

Election Administration in Nigeria: A Critique of the 2019 General Elections

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Abstract

Prior to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had conducted five quadrennial general elections from 1999-2015. The 2019 elections were characterised by various anomalies which include but not limited to widespread rigging through multiple registrations, alteration of results at collation centres, etc. Hence, this study examines election administration in Nigeria with particular emphasis on 2019 general elections. Data for the study were basically selected from both primary and secondary sources. The study identified that poor operational logistics, weak institutional framework on the side of INEC among others, still remain a major challenge in the administration of the 2019 general elections. The paper recommends among others that adequate digitalisation of the electoral process is a necessity to prevent the possibility of street thugs destroying ballot boxes and votes, and forestalling postponement of subsequent elections in the future.

Keywords: Democracy, INEC, Electoral Systems, Election Administration, Liberal Theory

Introduction

A central concern of all stakeholders is on how to improve the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria. Several by-elections and state governorship elections were run under the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that provided it with the practical tests and rehearsals it needed ahead of the national elections. Those

elections did throw up some controversies about the electoral process and INEC's work in the build-up to the elections.

The first election in Nigeria took place in 1922 and since that period, elections have occurred continuously until 1960 when Nigeria gained her independence from Britain. After political independence, elections took place in 1964 but the democratic administration was short-lived because of the 15 January, 1966 *coup d'état*. In 1979, Nigeria dropped the British styled Parliamentary System of Government which it adopted in the First Republic (1963-1966) and switched to the American styled Presidential System of Government. On 29th May, 1999, the Fourth Republic (1999-date) emerged and remains the longest democratic dispensation in the history of the country (Sule, *et. al.*, 2018). On the 29th of May, 2020, Nigeria is celebrating her twenty years of uninterrupted democratic government.

Since the Fourth Republic started on 29th May, 1999 till the 2019 General Elections, there have been seven constitutionally recognised offices into which elections have been conducted. Elections have been conducted to fill the offices of President, Senators, Members of Federal House of Representatives. There have also been gubernatorial elections, State Houses of Assembly elections, and elections to fill the offices of the Chairman and Councillors at the local government level.

One of the most controversial elections in Nigeria remains the presidential election. This makes the battle for the presidential election violent, life threatening, chaotic and sometimes leading to political tension. The culture of ethnic, religious and regional voting inherited from the nationalists during the colonial period has spilled-over to the present era and it seems to be the routine affair (Sule, *et. al.*, 2017).

Election administration occupies a significant position in electoral process and consolidation of democracy in any given polity (Gyekye-Jandoh, 2013). To achieve effective electoral administration, the existence of an impartial election management body such as the INEC in the case of Nigeria is very important. Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are important institutions for democracy and democratic consolidation because they are concerned directly with the organisation of multi-party elections and indirectly

with governance based on laid down procedure(s). This work is an investigation of the process of the conduct of the 2019 Presidential Election, the pattern of voting behaviour, an analysis of the outcome, the issues emanating from the contest and the anticipated implications of the pattern of voting on the electorate and possible policy options to address the inherent flaws.

Data for the study were generated through a careful review of relevant literature. The relevant literature was drawn from text books, journals, newspapers, internet sources and documentaries from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The study also benefitted from participant observation based on the fact that the researchers were ad-hoc officials of INEC and were actively involved in the 2019 presidential election where they served as collation officers. The data were analysed using the discourse analytic method. The method was utilised to interrogate election administration with particular emphasis on the 2019 general election and to determine the way forward in Nigeria.

Elections and the Pattern of Election Administration in Nigeria

Elections occur in every four years for some federal and most state and local government offices in Nigeria. Thus, in every four years, Nigerians elect a president and vice president, governors, members of the National Assembly and members of the various State Houses of Assembly. Since the emergence of the Fourth Republic every four years, 469 Members of the National Assembly across the six geopolitical zones are elected in Nigeria. As at the time of conducting this study, Nigeria is running its 9th National Assembly and is 20 years into an uninterrupted civil rule.

