Free and Fair Election: An Aberration to Nigerian Political Culture

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Abstract
Since the Introduction of Electoral process in Nigerian political space in 1922, the Nation has experienced difference shades of Electoral process, all aimed at entrenching the spirit of Democracy. At the beginning out of the 46 legislative members of 1922 Election only four were elected to represent the indigenous people, Lagos (3) and Calabar (1). The moment also ushered the emergence of Party Politics. The authority vested on Elective Principles in Nigeria has aroused sentiment and attraction to the Political actors. This invariably has shaped the psychology of the contestants who saw the aspiration to Elective offices or position as 'do or die affairs. This mentality has marred credible Election since the post-colonial era, and this attitude seems not to have abated even now. Free and fair Election appeared furlong because selfless to national service has become an aberration, more so as the political space appeared to have been hijacked by

mediocrity, and narrow-minded ethnic jingoist. Power grabbing appears to be the lot of Nigerian Political system. The winner takes it all, which has equally become the main attribute of Nigerian Politics, entails spending huge amount of money to secure political positions from the vested interest group, this too has even corrupted the system the more. In addition, free and fair Election can only be guaranteed in Nigeria, when the focus is shifted more from sectional interest to the mind-set of selfless National services. Again, high cost of politicking and incentive attached to the Elective positions reduced. It is therefore the position of this Paper that free and fair Election can only strive in Nigeria, when the spirit of selfless in services is hoisted on the citizenry who are determined to shun greed, personal or sectional interest for the good of all.

Keywords: *Greed, Election, Corruption, Party Politics, Conservatives and Ethnicism.*

Introduction

Nigerian's inability to conduct free and fair Election over the years could be traced to a brand of Political and leadership culture adopted immediately after the Nation's independence. Fear of Political domination by the conservative Northern leaders of the more enlightened South, led the British to reach an understanding with the conservative North, the consequences was the one-sided Political structure the favored the North more. The North have continued to leverage on this Disjointed Political structure to the detriment of the South, who are now in dog race of catch me if you can attitude of the conservative Northern leaders. This development have created sustainable Political institution, whereby in every Election, the conservative must influence who rules the Country after every Election. This Cabal in the guise of the conservatives directly or indirectly influences whoever must occupied very sensitive political positions in Nigeria since independence. Sincerely power have never left the North since independence. But by proxy, Election to the seat of the Presidency have remained within the grips of the Northern conservatives with few collaborators from the South. Strategically, the interest of this group have been extended to every critical positions of authority thereby making it very difficult for free and fair Election to happen in Nigeria. In a situation where the Electoral body has remained glued to the government of the day, the tenet of free and fair Election will remain an aberration. The Electoral body must be Independent for Democracy to strive.

Again it appears, that, the same conditions attached to the Election (Selection) to the office of the Presidency, have been extended to such critical positions as Military top hierarchy, the Judiciary, the office of the Accountant General, the Inspector General of Police, Controller of Immigration and Custom services, the Central Bank Governor Etc. By hijacking these sensitive offices, through vested interest group or the conservatives, they have succeeded in destroying merit by destabilizing the concept of free and fair Election. Mediocrity has taken the front seat in Nigerian Democracy. Going beyond the above offices in such other sensitive Elective positions like the Senate Speaker, House of Representative Speaker and other major Senate and House leadership have all become of interest to the vested interest. From the foregone, it has become obvious that Nigeria is indeed under siege. In addition, the effective and domineering control of the Cabal to the Political space of Nigeria, have rendered every opposition ineffective. The Conservatives have equally extended their Control to the Media. Certain laws appeared to be targeting the freedom of the Press have been passed by the Senate. Again, the slogan 'born to rule' have been traced to the conservative clique who appears to announce it each time power appears to slip from their grips more so to the South. The Current S President, Alhaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu has capitalized on that to respond, 'it is my turn', an anti-Democratic slogan.

