



Corrupt Electoral Integrity: The Challenge to Legitimacy and Good Governance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria as the Africa's largest country with about 160 million people and 350 ethnic groups and many languages is made up of huge natural resources, socio-political and cultural history. Following this development, her electoral process has been subjected to numerous influences that brought about the high degree of corruption in Nigerian democratization and management of public affairs. It has further made the electorates believed that it is almost impossible to conduct credible elections. Through qualitative data, the paper identified various levels of corruption in the electoral process in Nigeria which include party primaries and nomination, governmental, and the electorates. With content analysis, many pertinent issues were discussed and conclusively, it is recommended that political office holders' salaries and allowances should be equalized with that of the civil servants, political godfatherism must be discouraged, INEC and SIECs should ensure that political party primaries mandatorily holds at Electoral Ward level, and all the party card carrying members are delegates, and many more.

Keywords: Corruption, Election, Good Governance, Integrity, Legitimacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The question that is begging for answer from all Nigerians is that: can the electoral bodies like Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and States Independent Electoral Commission (SIECs) conduct credible elections that can be described as "free and fair" and lead to electoral integrity? This question and the possible answer (yes or no) are contemporary issues that have become household discussions among Nigerians especially as the 2019 general election is around the corner. The major bone of contention or impediment to electoral integrity in Nigeria is the wide spread corruption that has become more or less a monster that is almost insurmountable.

Accordingly, Nigeria's democratic project has been perpetually under threat, especially since the country returned to civilian (as against democratic) governance in 1999. The political climate since 1999 has been hostile to true democracy. This is so because all the factors that led to the collapse of the First and Second Republics are widespread and are at present more severe than the previous Republics. According to Human Rights Watch, (2007), such factors include corruption in high places (and at sophisticated level), widespread violence, electoral fraud or all sorts and dimension especially at local government and state levels, politically motivated killings, assassinations (with all impunity), politically inspired ethno-religious conflict, widespread poverty, flagrant disregard for the rule of law and disrespect for human dignity. It further stated that, the situation is said to have been compounded by various other crises such as Boko Haram, clashes between pastoralists and sedentary farmers, cult related killings and the near government's inaction to curb the situation.

The foregoing have therefore become prevalent in the Nigerian polity to the point that they have greatly eroded the bases of the authority of the state (government) and now have become serious challenges to the legitimacy of government. Ibietan, Abasilim & Ebhohimen (2016) averred that the nation has frequently witnessed infiltration, mismanagement of ethnic diversities and religious/sectarian bifurcations which also characterizes its fault-lines and plurality. They said these and other issues constituting the national question in Nigeria which has remained unresolved led to the violent demonstrations and monster of terrorism. The problem of electoral integrity has dampened the enthusiasm in the electorates thereby making people to feel disenchanted with the whole political process and has invariably impacted negatively on good governance. Experts on democratic governance have observed that while periodic elections by themselves do not and cannot guarantee true democratic governance, they serve as one of the barometers for measuring an effective democratic process, as elections provide the platform through which the electorate can change a non-performing government. That is why the UN Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security noted in its Report in September, 2012 that elections can further build up democracy, development, human rights and security or undermine them and that for this reason, elections should command attention (Ejime, 2017).

Consequently, the paper will contribute to democratic consolidation, good governance and academic discourse and it is therefore properly positioned for the purpose. It is germane to state that the segmentation and alignment of the concepts in the paper makes it a robust research enterprise.

2. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual clarification is essential as that will enable us to have a clear picture of the focus of paper.

2.1 Corruption: Definition and Description

Corruption is a universal phenomenon that is very difficult to define (Sharma, Sadana & Kaur, 2011:933). The theoretical conception perceiving corruption as a major impediment that poses a great threat to electoral integrity, democratic stability, sustainability and consolidation is very common in the political literatures. These theoretical stance, according to Ogundiya (2010) is depicted in the various works and analysis as "moral politics", "a moral formalism", "prebendalism", "patrimonialism", "neopatrimonialism", "clientelism" etc. All these are the various ways by which people try to conceptualize corruption. Corruption is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources, and power for private gain (Nye, 1967, Amuwo, 2009; Obayelu, 2007). Dobel (1978) saw corruption as the betrayal of public trust for individual or group interest.

