test of credibility. The new twist of staggered electoral timetables and stand-alone elections in some parts of the country is becoming a major issue in Nigerian democracy. The process and conduct of stand-alone elections is different from the general elections and is becoming a source of concern.

Stand-alone elections are the kind of elections that held separately, the general elections is an election usually held at regular intervals, Litigations of various degrees that caused termination of tenure have been observed as the main reason why elections are conducted separately. For instance, Osun, Ekiti, Kogi, Ondo, Bayelsa, Edo and Anambra are states that have had their governors removed and installed through various Election Petition Tribunals and courts of law.

There are lots of scholarly works on Elections and democracy in Nigeria, but the issue of stand-alone elections, isolated elections or staggered elections have not been sufficiently interrogated. In order to fill the observed gap in reviewed literature, this study examines the issues and challenges of the stand-alone election in the Osun state 2018 gubernatorial election. The study specifically examines the various issues and challenges that confronted the 2018 stand-alone election in Osun State and its possible implications on the nation's democracy. The most discussed issues within the Nigerian political system have been election malpractices, election security management and the conduct of political parties. In recent times, issues of inconclusive election, vote buying, ballot stuffing, stand-alone elections among others are featuring in the Nigeria electoral process which have become challenge to the electoral process in the country.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

ELECTION

Election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people called the electorate (Heywood, 1997 as cited in Lawal). Elections are not just casting of votes to elect leaders, but also the active participation of the people in governance to ensure sustenance and survival of democracy. In this sense, it is not a ritual organized for people to queue up every four years to cast their votes but also a veritable process of changing leadership through a peaceful means for improved socio-economic policies that benefit the people (LEMT, 2003). Election is a process through which candidates are chosen for public offices through voting in a periodic period of time. Key (1960), sees election as a process that establishes a framework for change. It provides continuity and a sense of political community, for they are links in a chain that bind one generation of voters to the other. Every four years the voters come together in an act of decision making that is influenced by the past and present, but designed to shape the future. Election has become a necessity in liberal democracies and for any process of leadership selection to be acceptable as a democracy, elections must be conducted.

However, it must be noted that not all elections are democratic. Democratic elections are such that electorates voted according to their conscience without any kind of intimidation, before, during or after voting for their preferred candidate or candidates in an election. Democratic elections are mostly conducted in the developed world where democratic principles are entrenched. Meanwhile, undemocratic elections are mostly conducted in the third world countries where elections are synonymous to war. In the third world, aspirants mostly force themselves on the electorates through vote-buying, election results are manipulated by the electoral body, intimidation of voters before, during and after the elections, electoral tribunals and courts basing judgments on flimsy technicalities among others. The resultant effect of the mentioned are political crises, absence of free and fair elections where citizens would retain or change their leaders.

An election is a formal decision making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office in trust for the whole. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy operates since the 17th century (Britannica, Encyclopedia 2009).

The most obvious function of elections is to provide a competition platform for office seekers and a means of holding the winners to account. According to Katz (1997), elections are the defining institution of modern democracy. Elections are the means through which the people exercise their sovereign right to choose who governs them and what the political and other priorities of their government should be. Democratic elections are thus the opportunity for the people to express their sovereignty through the ballot to confer legitimacy to their government; renew its mandate if necessary or withdraw from it the authority to govern. This is the basis of accountable government. (INEC, 2011 as cited in Innocent et al).

Elections that allow for free choice of the electorates are credible. Such election legitimizes regimes and consolidates democracy. There cannot be true democracy as long as free and fair elections remain elusive. This is because election malpractices of any kind bring about election crises and democracy cannot thrive in an environment bedeviled with political crises.

According to Shively (1999) “elections are a major component of the democratic enterprise. Regular, free, fair and transparent elections are the hallmarks of genuine democracy. We use the term genuine democracy deliberately because all over the world regimes exist which mouth the term democracy but whose practices are at variance with the tenets of democracy. In fact, there is hardly any government in the world today that does not make claims to being a democracy”

Elections are of various types. It may be direct or indirect. An on-cycle election is called the general election, which falls within the period of national election time table. An off-cycle are elections conducted outside the main or general election time table. An off-circle election is sometimes violent; low turnout of voters; intimidation; militarization and other forms that is anti-democratic norms. According to Rod and

Martin (2004) elections in some new democracies have acquired the routine character that reflects consolidation of democratic order. When the election itself ceases to be the issue, and the focus shifts instead to the competing parties, elections have become an institutionalized part of an established democracy.

