

The Role of International Election Monitoring Groups in Enthroning Sustainable Democracy: An Evaluation of Nigeria's Electoral Process

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ABSTRACT

Bearing in mind that over the years in Nigeria, the election management body has always been compromised and political parties and politicians are ever desperate. It still remains indubitable that the legitimacy of the electoral process and of the post-election regime is heavily contingent on the fairness and transparency of the transition or electoral process. This paper reviews the role of international election monitoring groups in enthroning sustainable democracy in relation to current electoral process in Nigeria and argues for pro-active reforms to improve the quality of electoral politics in the country these will in turn impact on the quality of governance and enthronement of sustainable democracy. From issues reviewed, it is apparent that the relationship between election management and democratic sustenance is axiomatic, especially in a country where the election management body is far from being independent in the true sense. Indeed, the roles performed by international election monitoring groups have come to assume place of prominence given the importance attached to democracy as a global imperative. These are expected to strengthen the democratic processes. What this translates to is that the extent to which individuals and groups involved in election monitoring assimilates democratic tenets to a large extent affects the extent to which they are able to discharge their assigned roles as well as the quality of democratic growth in the emerging political systems.

Keywords: International, Election Monitoring, Democracy, Nigeria, Electoral Process.

INTRODUCTION

Elections could be seen as institutionalized procedures for the choosing of political office holders by some or all qualified adult members of a society. So an electoral system exists to provide the electorate with opportunity and the right to choose their representatives and maintain contact with them. Hence, for an electoral system to be democratic, it must provide for equal electorate and the freedom of the electorates to make a real and meaningful choice devoid of coercion or intimidation [1]. In effect, 'election would be deemed to be democratic-and hence good if it is free and fair and not based on patronage of any kind'. Therefore, elections in

Nigeria though seen as a means of controlling the government; within context of electorate's participation reveal a rather disturbing 'state' that has called for serious concern. [2] Noted that, indeed the Nigerian electoral process since independence has gained an unenviable reputation for fraudulent practices [3]. This situation has forced many to see elections in Nigeria as a mirage or a mere 'selection'; selection in the sense that the electorate are left out of the entire system, owing to the fact that elections are conducted with or without the full participation of the electorates, who are supposed to choose those who rule over them.

The organization of elections in Nigeria have often been carried out without due involvement of the people. The system operates in a way that suggests a total disregard and misapplication of democratic ethos. Thus, the outcome has always been manipulated in favour of candidates of the powerful few. This is unfair and shameful, given the democratic system we opted for. It is better to tell the people that the leaders would be 'selected' so that they would not bother to queue up in the scorching sun. But allowing them to vote and later turn things upside down is the height of betrayal that must be resisted.

In a polity where politics and elections are perceived as a do or die affair gives cause for concern. The electoral process of Nigeria has always been marred by rising irregularities and muzzling of opposition by the ruling party. Often times the neutrality and the independence

of the electoral commission are usually compromised thereby putting the legitimacy of those so elected in question both locally and internationally. In view of this prevailing scenario, global attention has been drawn to the need for ensuring sustainable democracy via free, fair and credible elections across the world.

This clearly justifies the rationale for international election monitoring and observing, which has gradually become a norm all over the world as a means for ensuring that elections conducted anywhere in the world is free, fair and credible and is observed to have met the global standards for free, fair and credible elections. It is against the above backdrop that this paper evaluates Nigeria's electoral process with intent to identifying the roles of international election monitoring groups in enthrone sustainable democracy.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The electoral process in Nigeria is rather a charade and far from producing free, fair and credible election. This is a scenario commonly found in many African countries where many have degenerated to one party state thereby perpetrating sit-tightism in many African states. For the sustenance of democracy the need for free, fair and credible elections cannot be

relegated to the back door. This paper, aware that the election management body is already compromised, political parties and politicians desperate to have it their own way, takes recourse to evaluating Nigeria's electoral process with intent to identifying the roles of international election monitoring groups in enthrone sustainable democracy.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

This paper evaluates Nigeria's electoral process with intent to identifying the roles of international election monitoring groups in enthrone sustainable democracy. Specifically, the following aims are to be realized;

- 1) To briefly evaluate the electoral process in Nigeria;
- 2) To interrogate the intersection between election observation, monitoring and supervision