Obayelu (2007) on his part views corruption as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private gain. It is important to note that most of the definitions of corruption so far reviewed pointed to the fact that corruption takes place only in public life for private gain. But it should be noted that corruption as practiced in Nigeria and many other countries is a phenomenon, it is not limited public office. Even at personal level corruption takes place. Thus, any form of behaviour that is aimed at satisfying parochial interest at the expense of group interest is termed corruption. It is every effort made by an individual to exploit every available opportunity for personal gain at the expense of public or group interest. Thus, is any form of manipulative activity to satisfy personal goal. Thus any society or system where "manipulative" activities dominate the affairs of the society is a corrupt nation or society. Therefore, indisputable proof of reckless governance is always that corrupt practices become ubiquitous (Agbude et al, 2015:455).

Accordingly, Sharma, Sadana & Kaur (2011:933), identifies the basic postulation of corruption to include the following:

- i. It is a deliberate or intentional exploitation of one's position, status or resources.
- ii. It may be done directly or indirectly.
- iii. It is done for personal aggrandizement – whether it is material gain or enrichment of power or prestige or influence.
- iv. It is done by violating legitimate or sanctioned or commonly accepted norms of behavior.
- v. It is done against the interests of the community or other persons.

They cited Frederickson as saying that attitudes toward corruption and ethical conduct appear to be situationally determined, and that definitions of corruption and what constitutes ethical behavior vary depending on whether the setting is business; medical, legal, political or public administrative.

2.2 Electoral Process and Integrity

Electoral process has been at the centre of various crises that had truncated democratic experiments in Nigeria since independence to date. The collapse of the First and Second Republics (1966 and 1983) was as a result of manipulations of electoral processes which marred the integrity of elections and the democratic governance. Thus electoral integrity is the foundation of democratic stability. Electoral process which allows for the expression of the popular 'will' of the people is referred to as electoral integrity. Electoral integrity is a situation whereby all the necessary processes taken before, during and after elections are seen to be fair, transparent and trustworthy (Amuwo, 2009). Thus, electoral integrity can be conceptualized as a situation where all electoral processes are devoid of any form of partisan political manipulations that could create doubt and suspicion in the minds of the people about the outcome or result of an election.

Electoral integrity is therefore the pivot of democratic governance. When people have expressed their popular 'will' (through election of candidates of their choice) and such 'will' is upheld by the electoral body without overturning the will of the people, then we have electoral integrity. The credibility or otherwise of an election is therefore dependent on the integrity of the electoral process. It is observed that the truthfulness of the Nigerian voting structures has been severally violated in both procedural management and administration which the conduct of free, fair and credible elections to the background. Some factors have been identified includes the non availability of lack of reliable births and deaths data base on, non-adherence to a culture of integrity, poor technological and technical stance and the existence of fundamental flaws in the Nigerian constitutional and electoral set up. Osibanjo (2010) corroborated the aforementioned view that if any of the political institutions is bad, it will rub on others, explaining that unless all institutions were credible and reliable, no free and fair election should be expected.

It is germane to note, that election predates government formation. Thus, if the process of election is faulty, election conducted through such process will be faulty and the government formed from such election will be faulty. That is why we have cabal in government in Nigeria whose activities constitute great impediment to electioneering and good governance.

Electoral integrity therefore is a democratic culture where the will of the people is treated as sacred and immune to subversion by any anti-democratic and anti-people elements. Such democratic principles as outlined by Maduagwu (1996) include:

- i. majority rule,
- ii. rule of law,
- iii. equality before the law, and free choice, and
- iv. Absence of any form of partisan manipulations.

To this end Kofi Annan (2013) observed that when citizens go to the polls to cast their votes they aspire not only to elect their leaders but also choose a direction for their nation. Hence he warned that while election with integrity can bolster democracy, flawed elections can undermine it.

3. Levels of Corruption in Electoral Process in Nigeria

Corruption and corrupt practices in the Nigerian electoral process take place at different levels and in varying degrees in the Nigerian electoral process. Following this development, the multi-dimensionality of corruption and its amorphous nature takes place at various levels and stages in the Nigerian electoral process. The various levels of corruption in the electoral process in Nigeria include:

- i. party primaries and nomination level,
- ii. governmental level, and
- iii. Electorates level.

Each of these levels will be examined with their attendant consequences on electoral integrity.

3.1 Corruption at the Party Level

It is important to note that political democracy starts at the party level. It is strongly conceived that:

Political parties are a central feature of any modern democracy. They are the vehicles by which citizens come together freely to campaign for public office and win seats in a legislative body, to express their interests and needs, and define their aspirations for their society. Democracy can only exist and thrive where parties play their critical – even unique – roles in politics (NDI, 2008).