According to Makinde (1996), democracy is a government deeply rooted in the belief that eligible voters in any given society should be free to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems. Nonetheless, the founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, strongly believes that election is the most critical and visible means through which all citizens can peacefully choose or remove leaders if they abuse their offices or fail to perform. In other words, elections are the principal instruments that “compel or encourage the policy-makers to

pay attention to citizens” (Powell 2000:4). Indeed, the ruling party following any given election is conceived as holding temporarily the mandate of the entire citizenry; only as far as it continues to win elections. Thus, elections require the existence of a multiparty system as in the case of 2019 general elections where 73 political parties were duly registered for the presidential election that held on 23rd February, 2019. The advantages of the multiplicity of political parties is that citizens have an unfettered choice in making political decisions including voting for competing candidates fielded by the various political parties and holding divergent views as influenced by the various political party manifestoes.

In Nigeria, there exists two major types of elections: primary and general elections. Primary elections, which are chiefly internal party activities, are held prior to a general election to determine party candidates for the general election. The winning candidates in the primary go on to represent the party in the general election following the laid-out guidelines as given by the electoral umpire- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Since the commencement of the Fourth Republic, party primaries have been the chief electoral device for choosing party candidates. With rare exceptions, victory in a primary election results in a candidate being nominated by that political party for the general election. In a few states, party candidates are chosen in state or local nominating conventions, rather than primaries, either by tradition or at the option of the political parties. Once the primary elections or conventions are concluded, the party projects its candidate for the general election.

However, the question of internal democracy in Nigeria especially in the two major parties in Nigeria- All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) on the selection of party flag bearers often leads to intra-part conflicts whenever it is devoid of transparency. What are the laid down strategies for selecting a candidate in a party? Is the selection based on their credentials and loyalties to the party or based on the popularity of their godfathers and godmothers? Scarrow (2005) noted that the recruitment and selection of eligible candidates are crucial task for parties, because parties’ profiles during elections and while in office are largely determined by which candidates are chosen and

where their loyalties lie. Whichever procedure is adopted, it is the responsibility of the party to decide who is eligible to contest or participate in the election. The assumption is that the selection of a party flag bearer should be based on integrity and credibility of members. In other words, selection of candidates should be devoid of sentiments, prejudice, class and ethnic chauvinisms. This is a serious problem in both the APC and the PDP in some selected states of the federation in the 2019 general elections.

Election Administration

The specific procedures and practices of election administration are constantly evolving in Nigeria following a standard process. This standard process states that to be eligible to cast vote, one must be eighteen (18) years old, be a Nigerian citizen, be a registered voter, and present a Permanent Voter 's Card (PVC) at the polling station. Elections can be viewed as a cycle where eligible citizens are registered to vote, polling places are selected, poll workers are hired to supplement the INEC permanent staff, and voting procedures are decided by the electoral commission. According to Pastor (1999) the electoral commission is the only institution which can build the confidence of the electorate and political parties alike which is essential to generate a free, fair and credible electoral process. In Nigeria's nascent and fragile democracy, the responsibility for elections is usually administered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which is not properly insulated from the political pressures and controls of political forces; especially the ruling party which oftentimes demonstrate a special interest in the outcome of elections.

However, in Nigeria where the voting and registration patterns are centralised, the agency responsible for voter registration and voting is the INEC. The INEC comprises of 13 officials who are appointed by the President. In Nigeria, there are 119,973 polling units across the country, with each polling unit having no more than 70 registered voters. However, in Nigeria there are 57,073 voting points where there are excess voters (INEC, 2019). These are spread between urban and rural areas with varying degrees of difficulty in access. Transportation of sensitive and non-sensitive materials can be

difficult. For example, in remote areas that do not have quality infrastructure, airlifting materials for the day of election is a herculean task.

In the 2019 general elections alone, there were 73 presidential candidates in the election cycle. This remains the highest ever for any presidential election in Nigeria's political history. There were thousands of security forces deployed on Election Day; 4,030 non-security personnel; and 8000 special protection personnel. The INEC budget for the 2019 general election approved by the National Assembly was N198.2 billion (US\$525.5 million) amounting to US\$6.55 per voter (INEC, 2019). However, the 2019 General Elections was governed by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), as well as by regulations and guidelines issued by the Commission.