- 3) To ascertain global principles for non-partisan election observation and monitoring by citizen organizations;
- 4) To identify international observers' role in maintaining election integrity;
- 5) To assess the systemic advantages of election monitoring and observing in sustaining democracy;

METHODOLOGY

In this study, exploratory research design was employed. [4] argues that exploratory research design fits a situation whereby relatively, little or nothing is known about a situation/process or where the situation has a deviant character or relatively new. However, the goal of exploratory design is to discover ideas and insights [5]; [6]. In addition to the exploratory design, this study employed qualitative method in its data collection and analyses. Qualitative research emphasizes meanings (words) rather than frequencies and distributions (numbers) when collecting and analyzing data. Primarily, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of situations or events from the

perspectives of the people involved and as understood by them (in this relying absolutely on documented evidence). It is generally inductive rather than deductive in its approach, that is, it generates theory from interpretation of the evidence, albeit against a theoretical background. Thus qualitative measures are often binary in that they are interested in the presence or absence of phenomena. The work adopted the method of content analysis in extracting information from the above enumerated sources of data gathering techniques. This will be followed by an analysis of the discussions through a logical validation process.

CONCEPTUAL INSIGHT

[7], election is the process whereby an electoral chooses, by voting, officers either to act on its behalf or represent it in an assembly with a view to governing or administering. An electorate refers to a class of citizens entitled (by a law course) to vote in an election, by whatever procedure. Elections provide for a bare minimum of political participation, perhaps the only act of participation for the vast majority of the governed, and therefore create a feeling of belonging and a degree of responsibility for government decisions.

is only one factor in the evolution of a party system, but the effects of different electoral system can be found in the structure, ideology, the pattern of the party interaction and the members of the parties that compete in the political system. An electoral system consists of more than the method of counting votes cast by the voters. A full description of an electoral system would include such factors as the extent of franchise that is, who is entitled to vote? It would include the rules relating to the candidates and parties, and those regulating the administration of election, especially the provision against corruption. [9], electoral system is the institutionalized arrangements by means of which an election is conducted and the purpose of the election fulfilled.

Electoral system is a process by which citizens of a given democratic entity elect representative to handle their machinery of government. This is done through vote casting. According to [8], electoral system

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN NIGERIA

A survey of Nigeria electoral system (process) has increasingly revealed an important point of concern. This is sequel to the fact that the electoral system rather than provide expected results has become a misnomer and an episode that could be termed a farce. From 1959-till date elections, the system has gradually move from a falling system to a failed system, worse still the system recently has

deepen its fraud 'characteristics and further increased it sophistication in rigging, that the survival and endurance of our democracy is highly questioned. The electoral regulatory bodies instead of abating electoral fraud have join with the so called ruling party to disfranchise the electorate. In short, the have help institutionalized electoral crime in the polity. Indeed, characteristically, electoral

system particularly in 2003-till date has been seen as charade. 'The magnitude of fragrant and deliberate abused of electoral process especially by people in power is clear'. The elections were flawed from inception to execution, lacked the corollaries that can produce genuine results that could be respected by observers and all the contending parties. Pa Enahoro speaking on April polls remarked that at this point in our history, we must all do away with emotions on the current grave issues confronting the country. For over 53 years, our country was run like a vehicle with a drunken driver loaded with reckless passengers urging the driver on. The end needless to say has been the disastrous elections in which we find ourselves today.

Without an effective electoral body to serve as an unbiased umpire in an election such electoral system cannot thrive or survive. The life of good governance depends on the type of electoral body put in place. It is believed that electoral body should be able, on the face of a democratic system provide for a free and fair election. An election where

the electorates are allowed to cast their vote and the materials for the election provided on time, devoid of intimidation, malpractices and falsification of results. The function of electoral body is central to the sustenance of democracy and the deepening of democratic principles and practice.

For instance the activities of INEC in 2003/2007/15 elections can hardly be adjudge as providing a credible election based on its ability to conduct a free and fair elections, if such has ever existed in its history. Its inability to give Nigeria a free and fair elections and the undue influence by politicians via the ruling party suggests its lack of independence. Independent which is a major feature of an effective electoral body is threatened here in the Nigeria political process.