It is at the political party level that the various processes of electoral integrity and credibility begin. Thus, the possession of a free, fair and credible election depends on the extent of existence of internal democracy at the party level. At this level in Nigeria, political godfatherism has destroyed internal democracy. This is the beginning of corrupt practices in the political process. At the party level, political godfathers use their ill-gotten wealth to lure, intimidate and manipulate members of the party executives and impose unpopular candidates. The proposal by the then President Goodluck Jonathan seeking to allow party caucuses to produce delegates at conventions according to Akeredolu (2010) showed that internal democracy at the party level have been scuttled, and that is the beginning of election rigging and corruption at the party level.

Thus, Izenwa (2007) observed that corruption at the party level emanates from the activities of godfathers which have crippled democratic choice and consequently shrinks democratic space. He further noted that the activities of godfathers create serious electoral problems as they employ all forms of obnoxious means to win elections. Acknowledging the absence of internal democracy at the party level, President Jonathan in his broadcast to the nation on Democracy Day May 29, 2010, remarked that “for the parties to be relevant in the nation’s democratic enterprise, it is compulsory that a regime of internal party democracy must be in all the parties”, adding that “it is the political parties that are imbued with democratic spirit that would deepen the practice of democracy in our land”. This is an indicative fact that many political parties in Nigeria (including his party PDP) do not put in practice internal democracy.

Corruption at the party level has made democratic process and electoral integrity difficult in the Nigerian political process, especially since the nation returned to civil rule in 1999. This corruption emanates from material and mental poverty, greed, avarice and ignorance on the part of these party members. The trio, that is poverty, greed and ignorance have brought about the emergence of such citizens that prefer money to their conscience to the extent that they cannot whimper even when their democratic rights are subverted. That is why Ogundiya (2010) examined that “one major development in recent years is that political parties in Nigeria have become disabilities to democratic stability”. Hence, party procedures for appointment selection of candidates are usually scuttled and non-transparent due to manipulations of political godfathers who take over party affairs.

Poverty, greed and ignorance have made the political godfathers to impose any candidate of their choice on the party members thereby subverting democratic rights of members. This state of affairs was very dominant during 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 party primary elections in Nigeria. Examples include the imposition of late President Yaradua on members of the PDP and Nigerians by former President Obasanjo during the 2007 general elections, Chief Andy Uba as Governor of Anambra State 2007, and a host of others (Izenwa, 2007). The corruption at the party level therefore constitutes a great setback to democratic process and party internal democracy.

3.2 Corruption at the Governmental Level

If your hands are dirty, you lose moral authority and the right and conscience to do justice.

Public office is a trust and betrayal of that trust in any way or manner makes the public office-holder a traitor to the course and interest of the people.

The fear of most people who care dearly for Nigeria, however, is that we are going fast down the precipice (Obasanjo, 2014).

Official corruption is the most destructive factor in the electoral process in Nigeria. Official corruption is a crime in Nigeria under the criminal code. As Jega (2007) reiterated, the more public and elected officials demonstrate irresponsibility, seem unaccountable and insensitive to popular demands and aspirations, and the more poorly they conduct themselves in governance and state-craft, the greater the threats to democratic strengthening and sustainability. Yet, officials are involved in corruption with impunity, thus constituting impediment to electoral integrity.

Official corruption is defined as situation where an official abuses one's office for personal or group (financial) gains or purposes. The major officials connected with elections in Nigeria are the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) at the federal level. State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) at the State and Local Government levels the security operatives such as the Police, State Security Service (SSS), and the Army (in some case). These various officials are supposed to conduct and monitor elections and ensure that all the necessary rules and procedures are not only observed but followed to the later. However, the operations of those official agencies in Nigeria in electoral activities have been beclouded with corrupt practices of all sorts. The corrupt practices of government officials persist. According to Akeredolu (2010), lack of punishment for electoral offenders in such capacity is responsible. Unless and until punishments are meted out to official electoral offenders, corruption at official level will not stop as election time will be seen as big business/time "to make" through fraudulent electoral activities, such activities manifested in various local government elections in the country.