Since independence huge amount of money have been voted to phantom Elections, look at **Table 2**. The huge amount voted, have often time returned to line up the pockets of the Electoral umpires, the political leadership and the Security personnel deployed to facilitate Election rigging. Until the Masses are ready for a change the Conservatives or the acts of the vested interest group, who have spread their domineering tentacles to all over the sectors of Nigeria, the Country will remain in Political comatose. In response to the above challenges, Free and fair Election should be seen as a right and not a privilege. Until the masses are able to take their destiny at hand, the collective interest of the Generality will continue to suffer abuse. Though the forces behind Anti-Democratic governance appears formidable, the courage of the masses to resist the activities of the vested interest group, and the activities of the corrupt money bag Politicians by protecting their votes, this can put to an end the rot in Nigerian Political space.

The Genesis of Party Politics in Nigeria

Party Politics is an alien to Nigerian indigenous Political system. Though Party Politics is synonymous with Democratic Principles, the manner of Democracy exercised by the indigenous people appears to be slightly different with the Party Politics, and ideological tendencies attached to it. In that regard, Political Party system is an imported ideology. The term, Political Party could be referred to as 'a group of people organized to achieve and exercise power within a political system [1].This system originated in their modern form in USA and Europe. This concept was brought to Nigeria by the Colonial government following the introduction of Electoral Principles in 1922 Nigerian Political space.

It should be noted that the formation of the first political party in Nigeria coincided with the promulgation of Sir. Hugh Clifford's Constitution of 1922.This Constitution which was made Provision for the legislative council created four Electoral seats, three for Lagos and one for Calabar. In fact, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was founded by late Dr. Herbert Macauley the Grand Son of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowder, had the following as the founding members, thus:

Dr. Adeniyi Jones
Mr. Egerton Shyngle
Mr. Thomas Horatio
Mr. Karimu Kotun
Mr. Eric Moore among others, were the founders of the NNDP.

The name of the official political party in Nigerian was Lagos Youth Movement, which later metamorphosed to the Nigerian Youth Movement. In effect, the crises of leadership succession led to the formation of the Nigerian Democratic Party of Nigeria (the NNDP).Point of note, the first Political Party in Nigeria was not created to fulfill its cardinal objective that is to wrestle and to control power from the Colonial Administrators, and it nevertheless gave Nigeria firsthand experience on Electoral process. In 1923 the joy of the new Party knew no bound when it won the first legislative seats for the legislative council. What actually prompted the formation of the first Political Party in Nigeria 'was the crises precipitated by Nigerian educated elites who were discriminated against and frustrated after attaining higher educational height in Western Countries? So the first political party formed in Nigeria was in protest against mis-representation of the elites in the Colonial government. When the first Political Party won the Election in 1923, it was a milestone achievement. Moreover, Party Politics was restricted to Lagos and Calabar during the 1920s.This prevented the generality of Nigeria

However, in Party Politics as noted elsewhere, in 1930s there was a political platform which would later assume broader footing in galvanizing support beyond the ethnic boundaries, in the sense that from tribal confinement it wriggle itself away from being an elites Party (Lagos Youth Movement) to Nigerian Youth Movement, and finally to NCNC. Several individuals have followed the process to bring about the emergence of National Party. People like, Hezekiah Davies, Chief Ernest Ikoli, Chief Samuel Akinsanya, Dr. James Churchill, Mr. Vaughan and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe spearheaded the move. The Objectives of this new party appeared to have attracted more vibrant elites with resolute aspiration to develop the party into a formidable National Political Party that can wrestle power from the colonial government. In effect, when the strength of the New Party was put to test in 1938 Election, 'it won elections into the legislative council by defeating the heavily depleted NNDP by winning all the allotted three seats for Lagos' [3].

In August 26th 1944 the Nigerian Youth Movement has metamorphosed into a formidable National Party. The same year, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon was formed as a result of Party crises that bedeviled NYM.NCNC came with for wider representation of the people in politicking process of the Country. The name was subsequently changed to National Council of Nigeria Citizens, 'as soon as Cameroon was removed from Nigeria' [4].The leadership of this National Party paraded formidable personalities like, thus:

Chief J.O. Lucas
Chief L.P. Ojukwu
Rev. A.W. Lawal
Chief A.W. Howells
Chief. L. A. Onojobi
Chief. A. Ogedemgbe
Mr. A. Taylor
Chief. B.L.C. Ladipo
Mr. L. Odunsi
Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
Dr. Herbert Macaulay.

