The National Assembly And The Electoral Reforms In Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

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I. INTRODUCTION


Therefore, In Responding To That Challenge He Constituted An Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) Chaired By Justice Uwais In 2007 To Look And Study The Problems Of Elections In Nigeria With A View To Providing Recommendations On How To Address The Challenges Bedeviling Elections In Nigeria. The Committee Has Successfully Submitted Its Report And Recommendations On How To Improve The Conduct Of Elections In Nigeria. Based On The Recommendations Submitted By ERC, The Late President Yar’adua Had Submitted Seven Executive Bills To The Legislature (Igwu, 2014). Since Then, The National Assembly (NASS) Has Given Its Priority In The Constitutional Amendment To Electoral Reform, This, In Addition To The Previous Act In 2002 And 2006 Produced By The NASS. The NASS Has Contributed In Strengthening
Democracy in the country especially in electoral reforms, which accounted for the emergence of alliance progressive congress (APC) as a ruling party in 2015 after 16 years of people democratic party (PDP). This election was adjudged to be the fairest and credible in the history of Nigeria (Chukwudi 2015; Omilusi 2016; Yusuf, Yusoff & Zengeni, 2018). Considering this democratic development, this paper set out to study the role of NASS in electoral reforms in Nigeria’s fourth republic.

II. ESTABLISHMENTS OF ELECTORAL BODIES IN NIGERIA

The electoral bodies in Nigeria have not had historical consistency in the country’s democracy, thus, such bodies had the experience of dissolve and recreation. Their history could be traced to the time prior to independence when the electoral commission of Nigeria (ECN) was established to conduct the elections of 1959. Moreover, 1960 Federal electoral commission (FEC) was created after the dissolution of ECN. FEC was dissolved in 1966 after the first military coup and in 1978, federal electoral commission (FEDECO) was constituted under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo and conducted 1979 elections that ushered the second republic of shagari administration and it also organized the election of 1983.

The military administration of general Muhammadu Buhari scrapped the FEDECO, and because of its draconian approach, it stayed only for short time until December 31st, 1983. In 1987, the military administration of Babangida installed the democratic government in the country which was never come to reality, only to cancel its presidential election. It was later reconstituted to conduct another fresh election, but it was unfortunately dissolved by another military government.

The administration of General Sani Abacha in 1995 established national electoral commission of Nigeria (NECON), the body conducted elections which were later dissolved before its inauguration as a result of the sudden death of President Abacha who was military. The current electoral body was established in 1998 on the eve of fourth republic in accordance with section 153 F of 1999 constitution. INEC is charged with the responsibility of conducting and supervision of election of the president, vice-president, governor, deputy governors, members of NASS, and state house of assemblies (Iyiede, 2008). It also registers political parties in accordance with the provision of the constitution the act of NASS. The INEC has the experience of conduction elections of 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and most recently 2015.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. It uses both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Interview method and reports were used as primary source of data, while secondary source such as published articles and document were used to support the primary data. In-depth face to face interview has been conducted, interview method can be utilized in exploring perception and understanding of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Moreover, the purposive sampling strategy was used in selecting the informants because they are relevant in providing the required information (Creswell, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2013). Accordingly, 8 informants were recruited in the interview and saturation point was reached. The informants consist of two members from the NASS which comprise senator and member house of representatives, two staff of national institute of legislative studies (NILS), two from the media and two members of civil society organization (CSOs), one from civil society legislative advocacy centre (CISLAC) and the other from policy and legal advocacy centre (PLAC). The data were analyzed using NVivo 10 version qualitative analysis software package after transcribing coding and thematic presentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NASS</td>
<td>Members of National Assembly (NASS)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INST</td>
<td>Researchers from NILS Institute</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOS</td>
<td>Members CSOs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: The Codes and the Category of Informants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Informant Designation</th>
<th>No. of Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NASS</td>
<td>Senator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House of Representative</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INST</td>
<td>Research Fellow</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Showing Numbering of Informants**

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IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS


Figure 1.0 Model On The Role Of NASS In The Electoral Acts, Showing Three Sub-Themes Under Electoral Acts.

