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Comparative Study of 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

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I. Introduction

Nigeria's 2015 general elections the fifth since 1999, was scheduled for 14th and 28th February 2015 respectively and later changed to 28th March and 11 April 2015 respectively. All 36 states held presidential, federal parliament and House of Assemblies (state parliaments) elections. Gubernatorial polls were held in 29 states. General elections in Nigeria have always been turbulent and violent affairs. however Indeed, the 2007 election polls was widely condemned as the most violent, poorly and massively rigged in the history of Nigeria's electoral history. Even the winner of the presidential pool, a person of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, conceded flaws. Some analysts and observers considered the April 2011 elections as the most credible since the return to democracy, unlike 2007 pool where over 1,000 people were killed in post-election protests. (ibid)

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Nigeria has had a checkered electoral history with successive elections being marred by serious irregularities and controversy- particularly in the conduct of its electoral commission. This has led in some cases to the collapsed of democratic experiments as occurred in 1966 and 1983. The 2007 general elections in Nigeria provided a good opportunity to occasion a break with the past and rekindle public confidence in the electoral and democratic process of the country. However, this was not to be as the elections, according to several local and international observers turned out to be the worst in Nigeria's political history (European Union: 2007, Human Rights Watch: 2007, Transition Monitoring Group: 2007). Like its predecessors, INEC was accused of not being able to engender public confidence in the electoral process or organize transparent and credible elections. Unfortunately, this position has scarcely been demonstrated in a systematic manner. This paper is a systematic analysis of 2011 and 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

The aim of this paper is on comparative analysis of the 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria with sole objective of comparing the nature and character of 2011 and 2015 presidential election in Nigeria, examine why the incumbent lost to the opposition, why more votes were casted in 2011 than 2015 election, and to examine the statistical analysis of 2011 and 2015 elections.

This paper is divided into seven sections. The first section is the introduction and objective of the study. The second section explains the conceptual clarifications. The Third section explores theoretical framework. The fourth section examines the statistical analysis of 2011 and 2015 election in Nigeria. The fifth sections discuss the nature and characteristics of 2011 and 2015 election. The sixth section contains conclusion and recommendation.

a) Conceptual clarification

For a proper understanding of this paper, it is necessary to define the following concepts: Presidential government and election.

b) Presidential government

The Presidential system of government is a type of government in which most executive powers are vested in the president who is the chief executive. According to Garner (1955), "Presidential government is that system in which the executive (including both the

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Head of the State and his ministers) is constitutionally independent of legislature in respect to the duration of his or their tenure and irresponsible to it for his or their political policies. In such system the chief of the state is not merely the titular executive but he is real executive and actually exercise the powers which the constitution and laws confer upon him". In this system the president enjoys real powers of the government.

c) Election

Election is an integral part of a democratic process that enables the citizenry determine fairly and freely who should lead them at every level of government periodically and take decisions that shape their socio-economic and political destiny; and in case they falter, still possess the power to recall them or vote them out in the next election. This was Obakhedo, (2011) aptly defined election thus: Election is a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies; the key to participation in a democracy; and the way of giving consent to government (Dye, 2001); and allowing the governed to choose and pass judgment on office holders who theoretically represent the governed Obakhedo, (2011). In its strictest sense, there can never be a democracy without election. Huntington is however quick to point out that, a political system is democratic 'to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote' (Huntington, 1991:661). In its proper sense, election is a process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members (Nwolise, 2007:155). Anifowose defined elections as the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system, Bamgbose (2012). Elections provide the medium by which the different interest groups within the bourgeois nation state can stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means (Iyayi, 2005:1). Elections therefore determine the rightful way of ensuring that responsible leaders take over the mantle of power.

An election itself is a procedure by which the electorate, or part of it, choose the people who hold public office and exercise some degree of control over the elected officials. It is the process by which the people select and control their representatives. The implication of this is that without election, there can be no representative government.

This assertion is, to a large extent, correct as an election is, probably, the most reliable means through which both the government and representatives can be made responsible to the people who elect them. Eya (2003) however, sees election as the selection of a person or persons for office as by ballot and making choice as between alternatives. Ozor (2009) succinctly gives a more encompassing and comprehensive definition of election when he noted that the term connotes the procedure through which qualified adult voters elect their politically preferred representatives to parliament legislature of a county (or any other public positions) for the purpose of farming and running the government of the country. Thus Osumah (2002) elucidates what the basic objective of election is which is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens-interest. Elections, according to him extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system.

