

## **Democratic and Electoral Process in Nigeria: A Forecast into the 2023 General Elections**

*Harrison Adewale Idowu*

### **Abstract**

Given the history of democracy, electoral malpractices, and the new electoral laws going into the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, this essay makes a forecast for the 2023 general elections in the country. The research adopts primary and secondary data sources, using qualitative interview method. Findings show that indeed, electoral malpractice is huge in the Nigerian democratic/electoral process, that the practice permeates all aspects of the electoral process, and that they are driven by a number of factors. The forecast reveals that the 2023 general elections will be one of the most keenly contested in the history of democracy and elections in Nigeria, and that the new laws going into the elections (e.g., the electronic transmission of election results), are envisaged to enhance electoral integrity in 2023 only if they are effectively implemented. Electoral malpractices should be expected to continue in 2023, as politicians are likely to devise novel means/patterns (hacking is most likely) of manipulating the electoral process in Nigeria. It concludes that in order to improve the democratic/electoral process in 2023, electronic voting should be introduced, while all hands must be on deck to ensure that the envisaged new patterns of electoral malpractices are nipped in the bud.

**Keywords:** Democratic, electoral process, forecast, 2023 general election, Nigeria.

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### **Introduction**

**E**lections are germane components of any liberal democracy,<sup>1</sup> and often serve as the instrument for gauging democratic advancement or otherwise. Given this, the democratic quality of elections or electoral integrity becomes

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**Harrison Adewale Idowu** teaches Political Science at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko & he is a Ph.D. candidate at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. <idowuadewale88@yahoo.com.>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Pastor, "The Role of Electoral Administration in Democratic Transitions: Implications for Policy and Research," *Journal of Democratization* 6, no. 4 (1999): 1-27.

a critical concern for democracies. Although elections are not the only feature of democracy, they nonetheless remain the significant defining tool of liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup> The presence of periodic, free, fair and competitive elections gives meaning to democracy.<sup>3</sup> While democracy thrives with periodic, free and fair elections, an examination of the democratizing effects of elections in Africa shows that a majority of countries have backslid toward autocracy, while only a few maintain the periodic, free and fair quality of elections.<sup>4</sup> The erosion of the quality of elections on the continent has led to the rise of hybrid regimes, leaving only a semblance of democracy<sup>5</sup> and exacerbated autocracy.<sup>6</sup> These realities have made government, to a large extent, continue to lose its legitimate foundation as being the government created by the people, as the people are consistently and increasingly being short-changed during elections. For Nigeria, the situation has rendered the task of conducting elections suffused with integrity a huge challenge.

All too often, in Africa, and indeed in Nigeria, the quality of elections is compromised, raising questions about the critical role of the election management body (EMB), civil society organizations (CSOs), and other electoral stakeholders, including the electorate. These have a compelling negative effect on the quality of elections. This negative effect is emblemized in often controversial and contested elections, post-election violence, and voter suppression and intimidation, among others.

In Nigeria, incidents such as voter intimidation, voter inducement, low citizen participation, partisanship by security personnel, abuse of incumbency, journalists' harassment, and operational deficiencies still beset the country's elections. Other malfeasances with Nigerian elections include: lack of public communication and information (citizen engagement); violence; systematically muffling the judiciary; and conflicting and late rulings on electoral disputes, among others.<sup>7</sup> Also, citizen participation in the electoral process has dropped

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Katz, *Democracy and Elections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Comparative Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, *Assessing the Quality of Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Mathijs Bogaards, "Re-examining African Elections," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 151-160.