The activities of politician and political parties in the polity at times have been overbearing on the INEC, leaving the electoral system to suffer serious draw backs; and then allowing for more questions than answers in the mouth of Nigerians.

INTERROGATING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN ELECTION OBSERVATION, MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

The most widely accepted distinctions between election observation, election monitoring and election supervision refer to the role and the mandate of the different missions in terms of the level of intervention in the electoral process: observers having the smallest mandate, monitors having slightly more extended powers, while supervisors are those with the most extensive mandate.

The mandate of election observers is to gather information and make an informed judgment without interfering in the process.

The mandate of election monitors is to observe the electoral process and to intervene if laws are being violated.

The mandate of election supervisors is to certify the validity of the electoral process.

Different organisations use different definitions for these terms (see some examples below) and in some cases the terms observation and monitoring are used interchangeably without any explicit distinction being made between the two.

The Electoral Observation and Monitoring Missions of the African Union normally decide the scope or mandate of their observation missions based on the findings of an assessment mission. The scope or mandate can include:

- a) Observation, which involves gathering information and making an informed judgment;
- b) Monitoring, which involves the authority to observe an election process and to intervene in that process if relevant laws or standard procedures are being violated or ignored;
- c) Mediation, that is third-party intervention in electoral disputes, directed at assisting disputants to find a mutually acceptable outcomes and solutions to electoral disputes;
- d) Technical assistance, which generally takes the form of technical support and advice to the Electoral Commission;
- e) Supervision and audit, which involves the process of certifying the validity of all or some of the steps in election processes either prior to or after the election has taken place.

According to [10] any foreign presence at an election might, in popular usage, be referred to as "observation". This can however be confusing, as this term has been used to refer to any of the following five different types of activity:

- a) Mediation, which is a form of third-party intervention in disputes, directed at assisting disputants to find a mutually acceptable settlement.
- b) Technical Assistance, which generally takes the form of technical support to the electoral process.
- c) Supervision, which is the process of certifying the validity of all or some of the steps in an election process.
- d) Monitoring, which involves the authority to observe an election process and to intervene in that process if relevant laws or

- e) standard procedures are being violated or ignored?
- e) Observation, which involves gathering information and making informed judgments from that information.

According the International IDEA Code of Conduct, supervision and monitoring are sometimes confused with observation because all three activities are based on gathering information regarding an electoral process, and then making judgments about that process, based on the information collected. However, supervision and monitoring are significantly different from observation, for the following reasons:

Supervisors and/or monitors have much greater authority than observers.

Supervisors and/or monitors, by virtue of their greater authority, are usually governed by much stricter rules of conduct than those which apply to observers.

The functions of supervisors and monitors could implicate them in the election management process itself.

Supervision by foreigners of an election process has been necessary in some elections, for example, those in Namibia in November 1989 and Bosnia in September 1996. On the other hand, authority to intervene, which is part of the monitoring function, is rarely conferred on foreigners, although it is conferred in some cases on employees of the election management body. For example, the South African election experience in April 1994 demonstrated the importance of domestic monitoring of an election by officials of the electoral administration.

The Central Electoral Commission of Palestine defines election observation as "the process of gathering information related to the electoral process in a systematic way, and the issuing of reports

and evaluations on the conduct of electoral processes based on information gathered by the accredited observers without interference in the process itself. Elections observation aims at:

- a) Detecting any infractions in the electoral process.
- b) Providing concerned bodies with remarks on the progress of the electoral process and decisions taken.
- c) Guaranteeing the integrity and neutrality of the electoral process."

GLOBAL PRINCIPLES FOR NON-PARTISAN ELECTION OBSERVATION AND MONITORING BY CITIZEN ORGANIZATIONS

An important milestone in the progress of independent election monitoring and observation was development of the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations and Code of Conduct for Non-Partisan Citizen Election Observers and Monitors, initiated by the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). Conclusion of the Declaration and Code of Conduct was commemorated at the UN during 2012, by which time scores of citizen networks, international supporters and NGOs had endorsed the document [11].

Common standards for evaluating elections pose many difficulties. For one, international standards, while clearly articulated and binding through international legal instruments, are abstract and require interpretation and judgment before they can be applied to specific instances. Furthermore, it can be difficult to reach a general conclusion about an election on the basis of existing standards alone: there is no established formula on how instances of violations or irregularities relate to a broader quality assessment of an election or its outcomes.