Election Litigations

It is evident that there has been rising cases of election manipulations in Nigeria. This has led to increase in the number of election petition tribunals established to receive complaints over elections conducted. In 1999, for instance, despite the fact that Nigeria had just come out of a prolonged military rule, there were cases of election manipulations by desperate politicians to gain political power and thereby control the economic resources of the nation (Sha, 2008). Subsequent elections in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 witnessed manipulations of large proportions through various means (Agbaje and Adejumo, 2006; Suberu, 2007; Yagboaju, 2011; Owen and Usman, 2015; Onimisi and Omolegbe, 2019). This has inadvertently increased the number of election petition cases. The scale of electoral malpractices observed since Nigeria's first general elections under the current political dispensation was confirmed by the number of petitions to the election petition tribunals after results were declared by the INEC (Enweremadu, 2011).

The polity also witnessed many court cases regarding the processes and guidelines for the impeachment of elected state executives, in several key states in the bid to give electoral fraud in those states more potency (ibid). It is important to note that only on rare situations would politicians in developing countries not petition electoral outcomes even when they have no good cases to present at the law courts. On many instances, cases are thrown out by the courts for lack of merit and inability to present evidence that proves alleged cases of electoral malpractices (The Guardian, 10 July 2004). This is not to say that many other cases have not been proved beyond reasonable doubts before electoral courts, that malpractices actually took place, thus making the judiciary an instrument of democratic advancement (Enweremadu, 2011). Perhaps, the intention of politicians with bad cases before the election petitions tribunals is to explore the judiciary as an avenue to rig, buy favourable judgments and secure electoral victories through the courts since the judiciary in Nigeria was once noted for selling judgment to the highest bidder or to the powers that be (Ibid, 123). This is evident in the manner Justice Bassey Ikpeme of the High Court of Abuja gave an excruciating *ex parte* injunction to stop the June 12 1993 presidential election only two days to the election, despite existing Decree 37 of the Transition to Civil Rule which ousted all court verdicts relating to the conduct of elections (Ibid, 117). It was on this legal contraption that the Federal Military Government, headed by General Babangida, nullified the outcome of the June 12 election adjudged the freest and fairest in Nigeria's electoral history (Ojukwu and Oni, 2016; Agbo, 2008).

The desperation of politicians, especially the incumbent political office holders and their cronies to hold on to power and the equal desperation of the opposition to unseat them is an indication of underdevelopment and lack of political culture. When the political office seeker failed to achieve their goal through ballot, they resort to the judiciary as another avenue to slug it out. Thus, the geometric projection in electoral litigations after every general election is a bad omen for democratic development. This assertion received credence in the observations and report of the Justice Muhammed Lawal Uwais Political and Electoral Reforms Committee established by President Yar'adua. The President admitted on his inauguration day that the 2007 presidential elections that enthroned him were fraudulent hence the constitution of an electoral reform committee (Sahara reporters, 2010). In the report of the committee on the negative electoral culture in Nigeria's political history, it was noted *inter alia* that:

The basic reason for this has been the attempts by political elite to perpetuate their grip on political power by all means. Over the years, political elite have become more desperate and daring in securing and consolidating political power; greedier and reckless in the way they use and misuse power; and more intolerant of political rivalry, criticism and attempts at replacing them (Justice Uwais Committee on

Electoral Reform, 2008: 19).

The result of this power play was an unprecedented number of petitions filed to challenge the outcomes of the 2007 general elections. To be specific, there were 1,475 cases before the courts of law resulting from the 2007 general elections (Electoral Reform Committee, 2008). The rising cases of election litigations is also traceable to the upsurge in Nigeria's oil revenue which consequently occasioned jumbo pay for politicians at all levels, thus making political offices very attractive for both incumbents as well as aspiring ones. The effect of this is a highly monetized electoral process which opens doors for the corruption of the electorate, election management officials including security agencies (Mgba, 2017) and the judiciary.