The birth of NCNC as a National Party increased the Political activities and awareness of the people, it at the same time appears to have attracted the focus of tribal Politicians, as some cultural organization in Yoruba land and in Northern Nigeria hurriedly moved to transform these cultural organizations into Political Parties. This action further increased Political consciousness but with strong ethnic bias. In effect, not until 1953 that all these Political Parties like the NCNC, AG, NPC etc became strong enough to compete against each other for Elective positions in Nigeria. Otherwise NNDP the first political party had consistently being presenting candidates for Lagos legislative council in 1923, 1928 and 1933' [5]. The emergence of Political Parties like NCNC, NPC and AG broadened the Elective positions under the party politics with wider Nigerian coverage. In other words, the contest for Elective positions ceased to be Lagos and Calabar affairs when these Political Parties became functional. In fact, the Colonial government were forced to amend the constitution severally for the sake of granting the newly formed Political Parties some space for Political contest.

Political Parties Contestants Mentality in Nigerian Politics

Key factors in the minds of every Political Party contestants in Nigeria is winning at all cost mentality, so as to have unhindered access to the sharing of the National Cake, again how to raise thugs who would work to actualize his dream. Drive for selfless service appears elusive to the new

Politicians, and that has been responsible for non-issue based politicking inherent during party campaigns in Nigeria. Again, every contestant appears to run campaign of calumny infused with hatred against the opponents. This mentality have been transferred to the party faithful as well who often time infuse Ethnic Politics.

During the early Party Politics of 1920s, Lagos Youth Movement gave birth to Nigerian Youth Movement which later dissolved based on sentiments. Ifeoma Elebo aptly captured contestant mentality when she stated in her work understanding our past in our present that 'Nationalism which had started off on a broad non-ethnic basis in the past, had been derailed by the politicians who in the late 1940s began the formation of ethnic based political parties' [6].This new concept in Nigerian politics obviously repositioned the Political ideology of Nigerian people to reflect mediocrity. It failed to provide to the electorates the basis to always vote for national leader devoid of ethnic sentiment. Again, the transformation of cultural organisation to political parties failed to cage the objectives of those cultural organisation now turned political parties. The painful truth again, was , these culturally transformed political parties were 'established not as instruments of delivery service to the people of Nigeria, but as effective machinery for sharing booty and enriching party supporters' [7].As could be seen, this tendency as in ethnic political ensured that in the 1960s 'the Action Group, NCNC and NPC controlled the government of the Western, Eastern and Northern regions respectively in the election held to determine who took over at self-government' [8]. Ethnic politics is buoyed with hatred and the projection of self-centered interest. This attitude has affected the political focus of the contestants and the electorates. When Chief Akintola in one of his interviews with Drum Magazine, stated, thus, 'the second cause of disunity is the introduction of tribalistic journalism. The West African pilot started by finding hardly anything good in Yoruba leaders such as Dr. Henry Carr, Sir Adeyemo Alakija, Sir Kofo Abayomi and Chief H.O. Davies' [9].This assumption rightly or wrongly have continued to guide the political mentality of the electorates in Nigeria. To aptly understand the concept of tribalism or ethnicism with focus on Nigeria, H.O. Davies has defined the two as, 'to make fetish of one's own tribe and to support members of that tribe at all times whether they are right or wrong' [10].This behavior has continued to shape the electoral attitude of Nigerian people, to the detriment of National Political development. In 2023 election campaign the incumbent President of Nigeria, Alhaji Ahmed Bola Tinubu is known to have used certain words that appear undemocratic, like 'it is my turn to rule' grab it and run with it' etc. From such the electorates have come to believe that elections in Nigeria has never been free and fair as power could be negotiated with the political cabal or the vested interest which Tinubu was accused of. Again, from Nigerian Political History, it is obvious that ethnicity promotes opportunism, and that concept has become deep rooted as to trunked the process of Nation building. According to Nwabughuogu, 'the struggle for scarce resources by the component ethnic groups creates a situation where each group is concerned more with what it can get out of the National cake and not how it can help bake the National cake' [11]. This is just the mentality of every contestant in Nigerian political space. This idea has also been sold to mostly Nigerian illiterate electorates who now considers ethnic background than credibility during Votes in an Election. This too has formed the basis for the enthronement of mediocrity in Nigerian corridor of power.