To Jinadu (1997) election administration is the organisation and conduct of elections to elective public (political) office by an electoral body. For him, subsumed in election administration are structures and processes. By structure is meant the bureaucracy that is set up to or established to organise and conduct elections such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The process entails the rules, procedures and activities relating, among others, the establishment of electoral bodies, the appointment of members, the registration of voters, the nomination of candidates for elections, balloting, counting of the ballots, declaration of results, the selection and training of electoral officials; especially ad-hoc staff, constituency delimitation, voter education and, in some cases, registration of political parties and supervision of party nomination congresses.

In the preparations leading to the 2019 general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with road transport unions to use commercial vehicles for movement of election personnel and materials on election days. For example, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employees Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), and the National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) signed the MoU with INEC. According to the electoral commission, it needed over a hundred

thousand vehicles for the elections, which the commission cannot provide alone; hence, the resort to commercial vehicles (Ugbede, 2019).

The chairman of INEC, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, in his speech explaining the reasons for the MoU with road transport unions, said the Commission had the same arrangement with NURTW in 2015 but saw the need to expand the scope of the partnership to ensure a more efficient delivery and retrieval of election personnel and materials. The INEC chairman, described the new agreement as another giant step towards making the 2019 general elections better than the previous ones by making sure polling units open on time.

2019 General Elections in Nigeria: An Overview

The 2019 general elections in Nigeria were the most planned for. Arrangements kick-started with the INEC Strategic Plan 2017–2021. Afterward there were Election Management System, Election Project Plan and Elections Operations Support Centres. Beyond, the 2019 general election was the costliest in the history of elections in Nigeria. The Federal Government sponsored the elections with a massive ₦242 billion, ₦189 billion of that amount went to the INEC whilst the balance of ₦53bn was shared among the various security agencies to ensure security during the elections. This colossal amount from the federal government of Nigeria was, in fact, separate from the millions of dollars exhausted on the commission by the different international donor partners (*Punch*,2019).

According to the *Punch* (2019) there were 84 million registered electorates out of which 72 million electorates collected their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs); 91 registered political parties; 119,973 Polling Units; 120 accredited domestic observers and 36 accredited foreign observers; and 23,000 candidates competing for 1,558 elective positions. Seven elections were also conducted over two Saturdays. These were presidential, senatorial and House of Representatives elections on February 23, 2019 and gubernatorial, State Houses of Assembly, chairmanship and councillorship elections of the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory held on March 9, 2019.

There was a peculiar dimension to the 2019 presidential election: the two major presidential contenders— President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP were both from the North, the same Hausa/Fulani ethnic group, both Muslims by religion; with their respective vice-presidential candidates (Professor Yemi Osinbajo of the APC and Dr. Peter Obi of the PDP) sharing similar attributes. Both vice presidential candidates were from the South, of the same Christian religion, though of different ethnic nationalities.

However, the voting pattern indicated a surprising result where the Hausa/Fulani Muslims voted massively for President Muhammadu Buhari while the Northern Christians and the South/South and Southeast voted for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar with the votes split between the two in the Southwest as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of the 2019 Presidential Elections Results in Nigeria

S/N	Political Parties	Presidential Candidate	Vice President	Total Votes Received
1.	Accord (A)	Isaac Ositelu	Lawal Muhammad	19,219
2.	Action Alliance (AA)	Abdulrashid Baba	Uchendu Ozoka	14,380
3.	African Action Congress (AAC)	Omoyele Sowore	Rabiu Rufai	33,953
4.	Advanced Alliance Party (AAP)	Chike Ukaegbu	Safiya Ogoh	8,902
5.	All Blended Party (ABP)	Shipi Godia	Okwuanyasi Shaliat	4,523
6.	Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD)	Nwokefor Ikechukwu	Ali Abdullahi	11,325
7.	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN)	Obiageli Ezekwesili	Ganiyu Galadima	7,223
8.	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	Obadiah Mailafia	Nasiru Tanimowo	97,874
9.	Action Democratic Party (ADP)	Yusuf Yabaji	Olateru Martins	54,930
10.	All Grassroots Alliance (AGA)	Nwachukwu Nwabiku	Tijjani Ali	4,689
11.	All Grand Alliance Party (AGAP)	Umenwa Godwin	Ibrahim Olaika	3,071
12.	Advanced Nigeria Democratic Party (ANDP)	Yusufu Obaje	Sule Ganiyu	3,104
13.	Alliance New Nigeria (ANN)	Fela Durotoye	Khadijah Abdullahi-Iya	16,779
14.	Alliance National Party (ANP)	Shittu Moshood	Okere Evelyn	3,586
15.	Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party (ANRP)	Tope Fasua	Yakubu Zakari	4,340
16.	African Peoples Alliance (APA)	Aliyu Ibrahim	Adeleke Aderemi	36,866

