

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and
Post Election Peace Building in Nigeria: A Comparative Study
of 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

The credibility of any election is partly depending on the institution saddle with the responsibility of organizing and conducting election from the beginning to the end, which further determines or builds post-electoral environment of democratic societies to either be peaceful or otherwise. In Nigeria, efforts in building peaceful post-election environment have always been a major challenge from the First Republic, through the Second and aborted the Third Republic down to the Fourth Republic. In this regard, this paper aims to examine INEC's effort in post-election peace building in Nigeria, using comparative study of INEC's pre-election arrangement, election and post-election issues of 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections, through a content method of data analysis. The analysis revealed that INEC had played a key role in building peace during and after 2011, and especially in 2015 presidential elections, through the introduction of biometric innovations in the electoral processes such as; biometric voters register, permanent voter's cards, biometric card readers as well as access to information by electorates on INEC website among others, thereby conducting a free, fair and credible election that is acceptable to the electorates. The paper concluded that INEC alone can serve as a peace building mechanism by providing a transparent electoral process, and therefore, recommended that INEC should continue to improve and strengthen the use of biometric measures in its forthcoming or subsequent election in the country.

Keywords: Democracy, Electoral Management Body, INEC, Election, Peace Building, Nigeria.

Introduction

Democracy is a system of government whereby eligible citizens choose a party candidate that is willing to represent their interest in the affairs of the state through elections, organized, managed and supervised by the electoral management body. Meaning that, in any democratic dispensation, electoral management body is the sine qua non for a breath and healthy living of democracy. As a matter of fact, there would be no democracy without electoral management body anywhere in the World. These trends resulted to different democracies, establishing different electoral institutions empowered by their different democratic constitutions to organize and conduct elections at both national and local levels.

In Nigeria, the powers and functions of electoral management body, as contained in part 1 of the Third Schedule of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) are to register political parties, compile voters list as well as organize, undertake and supervise all elections into Federal and State offices (Ibrahim &Garuba, 2008). A part from the above roles mentioned, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is one of the key actor and contributor in determining whether the post-election environment could be peaceful or otherwise (violent one).

This can be understood from two different episodes. First, the general elections in 2003 and 2007 which were widely criticised as largely flawed, and the Commission was generally held accountable for many of the flaws. Among the major problems identified with those elections were; badly compiled rolls of voters, shoddy preparations for the elections, poor management of results, aloofness from stakeholders, seeming inability to control the negative actions of political parties and candidates, as well as outright vote rigging in some cases. Consequently, there was a widespread negative perception of the Commission and its capacity to conduct credible elections under the leadership of Dr. Abel Guobadia and Professor Maurice Iwu respectively. These created a serious burden on the post elections environment that led to the loss of lives, destruction of properties and displacement of many people (INEC, 2011).

Secondly, the 2011 general elections was conducted under the leadership of professor AttahiruJega, which is regarded by many observers as largely credible and well organized, with remarkable improvement in the conduct of the election, but despite all these, the process was not free from post-election violence, which robbed the shine off the electoral success (Bekoe, 2011; Orji &Uzodi, 2011). Similarly, the 2015 general election was conducted under the same leadership, and the election was highly commended by both domestic and international observers as not only the most credible and transparent since independence in Nigeria, but also violent free election with a lot of innovations. Most notably is the application of biometric measures that made the outcome of the presidential election unchallenged leading to a peaceful post-election environment.

As a matter of fact, what is well known to public is the primary responsibility of INEC as outlined by the constitution and the Act of the National Assembly. Very little is known about the role of INEC in post-election peace building. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the role of INEC in post-election peace building in Nigeria, using a comparative analysis of 2011 and 2015 presidential elections. The study seeks to answer the following questions; what are the INEC contributions to post election peace building in Nigeria between 2011 and 2015? What type of arrangements INEC put in place to militate against post-election violence during this period? How does it help in post-election peace building in 2011 and 2015? To achieve these efforts, the paper is divided into four sessions; the first session deal with review of literatures on post-election peace building and theoretical issues, while the second part explores the historical perspectives of INEC and post-election peace building in Nigeria. The third session dwelled on the INEC and post-election peace building in Nigeria, using comparative study of 2011 and 2015 presidential elections. This part is subdivided into; INEC and pre- election arrangements, elections and post-election peace building, lastly, the conclusion and recommendations.