Electoral Umpire and The Conduct of Free and Fair Election in Nigeria

The National Electoral body in Nigeria has contributed toward the failure of Promoting free and fair Election. Whether this is deliberate or not, the truth remains as long as the electoral body has never been granted independent, the power of incumbent will continue to collaborate with body to

rig the Election. Vested interested has also contributed to undermine the conduct of free and fair election in Nigeria, as they often times insist or control the swing of the pendulum to power. The 'born to rule tendency' and 'the anointed one', in addition to Tinubu's it is my turn to rule, all lay Creedence of anti-democratic mechanism operating in Nigerian polity since independence.

Table 1: The list of Electoral Chairmen in Nigeria since Independence.

S/N	ELECTORAL CHAIRMAN	DURATION	REMARK
1	Chief Eyo Esua	1964-1966	During the First Republic.
2	Chief Michael Ani	1976-1979	During the Second Republic.
3	Justice Ovie-Whiskey	1980-1983	Military Coup in December, 1983 Truncated it.
4	Prof. Eme Awa	1987-1989	Failed Attempt.
5	Prof. Humphrey Nwosu	1989-1993	Failed Attempt.
6	Prof. Okon Edet Uya	1993	Failed Attempt.
7	Chief Sumner Dagogo Jack	1994-1998	Transition Period.
8	Justice Ephraim Akpata	1998-2000	The Birth of Third Republic.
9	Chief Abel Goubadia	2000-2005	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘
10	Prof. Maurice Iwu	2005-2010	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘
11	Prof. Attahiru Jega	2010-2015	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘
12	Alhaji Aminu Zakari	2015	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘
13	Prof. Mahmood Yakubu	2015-2026	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘
14	Prof. Joash Amupitan	2026-Date	‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘ ‘

Sources: Ngozi Orjiakor and Sally Dyson.

This vested interest as has noted, is accused to have ousted President Goodluck Jonathan from power even when there was clear indication that he won the election of 2019.Prior to the election of 2019, it was stated that foreign missionaries were brought into the Country to create spate of insecurity if Jonathan was declared President. When Buhari threatened, 'Monkey and Baboon will soak in blood' he was speaking the minds of the vested interest who were bent to wrestle power from President Goodluck Jonathan either by hook or crook. Hook and Crook does not match the democratic principles, and that is where we are in Nigerian Politics.

Election rigging has been the feature of Nigerian electoral system, so it did not start today. Prominent politicians in Nigeria now control professional thugs engaged in ballot box snatching and the destruction of election materials. This scenario could be trace to the years preceding the Nation's independence. In otherwards, the 'election of 1951, 1953 and 1954 were not free'[12]. Although the election rigging of 1951 was minimal, however, the federal election held on

December 30th 1964 was more a witches Sabbath than a general election. Everything consciously and unconsciously was done to turn it into such mockery' [13]. This election which was organised by Mr.E.E.Esua, then the federal electoral commission Chairman was nothing less than charred. That election marked the beginning of state organised election rigging. For instance, 'In the Western Nigeria, road blocks were mounted and trenches dug all in order to deny political opponents the freedom of expression and movement'[14]. In fact, in the circumstances, it was clear from the very beginning that the election would not be free and fair' [15].The crises created as a result of the rigging led to the first military coup in January 15th 1966.