Experience shows that it is not always easy to reach an overall conclusion. International observer reports may

The ODIHR handbook Election Observation - A decade of monitoring elections: the people and the practice make no distinction between observations and monitoring and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers make no explicit distinction between observation, monitoring and supervision and provide no definition of the terms.

disagree because different observer groups use different criteria or are influenced by disparate interests or perspectives. The result is that such inconsistencies may engender confusion in the country in which elections are observed.

Contradictory reports undermine the credibility and purpose of observation. For example, during the 1998 election in Cambodia, the election observers' statements sowed confusion and resentment. Many observer groups seemed to give a passing grade to the election, based on their observation of the voting and the count; a few others took emphatic exception, citing the unhealthy political atmosphere before the election [12].

Similarly, during Zimbabwe's legislative elections in 2000 and presidential elections in 2002, contradictory evaluations were issued by various international and national observation groups [13]. Once again, the reports were met with some bitterness by national participants.

Thus adoption of common observation standards is increasingly viewed as essential to ensure the credibility and legitimacy of election observation

missions. One set of proposed criteria is as follows [14]:

- 1) Observation should cover a broad range of issues: administration and functioning of the election process; legal and institutional framework for the process; political context and climate in which the election is held (exercise of political rights).
- 2) Observation should cover the entire process from beginning to end, including: the pre-election period, including candidate

- 3) Coverage should be as broad as possible: sufficient observers stationed throughout the country; including party and candidate agents and monitors, national observers and official monitors and overseers.

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS' ROLE IN MAINTAINING ELECTION INTEGRITY

International observation plays an important role in safeguarding election integrity. This role may be compromised if election observers do not follow certain rules that should guide their conduct during their mission. Serious and professional international observation can help maintain election integrity in many ways:

- a) Disseminating international standards and good practices: Electoral administrators, politicians and national observers can learn to better understand international standards for free and fair elections by engaging in liaison with international observers and studying their reports. International observer missions also provide electoral administrators the opportunity for comparative exchange of professional knowledge with other experts, particularly on integrity mechanisms.
- b) Deterring integrity problems: The presence of international observers monitoring the election process may help deter attempts to disrupt or tamper with the process. There is a public perception in most countries that international observers will be able

to uncover fraud on Election Day [15]. But, in fact, this perception may be misplaced since international observers have only limited data and may not understand the "local" way of doing things.

- c) Detecting integrity problems: Experienced observers can detect problems or questionable activities, and bring them to the attention of the election management body and the public. International observers, like national ones, cannot actually intervene in an electoral procedure, but may ask questions about its conduct in an informational way. Early identification of issues in this manner can allow a problem to be solved before it is too late.
- d) Holding a fragile process together: In situations of conflict or in countries in transition, the presence of international observers can to some extent deter violence and intimidation. Their ongoing presence may help reassure candidates, monitors and voters that it is safe to participate. The presence of international observers may also convince

- opposition politicians that competing in the election is preferable to boycotting, or engaging in civil disobedience or disturbance [16].
- e) Increasing the credibility and legitimacy of the process: Through their reporting and analysis, observers can uphold or denigrate the legitimacy of the electoral process and its outcome. If their reports show that the election is proceeding within acceptable parameters, this finding reinforces the acceptability of the process and the legitimacy of the results.
- f) Developing the capacity of national observers: If international observation is occurring simultaneously with national observation, the example set by international observers can help develop and improve the capacity of national observation efforts. For example, international observers can provide a model to emulate concerning how to set up a nationwide election observation effort, conduct parallel vote tabulation and assimilating field observation reports. They can also encourage national observers, and perhaps inform them of standards and best practices relevant to their activities.
- g) Relationship with national observers: But it must be cautioned that international observers should not actually coordinate with national observers in terms of deployments or other aspects of their mission, since that would potentially detract from the perceived independence of the international observers and their accountability to the organization which has authorized and supported their mission. Similarly, international observers should not share non-public information concerning their activities or impressions since that might compromise mission security and lead to unauthorized disclosures of information.