A Review Of Literature on Post-election Peace Building

Elections particularly in Nigeria or Africa in general are always marred by post electoral violence i.e. Ethiopia 2005, Kenya 2007, Zimbabwe 2008, Cote d'Ivoire 2010, Democratic Republic of Congo 2011 and Nigeria 2011 were all victims of post-election violence at one period of time or another. In this regard, post-election peace building arrangements are constantly putting in place by the institutions saddle with responsibilities to conduct elections in order to secure a peaceful post-election environment. Atwood (2012), argued that to build up peace in any post-election democratic society, the capability and legitimacy of electoral commission is the first indicator that determines and shape a peaceful post-election environment. This is because an honest Electoral Management Body may be able to protect a vote even in difficult conditions. This view was admitted by Ahmed (2010), when acknowledging that the major cause of the post-election crisis in the 2007 Kenyan general election was the credibility of the Electoral Commission or rather lack of it, which make many Kenyans feels betrayed and led to the over two months of civil unrest throughout Kenya.

Atwood (2012) further argued that recent experience suggests that the Chief Election Commissioner can play a central role in building the post-election environment either to be good or ill. In line with the above, Huhne (2010) argued that the Chairman of Independent National Election Commission of Ghana Kwado Afari-Gyan and his colleagues demonstrated this during the 2008 general election, when they rushed around the country to mediate conflicts between candidates, parties and groups at the local as well as the national level, more importantly by announcing the interim results of the elections in a very well timed manner. More often than not, their actions matter a lot in building post-election peace in Ghana. In the same vein, Matlosa (n.d.) posited that if well managed by Electoral Institutions, elections are also crucial instruments for conflict management and post-election peace building.

Magolowondo (2009) also believed that regular stakeholder meetings organised by many Electoral Institutions to discuss on how to conduct violence free elections are key ingredients to increasing political tolerance and building post-election peace in democratic states. To Onwudiwa & Berwind (2010), INEC remains an agency burdened by a cumbersome set of duties with regards to violence prevention, creation of the electoral reform commission and recommended electoral offenses commission could have been of particular advantage in reassuring the public that elections criminality will be investigated and punished, thereby facilitating a smooth post-election environment.

However, the method adopted by INEC of announcing and releasing of election results to party and security agents as well as election observers, helps to reduce frustration and eases tension at polling units in many locations across the country (Independent Electoral Assessment Team, 2010). Moreover, the European Union Election Observation Mission (2015) observed that the attempt by INEC to improve the integrity of voter registration and identification by introducing biometric measures was to build confidence on the people in order to prevent post-election violence in Nigeria. **Theoretical Issues**

The term 'peace building' was first coined by Galtung (1975), a sociologist in his bid to promote and encourage sustainable peace across the world. He suggested that all social, economic, and political structures should be decentralized from bottom to top cited in (UN Peace building Report, 2012). Another proponent of the 'peace building' is John Paul Lederach (1997), who viewed the term from a different perspective, argued that, peace building should be attained by involving the grass root, local, governmental organization and institution, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), state and international actors to create sustainable peace process at any level of the national and international activities. Therefore, as one of the Nigeria's governmental institutions, INEC empowered by the constitution to conduct elections for the sustainable peace and unity of the country.