From 1966 to 1979 Nigeria was under the military rule. These years of military rules ought to have been moments of sober reflection with regard to making amend by the politicians, evidence proved on the contrary. When the Nation was returned to the civilian rule in 1979, vested interest started almost immediately to teleguide the new government. The army struck again to deny the newly elected civilian government the opportunity to learn. The army took over again in 1983.

Onwudiwe aptly captured the reason why free and fair election will remain elusive when he stated, thus, ' as soon as independence was won, some of these leaders seized the opportunity to deepen the division of the Country by promoting tribal politics at the expense of National Unity' [16].Apart from the Presidency, the vested interest in Nigerian politics made up of the Caliphate, the retired Military Generals and surrogates, have targeted some sensitive political exclusively for particular tribal leaders. All political crises in Nigeria had its root on contention between vested interest and the popular votes of the masses. This is traceable to notable electoral crises in Nigeria like the 1964 federal election, Western regional election crisis of 1965 and the 1983 election crisis that led to military takeover. Again, all these crises have proved the extent to which to which the electoral umpire could compromise for the sake of protecting the primordial interest of vested group.

In 1964 federal election, it is worthy to note that the following trends perpetrated by the electoral umpires, which invariably undermined the concept of free and fair election, thus:

(a) Inaccessibility of electoral officers which prevented many aspirants from filing their nomination papers.

(b) The persecution and threats targeted on the opponents.

(c) Boycott of the election by the opponents.

(d) Imprisonment of opponents using government Machinery.

In fact to prove government's partisanship in the Electoral process in Nigeria, when all these allegations were brought to 'the knowledge of the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, Mr.E.E Esua, he did nothing'[17].High handedness and arrogance exhibited by the political leaders of the first republic Nigeria was responsible for the first Military coup.

After prolong military rule, came the second republic. The opportunity to try out the Democratic system of government was enthusiastically embraced by the masses. However, during the Electioneering campaign of the five political parties, namely, thus:

(1) The National Party of Nigeria (NPN).
(2) The Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP).
(3) The Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP).
(4) Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).
(5) The Unity Part of Nigeria (UPN).

It became obvious that tribalism and sentiment that marred the first republic was still actively expressed in the new political set up. Nevertheless, after the Election Alhaji Shehu Shagari won in a keenly contested Election that was characterized with rigging and ballot boxes snatching. The

Electoral Umpire during that period, Mr. Michael Ani Chairman of FEDECO appears hapless to contend the vested interest candidate who were bent on returning their own.
Voted interest has sworn that Nigeria will never experience free and fair election and this tendency has continued undermine political development in Nigeria.

Table 2: **Electoral Budget from 1960s till Date**.

S/N	ELECTORAL BOARD CHAIRMAN	ELECTORAL BUDGET	YEAR
1	Mr. E.E.Esua	# 663,550.00 (Pound)	1963
2	Mr.E.E.Esua	# 847,150.00 (Pound)	1964
3	Justice Ovie Whiskey/Justice Ephraim Akpata.	# 32, 000, 000, 000, 00 (In Billions of Naira).	1979-1983
4	Justice Ephraim Akpata		1998-2000
4	Chief Abel Goubadia	# 55, 170, 000, 000, 00 (In Billions of Naira).	2000-2003
5	Professor Maurice Iwu	# 74,002,000.000.00 (In Billions of Naira).	2007
6	Professor Attahiru Jega	# 99,007,000.000.00 (In Billions of Naira).	2011
7	Alhaji Aminu Zakari	# 122, 009, 000, 000, 00. (In Billions of Naira)	2015
8	Professor Mahmood Yakubu	# 242, 002,000.000,00 (In Billions of Naira).	2019
9	Professor Mahmood Yakubu	# 355,298,000.000.00 (In Billions of Naira)	2023
10	Professor Joash Amupitan	# 700,000.000.000.00 (Estimate)	2027

Sources: Ngozi Orjiakor and Sally Dyson.