Osibanjo (2010) lend his voice on the same issue when he said that the solution to the mirage of problems that might put elections in jeopardy is the curbing of moral problems in the system prosecuting electoral offenders and monitoring the judiciary. A fraudulent election cannot produce meaningful democratic leadership except fraudulent government, unacceptable to the public (Ogundiya, 2010). Those who are supposed to legislate against corruption are themselves neck deep in corrupt activities. Therefore, Ogbamlyam (1996) proposed that a national assembly which is corruptly selected tends to subvert democratization resulting in weak governmental institutions and bad governance.

3.3 Corruption at the Electorate Level

According to Obasanjo (1999), corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most activities. The irony about electoral process and integrity in Nigeria is that election period is always seen by the electorates as the time and avenue for the masses to "obtain their booties" from the politicians. Consequently, election period becomes a time when many of the Nigerian masses, especially the youth will begin to scramble for money from members of the political class. Because of this singular belief that the masses must get their own "share" of the national cake from the politicians, the mindset of average Nigerian is not tilted towards political ideology of development but rather on what share he/she would get from the political class to deliver his constituency, ward, or polling unit. Since the focus of the majority of the masses is how to corruptly enrich themselves through the election process, many of them now become agents of electoral malpractice with the politicians. Thus, massive rigging, snatching of ballot boxes, multiple voting etc are committed by the electorates to satisfy the interest one political party/politician or the other thereby "selling and betraying" the constituency, ward or community. With the foregoing state of affairs, there is an obvious lack of decisiveness on the part of the electorates to ensure electoral integrity. Consequently, both elites and electorates become indifferent to electoral malpractices. This state of affairs has created fertile ground for electoral corruption.

Corruption at the electorate level emanates mostly because of poverty and ignorance occasioned by illiteracy. Because of the low level of literacy of the masses many of them do not know what constitutes their political rights. Consequently, they see political activities and electoral processes as the activity that belongs to only a particular group of people. Capitalizing on the lack of awareness of the masses, the political class always manipulates the electorates by throwing around the ill-gotten money from the much they have siphoned from the public treasury, thereby causing 'divide and rule' among the masses and

creating confusion and commotions, and lack of political relationship between political office seekers and the role of the electorate, especially the value of their vote. Due to lack of knowledge, they were being made to “sell” their votes for any party and mortgage their future and that of their generation yet unborn. That is why the proposition by many scholars and pro-democrats for the protection of votes does not seem to make meaning to many electorates.

Again, the development of political thuggery is a by-product of corruption at the electorate level. Thugs are generally selected from among the electorates and particularly from the youths and able-bodied with low-mental/social background because of the attitude and behaviour of the operators of democracy which has failed to conform to democratic ethics and tenets (Idakwoji & Paul, 2013; Idakwoji, 2014). For the reason of their mental bankruptcy, they see thuggery as the only way for them to attain position and amass wealth. Thus, many of them can stake their lives to protect the ‘interest’ of their principal. It has brought sorrow to many families among the lowly placed Nigerians while their political masters continue to blossom with their children, and recycle them in political offices. On this note, Idakwoji (2014) painfully questioned:

- i. why is it that none of the politicians recruit their own children into thuggery in their localities?
- ii. why can’t the thugs use their power of thuggery to defend votes in the interest of the masses?
- iii. which will give them long time life benefits than the ephemeral one?

4. Democracy and Democratic Practice in Nigeria

Democracy is a laudable system generally acceptable in all civilized polity. Its gains are only realizable through the electoral process. For this reason, electoral process is perceived as the conveyor or channel through which democracy and its dividends are actualized (Anichebe, 2007). Thus, without an appropriate electoral process which allows the people to freely choose their representatives, democracy remains a mere slogan. Democracy in its simple definition means “the rule of the people”. Lincoln’s definition of democracy which is the most popular sees it as “government of the people, by the people and for the people”. Agundu (2007) defined democracy as the rule of the people expressing their sovereign will through their votes. Going by the foregoing definitions, it means that in democracy, the ultimate authority of government resides in the people so that public policies are made to conform to the will of the people and to serve the interests of the people.

Generally, the common way of determining the wishes of the people is through election, it is only when the masses are allowed to express their choice of candidate in free, fair and credible elections where democratic principles are followed that democracy is said to have taken place. The philosophical basis and fundamental ethos of democracy is “free choice” by the people.