17	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Muhammadu Buhari	Yemi Osibajo	15,191,847
18	Advanced Peoples Democratic Alliance (APDA)	Shittu Mohammed	Olayemi Mahmood	26,558
19	All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	John Gbor	Gerald Chukwueke	66,851
20	Allied Peoples Movement (APM)	Mamman Yusuf	Duru Nwabueze	26,039
21	All People's Party (APP)	Obinna Ikeagwuonu	Omotosho Emmanuel	3,585
22	Alliance of Social Democrats (ASD)	John Dara	Abubakar Salihu	2,146
23	Alliance for a United Nigeria (AUN)	Angela Johnson	Zayyanu Abubakar	1,092
24	Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP)	David Eze-Iyamu	Kofar Umar	1,649
25	Coalition for Change (CC)	Geff Orjinika Chizee	Yakubu Usman	2,391
26	Changed Advocacy Party (CAP)	Lewis Abah	Michael Okojie	1,111
27	Change Nigeria Party (CNP)	Emmanuel Etim	Adeola Zainab	1,874
28	Democratic Alternative (DA)	Frank Ukonga	Musa Saidu	2,769
29	Democratic People Congress (DPC)	Awosola Ulusola	Seiyafa Fetepigi	5,242
30	Democratic People Party (DPP)	Felix Osakwe	Mohammed Ali	14,483
31	Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)	John Onwubiya	Ahmad Muhammad	4,174
32	Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH)	Chris Okotie	Bintu Adefila	4,554
33	Grassroots Development Party of Nigeria (GDPN)	Davidson Akhimien	Ibrahim Hamman	41,852
34	Green Party of Nigeria (GPN)	Samuel Eke	Hadiza Musa	4,924
35	Hope Democratic Party (HDP)	Albert Owuru	Yahaya Shaba	1,663
36	Independent Democrats (ID)	Nnamdi Madu	Adamu Abubakar	1,845
37	Justice Must Prevail Party (JMPP)	Sunday Chukwu-Eguzolugu	Salihu Imam	1,853
38	KOWA Party (KP)	Adesina Fagbenro-Byron	Ummar Abbas	1,911
40	Liberation Movement (LM)	Kris David	Azael Vashi	1,438
41	Labour Party (LP)	Usman Mohammed	Tom Akpan	5,074
42	Mass Action Joint Alliance (MAJA)	Olufunmilayo Adesanya-Davies	Anthony Ibeneme	2,651
43	Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN)	Isah Bashayi	Oluwatoyin Adepoju	14,540
44	Mega Party of Nigeria (MPN)	Hamsu Santuraki	Chinwe Ufondu	2,752
45	National Action Council (NAC)	Rabiu Hassan	Chineme Uhuegbu	2,279
46	Nigeria Community Movement Party (NCMP)	Babatunde Ademola	Aisha Tataji	1,378
47	National Conscience Party (NCP)	Yunusa Salisu	Funmi James	3,799
48	Nigeria Democratic Congress Party (NDCP)	Johnson Edosomwan	Nasiru Mohammed	1,192