Similarly, the manner in which the election management body in Nigeria compromises the electoral process arms politicians to seek justice in the courts of law against the electoral process and its outcomes. This inglorious posture of the election management body is not in tandem with its expected role in a democratic system. As averred by Jinadu (1997: 1), in a democracy, the organization and conduct of elections, who does this and how it is done, the structure and process for doing it, are all of paramount importance. An impartial electoral administration is therefore sine qua non for promoting credible elections. Credible elections are also not achievable without effective electoral administration (Mozaffar and Schedler, 2002; Oni, Eramah and Oladejo, 2017). Various post-election reports indicted the election management body and its allied organizations, especially security agencies assigned to provide adequate protection for both electoral personnel and election materials, of complicity in manipulating and weakening political structures. Giving specific details on this, some reports noted inter alia:

‘In Enugu state, it was observed that voting officials in many stations stamped and released bundles of ballot papers to agents of a particular party which they thumb printed in the presence of security agents before stuffing them in the ballot boxes. In Imo state, some voting officials connived with agents of one of the political parties and carted ballot boxes away to Owerri Plaza where they were stuffed with already thumb printed ballot papers. The same was in Taraba. In Emekuku, thugs were said to have to assume the position of electoral officers at polling Centre 008 in Yenogoa Local Government Council Area of Bayelsa state, agents were said to have bribed the Presiding Officer. Indeed, the list is endless’ (TMG Report, 2003/2004; Vanguard May, 26, 2003)

The brazenness with which the election management body and security agencies compromise their constitutional positions; namely, impartiality, neutrality, openness, transparency and accountability during elections have become potent bases of argument for politicians who lose elections at the ballot in challenging electoral outcomes in courts, thereby exacerbating the number of election litigations. The number of electoral fraud and manipulations in Nigeria reached its climax during the 2007 general elections, owing to the threat of a do-or-die election by the outgoing President Obasanjo who had earlier boasted that his political party would rule Nigeria for at least 60 years (Tenuche, 2009: 50; Oni, 2014:190). Earlier election petition figures did not raise alarm about the rot in Nigeria's electoral process. Very insignificant number of petitions were filed against the 1999 general elections, the only notable one being Chief Olu Falae's petition against the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Sagay, (2012) submits that the 2003 general elections attracted 754 petitions. Election petition cases resulting from the 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections have drastically reduced, though still fluctuating due to many reforms introduced into the electoral system. Increase in the number of post-election litigations poses a big question on the electoral process in Nigeria despite series of reforms and money spent on the process. However, it should be noted that Nigerian politicians introduces new methods of rigging elections at every election. Examples are vote buying, ballot stuffing, and intimidation of the electorates, and inconclusive elections which eventually result in stand-alone election.

2018 Stand-Alone Gubernatorial Election in Osun State

Stand-alone elections are scheduled and conducted separately from the general elections. It could be an election for the positions of Governor, Senator, House of Representatives Member, State Assembly Member or any other elective positions. It is important to note that by Elections too are referred to as a Stand-alone election; it could be as a result of the death of any elected Chief Executive or representative, resignation or recall that may warrant the conduct of another election which will not be at the same time and period of the general elections. The disparity in the Governorship stand-alone election and legislative stand-alone elections are: In cases of the stand-alone election conducted on the ground of any legislative positions the situations and positions are differing from the Governorship positions, in the sense that the tenure of office of the legislative house remains the same date with other in the house and not to be extended on the date or tenure of office. In the cases of the stand-alone election conducted on the gubernatorial positions, the situations are differing and the tenure of office are based on the litigation outcome and electoral provisions. This makes possible for any Governorship candidate to spend the accurate tenure of office (four years) as different from other legislative positions. The day a Governor takes oath of office would be the first day of counting the days and tenure of office for the Governorship position.