Ethnic Politics and Its Impact on The Conduct of Free and Fair Election in Nigeria

When the ethnic interest was allowed center stage in Nigeria political space, the danger was that ethnic loyalty was allowed to supersede national interest. In 1953 when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was denied the opportunity of being the leader of the government in the western Regional House of Assembly, it was due to Ethnic card played by Chief Awolowo and Co. in March 1953 Chief Anthony Enahoro had requested the house of representative to endorse the self-government in 1956, when the Northern conservatives members opposed it, they were ridiculed, insulted jeered at by the Lagos broods. This action elicits ethnic sentiment to the northerner's members of the house who almost staged secession from the Federation. It was no doubt that that action equally heightened ethnic sentiment when the leader of the Action Group and the NCNC decided to send delegation to the Northern cities to campaign for self-government in 1956, and were attacked by the hostile North. The consequences the Lagos incidence were that North was also suspicious to the Southern Politicians and never trusted them as Political friends.
In that regard, Ethnic Politics has aroused mutual suspicion, and denied trust away from the groups in Nigeria. Vigorous attempt at building trust in an electoral system appears to have been thwarted by this lack of trust, and fear of overturning the conservative's institutionalized Political benefits over the years was strongly resisted.

In 1987 the then Head of State General Ibrahim Babangida in his bid to restore sanity in the Electoral system, after the coup that ousted general Buhari, constituted the National Electoral commission with a renounce scholar and a political scientist Prof. Eme Awa being appointed the chairman. Prof. Eme Awa effort at instilling sanity in Nigeria electoral system was however frustrated by vested interest, who were afraid the move sensing that, such moves could turn the table against conservative mid-wife electoral frauds. In an attempt to achieve that, Prof. Eme Awa was replaced by Pro. Humphrey Nwaosu who was his formal student.

Prof. Nwosu however towed the line of his erstwhile teacher, by introducing a more Electoral credible and transparent system tagged option A4. The option A4 brought about open balloting system. The option A4 which started from the grass root enabled the Electorate to queue behind their preferred candidate, with the candidate with the highest vote after counting stands elected. For the sake of integrity Prof. Humphrey Nwaosu was to sustain this level of transparency up to the presidential election, where Chief Mashood Abiaola was at the verge of being declared the winner when the same vested interest that worked against Prof. Eme Awa undermined the process. In the history of Nigeria electoral system, it appears that it was only during the time of Profs. Eme Awa and Humphrey Nwaosu that serious efforts were made towards achieving free and fair election. From that time till date, the electoral system in Nigeria is characterized with voter's intimidation and the use of security personnel, and to some extent the Judiciary to deny the rightful winners. In fact, the involvement of the security personnel and the Judiciary, have demonstrated the extent to which vested interest group could go in preventing free and fair election.

In fact, in 1983 general election it is reported that, the elections where reminiscent of the 1954/1955 political quotation in Nigeria. In effect, during the gubernatorial were the most rigged and most violent in some states of the federation. It was during that election, that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe home state, Anambra, was blatantly rigged to favor MPNs Shehu Shagari. During the election, military was deployed openly to rig the election to favor incumbent. The Brouhaha raised as a result of that, led to the military cop of December 1983.

Military interference in Nigeria political on and off has been corroborated by Chief Dan Olasi, in his interview with the Arise Television of Nigeria, stated in his interaction with Mr. Oseni a well-known journalist, stated about a statement accredited to General Ibrahim Babangida as having said "The military struck to prevent Dr. Alex Ekwueme during the 1999 PDP primary in Jos because the vested interest never wanted him to win. This singular act has continued to play out in Nigerian Political space. Popular candidates have continued to lose elections because the vested interested must see their own through, by hook and crocks.