49.	National Democratic Liberty Party (NDLP)	Robinson Akpan	Umaru Ahmadu	1,588
50	Nigeria Elements of Progressive Party (NEPP)	Paul Ishaka	Akinfelami Vincent	1,524
51	Nigeria for Democracy (NFD)	Asukwo Archibong	Ite Donald-Ekpo	4,096
52.	National Interest Party (NIP)	Eunice Atuejide	Muhammad Bello	2,248
53.	New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)	Ike Keke	Johnson Omede	6,111
54.	Nigeria People's Congress (NPC)	Maimuna Maina	Yetunde Oluwale	10,081
55.	National Rescue Movement P (NRM)	Usman Ibrahim	Onwa Nwafor-Orizu	6,229
56.	National Unity Party (NUP)	Moses Ajibiowu	Michael Idoko	5,323
57.	Peoples Coalition Party (PCP)	Felix Nicholas	Baba Ado	110,196
58.	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Atiku Abubakar	Peter Obi	11,262,978
59.	Progressive People Alliance (PPA)	Peter Ameh	Kehinde Edun	21,822
60.	Providence People's Congress (PPC)	Victor Okhai	Iyan Tama Hamisu	8,979
61.	Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN)	Hamza Al Mustapha	Robert Opara	4,622
62.	People's Trust (PT)	Gbenga Olawope-Hashim	Nwankwo Agwuncha	2,613
63.	Reform and Advancement Party (RAP)	Israel Nonyerem Davidson	Dawud Hassan	2,972
64.	Re-Build Nigeria Party (RBNP)	Chukwudi Osuala	Muhammad Falali	1,792
65.	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	Aligned with APC		34,746
66.	Save Nigeria Congress (SNC)	Thomas Da Silva	Aisha Muhammad	28,680
67.	Sustainable National Party (SNP)	Ahmad Buhari	Nwogu Kingsley	3,941
68.	United Democratic Party (UDP)	Ishiaka Balogun	Shuaibu Mohammed	3,170
69.	United Patriot (UP)	Mark Emmanuel	Okeke Moses	1,561
70.	Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)	Ahmed Inuwa	Echemor Nkwocha	1,631
71	We The People of Nigeria (WTPN)	Nwangwu Uchenna	Olanrewaju Adebowale	732
72	YES Electorates Solidarity	Ali Soyode	Balkisu Abdullahi	2,394
73.	Young Progressive Party (YPP)	Kingsley Moghalu	Umma Getso	21,886

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Nigeria_general_election & Compiled by the Authors (2020)

The table above indicated a voting pattern where for the first time in the electoral history of presidential election in Nigeria a number of 73 political parties contested. The large number of political parties made the 2019 presidential election a unique affair in comparison with previous presidential elections in the country.

However, one noticeable trend was that the 2019 presidential election recorded the lowest voter turnout in comparison with that of 2007, 2011 and 2015 respectively. In 2007, a turnout of 57.5% of 61.5 million registered voters was recorded, in 2011, a turnout of 56.4% was recorded, in 2015, a 46.8% voters' turnout was recorded while in the 2019 presidential election, only 39.09% voter's turnout was recorded. Among other reasons, political apathy, and the postponement of the presidential election from 14th of February, 2019 to 23rd of March, 2019 were cited for the low voter turnout in the 2019 presidential election.

The statistical details of the 2019 presidential election result indicating the summary of votes cast is further shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Votes Cast in 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria

S/N	Summary of Votes	Total Count
1.	Registered Voters	84,004,084
2.	Registered Voters (As Collated)	82,344,107
3.	Accredited Voters (As Collated)	29,364,209
4.	Valid Votes (As Collated)	27,324,583
5.	Rejected Votes (As Collated)	1,289,607
6.	Votes Cast (As Collated)	28,614,190

Source: INEC Official Report (2019) & Compiled by the Authors (2020)

Critical Issues in the 2019 General Election in Nigeria

The 2019 presidential election in Nigeria had several pitfalls that hindered its fairness and participative nature and some abnormalities in spite of the huge budgetary allocations dedicated to the exercise. In the wake of the 2011 and 2015 elections, INEC, other organisations such as Civil Society Organisations (CSO), the security agents, representatives of the media, observer groups and individual researchers made valuable recommendations on how to improve and democratise Nigeria's electoral process. Their emphasis however ranged from issues like campaign expenditure limits to election

security and rigging. Below are some of the flaws inherent in the recently concluded presidential election in Nigeria. ***Digitalising the Electoral Process in Nigeria***