However, the Osun state gubernatorial election of September 22 2018 was conducted and raised series of issues from various quarters. The election became a major concern for observers and analysts, because of the new dimension and the new trend of its inconclusiveness. The new trend roused discussion and observable awareness among the electorates. On Saturday September 22, 2018, the Osun state gubernatorial election was held, it was the day set aside for the electorates to exercise their franchise in electing a governor who would oversee the affairs of state for four years as stipulated by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, the outgoing Governor was at the tail end of his administration as his constitutionally stipulated two-term limit would lapse on November 26, 2018, thus making the elections imperative. Officially, 48 political parties fielded candidates for the election, but only five major political parties and five candidates that were seen as serious contenders in the electoral contest.

The political parties and their candidates are: All Progressives Congress (APC) – Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – Senator Ademola Adeleke; Social Democratic Party (SDP) – Otunba Iyiola Omisore; two former Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Moshood Adeoti and Alhaji Fatai Akinbade, who are the candidates of the Action Democratic Party (ADP) and African Democratic Congress (ADC) respectively. The expectations and determination of the voters in the election was evident in the manner they presented themselves and this ensured a violence-free exercise in almost all the polling units in the state. Even though, reported cases of vote-buying was a bit of concern, there was, however, significant reduction from the usual experiences from recent past stand-alone gubernatorial elections held in other states of the country, notably Edo, Anambra and Ekiti states. At 11: 00am of Sunday September 23, 2018, official results from most of the 30 local government areas had been collated, putting PDP's Senator Ademola Adeleke ahead with comfortable lead of over 5,000 votes before the INEC State Returning Officer (SRO), Professor Joseph Afuwape called for a break in the exercise, Unfortunately, when the Returning Officer resumed from the said break he announced that “it's not possible to declare anybody as the clear winner of the election on the first ballot.” Explaining that the total registered voters in the seven polling units where elections were cancelled due to incidences of over-voting and violence is 3,498 votes and that since the figure is higher than the difference (353), between the two leading candidates, owing to this declare the election inconclusive.” and to conduct a rerun election so as to determine the winner at the final poll, slated for 27th of September 2018. It was stated that the contrived Rerun would only cover 7 polling units but spread across four local governments. INEC indicated that voters in Ife South Ward 8, Unit 10; Ife South Ward 7, Unit 12; Orolu Ward 9, Unit 3; Orolu Ward 8, Unit 1; Orolu Ward 8, Unit 4; Osogbo LGA Ward 5, unit 17; and Ife North LG, Ward 10, Polling Unit 2, Oyere II, should be prepared for a fresh election on the 27th of September, 2018. (Vanguard newspaper 23 September 2018).

The rerun election was conducted on 27th of September 2018, to ascertain the clear winner of the poll. The election was reported by local and international observers to have been marred with irregularities, intimidation of the electorates with the heavy presence of military armed men and thugs seen carrying dangerous arms freely without any challenge or resistance from the security personnel (Vanguard newspaper 23 September 2018). However, the Independent Electoral Commission declared the candidate of All Progressive Party, Gboyega Oyetola, the winner of the 2018 governorship election. At the end of the tally votes, APC candidate scored a total number of 255,023 votes. Although Mr. Adeleke had led his APC rival with 353 votes at the end of the first round of the ballot on Saturday, the table turned the other way after the supplementary election held on Thursday 27th of September, with the APC overtaking and won with a total margin of 482 votes.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among selected members of the study area in Osun State. The respondents were those capable of providing adequate answers to the research questions. The populations include the residents of the sampled communities. The population comprised politicians, party officials, registered voters comprising of; market women, commercial motorcycle riders, youths of voting age and erudite scholars. A field survey was conducted in Osogbo, Ile –Ife, Ikirun, Okuku, Iwo and Ikire, making equal representation of all three senatorial districts in Osun State. The study adopted qualitative research method and applied in-depth interview method to collect data for the study. In determining the sample size for this

Study, the researcher adopted the purposive sampling methods. These are non-probability sampling techniques, essential in a study that requires information from a well-informed public about certain socio-political phenomena.