<sup>5</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Comparative Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*; Yonatan Morse, "The Era of Electoral Authoritarianism," *World Politics* 64 no. 1 (2012): 161-198.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Bratton, "Vote Buying and Violence in Nigerian Election Campaigns," in *Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa*, ed. Michael Bratton (Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> EU EOM, *EU Election Observation Mission presents Final Report with Recommendations for Electoral Reforms* (Abuja, Nigeria: European Union Observation Mission Nigeria, 2019); and Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, "Third Interim Statement by Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room on the Conduct of the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly Elections on 28 February 2019," *Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room* (February 23, 2019), [https://www.placng.org/situation\\_room/sr/?s=Statement+on+2019+presidential+election](https://www.placng.org/situation_room/sr/?s=Statement+on+2019+presidential+election) (accessed January 30, 2022).

from the all-time high voter turnout of 69.08 percent in the 2003 elections to a mere 35.66 percent turnout recorded in the 2019 elections (the lowest in the country's democratic and electoral history).<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the freedom for citizen engagement and participation in the electoral process and the mobilization of citizens for the electioneering are continuously being muffled in most parts of Nigeria. Citizen participation is still largely restricted in Nigeria, because as Mojeed Alabi<sup>9</sup> and Etannibi Alemika<sup>10</sup> posit, the incumbent governments continue to make the political environment uncondusive and unsafe for citizens to participate freely in the political process without fear or favor. Given these challenges among others, The Freedom House Index on democracies categorizes Nigeria as "partly free."<sup>11</sup>

Ahead of the February 25 and March 11, 2023, general elections in Nigeria, a number of events, intrigues, and activities, such as the debate over the introduction of new electoral laws, including the electronic transmission of election results, eventual passage of the Electoral Act 2022, the cross carpeting (party switching) of politicians, and the rise of youth political movements and mobilization in support of their preferred candidates, etc., have characterized the buildup to the elections. The Electoral Act 2022, among other provisions, makes room for the electronic transmission of election results from polling units to a public portal easily accessible to citizens. The Electoral Act, and indeed, other electoral reforms going into the electoral process, are products of engagements among INEC, civil society, political parties, the national parliament, and other electoral stakeholders. Particularly, the electronic transmission of results was proposed by the INEC and supported by civil society. While it had initially faced some opposition from the parliament, resistance from civil society and the public mounted the pressure on parliament to accept and pass the bill. Given the prevailing electoral and democratic environment in Nigeria both presently and in the past years, a forecast for the dynamics of the electoral process and the likely electoral maleficence that will come with the 2023 general elections deserves some investigation. Therefore, this essay fills a significant gap in the literature on liberal democracy and the democratic/electoral process in Nigeria.

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<sup>8</sup> INEC, *2015 Presidential Election 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015: Declaration of Results* (Abuja, Nigeria: INEC, 2015); and INEC, *2019 Presidential Election, 23rd February 2019: Declaration of Results* (Abuja, Nigeria: INEC, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Mojeed Alabi, "Electoral Reforms and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: The Electoral Act 2006," *Political Science Journal* 4, no. 2 (2009): 278-303.

<sup>10</sup> Etannibi Alemika, *Quality of Elections, Satisfaction with Democracy and Political Trust in Africa*, Afrobarometer Working Paper, no.84 (Cape Town, South Africa: Afrobarometer).

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Repucci and Amy Slipowitz, "Freedom in the World 2022: The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule," Freedom House (February 17, 2022), <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores> (accessed March 2, 2022).

The essay thus describes the dimensions and trends of electoral malpractices in Nigeria and the factors responsible for them. These are done to provide a clearer understanding of the menace and proffer ways to address electoral malpractices in the Nigerian electoral and democratic process. More importantly, motivated by the prevalent electoral and democratic environment in the country, the essay forecasts the future of elections and electoral malpractices in the country, especially with respect to the 2023 general elections. This is important in order to prepare well ahead of the possible challenges and nip them in the bud.