As argued by Ismail (2006) many scholars seem to accept Lederach's (1997) perspective of peace building which he says should be approached in a triangular form. This assumption entails that "peace building involves the identification of the root cause of the conflicts, having a vision of the social and political structure and relationships desired as well as a transformation procedure from crisis to the desired change by transforming existing violence into constructive dialogue". Lederach (1997) further noted that representatives or leaders should be chosen from the three spheres of the society which is from the higher, middle and lower levels respectively, who will assist in maintaining and sustaining peace at the different levels of the society.

Another notable aspect of Lederach's perspective that is useful to this paper is the idea of training the representatives at every level as a means of achieving sustainable peace. These representatives could be from ethnic, religious, academic intellectuals, civil societies, social, economic and political sectors of the society. In its pre-election arrangements of 2011 and 2015 presidential elections, INEC organized workshops, seminars, symposiums among others, to educate and train representatives of various groups from the higher, middle and lower levels on how to build sustainable peace during and after the elections as well as learn about the implication and consequences of post-election violence. After the training, participants or representatives are expected to share their knowledge and skills acquired to their various communities through which peace building can be achieved and sustained before, during and after elections.

INEC and Post-election Peace Building in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

The existence of electoral management bodies (EMB) in Nigeria can be dated back to the period before independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN) was set up by the British Colonialists to conduct the 1959 elections. By the time Nigeria became politically independent in 1960 the Federal

Electoral Commission (FEC) was established and conducted the general elections in 1964 and the western region elections of 1965 which were marred by electoral frauds. However, the election malpractices and irregularities induced by FEC led to the crises in western region and the Military Coup d'etat of 1966 (Musa, 2001).

In 1978, the then Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo's Military Administration established another Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) which conducted transitional election in 1979 and 1983 general elections. Although, the transitional election was supervised under the military administration which makes it less violence, but the general election conducted under the supervision of the then incumbent President Shehu Shagari witnessed many electoral malpractices and irregularities. For instance, Sunny, Aghemalo & Ezekwesiri (2014) observed that apart from the irregularities and malpractices manifested in the conduct of 1983 general elections, the election suffered logistic problems. Personnel and voting materials were not available on time in some areas or even not available at all. These led to the widespread of electoral violence, riots, arsons and killing of the prominent politicians especially in the western and Mid-western regions of the country. In December 1983, another military coup terminated the civilian regime and dissolved the commission as well.

In 1987, the Babangida Military Government set up the National Electoral Commission (NEC) which conducted elections in 1987, 1990, 1991 and 1993. The activities of NEC reached its zenith in 1993 with the conduct of the controversial presidential election which was later annulled by the then military Junta. NEC was dissolved on 17th November, 1993 with the coming into power of Abacha whose administration in 1995 established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) which also conducted Local Councils and National Assembly Elections. With the death of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998, NECON was again dissolved by the new military government led by Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, which established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in August, 1998 that conducted the transitional elections of 1999 and till date (Musa, 2001).

The 1999 elections conducted by INEC do not provoke much violence for two major reasons; first it was supervised under the military administration, and secondly, the Nigerians were tired of military rule thereby accepting the general elections results. However, the administration and conduct of elections by INEC in 2003 under the leadership of Professor Maurice Iwu during the former President Obasanjo regime was characterised by different types of electoral frauds; ranging from ballot stuffing, intimidation, killing, and assassination among others. Both internal and external observers were unanimous on the unfairness of the competition in the electoral process which was manipulated by the so-called ruling party (PDP) (Samson & Abimbola, 2014).

In April, 2007, INEC conducted another general election under the same Chairman and ruling party that led to the emergence of late former President Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua, in May 29, 2007, who was from the same political party (PDP). But nevertheless, the electoral process that led to his emergence as president was highly condemned and criticized both within and outside the country. Samson & Abimbola (2014) argued that the 2007 election turned out to be the worst election conducted in the post colonial Nigeria, to which even the elected president in his inaugural speech acknowledge the frauds and irregularities during the electoral process. The non-partisanship of INEC which is supposed to be an independent and credible body was doubted more than ever because every aspect of the election was far from fair (Babatunde, 2014). This explained the role of INEC and how it contributed to post election violence during this period.