II. Theoretical Framework

While it could be stated that there are different perspective of viewing the electoral process the researcher adopt the comparative analysis approach to the study. This theory tells us that in order to find out the causes responsible or the political happenings; we must compare the various events, recorded in the world history. Gilchrist believes that this method or theory is rather a supplement to the historical method. This theory aims at the study "of existing politics or those which have existed in the past to assemble a definite body of material from which the investigator, by selection, comparison and elimination, may discover the ideal types of progressive forces of political history". Lord Bryce says "that which entitles it to be called scientific is that it reaches general conclusions by tracing similar results to similar causes, eliminating those disturbing influence which are present in one country and are absent in another, make the results in the examined cases different in some points while similar in others.

The very essence of this theory lies in comparing different historical facts and political events with a view to finding out the causes responsible for any changes. By the use of the comparative method we try to know what is common and seek to find out common causes and consequences. This theory provides an opportunity to find out the lacuna between 2011 and 2015 general election in Nigeria.

a) The Statistical analysis of 2011 and 2015 elections

March 28th and April 11th 2015 election marked another turn in Nigeria's democratic history as registered voters took to the polls to elect the next set of leaders into the Presidential and National Assembly positions. The elections, conducted in the thirty six states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory, witnessed the emergence of the opposition party- the All Progressives Congress (APC) and its candidate. This outcome was also the first time an opposition party would unseat the ruling party- People Democratic Party (PDP) since Nigeria's transition into civil rule in 1999.

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Table 1 : 2011 and 2015 Presidential Political Parties and Voters Statistics Distribution

Party 2011	Party Logo	Votes received 2011	% of Vote received 2011	Party 2015	Party Logo	Votes received 2015	% of Vote received 2015
ADC		51,682	0.14%	AA		22,125	0.08
ANPP		917,012	2.40%	ACPN		40,311	0.14
APS		23,740	0.06%	AD		30,673	0.11
ARP		12,264	0.03%	ADC		29,666	0.10
BNPP		47,272	0.12%	APA		53,537	0.19
CAN		2,079,151	5.41%	APC		15,424,921	53.96
CPC		12,214,853	31.98%	CPP		36,300	0.13
FRESH		34,331	0.09%	KOWA		13,076	0.05
HDP		12,023	0.03%	PDP		12,853,162	44.96
LDPN		8,472	0.02%	PPN		24,475	0.09
MPPP		16,492	0.04%	UDP		9,208	0.03
NCP		26,376	0.07%	HOPE		7,435	0.03
NMDP		25,938	0.07%	NCP		24,455	0.09
NTP		19,744	0.05%	UPP		18,220	0.06
PDC		82,243	0.21%				
PDP		22,495,187	58.89%				
PMP		56,248	0.15%				
PPP		54,203	0.14%				
SDMP		11,544	0.03%				
UNPD		21,203	0.06%				

Source: 2011 and 2015 Election in Nigeria (Africa elections database). African elections tripod. http://www.inecnigeria.-org/?page-id=31

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The following report can be inferred from table 1 above:

- *16 April 2011 Presidential Election*

Registered Voters 73,528,040. Total Votes (Voter Turnout) 39,469,484 (53.7%). Invalid/Blank Votes 1,259,506. Total Valid Votes 38,209,978

- *28 March 2015 presidential Election*

Registered Voters 67,422,005. Accredited 31,746,490 (47.08%). Total Votes (Voter Turnout) 29,432,083. Invalid/Blank Votes 844,519. Total Valid Votes 28,587,564 (97%). The 2015 presidential election and the eventual outcome were in many ways different from other elections, especially the 2011 election:

14 Political parties participated in 2015 compared to 21 political parties in 2011 that contested the election. More votes were cast in 2011 (38,209,978) than in 2015 (28,587,564) by a 25% difference. The incumbent lost to the opposition: 45% (12,853,162) to 54% (15,427,943). The incumbency lost by a relatively wide margin of the total votes cast for the opposition, about 20% (2,574,781). The opposition won more states (21) and had at least 25% of votes in more states. The PDP lost approximately 43% of the votes it once controlled (22,495,187 in 2011 to 12,853,162 in 2015). In contrast, the APC gained approximately 26% more votes between 2011 and 2015 (12,214,853 to 15,424,921). The PDP won 31 states in 2011, but could only muster 16 states in 2015. The PDP not only lost 15 of the 31 states, it also lost some percentage of votes in the states it retained. There was an increase in the number of total votes cast for the two main parties; 98.92% in 2015 compared to 90.84 in 2011 marginal parties saw their support erode.