In all; 400 interviewee was targeted, comprising of 50 politicians, 50 active party officials of different political parties, 100 registered voters, 50 market women, 25 transport workers, 25 Okada riders, 50 youths of voting age both male and female, and 50 scholars. Unfortunately in the course of the field work on interview, most respondent do not have little or much ideas on stand-alone Election, it was a tough efforts to contact respondents who could give useful information's on the research questions.

Other difficulties arose again at July 2021 at Oshogbo and environs whereby respondents decided not to grant interview on any matter with the fear of being implicated, because it was a sensitive time of cult clash and unrest in Osogbo, '7/7' as usually coded; there was a communal clash at Ikirun and Obaagun in Ifelodun local Government of Osun State, around the month of April and May 2021 during the course of gathering relevant information's on this research work, it then stood as an impediment to gather relevant information's from the selected targeted population.

Similar occurred at Ikire, Iwo ,and Ile Ife where many electorates contacted were not ready to discuss anything political despite many proof of being an academic work, while only few that responded were giving information's that does not match the interrogation's. while some gave reasons on political apathy in recent times and decided not to grant any discuss that has to do with politics or election.

These impediments prompted the researcher to purposively focus the interview on Opinion leaders and scholars who had prior knowledge of elections, stand-alone election and democratic values and consolidation; which later reduced the sample population to 20 respondents who gave adequate information's needed on the research interrogation's; 10 opinion leaders/scholars was selected; 3 from Ile Ife, 2 from Osogbo, 2 from Iwo, 1 selected from Okuku and 2 from Ikirun.

While 10 registered voters were interviewed; 2 from Ikire, 2 from Oshogbo, 2 from Iwo, 2 selected from Ile

Ife, 1 from Ikirun and 1 from Okuku. These selected numbers varies due to sizes and population of each towns and cities targeted.

The main research instrument was an unstructured interview guide, which enabled the researcher to query many issues of concern, and on the other hand the respondents were able to adequately discuss questions asked by the researcher. The interview guide was made up of 10 questions. Data gathered were analyzed qualitatively by making use of excerpts and paragraphing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings indicated that stand-alone elections are not an aberration to democracy, respondents stated that stand-alone election is one of the fruits of healthy democracy, that is having strong and credible stand-alone elections will be a good instrument and a consolidating tool in situations and cases of undefined occurrence's where election could not hold or litigations sets in due course. An interview by a prominent scholar and public analyst in Osogbo. Chief Tope Abiola, posited on stand-alone election and democratic consolidations and the possible effects on democratization in Nigeria:

stand-alone election is a good thing and one of the fruits of good democracy which is mostly given out by the Judiciary, from the aftermath of the Election Petition Tribunals. It is good in the sense that it gives, opportunity for the cheated and oppressed to express their grievances or unpleasantness about an election or elections conducted, it's a vital tool that makes possible for democratizations. The case of Aregbesola was a kind that brought a change to the trend of democracy in Nigeria, where an incumbent governor was sacked and new one took over and spent the actual periods of tenure to be in office. This situation brought a change to the date in the state election from the general elections. Nothing has been done wrong by so doing and the fact remains that it has only been taken advantage of by the political elite and the government in power, as beautiful as it could be, it has been abused and misused to give a setback to democratizations and democratic consolidation. The extent to which power are being exercised by the political ruling class to win such elections has been undemocratically unimaginable. For example, militarization of election, vote buying, electoral malpractices and lots of delinquencies that would not promote democracy are being engaged in during the Osun Gubernatorial election in 2018. The discussed are the other disadvantageous part of the stand-alone elections and should be guided against so as to give democracy the values it required to make it more sustainable and healthy.