The conduct of 2011 general elections were generally accepted by both local and foreign observers to be partially fair when compared with the 2003 and 2007 general elections, although, under different leadership of both INEC and incumbent President who is from the same ruling party (PDP). But, the announcement of the 2011 Presidential election result by INEC chairman Prof Attahiru Jega in which the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP was declared the winner led to a serious post electoral violence especially in the Northern part of the country, where within just four days Human Rights Watch, recorded about 800 people were killed and over 65,000 people were found to be temporarily internally displaced apart from burning of places of religious worship, public buildings and the houses of politicians (HRW, 2011). However, the last 2015 general elections conducted by INEC under the same leadership was successful and peaceful, especially with the introduction of new biometric

innovations in the electoral process which make the election to be free, fair and credible thereby promoting a peaceful post-election environment.

INEC and pre-election Arrangement in 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections

The major issues in the pre-election periods of 2011 and 2015 presidential elections were interrogated under this section among which include; voters' registration, organizing seminars and sensitization programmes through the use of media, distribution of permanent voter cards, elections postponement, and recruitment of ad-hoc officials for the election exercise.

Voters' Registration

Few months to the 2011 general elections, INEC conducted registration of voters in all the 119, 973 Registration Centres in the country. The exercise was conducted for three weeks to enable all citizens who are of the required age to be registered properly (Nwafor, 2015). The voter's registration was biometric in nature in the sense that it has the picture, details and fingerprints of each voter, so that it can be easy to identify any eligible voter in the register and one can ask some simple security questions like age, date of birth etc, to ascertain doubtful voters. Therefore, a total of 74.6 million Nigerians were registered during the exercise (The Sheet, 2015).

The primary purpose behind the adoption of biometric voters register by INEC was to ensure transparency and avoid multiple voting during election that always tends to generate violence during and after election. Again, to prevent violence at all levels of the 2011 elections, INEC deleted 61, 681 voters who were found to be double registrants from the voters' register, and another 580,000 had no fingerprints in their Permanent Voters Cards (PVC), hence they were cancelled for the safety of the electoral environment. However due to the limited time to the election period, INEC had to issue a temporary voters cards for the 2011 presidential polls.

With the successful conduct of the 2011 elections, and in preparation for the 2015 elections, INEC continued the registration process to allow others who have attained the required age to be registered and those who were unable to register during the 2011 registration process. However, Section 20 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) requires that INEC prepares and publishes a register of voters 30 days before the date scheduled for the election. Therefore, on January 13, 2015, INEC published a voters' register of 68,833,476 Nigerians that would be eligible to vote in 2015 presidential election (The Sun, 2015; This Day live, 2016). This formed the basis for free, fair and more credible polls in the 2015 presidential election.

Organizing Seminars and Sensitization Programmes

In a country with large population size and complexity like Nigeria, public enlightenment, sensitisation and voter education are circumscribed by enormous challenges. This notwithstanding, in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections, INEC partnered with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to carry out sensitisation and voter education through organizing different seminars, workshops and symposiums on election time lines, advocacy for collection of PVCs, peaceful, non-violent conduct by all during and after elections, explanation about voting procedures as well as electoral regulations. Similarly, INEC also employed the use of multiple media channels and outlets for these activities, from radio, TV, newspapers, traditional media to on-line Internet resources. They also used posters, leaflets, handouts, etc (The Sun, 2015).

Distribution of Permanent Voter Cards

In the 2011 presidential election, temporary voter cards were issued to eligible voters by INEC due to the time factor. But by 2015 presidential election, INEC endeavoured to produce Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) for all the voters on the register. It can be recalled that by Monday, February 2, 2015, INEC distributed a total number of 66, 323, 850 representing 96% of PVCs for the 36 states and FCT (The Sun, 2015). This gave the electorates confidence and also improved a peaceful conduct of the 2015 presidential election.