The Failure of Free and Fair Election in Nigeria, Way Out

From 1960s till date, central government of Nigeria has committed billions of naira to conduct fantom election from evidence on election budget (See Table 2), this aspect of Political development has been retained to sustained conduit pipe for Election fraud. From the records, it appears vested interest in collaboration with proxy leadership of the country has refused to grant independent status to the electoral body. This has contributed for easy manipulation of the electoral process in Nigeria. Again, poor level of political culture has influenced the concept of free and fair election in Nigeria. In order words, "the higher the level of political culture, the lower will be the opportunities for the militaries and the less the support the military will receive" to interfere in electoral process. Nevertheless, the military has continued to influence the electoral process on and off due to primordial interest, as one of the vested interest groups. In that respect, military intervention in the political space of Nigeria overtime, has created deep root class interest in

Nigerian politics. This class of people which is made up of the serving and the retired military officers in Nigeria appeared to have been responsible for the weakened democratic development in Nigeria. From the technical perspective, when the government promised electoral reform with the introduction of electronic voting system, people saw it as a welcome development earned at promoting free and fair election. The compromised institution as earlier mentioned above, has another plan earned at undermining the credibility of electronic voting system. For instance, the biometric machines now in use appears to have been compromised. Android 10 supplied for the electoral process appears to be very old and incapable of reflecting accurately the biometric information. This has created room for electoral manipulation. From all indication vested interest appears to be miles away in election rigging. This has become noticeable because the Android 17 version, the latest biometric voting machine was deliberately avoided in order to aid election rigging and manipulation. Again, the use of monitoring gratification to induce the poor, impoverished and illiterate voters has as well affected the concept of free and fair election in Nigeria. It is not uncommon to see few cups of rice, clothing materials and a couple of naira being thrown and shared at the election venue by the desperate politicians. Because the majority of the electorates are poorly educated with little or no knowledge of the democratic governance, the easily fall prey to the antiques of the gullible politicians who have been around for several years to destabilized the democratic principles.

Conclusion

Several factors have continued to work towards undermining the concept of free and fair election in Nigeria politics. Those factors appear very difficult to tame in spite of deliberate effort at building confidence among ethnic divides in Nigeria. Apart from Ethnicsm, Nigeria political system appears to have been highjacked powerful click spread all over the major sectors of nation system. Consciously, this click has noticed critical sectors of strength and influence in the country from the economic, political and social spheres. The have equally taken hold of the critical sectors preferring to control those sectors either directly proxy. Such sectors like the military chiefs in the security, the Judges and appeal and Supreme Court (in the Judiciary), in the petroleum sector (Minister of Petroleum) in the Police force (Commissioners and Inspector Generals of police).

The democratic principles have failed in Nigeria because Ethnicism has been allowed to thrive. On the platform of Ethnicism are key actors who do not believe in the Unity of the Nation. At the moment it appears the perpetrators are bent on holding and dictating who get what in Nigeria Political space. Apart from Ethnicism, Religious inclination has equally become visible to plum political positions in Nigeria. The danger it posits is the current spate of emergence separatist agitations in Nigeria today. In that regards, for Nigeria to enjoy credible election through free and fair, democratic ideology must allowed to develop and grow. People should be deliberate in their demand for the conduct of free and fair election. Masses can only be stronger when they arise to demand of equity and justice. Free and fair election could only be guaranteed if people in unison demand and insist for it irrespective of ethnic divide. Electoral reform is equally a key factor for free and fair election. In that regard, the electoral in Nigeria must be independent. The same reform must be extended to the military, no military personnel weather retired or serving should be allowed to participate full time political activities. This is because Nigeria is not strong or disciplined enough to accommodate military in her political space.

For democracy to grow in Nigeria, some element of democratic principles from the indigenous perspective should be accommodate. This is because people will feel free to participate and confidence restored when the process is all inclusive. Again, Nigeria electoral system is porous

because the base is weak. The base is weak because the poor illiterate rural voters have been introduced into ethnic politics. In addition, poor rural dwellers majority who formed the bulk of the voters have been influenced through monitory inducement. The danger is that often time, the corrupt system has remained more corrupt because the corrupt elites seeing nothing is using corrupt means to gain power. The general believes in Nigeria today, is that the election will never be free and fair in Nigeria. Using the military during the Election has equally resulted to voter's apathy. Nevertheless, the Nigerian voters can only experience free and fair election with shared determination. This could be achieved when they insist to defend democracy through effective monitoring and exercise. Awareness ought to be created through proper electoral education the poor rural dwellers, who for years has been deceived by the corrupt political elective office seaters.



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