However, in Nigerian situation, the opposite is the case. According to Jega (2007), civil rule in Nigeria have been characterized by heightened incidence of poverty, ethno-religious conflicts and generalized insecurity, all of which serve as legitimate grounds for raising many pertinent questions like:

- i. the relationship between democracy and development;
- ii. management of ethno-religious conflicts in a democratic transition in a complex plural society such as Nigeria, and
- iii. building or consolidating democracy in a situation of an acute economic crisis and conflicts.

On this note, Ibeanu (2007) succinctly perceived that:

...Nigerians do not attach great promissory content or a psychological value of their vote is grossly devalued and mandates claimed by politicians are effectively dubious... Nigerian voters and politicians alike know that votes are unequal and that the action of corrupt electoral officials, party leaders, security agents and the Presidency do count more in determining electoral outcomes than votes ... the bulk of Nigerian voters have no illusions about the importance of their votes and there is no psychological satisfaction in voting because they know that either the votes will not be counted or the votes will not count.

Despite the introduction of Card Reader and partial electronic voting system by the former INEC Chairman, Professor Attahiru Mohammed Jega to strengthen electoral integrity, local government elections conducted by SIECs across the country failed to observe the rules of the game, thus scuttling the integrity of elections at the local levels. The above statement shows that Nigeria is yet to start the practice of democracy since the people are alienated and are deprived from expressing their will. Local Government Council elections which ought to be the major nursery for democratic participation being is the closest to the people has been perverted. Where the will of the majority cannot prevail, it is strange to call such practice democracy. For democracy to be responsive and work effectively, the masses must see and appreciate the fact that political leaders have the public goods at heart and do respond to the reasonable demands of the citizenry. For instance;

It is only in Nigeria that politicians would promise the people “heaven on earth” as campaign manifesto and cunningly deny after assumption of office with the peoples vote. Succinctly, how to be accountable has been a hydra-headed challenge facing members of Nigerian political class though there is presence of “Freedom of Information Act” passed by the 7th Senate (2011–2015) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The complaints of citizens aired through the mass and social media, protests and peaceful demonstrations have been relegated to the background by successive governments in Nigeria (PAUL, Orokpo & Ojo, 2017).

In democracy where the popular will prevails, it leads to governmental responsiveness and accountability. Responsiveness and accountability are both necessary for effective democratic governance, Dennis (2008) noted that responsiveness and accountability are twin virtues of a well-run democratic society. He added that responsiveness in democratic government means the government is responsive to the yearnings of the people while accountability means the existence of checks on public officials to ensure that they will function in a responsive and responsible manner and the potential of levying of negative sanctions on political leaders who strays from the standards. These are the tenets of democratic governance which political godfatherism has thwarted and scuttled in the Nigerian polity. Unless these ideals are allowed to function in Nigerian democratic project, the system will continue to experience friction and instability.

5. Corruption, Governmental Legitimacy and Political Stability

The present administration has failed to live up to its campaign slogan...and what is more, it has jettisoned its manifesto and it failed to perform to expectation and, therefore, has betrayed the mandate of the people. What happens at the centre has its implications at the state and Local Government levels. Any discerning, committed and objective person can compare... (Obasanjo, 2014).

Obasanjo asserted like a prophet in this situation when he wrote to late President Yar’Adua in 2008. Perpetually, Nigeria has been described as one of the countries that show off failed democracy due largely to corruption and lack of electoral integrity (Maduagwu, 1996). This is because democratic institutions have been ravaged by corruption. Such democratic institutions include the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), States Independent Electoral Commission (SIECs), political parties, National Assembly, States House of Assembly, and Local Government Legislative Councils. However, NDI (2008) citing David Broder asserted that:

“[Democracy requires an] institution that will sort out, weigh, and, to the extent possible, reconcile the myriad of conflicting demands of individuals, groups, interests, communities and regions...; organize them for the contest of public office; and then serve as a link between the constituencies and the [people] chosen to govern.

The impurity of these institutions create problem of governmental legitimacy. Ogbam-lyam (1996) propositions which are considered relevant for the understanding of the defective functionalities of the legislature to democratic stability as cited in Ogundiya (2010) are:

- i. when the few control the governance of a polity and have the preponderance of force to continue to maintain such control, the National Assembly that emerges from the dictation of such a group is likely to be more corrupt and subversive of democracy and democratization than the one that emerges from the dictates of the popular forces,
- ii. the National Assembly which is recruited and constituted through corrupt and anti-democratic means tends to be corrupt, and
- iii. A citizenry that is essentially corrupt tends to have and tolerate a corrupt National Assembly.