Postponement of the Elections

In 2011, INEC postponed elections which earlier scheduled to be conducted as follows; The National Assembly Elections were scheduled for 2 April, 2011; Presidential Election on 9th April, 2011; while Governorship and State Assembly Elections were scheduled for 16th April, 2011. The change was actually due to logistics problems that made INEC to shift or re-schedule the elections as follows; the National Assembly, 9th April, 2011; Presidential Election 16th April, 2011; Governorship and State

Assembly Elections 26th April, 2011; Kaduna and Bauchi Governorship Elections 28th April, 2011; Imo Governorship Elections 5th May, 2011 (INEC, 2011).

As a result of the letter written by the office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) stating that security could not be guaranteed during the proposed period of the 2015 general elections due to Boko Haram insurgency in four states of the Northeast (Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe), which was equally reinforced at the Council of State meeting involving all the Services Chiefs and heads of Intelligence agencies, who unanimously reiterated the same position and requested for at least six weeks within which to conclude all required military operation against the insurgency in the zone, INEC had to reschedule the 2015 presidential election to March 28, 2015. In his postponement speech, the INEC Chairman noted that inability of the INEC to distribute PVCs alone is enough reason to postpone the February, 2015 slated general elections, but further admitted that there are other salient issues that are critical to elections like security which is not under the control of INEC (The Net, 2016; The Nigerian Voice, 2015). Notwithstanding, the postponement contributed to the peace witnessed during and after the election, because many eligible voters were able to access their PVC's within the extension period, thereby given them the opportunity to vote.

Recruitment of INEC Ad-hoc Officials

In the 2011 presidential election, INEC used five categories of ad-hoc staff namely; Returning Officers, Collation Officers, Supervisory Presiding Officers, Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers. Most of these categories of ad-hoc staff were recruited primarily from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme and the Staff of Federal Tertiary Institutions and other Federal Agencies. During the 2011 presidential election, an estimated of 368, 812 ad-hoc personnel were recruited mostly from NYSC and the stated institutions. In contrast with the 2015 presidential election, an estimated of 700, 000 ad-hoc staff were recruited from the same mentioned Scheme and Institutions (The Sun, 2015).

This gave birth to the establishment of an INEC-NYSC bi-lateral committee and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Commission and NYSC Directorate. The MoU spelt out the mutually agreed commitments of the two agencies, especially on the recruitment, deployment, payment, welfare and disciplinary procedures of NYSC members that were engaged to undertake ad-hoc electoral duties on behalf of the Commission. Similarly, the crucial role played by University Staff in both 2011 and 2015 presidential elections as State Returning Officers and Collation Officers at the Registration Areas, raised the level of credibility of the elections. Their involvement in the process substantially addressed the incidence of declaration of false election results which made the exercise to be more credible and peaceful in the democratic history of Nigeria (INEC, 2011).

Issues In Elections Day of 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections

It has been the practice of INEC to announce to the nation and the world that they are fully ready to conduct election, and that, all materials and staffs are ready and have been distributed to all parts of the country (Ibrahim & Garuba, 2008). In this regard, there are three major issues to examine, particularly on election day. These include; voting process, determining score at polling and collation centres and result management.

Voting Process

One of the major challenges that characterized previous elections in Nigeria was the issue of multiple voting which tends to instigate violence right from the polling units and later metamorphosed into post election violence. Therefore, in order to build post election peace in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections, INEC took the view that a major way to check this, was to have two distinct phases in the voting process (INEC, 2011).