(Field work 2021)

Providing a closely related view with Chief Abiola's submission is Alimi, he presented his view on the September 22, 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun;

Stand-alone elections are circumstantial elections, there are reasons for coming into being of such elections, these kind of elections are not willfully created, and it's a very good opportunity for democracy, the Electoral Management Body (EMB) do have adequate resources and opportunities to well plan such elections in terms of logistics to have a properly created election. This has created a positive impact on democratization in Nigeria, while at the same time wherever these kind of elections are conducted there are much concentration of overambitious politicians, the cases of Osun State is a typical illustration to see that it raises more nerves of the people than the general elections. There was presence of adequate electoral monitors both locally and internationally. Considering the fact that such elections required proper monitoring because it has a higher focus than the general elections, so as to make possible for credibility and fair play on the process and conducts. So its regarded as good and positive for consolidation of democracy. The heavy presence of the security personnel was to make possible for fairness and credibility except in the present situation where there are insufficient numbers of security personnel to be able to oversee the conduct as appropriate. He disagreed to the notion that heavy security presence is to manipulate the election or to

intimidate the electorates. Election process should be a civil process that should not involve the military, so cases where there is presence of the military then it could be termed as violating the major objective. The police presence in elections is not a bad arrangement, and it's not to intimidate but to maintain peace and order.

Vote buying was at the high side during the stand-alone election conducted in Osun state on 22nd of September, 2018. Based on the isolation of the election, it has always been a fiat competition between parties in exercising strengths and targeted to winning elections by all means. To be honest the incumbent power has not done well with some levels shown in the conducts in most cases, they by all means wanted to be reelected not considering their legitimacy. Retaining power by the incumbent is to show that they have done well either acceptable by the citizen or not. Most stand-alone elections are almost closer to the general election so the incumbency power does like using it as a spring board to the general election so as to use it as a template in conducting the general election as well to convince the electorates.

Stand-alone election conducted in Osun State have solidified democratic consolidation in Nigeria, it doesn't give space for manipulations because of the much focus of observer's and as well the EMB are able to properly plan and conduct the elections with fair play and neutrality.

(Field work 2021)

Sabitu argues that:

The 2018 stand-alone election in Osun was not an election conducted alone with other parties, but it seems to be as an election between PDP versus Federal government and other APC states. The pressure was much from all Federal agencies that took part in the election and the election was seriously financed by all APC governors, this is no more an elections and cannot consolidate our democracy in anyway, it's putting down a template that is unhealthy to Nigeria democratic system.

(Field work 2021)

An Anonymous opined that:

INEC destroyed all the processes of the 2018 election in Osun state, the conduct was at first very peaceful and well acceptable, it was a bad game to declare the election inconclusive. INEC has no specific and defined rules of conduct that is why it is important to have a review of our electoral act. The one in use is outdated and it seems to be like a tool of exploits for any government in power. It is on both the parties that has been using this wrong acts to manipulate the elections, that excuse given by the SRO was not genuinely, it was a mere manipulation by the government in power there were live shows of display of thugs and other heavily armed security men showing off their strength. Who dare go there to vote? That is not election again but a mere cajole to rig, as such not healthy for Nigeria democratic consolidation.

(Field work 2021)

Another view on 2018 stand-alone gubernatorial election in Osun state was presented by an Apeloko thus:

Stand-alone election is one of the good components of democracy, it added strength to democratic consolidation and gives room for clarifications and good conduct of elections, in the sense that when some are being cheated and manipulated on election process there is room for revisiting of such elections to put the interest of the electorate at priority and giving the mandate to the rightful and acceptable candidate. This kind of election could only exist on court decisions and ratification after various petitions and tribunal of elections. Judicial system remains the alternative institution that could put straight the anomalies of the elections conducted, this has been a slap on the institutions charged with the conduct of elections in Nigeria

(INEC).

It is essential to have a good conduct and credible elections that is devoid of petitions or litigations aftermath of election, our democratic values are lowering down as we are not getting the mandate on elections rather than court; this poses much defacement to Nigeria democratic consolidation.

The “genesis” of stand-alone election should be the most important factor to put into consideration and work towards, if the election conducts were free, fair and credible then there will be lesser issues of stand-alone elections in Nigeria. Stand-alone elections are not working as tool of democratization when it comes to the various set back in its conduct and the atrocities in the process. Therefore, it is viewed both as a way and as a tool for correcting the errors and cheats of election and as well as an instrument's of electoral manipulations.