## **Theoretical Framework on Electoral Malpractices**

Pippa Norris<sup>12</sup> seeks to explain and understand how political attitudes, cultural values, social norms and cognitive opinions impact voters' choices and support for political parties and candidates. Norris' institutional approach also examines how diverse electoral rules impact issue voting, cleavage politics, and partisan identification over a given time frame. The various changes that arise before and after electoral reforms are made and implemented, are also analyzed by Norris.<sup>13</sup> For Michael Alvarez, Thad Hall, and Susan Hyde,<sup>14</sup> institutional theory of election focuses on electoral fraud detection and how this can be curbed. Their assumption is that institutional factors like incumbency, electoral system, urbanization, economic interests, and partisanship would determine the level of electoral fraud, their character, detection, and prevention. The basic argument of the institutional theorists is that institutional mechanisms are potent for electoral fraud detection and prevention. The institutionalist theories of election have highlighted the role of institutions, such as EMBs, in shaping voters' choices, issue voting, and electoral fraud, among others. The role of such institutions as EMBs, and the police, for instance, are important in the magnitude of electoral malpractices taking place in democracies.

Cees Ejik<sup>15</sup> categorized political actors into individual, collective, and institutional. In this case, as it relates to elections, individual actors could imply the electorate and politicians, collective actors may relate to political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), and institutional actors refer to EMBs, and the police, etc. In the electoral process, these actors have a role to play and also determine whether or not electoral malpractices occur, or to what extent they occur.

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<sup>12</sup> Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Alvarez, Thad Hall, and Susan Hyde, *Election Fraud: Detecting and Deterring Electoral Manipulation* (Washington, D.C.: United States, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Cees Ejik, *The Essence of Politics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

Sarah Birch<sup>16</sup> avers that violence has been a tool of electoral malpractice across the world since the Second World War. Using the case study of fourteen democracies, Birch posits that violence has been a long-time threat to democracies and democratic elections. According to her, violence has continued even in contemporary democracies and elections. Africa is particularly in the center for the use of violence in the manipulation of elections. This is because countries such as those of Africa and the developing world are more prone and vulnerable to electoral violence, due to high levels of corruption and weak democratic/electoral institutions.<sup>17</sup> According to Birch, electoral violence is a form of electoral malpractice which is used to aid other electoral malpractices, such as vote buying and ballot snatching/stuffing. This suggests therefore, that politicians deploy violence in order to carry out other forms of electoral malpractices. To address electoral violence, Birch argues that electoral authority and quality of implementation of electoral governance (electoral rule making, implementation, and adjudication), rather than formal designs of electoral/democratic institutions, are important.<sup>18</sup> This implies that electoral institutions alone, such as EMBs, cannot be trusted with the task of curbing electoral violence and other electoral malpractices.

Deploying his theory of authoritarianism, Andreas Schedler<sup>19</sup> posits that there are electoral authoritarian states disguising as representative democracies, holding multiparty elections, albeit, the process is usually highly flawed and manipulated. This aligns significantly with Varieties of Democracy's (V-Dem)<sup>20</sup> categorization of Nigeria as an electoral autocracy, with often flawed and manipulated elections. In such electoral autocracies, Schedler argues that government and those in the opposition compete over electoral support and institutional rules. To compete favorably, while the former deploys electoral malpractices, the latter deploys electoral protest.<sup>21</sup> The point is made that while states remain highly electoral autocratic, such as is the case with Nigeria, electoral malpractices are bound to occur and persist.

Further theorizing about electoral malpractices, Schedler argues that elections have become an “instrument of authoritarian control as well as a means of democratic governance.”<sup>22</sup> This is owing to the highly manipulative nature of elections across many democracies. Democracies have been disguised

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah Birch, *Electoral Violence, Corruption, and Political Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustainability and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> V-Dem, *Autocratisation Changing Nature? Democracy Report 2022* (Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2022).

<sup>21</sup> Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty*.

<sup>22</sup> Andreas Schedler, “The Menu of Manipulation,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 36-50.

in such a manner that as much as they allow for some pluralism and multiparty elections, such elections are often ridden with electoral malpractices, which significantly undermines their integrity. As such, Schedler argues that while such regimes do not qualify as authoritarian states, they, however, do not pass for a democracy. Whereas elections are allowed to take place periodically, such elections are placed under tight authoritarian controls to enable a continued hold onto power.<sup>23</sup> Schedler identifies opposition suppression, oppression and intimidation, voter suppression and “informal disenfranchisement,” violence and intimidation, “clientelist control” of the electorate (exploiting socio-economic inequalities), padding total votes, and burning ballot boxes, etc., as some strategies of electoral malpractices.