Phase 1: Accreditation of Eligible Voters

The 2011 and 2015 presidential elections witnessed a separate period and process of accreditations in order to ascertain and authenticate the eligible voters at every polling unit simultaneously across the country. These were done between 8:00am when the polling stations opened and ended at 12.00pm provided that any prospective voter already on the queue was accredited. For instance, in the case of 2011 presidential election, the accreditation process required eligible voters presented themselves with the temporary voters card (TVC) to the Assistant Presiding Officer of the polling unit, who upon satisfaction as to the identity of the holder made a mark on the appropriate checkbox on the register. This was done continuously up to the last person in the queue. Voting Points of not more than 300

voters were created within a Mega Polling Units to enable for easy accreditation of voters within the specified period of time. At the end of the accreditation process, the total number of accredited voters were loudly announced and recorded appropriately in the column provided (INEC, 2011). This arrangement makes it extremely difficult for any multiple voting to take place and restore the integrity of election and confidence on electorates thereby building up peace in post electoral environment.

To attain more transparency in the election, four innovations were adopted by INEC to improve the credibility and build peace in the 2015 presidential election which include; the introduction of Permanent Voter's Card and the use of biometric technology (card readers) for the two step voter accreditation process (Orji & Kelechi, 2015). These innovations make it a little different from the accreditation of 2011 presidential election. For instance, Oluwashina (2015) explained that an intending voter was expected to go to the polling unit where he or she registered with his or her PVC for accreditation. The voter would present his or her PVC to the polling officials for verification. The Presiding Officer tests the PVC using the card reader to authenticate its originality. Once the voter's information appeared on the screen the voter will be duly accredited, but if it does not, this signifies that the PVC is not from INEC or may either be cloned or it belongs to another person. The prospective voter will consequently be disqualified from voting.

The biometric accreditation system served as additional measure to prevent multiple voting and enhance public confidence in the electoral process thereby preventing the perceived post-election violence across the country. Although Onapajo (2015) noted that in some locations where card reader does not work, INEC was able to salvage the process by announcing an alternative process using manual accreditation which accommodated the voters that encountered the problem. This alternative measure contributes to the peaceful conduct of the election and thereby promotes post-election peace in those areas.

Other innovations that build confidence of the electorates and election peace during and after the 2015 presidential election, is the encouragement by INEC to prioritize the deployment of parties agents to polling units. This is because the greater presence of party agents in polling units the better access to information by political parties which improved transparency of the electoral process. This access to information was further strengthened by the establishment of INEC's Citizens Contact Centre (ICCC) responsible for direct, real-time reception of feedback from citizens. The centre was designed as a modified Situation Room to work as a channel of continuous communication and exchange of information with the electorate and other stakeholders. Members of the public could contact the CCC with questions or complaints and receive responses from INEC officials (Orji & Kelechi, 2015). Therefore, these innovations introduced by INEC particularly in the 2015 presidential election help greatly in shaping the post election environment to be peaceful one, and makes INEC to be one of the major player for post election peace building in Nigeria.

Phase 2: Vote Casting

Vote casting became easier because only accredited voters were eligible to vote, therefore in both the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections voting started from 12:30 pm, until the last person on the queue has voted, unless in a few cases where there are some logistic problems. The presiding officer of each polling unit after arranging the unit in the approved lay out started the voting process by announcing to prospective voters that vote casting was about to begin (Oluwashina, 2015). The process is that all accredited voters on the queue were issued with ballot paper duly stamped and signed by the Presiding Officer. The voter then proceeded to the voting cubicle to make a confidential and secret finger print impression on the ballot paper against the party of his/her choice and then dropped the ballot paper in the Collapsible Transparent Ballot Box in full glare of all present. Voting ended when the last voter on the queue voted (INEC, 2011). These arrangements aided for a peaceful end of the election as well as post election peace across the country.

Determining Scores at Polling and Collation Centres

Determining scores at polling and collation centres in the 2015 presidential election was not different from the 2011 presidential election. Immediately after the closing formalities, the Presiding Officers and their clerks commenced with the sorting, counting, recording and determining the votes scored at polling and collation centres by each party. A copy of the result recorded on Form EC 8A and EC 8B were pasted at the polling units and collation centres respectively (INEC, 2011; Orji & Kelechi, 2015).