Table 2 : Nigeria Presidential Election Regional Voters Turnout

Zone	2015 approximate	2011 approximate
North Central	43.47	49
North East	45.22	56
North West	55.09	56
South East	40.52	63
South South	57.81	62
South West	40.26	32

Source: 2011 and 2015 Election in Nigeria (Africa elections database). African elections tripod. http://www.-*inecnigeria.org/?page-id=31*

(The above diagram is represented below)

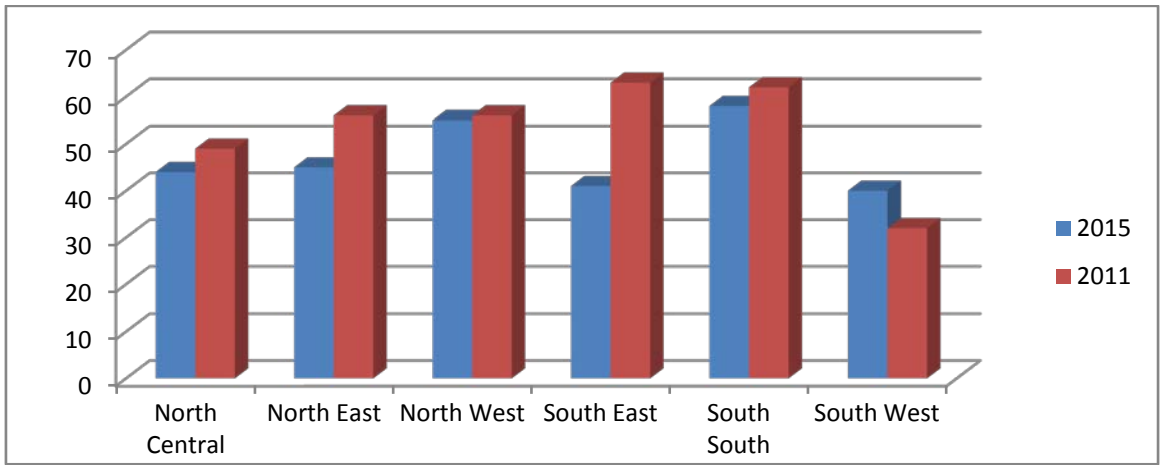


Fig. 1 : Multiple Bar Chart of 2011and 2015 Presidential Election Regional Voters Turnout among the six Geopolitical Zones

From table 2, the values displayed were obtained by dividing the number of those who turned out to vote by the total registered voters and then multiplying by 100 in each geopolitical zone. From this table, it was observed that in 2011, five of the six geopolitical zones had higher voters turn-out except the South-West region.

b) The nature and character of 2011 and 2015 presidential election

The Presidential election was initially scheduled to hold on 9th April 2011, but later held on 16th April, 2011. Similarly in 2015, general election was scheduled to hold on 14th February 2015 but was held on 28th march 2015. The elections were reported in the international media as having run smoothly with relatively little violence or voter fraud in contrast to

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previous elections. It was one exercise that showed that election should not be a do-or-die affair as in this clime. The election exposed the supremacy of the interest of the nation above that of self or a cabal as in Nigeria.

Politics is a game of compromise gained expression in the recent Nigeria election. Among the two contending parties of All Progressive Congress and Peoples Democratic Party, what it showed was that in Nigeria, the incumbency factor did not confer any undue advantages, there was a level playing field for all parties in 2015 contention, contrary to earlier tradition in 2011, which always been the opposite with the ruling party taking advantages of its position to lord it over others. Since 1999 that democracy was reintroduced in Nigeria, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has literally eclipsed the opposition. Analysts argue that though Nigeria has about 58 parties, the reality on ground is that it is the PDP and others. While politics here is a do-or-die affair. Over the years, politics in Nigeria has been a game of "winner takes all" while in the recent election and how the government emerged out of a consensus between the CPC, ACN and the allies showed that politics is a game of numbers and one of compromise. What matters is the collective interest of the people.

Moreover, despite the level of competition among the two main political parties in 2015, a spirit of sportsmanship prevailed in their actions before and after the elections. None of the candidates including the incumbent was desperate for power. The idea was to win the election and not to "capture it". There were minimal reported cases of rigging, manipulation of the votes, intimidation of the electorate and violence including outright assassination of opponents. Throughout the period of campaign and election, there was room for alternative views unlike in 2011, 2007 and 2003, where opponents are viewed as enemies.