After studying thirty-eight countries across developed and “counterfeit” democracies, Nic Cheeseman and Brian Klaas<sup>24</sup> aver that authoritarian leaders who accept democracy through periodic elections stay longer in power than those who do not. One way to ensure their perpetual stay in power is via electoral malpractices and manipulations. From the United States to Russia, Argentina, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India, and Brazil, Cheeseman and Klaas provide six strategies through which politicians carry out electoral malpractices in order to guarantee victory for themselves and their parties. The strategies include vote buying, gerrymandering (manipulations with polling unit division and creation), violence/repression, election hacking, ballot stuffing, and fooling/deceiving the international community. Cheeseman and Klaas proposed reforming election monitoring, digitizing elections, and empowering the opposition and civil society, etc., as some of the strategies to curb electoral malpractices.<sup>25</sup>

Alberto Simpser<sup>26</sup> theorizes the “more than winning” perspective of electoral malpractices, and exposes the blatant and excessive manipulation of elections, including the factors driving such electoral malpractices. Contrary to the general claim that governments/politicians rig elections to win, Simpser shows that electoral malpractices go beyond the purpose of winning elections alone, but could also be used to transmit and distort information. Governments engage in electoral malpractices in order to send messages of strength and resolve/power to the opposition.<sup>27</sup> This, therefore, suggests that governments could decide to engage in electoral malpractices even for those elections in which they are sure to be victorious. They do that just to send a message of their strength, power, and/or resolve to the opposition. This is because of the

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<sup>23</sup> Schedler, “The Menu of Manipulation,” 36.

<sup>24</sup> Nic Cheeseman and Brian Klaas, *How to Rig an Election* (Cornwall, UK: TJ International Limited, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Alberto Simpser, *Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections: Theory, Practice, and Implications* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

belief that manipulating elections can make the manipulating party appear strong, while failing to manipulate can convey a message of weakness.

Fabrice Lehoucq and Ivan Molina<sup>28</sup> find how partisan electoral commissions can aid ballot box stuffing, and recommend that only non-partisan commissions should be allowed to run elections. According to the authors, electoral commissions are often found complicit in electoral malpractices, and ballot rigging is occurring in many democracies across the world, including “developed” democracies. They also argue that incumbent governments may pass laws that reduce their chances to rig elections for several other ulterior motives.<sup>29</sup>

### **Historic Pattern of Democratic/Electoral Process in Nigeria (1999-2019)**

Following the commitment of the military government headed by General Abdulsalami Abubakar to return the country to democratic rule, his military government therefore adopted a new constitution on May 5, 1999. This set the tune for the fourth Republic and the 1999 general elections in Nigeria. To date, under the current Fourth Republic, the country has held six general elections, with four years intervals (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019), and has alternated power between incumbent and opposition party once in 2015.

In preparation for the 1999 general elections, General Abdulsalami created an Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to oversee the elections. The election was keenly contested between two political parties, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). While the AD was represented by Chief Olu Falae, the PDP had Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as its presidential candidate. Although the election was condemned as unfair and unfree,<sup>30</sup> Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was declared winner, having clinched 62.78 percent of the votes, while Olu Falae had 37.22 percent of the total votes cast.<sup>31</sup> Chief Olu Falae contested the election result at the Court of Appeal, but lost.<sup>32</sup> Given this result, General Abubakar handed over power to the democratically elected government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29, 1999.<sup>33</sup> This transition put an end to the nearly 33 years of military

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<sup>28</sup> Fabrice Lehoucq and Ivan Molina, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Carter Center, “Post-election Statement on Nigeria Elections, March 1, 1999,” *The Carter Center* (February 28, 1999), <http://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc891.html>. (accessed February 24, 2022)

<sup>31</sup> Harrison Adewale Idowu, *Election Management and Peaceful Democratic Transition in Ghana and Nigeria* (M.Sc. thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Michael Ogbeyidi, “A Culture of Failed Elections: Revisiting Democratic Elections in Nigeria, 1959-2003,” *Historia Actual Online (HAOL)* 21, (2010): 43-56, 51.