(Field work April 2021)

Olaseni observed and submits that:

Issue of stand-alone election has created lots of setbacks and unfortunate cases of political frauds to our democracy in Nigeria. Many occurrences of this kind of election conducted in Nigeria; that has brought some kind of questioning to our democratic system, illustrating with the second term election of Ogbeni Rauf Aregbosa and Iyiola Omisore, on August 9 2014, and the September 22 gubernatorial election of 2018 in Osun state. It shows the reality of conducting a stand-alone election in Nigeria, where the incumbency power with the federal government might and strength shows dominance through the use of state power, state resources and money to influence and manipulate the elections through various means and methods which are anti-ethical to democratic standards and consolidation. Manipulations and vote buying was all over during that election and not paving way for the true will of the electorates, this kind of election is a set back to our democratic values, the extent of the use of arms, thugs and manipulations during the rerun of the Osun State 2018 governorship, has created political apathy to most electorates, it reflects the electorates has been disfranchised, thus not promoting our democratic sustainability.

(Field work April 2021)

The deduction from the above assertion is that the conduct of stand-alone election have created a fear and political apathy for some electorates due to the conducts and manipulations of the election process, the heavy presence of armed thugs and military personnel and their conducts intimidated most electorates.

In the view of Omiwole, he declared that:

Stand-alone elections are not a bad phenomenal to democracy, it supposed to give the electoral body opportunity to check and correct some errors or inadequacies of elections conducted. It is only unfortunate that stand-alone elections have turned to another scenario in Nigeria polity, whereby it's used as a tool for winning elections at all cost. Lots of atrocities were recorded in the conduct of stand-alone elections in Nigeria, which put the type of election as another bad side of democratic sustainability. The process has been compromised and conducted as against the acceptable rules of the game. Stand-alone election supposed to be template for other elections in the country especially the general election, it's a good room for checkmating the oppressed in democracy who seek redress over incredibility or cheats on election process, rather than targeting its main objectives of making democracy healthy it has been high jacked by the political class as an instrument of winning elections at all cost. Most of the stand-alone elections conducted so far in Nigeria has been grossly manipulated, there should be no reason why the 2018 Osun stand-alone election should be declared inconclusive. It's the issue within the INEC as an institution that has the control of government in power, opined that; if it was the PDP that rules at the presidency, the election

would have been declared in favor of PDP, with all these, it shows how stand-alone elections have been manipulated and used as a tool of oppression in Nigeria.

(Field work April 2021)

Corroborating the above assertion, Fasanjo observes that:

The conduct of these so called stand-alone election has been seen as a serious setback to democratic consolidation, its conducts and various observations were not pleasant to many electorates, the ones conducted in Osun here made many to start having some kind of feelings negatively, situations and processes of the conducts makes people uncomfortable with the conducts. All observations were not pleasant, observably at the eve of the Osun election was a war at places where the rerun was to take place on the 27 of September it was a bad omen for democracy, with various unrest and display of thugs Armed men on uniform and various unethical acts, acceptable legitimate government is the most preferred and not forceful governance, There were sporadic shootings and violence, so where is the democratization in that? The process of its conduct should be checked again and corrected with the hope of sustaining our democracy in Nigeria.

(Field work April 2021)

The general overview of this study reveals that stand-alone election is a tool to democratic sustainability; and many positive effects on democracy has been observed in the past stand-alone elections conducted in Nigeria as a whole, it is evident that stand alone election created some tensions and incredibility on the conducts of election in Osun state and Nigeria as a whole. Electoral Body which is the appointee of the Federal Government were accused of manipulating the process in favor of the ruling party, while the security agents are not neutral; rather, they support the government in power to manipulate the election processes by not allowing legitimate electorates to come out and vote for the candidate of their choice. The action of the security personnel during the election is one of the underlying factors that affects the conduct of free, fair and credible stand-alone elections in Osun state.

More so studies show that stand-alone elections were marred with the issues of institutions responsible for the conduct of election (EMB) as being manipulated and not neutral in the conduct of the elections in Osun state stand-alone election of 2018. Though it was ascertained that stand alone elections has been a good tool for democratic consolidation but has not been adequately managed to make possible credible and acceptable election.