The above hypothetical statements no doubt reflect the character of the Nigerian political system and such scenario creates problem of governmental legitimacy, political stability and good governance. That is why Nigeria is at present bedeviled with myriad of crises which in the view of Osabiya (2015) cited by Ibieta, Abasilim & Ebhohimen (2016) have generated a vicious circle of the sum total of conflict, unemployment, insecurity, the subsequent emergence of Boko Haram, and herdsmen/farmers bloody clash which is the resultant effect of the failure of the Nigerian state to address the unanswered National Questions. Most of this followed the people's disenchantment with the legitimacy of government. As a result of the endemic nature of corruption, citizens no longer have confidence in the government and the effect is devising alternative coping strategy. This strategy is one of the various methods that the people express their dissatisfaction with government. For instance, Nigerians no longer repose confidence on the State Security Agencies as individuals now rely more on their private security than that of the State. This situation often creates tension and threatens the stability of the polity. Corruption is therefore the fundamental factor that causes of political violence we have in Nigeria. According to Human Rights Watch (2017), since 1999 when the country returned to democracy, lives have been lost in politically motivated violence and properties worth billions of Naira have been destroyed.

The foregoing scenario demonstrates that the fundamental ethos of democracy have been swept under the carpet. As earlier noted, the Nigerian electorates have also lost confidence not only in the electoral process, but more importantly on government which a fraudulent process produced. The fraudulent nature of the electoral process has led to the production of irresponsible and unaccountable governance in Nigeria and this portend a great danger to the Nigerian state if allowed to continue unabated. With electoral integrity, people are allowed to freely elect their representatives which leads to governmental legitimacy, confidence in governance, democratic stability and consolidation. This is so because both the "electors and electees" will have joint-trust that will bring accountability and cooperation to governance and stability of the polity.

6. CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Corruption electioneering has posed a great challenge to democratic integrity and stability. Therefore, the major confrontation facing the Nigerian state is how to curb corruption in her democratic formations. In a nutshell, the fight against corruption in Nigeria over the years has failed to achieve the desired result simply because those who ought to fight corruption head long are the same people who are neck-deep in corrupt practices. Those in political leadership positions who are supposed to constitute role models to the rest members of the society are fingered as perpetrators.

Consequently, the inordinate desire for primitive accumulation by the use of state power and resources which the people in political offices have demonstrated over the years has greatly put the country in bad shape. If the political leadership is upright, insisting on the right thing and lead by example, the rest members of the society would have no option but to queue behind.

Therefore, if the leadership is corrupt, the piety of the subordinate is always seen as a threat and consequently the subordinate would like to dance to the tune of his superior. This accounts for the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria. Political corruption is the bane of electoral integrity in Nigeria. In order to move Nigeria to the next level, frantic efforts have to be made to address the problem of political corruption among the ruling class. Nevertheless, the following recommendations are proffered.

- i. The Fiscal Mobilization Commission which is responsible for fixing salaries and allowances of political office holders should as a matter of urgency reduce the salaries and allowances of political offices in accordance with economic reality of the country. No political office holder should earn more than what his counterpart in the civil service earns.
- ii. Politics of godfatherism which has not allowed for internal democracy at the party level should be challenged by the electorates through ‘protest votes’ in the secondary elections.
- iii. INEC and SIECs must ensure that political party primaries should be subjected to democratic election by all card carrying members of political parties rather than the delegate system. Internal democracy can only take place when every card carrying member of the party’s vote counts. This particular point canvases for organization of primary elections in all the electoral wards where all card carrying members should be allowed to freely choose candidates of their interest for various positions. This is what democracy means.
- iv. The synergy between Judiciary and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in the arrest, prosecution, trials, conviction and disqualification of persons found guilty of any corrupt practice will be a major “headway”.
- v. Electoral offences should be taken very seriously and adequate penalties meted out to offenders to serve as deterrent to others. Any person who commits electoral offence whether INEC/SIEC official, security agent or electorate should be made to face the full wrath of the law. There should be no “sacred cow” in this respect as no individual should be above the law of the land.
- vi. There should be a declaration of war against political thuggery. It should be qualified as terrorism and all punishments meant for terrorists should be applied.
- vii. Effective mass mobilization mechanisms should be put in place by government and non-governmental organisations so as to create political education and awareness among the electorate. This should target universal adult suffrage. This should be done through mass media in local languages.

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