<sup>33</sup> George Olusoji, Seyi Shadare, and Oluwakemi Owoyemi, “Military Intervention in the Nigerian Politics: ‘a Timed Bomb’ waiting to Explode? The Avowal of a New Management Elites,” *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology* 2, no. 5 (2012): 191- 198.

rule in Nigeria, excluding the brief civilian rule during the second Republic (1979-1983).<sup>34</sup>

In 2003, the election was considered germane to test the democratic advancement in Nigeria, being the first election to be overseen by a democratically elected president in the Fourth Republic, and the first transition election to usher in another civilian government. According to Michael Ogbeyi,<sup>35</sup> INEC had registered 27 more political parties to bring the total number of political parties to 30, including the three that competed in the 1999 general elections. The 2003 election was a contest mainly between PDP represented by incumbent President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP) represented by General Muhammadu Buhari. At the close of the polls, Olusegun Obasanjo pulled 61.94 percent of the total votes cast, while General Muhammadu Buhari pulled 32.19 percent to clinch second position.<sup>36</sup> The 2003 election was marred by serious irregularities and fraud, and it resulted in widespread protests, with many calling for the outright cancellation of the elections.<sup>37</sup> The election was characterized by money politics—there was the excessive use of money to influence voters and the outcome of the elections.<sup>38</sup>

The 2007 general election in Nigeria has been described as the most controversial and the worst in the political and democratic history of the country.<sup>39</sup> The election, which was overseen by the outgoing administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, was characterized by high levels of irregularities, violence and death. UK Aid<sup>40</sup> observe that widespread malpractices characterized the whole stages of the election, with the ruling party (the PDP) having fixed the results in advance. Against his failed attempt to elongate his tenure in office beyond the constitutionally allowed four years of two terms,<sup>41</sup> President Olusegun did all he could to install his political candidate, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in power.<sup>42</sup> This included the excessive monetization of the

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<sup>34</sup> Olusoji, Shadare, and Owoyemi, "Military Intervention in the Nigerian Politics."

<sup>35</sup> Ogbeyi, "A Culture of Failed Elections," 52.

<sup>36</sup> Idowu, "Election Management and Peaceful Democratic Transition."

<sup>37</sup> Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), *Annual Report on the Human Rights Situation in Nigeria, 2000* (Mowe, Nigeria: CDHR, 2001), 111; and European Commission, Nigeria, *European Union Election Observation Mission Final Report* (Abuja, Nigeria: European Union).

<sup>38</sup> Emmanuel Onah and Uche Nwali, "Monetisation of Electoral Politics and the Challenge of Political Exclusion in Nigeria," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 56, no. 3 (2018): 318-339.

<sup>39</sup> National Democratic Institute, *Final NDI Report on Nigeria's 2007 Elections* (Abuja, Nigeria: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2008); and UK Aid, *Elections in Nigeria in 2007* (Abuja, Nigeria: UK Aid, Department of International Development, 2007), 1-4.

<sup>40</sup> UK Aid, *Elections in Nigeria*.