The inference from the various submission is that, in an entrenched and consolidated democracy, where politics is conducted as war and winner take all, stand-alone election will further strengthen the process by ensuring free, fair, credible and acceptable election. But in the Nigerian experimental democracy, stand-alone election will only allow for the will of the powerful rather than wishes of the electorates.

The study however revealed that the stand alone election is unavoidable in democracy; hence it has been a good fruit for healthy democracy, its influence and effects on democratic consolidation remains vital, the conduct of this kind of election should be adequately considered and properly managed, the aftermath of elections and challenges of electoral process and elections ensued stand-alone elections. Election petitions and litigation has been observed as the major factors that resulted to stand-alone election in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The place and vitality of stand-alone elections in democracy cannot be overemphasized. Ideally, election is a means of determining the will of the people regarding their choice of political leaders and types of regimes.

In essence, both the process and the outcome of election should reflect the consent and aspirations of the people as organized electorate in developed democracy with well entrenched globally acceptable political process and culture. This implies that apart from being a routine periodic democratic exercise, election must be competitive, devoid of intimidation, vote buying, transparent, free and fair as well as credible. In situations whereby elections needed to be revisited, due to maybe inadequacies or shortcomings on elections that might demanded for re fixing elections, to make possible for the electorate's to exercise their franchise; some cases of litigations from the court of law which are part of the good process in attaining viable democracy; death or resignation of an elected Executive or Legislator.

In Nigeria, the issue of election has been a problematic process over the years. The electoral process in Nigeria has been compromised to allow the most powerful emerged as the winner of elections. There have been problems of electoral violence, falsification of election result, vote buying and many other irregularities bulk of which arose from the excesses of the politicians in their desperate bid to capture, control and remain in power. This erodes the globally established electoral standards and defy the prospects of free, fair and credible elections in the country. It has been observed that stand-alone elections have been regarded as a tool of exploiting and oppression on the part of the party that controls the federal government. There were display of military powers to intimidate electorates and more financial inducement during stand-alone elections in Nigeria. Other states interference on the electoral process through mega rally by giving fake promises; donations from sister states which aides vote buying and selling, the use of armed men in harassing the electorates before and during elections, all these have diverted the targeted objectives of stand-alone elections which are to put democracy rightly and to help in its consolidations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings in this research, the following recommendations are proposed to address some of the identified issues with stand-alone election in Nigeria, managing a stand-alone election properly with adequate focus on its conducts remains a very crucial task to attend to by the electoral umpire (INEC) this will make possible for acceptability of the stand-alone election to serve its purpose of consolidating democracy and correcting the anomalies that might had occurred in past elections,

INEC as an institution charged with the responsibility of conducting elections should comprise of individuals with an impeccable character and integrity. Also, membership of the electoral umpire should not be extended to membership of political parties either active or perceive. A serious investigation would reveal partisanship of members of the electoral body in Nigeria over the years. The conduct of the electoral body in Nigeria has not always been neutral and independent. There is need for independency to reflect in their conducts and operations as an institution and not partisan as most reports and studies revealed.

This is evident in that, most of the time when cases are taken to court, INEC is also joined as a party in the litigation. At times, INEC can provide information that can actually validate or invalidate an election. Hence, INEC is a factor in any electoral process, they can be compromised. The position of the electoral management body (EMB) should be seen as in reality neutral and should maintains its professionalism on the conducts of electioneering processes. More to this is the amendments of the electoral acts to make clearer definitions of conditions of elections and voting patterns, usage of electronic means of voting and transmitting of election result remains an important recommendation.

Finally, this study recommends that stand-alone elections should be remodel and well scrutinized in terms of planning, processes, and judicial litigations on stand-alone elections; Nigeria in particular because the disadvantages outweighed the advantages as its been managed and conducted . It is only in Nigeria that the government can make available security personnel that could outnumber the registered electorates in a stand-alone election but would fail to mobilize security to confront and combat terrorists and bandits. In view of

this, it is recommended that judicial judgment for legislative stand-alone elections should be extended and applicable to the executive stand-alone elections, to ensure that all elections are conducted simultaneously in the same election time table without setting aside any state election.

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