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR INTERNATIONAL MONITORS AND OBSERVERS

To ensure the legitimacy of their work, international monitors and observers have to follow internationally recognized standards of conduct. Several organizations that specialize in international observation have developed codes of conduct to guide such observers' behaviour. The main requirements for ethical and professional observation are as follows [17]:

- a) Respect the sovereignty of the host country: To maintain the credibility and effectiveness of their election observation mission, international observers must respect the laws of the host country and the rules of its election management body. They must not attempt to give instructions to electoral administrators or interfere with governance of the country being observed. They must also respect accreditation rules during their mission.
- b) Objectivity: To be effective, international observation must be objective and non-partisan, and must provide balanced reports. Objectivity protects the credibility of the mission and helps maintain the integrity of the electoral process. When observers do their work, they must be very careful not to show a preference for any particular party or candidate lest they compromise the objectivity required for preparing impartial reports.
- c) Non-interference in the election process: International observers must not interfere with the work of

- electoral administrators. Their mandate is not to supervise, correct mistakes or resolve local conflicts, but only to observe, report and assess.
- d) Accuracy: The reliability of the observation and assessment depends on the accuracy with which international observers report the facts. Many of the observers do not have an opportunity to observe the entire electoral process; accordingly, they must avoid generalizing on the basis of limited observations. Observation reports should clearly indicate the basis for the information presented, and not extrapolate beyond it.
- e) Avoid conflicts of interest: Election observation should be kept strictly separate from technical assistance for elections. International observers should not be engaged in electoral assistance activities in the country where they are observing (for example, assisting electoral administrators, developing electoral legislation or training election staff). Professional and credible assessment of an electoral process requires reasonable separation from the administration being observed.

ASSESSING THE SYSTEMIC ADVANTAGES OF ELECTION MONITORING AND OBSERVING IN SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY

Independent observers play an important part in maintaining election integrity; thereby ensuring sustainable democracy. Whether domestic or international, these observers are supposed to monitor the process objectively. Since their interest is to ensure that elections are fair and above-board, they should not take a position on political issues in the election issues. As independent observers, they must also provide objective reporting on the electoral process.

Observing an election involves closely monitoring the process, collecting information on its aspects and making an overall assessment. [18] Has identified several systemic advantages of including independent observers, including:

- a) legitimizing the election process;
- b) building confidence;
- c) improving the prospects for democratization;
- d) enhancing the electoral process; and
- e) reducing or preventing conflict.

A wide variety of NGOs and other organized civil society groups act as

international election monitors. Active monitoring by international observers provides feedback to electoral administrators and policy makers about problems encountered. This allows for corrections to be made during the process, when there is still time to act. In this connection, active monitoring (which can involve preparation of interim reports during the electoral process) can be more effective in maintaining election integrity than passive monitoring, which simply produces a report after the process is over, without much interaction with electoral administrators. Impartial international observers can thus promote free and fair elections.

They may perform the following tasks:

- a) Detect and deter integrity problems by closely monitoring the process, and draw attention to any irregularity or integrity problem observed;
- b) Increase transparency by publicly reporting on the process, identifying problems and

assessing their impact on the election results;

- c) Assess the integrity of the election. In newer democracies, this may mean assessing whether elections were “acceptable”, “competitive” or “free and fair,” and whether the results reflect the will of the voters. (In older democracies, domestic monitoring tends to focus on how money from interest groups influences the quality of the electoral campaign, rather than how elections are conducted.); and
- d) Recommend procedural or policy changes to improve election integrity.

International observers serve as monitors in countries that receive international donor assistance for elections, and countries undergoing a democratic transition. International observation is performed by many different organizations, particularly by international organizations (such as the Commonwealth, Organization of American States, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the African Union and ECOWAS); and international NGOs (such as IFES, and International IDEA and The Carter Center), with support from national and supranational donor agencies.

The UN does not engage in election observation unless it is mandated to do so by the General Assembly or the Security Council. It has become rare for the UN to engage in observation: the most recent observation mandate was carried out in 2001. Observation is distinct from UN mandates to “certify” or to “verify” an election, but the latter two are equally rare. The organization does, however, sometimes provide logistical support for international election observers or other support for national observer groups [19].