<sup>41</sup> John Campbell, *Nigeria Dancing on the Brink* (Maryland, United States: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Onah and Nwali, "Monetisation of Electoral Politics."



entire process by inducing voters, election officials, and security personnel, among others, to rig the elections.<sup>43</sup> At the close of polls, which amounted to 50 deaths on election-day, and over 200 throughout the electoral cycle,<sup>44</sup> the incumbent PDP was declared winner. While the PDP flagbearer, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua garnered 69.9 percent of the total votes cast, the ANPP flagbearer, General Muhammadu Buhari pulled 18.66 percent of the votes to come second.<sup>45</sup>

The 2011 elections took place amidst several reforms made following the outcome of the 2007 elections.<sup>46</sup> Following this, a new biometric register of voters was put in place. The contest took place among 17 candidates, with the candidates of the PDP, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), General Muhammadu Buhari, being the main contenders for the presidency. The 2011 election was adjudged much more credible, freer and fairer when compared to the previous elections.<sup>47</sup> Prominent challenges with the 2011 elections were those related to underage registration and voting,<sup>48</sup> as well as post-election violence. The election witnessed the worst post-election violence in the history of elections in the country,<sup>49</sup> with over 800 deaths recorded.<sup>50</sup> Abiodun Odusote<sup>51</sup> averred that the 2011 election outcome showed a high level of ethnic and religious sentiments, as the predominantly Christian South voted for President Jonathan who is a Christian, while the predominantly Muslim North voted for General Buhari who is a Muslim. While Jonathan pulled 58.8 percent of the total votes cast to be declared winner of the polls, his closest rival, General Buhari clinched 31.98 percent of the votes.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Albert Okolie, "The State, Electoral Fraud and Illusion of Participatory Democracy in Africa: Lessons from the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria," *UNILAG Journal of Politics* 5, (2010): 38-60.

<sup>44</sup> National Democratic Institute, *Final NDI Report on Nigeria's 2007 Elections*, 33-38; UK Aid, *Elections in Nigeria*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Idowu, "Election Management and Peaceful Democratic Transition."

<sup>46</sup> Harrison Adewale Idowu and Oluwafemi Mimiko, "Enabling Factors for Peaceful Political Power Alternation and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana and Nigeria," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1 (2020): 161-195.

<sup>47</sup> EU EOM, *Nigeria: Final Report of the Nigerian General Election of the European Union Election Observation Mission* (Abuja, Nigeria: European Union, 2011); and Abiodun Odusote, "Nigerian Democracy and Electoral Process since Amalgamation: Lessons from a Turbulent Past," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 10 (2014): 25-37.

<sup>48</sup> Project Swift Count, *Interim Report on the Voter Registration Exercise for the 2011 General Elections* (Abuja, Nigeria: Project Swift Count, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Atanda Isiaq, Oluwashina Adebisi, and Adebola Bakare, "Ethnicity and Election Outcomes in Nigeria: Interrogating the 2015 Presidential Election," *Journal of African Elections* 17, no. 1 (2018): 117-139.

<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Post-election Violence Killed 800* (May 16, 2011), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800> (accessed March 20, 2022).

<sup>51</sup> Odusote, "Nigerian Democracy and Electoral Process," 30.

<sup>52</sup> Idowu, "Election Management and Peaceful Democratic Transition."

The 2015 general election in Nigeria remains one of the most keenly contested and most significant elections in the history of electoral politics in the country, being the first election which saw the defeat of an incumbent president and party in the country.<sup>53</sup> The buildup to the election saw the merger of political parties to compete against the ruling PDP, and according to Segun Adeniyi,<sup>54</sup> this aroused national excitement. Despite the massive support enjoyed by the incumbent President Jonathan, most Nigerians were eager to see an alternation of political power, hence, they drummed support and clamored for the candidate of the merger party, the All Progressives Congress (APC)—General Muhammadu Buhari.<sup>55</sup> For the first time, the Smart Card Reader (SCR) and permanent voter card were introduced in the electoral process in Nigeria, which aided the credibility of the elections.<sup>56</sup> While the election was adjudged as the best in Africa from some quarters at the time,<sup>57</sup> underage voting, vote buying, malfunctioning of SCRs, money politics, and calls for cancellation from some quarters<sup>58</sup> characterized the elections.