The processes of voting, counting and collation of votes cast was done manually in some Polling Units (PU) in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria and this caused significant glitches that compromised the integrity of the election. Besides reducing the potential for errors, digitalising the process also saves time and human resources. Furthermore, digitalising the election process is more climates friendly. The heap of papers used during elections, no doubt, contributes to the depletion of the election environment and climate change. ***Validating Candidacy Based on Expressed Electorate Support.***

It was outrageous and borderline ridiculous that there were seventy-three candidates in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. Some of these candidates are unknown to the populace and are fully aware of their inability to win votes. It was, therefore, not surprising that twelve of the seventy-three candidates withdrew from the presidential race on the eve of the elections and endorsed the candidacy of the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari. This was a waste of the nation's resources as the electoral commission had already printed ballot papers and documents with their names and logos of the various parties. This development in the electoral process compounded and truncated the level of valid votes cast (Obisesan, 2019). ***Facilitating the Voting Process for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs):***

Democracy emphasises inclusion and the electoral process should not be designed to alienate the population of persons living with disabilities in Nigeria. According to the National Population Commission, no fewer than 19 million persons live with disability in Nigeria. In spite of this relatively large population of PWDs, the electoral process does not seem to fully take their needs into consideration. The Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) centres and polling units are sometimes not easily accessible to persons living with disability. Though it must be noted that the INEC adopted a PWD Framework in 2018, the fact still remains that more intentionality has to be put into the process to ensure inclusion of PWDs. Publishing

documents and organising sensitisation workshops on the theme of PWD voting is not enough if it is not followed up with concrete actions that increase the accessibility of the process. At every polling unit, special booths should be dedicated to PWDs. It will also be a giant leap towards inclusion if provisions are made for PWDs whose conditions imply the absence of fingers, hence the impossibility to thumb print.

Over Centralisation of the INEC

The over-centralisation of power in the INEC constitutional responsibility also calls for serious concern. This emanates from the fact that it is the prerogative of the president to appoint the INEC chairman twelve national commissioners, and 37 resident electoral commissioners, one each for the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, all of whom are appointed by the federal government. According to Omotola (2010) this makes INEC easily susceptible to manipulation by the President and the federal authorities. The oversight role expected of the legislature in the screening of presidential nominees for INEC positions is rendered impotent. Ordinarily, an independent INEC will require a consolidated account, where a specified proportion of federal revenue is allocated on which it exercises direct control. In this way, the INEC can enjoy independent funding, thereby limiting the financial control the executive can exert. In Nigeria, however, this is not yet the case. Under the current civilian administration, INEC does not have an independent budget, but instead depends almost entirely on the presidency. This significant centralised financial control contributes to the inability of INEC to make adequate, timely planning and preparations for successful elections.

Conclusion

Electoral administration has to do with the processes, be it rigorous or complex through which an election is conducted. In a nutshell, a lot needs to be done in the long and short runs, in order to overcome the recurrent challenges that often truncate the credibility of elections. This paper concludes that the 2019 presidential election has similitude with the previous presidential elections in Nigeria from the 29th of

May, 1999 in terms of voting pattern. The electorates voted for their Presidents with much emphasis on ethnicity, religion and regionalism. The paper also argued that the 2019 presidential election differs in many ways from the previous presidential elections in the political history of the country.

One point of conviviality is the higher number of registered political parties up to 91 and 73 of them fielded candidates for the presidential contest. However, it is totally myopic and ill-informed philosophical advancement to label Nigeria as democratic on the basis of the fact that it has held elections regularly. Elections on their own cannot be the yardstick for measuring democratic development as indicated by the assumptions of liberal democracy.

The paper recommends that a digital-based process be introduced to prevent the possibility of street thugs or *area boys* from hijacking ballot boxes or burning votes. Digitalising the electoral process may not be the silver bullet to all of Nigeria's electoral problems but it is a step in a good direction. Adequate preparation should be made to forestall postponement of subsequent elections in Nigeria. The present political leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari should muster courage to empower the Independent National Electoral Commission so as to extricate the Commission from the stronghold of the executive arm of government. Postponing elections have become somewhat of an electoral tradition in Nigeria, as elections have been postponed for the past three election cycles starting from the 2011 general elections. Nonetheless, the postponement of a process to which four years and billions of naira were dedicated is inexcusable.

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