Furthermore, the 2015 campaign was based on issues and not persons, but there some personality attack, the ultimate preoccupation of politicians and parties is to grab power at all cost. The campaign was based on issues as the PDP campaigned for a second term in office and battled to restore support lost while the APC struggled for dominance after losses in the 2011, they hoped to make gains and to hold the balance of power in a possible hung parliament. The parties delved into several issues particularly the economy and foreign policy including the insurgency of Boko Haram in Northern parts of the country, in contrary to many believe that Nigerians play "politics of the stomach" and not of issue.

Finally, the 2015 Nigerian election was a proof of the supremacy of the national interest above that of self. This is not the case where the nation is sacrificed on the altar of self aggrandizement. Many believe that part of why Goodluck Jonathan signed Accord Agreement was to ensure that the polity was not subjected to undue tension arising from the election eventually won by Muhammad Buhari, the new President of Nigeria.

c) Why the incumbent lost

The Jonathan government was riddled with serious allegations of corruption. A former Central Bank governor, Lamido Sanusi alleged that about $40 billion of oil revenue was unaccounted by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). In 2013, Nigeria ranked 144th of 177 in the "Corruption by Country" rating of Transparency International. PDP was in turmoil before the elections and it is very likely that some members may have worked against the interest of the party at the polls. The Jonathan presidency was also believed to have performed woefully in the different sectors of the economy like the power, road, aviation and many other sectors. Even though Nigeria was rated the largest economy in Africa during the Jonathan presidency, not many Nigerians could feel the impact. Youth unemployment was put at over 50% (Durotoye, 2014b). Surprisingly, it appeared the Boko Haram insurgency and the kidnap of over 200 school girls in Chibok, Borno state also play a major role. This may be due to the fact that the government had sufficiently rooted out the insurgents a few weeks before the elections. Another explanation might be that not many people in the North East where Boko Haram holds sway partook in the polls. The religion factor was also contributed to lost.

III. Conclusion and Recommendation

a) Conclusion

The cornerstone of competitive elections and democracy is free and fair election. The credibility and legitimacy accorded an election victory is determined by the extent to which the process is free and fair (Garuba, 2007; Bogaards, 2007). Free and fair election serves the purpose of legitimizing such government.

In fact, the quality of elections is part of the criteria for assessing the level of consolidation of new democracies. Elections are therefore considered as vital and indispensable for determining the democratic nature of a political system. When election is not managed quite satisfactorily, it can pave the way for deeper ethnic and regional divisions, lost of legitimacy of elected authorities, protest, violent contestation, social explosion, and doubt about institutions, violence, and instability or even threaten the entire democratization process. In fact, poor management of elections is a real and prolific source of conflicts, violence, insecurity and instability (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2010).

Low turnout in the 2015 compared to 2011 may be attributed to some factors. First, it might be an indication that previous election results were inflated. Second, there was a heightened sense of insecurity

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among Nigerians, with causes such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the North, the possibility of the incumbent not willing to accept the outcome of the election should it not be in its favour, the effects of the election postponement, Also, there is the perception that 'votes do not count' and that the outcomes have been pre-decided by an elite minority.

The successful of the election can also be attributed to: determination of the opposition party to win the election, the positive attitudes of politics, the introduction of card readers, the competence of the electoral commission to manage the election, a well organized opposition, effective of the social media and the peace accord agreement signed by the candidates.

b) Recommendations

- To sustain ongoing capacity building programs for major institutions involved in the elections, particularly INEC and the police, the government should increase technical and financial support to relevant civil society organizations.
- The Electoral body should deploy observer missions for longer periods before and after the votes to monitor the process more comprehensively.
- The civil societies should engage more actively with youth leaders especially in poor urban and rural areas, strengthen participatory early warning and early response systems, and raise timely alerts of possible violence.
- The mass media should ensure that there are factual and balanced reporting of all election-related developments, and avoid publishing hateful, divisive and inflammatory statements.
- The government should direct publicly all officers to ensure neutrality in relations with all parties and apply exemplary sanctions against any officer who fails to comply.
- The politicians should avoid inflammatory rhetoric, publicly denounce violence, pledge to respect rules, in particular the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, and pursue grievances through lawful channels.
- The political parties should respect party constitutions and particularly allow democratic candidate selections.

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