The Role Of National Assembly In The Electoral Reform


We Can Consider As Part Of Their Contributions To Democracy The Provision And The Approval Of The Electoral Act, For Instance, The Electoral Law Of 2002 And 2006, Similarly The Electoral Act Of 2010 Which Strengthen And Consolidated The Electoral System. The Conduct Of 2015 General Elections Was...
The fruitful Result Of That Reform Because It Was One Of The Free And Fair Elections In The Political History Of The Country (MEDIA 1).

Another Informant Explained The Objectives And The Reason Why NASS Has Focused On Electoral Reform As One Of The Constitutional Alterations In The Fourth Republic He Said:
The Objective Of These Electoral Reforms Is To Ensure The Electoral Law Is Reform In Such A Manner That Elections Will Be Credible And Accepted In Nigeria, It Was Informed From The Fact That The Electoral System And Processes Were In Shamble And No Doubt About That. (Institute 1)


**Powers Of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**

Studies Confirmed That With The Exception Of 2015 Elections Which Were Adjudged To Be Credible, All Other Elections Conducted By INEC Are Problematic (Adejumobi, 2000; Suberu, 2007; Egwu&Omotola, 2017). However, The Conduct Of 2007 Elections And Its Unsatisfactory Result Has Motivated And Culminated In The Pressure For Electoral Reform (Animashaun, 2010). Accordingly, In August 2007 The President Yar’adua Constituted Electoral Reforms Committee To Study And Give Recommendations On How To Reform The Electoral System In Nigeria. The ERC Sumitted Its Reports OnDecember 12, 2008 And Suggested Several Ways Out To The President.

Accordingly, The President Submitted Seven Executive Bills To NASS. This Was Beside The Effort Of The NASS In 2002 And Subsequently 2006. Interview From This Study Confirmed That The Reform Improves The Power And The Performance Of The INEC, By Given It Administrative Autonomy (NASS 2), And In Conformity With Electoral Act 2010 Which Repeal The No. 2 Of 2006 Electoral Act. INEC Has The Power To Conduct The Election Of The President, Governors, AndNASS And Has Power To Register Political Parties. Moreover, The Appointment Of The Resident Commissioners At The State Level Should Be Made By The President Of The Federal Republic Of Nigeria Subject To The Approval Of The Senate (Csos 2).


However, Despite Significant Reform In The Nigerian Electoral System, There Exist A Huge Gap To Be Filled By NASS In The Constitution And The Electoral Act (NHRC, 2015). It Was Confirmed That Several Recommendations Suggested By Justiceuwais Committee Were Not Implemented (NHRC, 2015). Issues Like The Full Autonomy Of The INEC, Internal Democracy In The Political Parties Among Others Are Not Been Properly Addressed.

**Revenue Of INEC**


**Financial Autonomy Of INEC**

The NASS In Its Effort To Correct Elections Anomalies, Some Drastic Measures Were Taken To Improve The Performance Of INEC By Making Sure That It Receives Its Finance From Consolidated Account And Was Made Into Single Fund Known As Independent National Electoral Commission Fund (Electoral Act,

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2010), This Is To Improve Elections Spending Oversight, This Also Corroborated With Opinion Of Two InformantsNASS 1, And 2. Financial Autonomy Is Very Important In The Administration Of Any Organization Because It Determines The Power And The Ability Of The Institution To Undertake Quick Decision When Resource Should Be Utilized.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although, There Are Grey Areas That Need To Be Reform By The NASS In The Electoral System. This Study Observed That There Are Several Recommendations Suggested By Justice Uwais Committee That Are Not Implemented As A Result Of A White Paper Released By The Government Of President Umar Musa Yar Adua (Suberu, 2014). However, The Reform Agenda Of Both Constitution And Electoral Acts Were Adjudged To Produced Tangible Results. This Can Be Seen From The Recent 2015 General Elections Which Accounted For The Emergence Of The Opposition Party As The Winner.

Promoting Democracy In Nigeria Will Require The NASS To Engage In The Remaining Unfinished Agenda Of The Electoral Reforms As Suggested By Justice Uwais Committee. The Issues That Has To Do With Full Autonomy Of INEC, Independent Candidature And Issues That Has To Do With Court Cases Among Others.

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