In addition to the earlier points, international observation can perform the

following functions, which may enhance democratic sustenance:

- a) Identify problems and bring them to the attention of the election management or policy-making body.
- b) Ensure action to rectify and follow up on problems, and see that this action is a condition for donor funding.
- c) Issue observation reports that help contribute to the transparency and legitimacy of the process.
- d) Help bolster voter confidence, thereby increasing the number of eligible voters who register and cast ballots.
- e) Facilitate the work of national monitors by asking the hard questions that they may hesitate to ask, recognizing that national monitors may only enquire about matters under observation and not attempt to intervene in the process.
- f) Provide reassurance to national monitors facing intimidation or other security problems, although the relative safety of international observers due to their status may not extend to national observers.
- g) Through their presence and attentiveness, act as a deterrent to those wishing to subvert the system; but it should always be recognized that even the most extensive international observation cannot possibly prevent all fraud, including at polling stations and counting centers.

However, international observation that is not impartial or balanced can itself create integrity problems.

Furthermore, monitoring of the entire electoral process is one of the integrity safeguards that help protect the viability and honesty of election administration, as well as fair participation by election participants.

Monitoring promotes compliance with the legal framework and helps deter questionable activities. Public reporting by monitors increases transparency and helps ensure election officers' accountability.

Monitoring includes official oversight by a government auditor or agency, as well as observation of the process by political parties, the media and individual electors, as well as national NGOs and international groups.

Monitoring may be partisan (conducted by political parties) or non-partisan (conducted by accredited national or international observers). Partisan monitoring focuses on protecting the interests of a particular candidate or party. For this reason, it is important to have participation by monitors from different political parties active throughout the process.

Non-partisan monitoring is expected to be impartial and objective. Since reporting on elections usually involves forming an opinion about the quality of the process, integrity in monitoring is itself important. Integrity issues related to monitoring are discussed in this section.

To be effective, monitoring should cover the entire electoral process, not just some aspects such as voter registration or polling. Among other things, monitors must examine:

- a) the scope and effectiveness of the legal framework;
- b) the appropriateness of electoral procedures and preparations, including training of election staff;
- c) delimitation of electoral districts;
- d) elector registration;
- e) information and education programs;
- f) registration of political parties and candidates;
- g) freedom of association, assembly and movement;
- h) freedom from fear and intimidation;
- i) freedom of expression and equal access to the media;
- j) use of public resources for campaign purposes;
- k) activities on election day;
- l) vote counting and consolidation of results; and
- m) the adequacy of procedures for lodging complaints about election conduct and results, and procedures for resolving them [20].

CONCLUSION

In short, the politics of electoral process in Nigeria has often operated in 'absolute' denial of the rights of the electorates who are supposed to choose those who rule them. Elections are regarded as mere 'selection' to favour the powerful few. There is absence of free and fair elections, as electorates are left out of the electoral system. The results of elections are often manipulated by INEC under the influence of the ruling party. The elections were characterized by several under aged voters, ballot bag snatching, state intimidation via armed forces and Paramilitary agencies. Therefore, the 2003/07/15 elections no doubt were not true reflections of the

wishes, desires, expectations and yearning of the people of Nigeria. The people are generally fed up with the prevailing scheme of things and they earnestly ask for a change to better their lots and give them a better life. 'Nigeria is not a banana republic where anything can just happen'. Nigeria is governed by laws; hence, we should strive to strengthen constitutional democratic development, thereby ensuring enduring democracy in the polity. Consequently, international election monitors serve relevant purpose in terms of providing non partisan credible report on the electoral process and the moral suasion for the election

management body to get it right for the

votes to count.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cognizance of the issues addressed in this paper, the following recommendations are posited and considered apt for policy:

- a) To ensure sustainable democracy there is need for fundamental reforms in the electoral process to bring about change in the belief of political parties and politicians who think election is a do or die affair.
- b) There is need to give legal credence to the findings and reports of international election monitors and observers, so that such can serve as complimentary evidence in matters relating to election outcomes.
- c) Political values and Political culture of Nigeria should be

repositioned in a way that it will promise to strengthen democratic ethos.

- d) INEC should be given total independence to operate as an autonomous body free of undue interference from executive and other external sources.
- e) The franchise of the electorate should be respected, upheld and strengthened in our democracy so that votes will begin to count.
- f) For the sustenance of democracy, improvement of economic and social condition and the reduction of endemic poverty and deprivation should be seriously pursued.

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