But the declaration of the winner was usually done at the INEC National Headquarters. Thus, the public display of results at the polling units and collation centres in both 2011 and 2015 presidential elections was part of the measures taken by INEC to ensure transparency in the electoral process which is a key to peace building during and after elections.

This indicated that the entire voting process was owned by the voters from accreditation to balloting, through counting, collation and determining the score of each party. It was entirely participatory and voters were encouraged to observe the closing procedure from a reasonable distance (INEC, 2011). Orji & Kelechi, (2015) believed that the intention of this was to ensure that all voters would spend the entire day at their assigned polling unit in order to prevent multiple voting and enhance public confidence in the accuracy of the results at the polling and collation centres thereby reducing tensions and builds peace in the post-election environment.

Result Management

As part of the strategy to secure the integrity of results recorded and to avoid post-election violence in the 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections, the Commission refined the process for managing results of elections by introducing a manual and electronic procedure. For the manual procedure, all Presiding Officers and Collation Officers at every level must duly and correctly completed their result sheets at polling units and collation centres, declared results were displayed at the polling units and collation centres and that all result forms must be arranged, batched and transferred to the state office for safe-keeping not later than 48 hours after the election. While, in the electronic procedure, at least for the presidential election of 2011, collation at the State Collation Centres and the Presidential Collation Centre were subjected to accuracy checks by using an excel spread sheet application to eliminate computation errors (INEC, 2011). While in the 2015 presidential election, collations at all levels were subjected to accuracy checks using the same method. However in both elections, all results were projected on a screen and publicly displayed as they were announced, which enhance the credibility, transparency and assisted for post elections peace building in the country.

In order to prevent tampering with the manual copies of the results in transit, copies of the results were transmitted electronically from the State Collation Centres to the Presidential Returning Officer using a secure email address. Results in all cases were subsequently placed on the Commission's website in compliance with the requirement for the publication of results of elections (INEC, 2011). This system significantly reduced the incidence of fake and multiple voting, inflated figures, vote buying and other popular forms of rigging in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections across the country (Onapajo, 2015). And once there is no election rigging, the chances of post-election violence would be very limited.

Post Election Issues In 2011 And 2015 Presidential Elections

There are three major issues associated with post-election particularly in 2011 and 2015 presidential election in Nigeria identified by this paper. These are; declaration of results, post election violence and post election petitions.

Declaration of Results

Declarations of results in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections were however done at INEC Collation Centre in Abuja by the Chief Returning Officer of the Presidential elections, Professor Attahiru Jega who was also the Chairman of INEC from 2010 to 2015. In the 2011 presidential election Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of PDP scored 22, 495, 187 votes representing 58.89% of the total votes cast, and met the requirement of 25% votes cast in 24 states. The CPC candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) scored 12, 214, 853 votes representing 31.98% of the total votes cast and the ACN candidate, Mr. Nuhu Ribadu scored 2, 079, 151 votes. Therefore, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was declared winner, re-elected for four-year tenure (Akinsanya, 2015).

Whereas, in the 2015 presidential election, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) scored 15, 424, 683, representing 53.96% of the total votes cast to defeat the incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan who pooled 12, 853, 162 votes representing 44.96% of the total vote cast. The result indicated that both the leading candidates met the minimum requirement of 25% votes cast in 24 states. However APC candidate, Gen. Buhari defeated President Jonathan of PDP with about three million votes in a historic election that saw a Nigeria leader conceding electoral defeat for the first time in its history (Udu, 2015). Therefore, having satisfied the requirements of the law and scoring the highest numbers of votes, the

Chief Returning Officer declared the APC presidential candidate as the winner of the presidential election and was returned elected.

Post-Election Violence

Despite the fact that INEC make significant improvement in the conduct of 2011 presidential election, the election was still not free from post election violence (Bekoe, 2011). This came immediately after the announcement of the results which confirmed the victory of the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the ruling party (PDP). Violence sparks across many states in the Northern part of the country. States like Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Niger, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno among others were affected (Halliru, 2012). Within just a four days Human Rights Watch, recorded about 800 people were killed and over 65,000 people were found to be temporarily internally displaced, millions of properties were also burnt and destroyed (HRW, 2011). This was seen as the worst ever witnessed in the history of post-election violence in Nigeria. Although INEC noted that the violent reactions that erupted after the 2011 presidential election did so not as a consequence of poor handling of the process by the Commission. Rather, it was a practical expression of frustration and disappointment as well as a consequence of the “do or die” attitude of the political class to electoral contests (INEC, 2011).

Compared with the 2015 presidential election, many predicted that the aftermath of the election may possibly mark the end of Nigeria as a nation, which generated a lot of tension and confusion in the pre-election period of the country. But nevertheless, they were probed wrong. In fact, there was no post-election violence for the first time in the history of Nigeria's democratic dispensation. Even though, there were protest in some selected states of the country, following the allegations of fraud, but the protests were peaceful, since there is no loss of lives and properties. Some of these states include; Rivers, Imo, and Akwalbom States. In Akwalbom State, for example, supporters of the opposition APC protested over perceived irregularities in the state elections calling for the outright cancellation of the elections (cited in Onapajo, 2015).

Post Electoral Petitions

Petitions are required to be submitted within 21 days of the declaration of results to the Election Petition Tribunals (EPTs) as provided by the section 285 of the 1999 Constitution, as amended (EU EOM, 2015; The Vanguard, 2015). As a result, two petitions were filed in the 2011 Post Presidential Election Tribunal, against the victory of President Goodluck Jonathan. One was filed by the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) Presidential Candidate Gen. MuhammaduBuhari, and the second was filed by Hope Democratic Party (HDP). The drastic fall in the number of petitions recorded after the election compare with the previous ones, must have been influenced by the decisions of many failed candidates to accept the results following what they largely considered as free, fair and credible election (This day live, 2016). However, the presidential election petition tribunal of 2015 have not filed a single case against the victory of President MuhammaduBuhari, neither the PDP nor any other Party or Presidential Candidate moved to challenge Buhari's election victory at the tribunal, meaning that no petition was filed against the 2015 Presidential election result (The Vanguard, 2015).

Conclusion

No doubt, the improvement in the administration of electoral process and introduction of new innovations in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections by INEC, especially the used of biometric voters register, permanent voter's cards, biometric card readers as well as access to information by electorates on INEC website among others, demonstrated that INEC alone can serve as a peace building mechanism by providing a transparent electoral process from the beginning to the end, and above all conducting free, fair and credible election that can buildup the confidence of electorates, this will go a long way to establish successful as well as peaceful post-election environment across the country.

Recommendation

INEC should continue to improve and strengthen the use of biometric measures such as Card readers in its forthcoming or subsequent election in the country. This will positively help in overcoming the challenges of multiple voting that has been the issue for long, if not a tradition during election, which always instigate and fuel violence during and after election across the country.

As a matter of fact, the quality of leadership matters a lot in the conduct of election, therefore, those with the responsibility of appointing the INEC officials i.e. (Chairman and resident commissioners) should ensure the credibility, patriotism and altruistic of the prospective candidates to be appointed.

INEC should maintain and strengthen its relationship with NYSC and Federal Tertiary Institutions as their major sources of ad-hoc officials for the integrity, credibility and transparency of election.

INEC should take post-election peace building as part of its major responsibilities by introducing many pre-election programmes such as (voter education and sensitization) at local levels that can help better in preventing post-election violence.

Above all, INEC should continue to conduct free, fair and credible election that can be acceptable to all. This can only be achieved through the neutrality, non-partisan and independent of INEC from the influence of any democratic institution or individual in carrying out their responsibilities assigned by the Constitution and Electoral Acts.

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