The buildup to the 2015 elections, and indeed, the election proper was characterized by over-heating of the polity, a much tensed political environment, and a hostile relationship especially between the two main political parties, the APC and PDP.<sup>59</sup> Dele Babalola<sup>60</sup> posits that once again, ethnic and religious sentiments characterized and determined the 2015 elections in Nigeria. Again, post-election violence rocked some parts of the country after the declaration of the 2015 presidential election results.<sup>61</sup> After a keenly contested election, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP lost and conceded defeat

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<sup>53</sup> Idowu and Mimiko, “Enabling Factors for Peaceful Political.”

<sup>54</sup> Segun Adeniyi, *Against the Run of Play: How an Incumbent President Was Defeated in Nigeria* (Lagos, Nigeria: Kachifo Limited, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Adeniyi, *Against the Run of Play*, 42.

<sup>56</sup> Idowu and Mimiko, “Enabling Factors for Peaceful Political.”

<sup>57</sup> Commonwealth Observer Group, *Nigeria Elections 2015: Interim Statement by Commonwealth Observer Group* (Abuja, Nigeria: The Commonwealth, 2015); and Economic Community of West African States Election Observation Mission (ECOWAS-EOM), “ECOWAS Poll Observation Mission Says Nigeria’s March 28 Elections Free, Transparent Despite Some Hitches,” (March 30, 2015), <http://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-poll-observation-mission-says-nigerias-march-28-elections-free-transparent-despite-some-hitches/> (accessed March 24, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> EU EOM, *Final Report, Federal Republic of Nigeria General Elections 28 March 2015, 11 April 2015* (Abuja, Nigeria: European Union, 2015); and Idowu and Mimiko, “Enabling Factors for Peaceful Political.”; and Onah and Nwali, “Monetisation of Electoral Politics.”

<sup>59</sup> EU EOM, *Final Report*; Ladi Hamalai, Samuel Egwu, and Shola Omotola, *Nigeria’s 2015 General Elections: Continuity and Change in Electoral Democracy* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); and Shola Omotola and Charles Nyuykongwe, *Nigeria’s 2015 General Elections: Challenges and Opportunities, ACCORD Policy and Practice Brief (PPB)* (Durban, South Africa: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Dele Babalola, “Ethno-religious Voting in Nigeria: Interrogating Voting Patterns in the 2019 Presidential Election,” *The Round Table* 109, no. 4 (2020): 377-385, 381.

<sup>61</sup> Idowu, “Election Management and Peaceful Democratic Transition.”

to the opposition leader, General Muhammadu Buhari. While Buhari pulled 53.96 percent of the total votes cast, President Jonathan pulled 44.96 percent.<sup>62</sup>

During the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, the stakes were high, and local and international observers of Nigerian electoral politics keenly watched how the incumbent government of the APC and President Muhammadu Buhari would handle the elections, having benefitted from the 2015 transition elections. This time, the number of political parties in the country had risen to 91, even though the contest was keen between the ruling APC and the opposition PDP. Despite the fact that the two main contenders were from Northern Nigeria, Babalola<sup>63</sup> posits that ethnic sentiments still characterized the 2019 polls. The 2019 elections went quite peacefully with incidents like violence and vote buying,<sup>64</sup> and some observers argued that there had been a retrogression over the progress made in 2015.<sup>65</sup> In spite of these hitches, there was a general perception that the 2019 election was credible.<sup>66</sup> Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari was declared winner with 56 percent of the total votes cast, while his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar pulled 41 percent of the votes.<sup>67</sup>

## Methodology

The study adopts the exploratory research design (collection and analysis of data through interviews and documentary evidence), using qualitative research method. Primary data was sourced through semi-structured interviews administered on key state and non-state stakeholders in the Nigerian democratic/electoral process. Interview respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique, based on their experience, expertise, knowledge, and practical involvement in the democratic/electoral process in Nigeria.

Interview respondents included officials of the election management body—INEC, political parties, democratic institutions, civil society organizations,

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Babalola, "Ethno-religious Voting in Nigeria."

<sup>64</sup> Eniola Akinkuotu, "INEC Had Many Operational Failures-EU Observers," *Punch Nigeria* (February 25, 2019), <https://www.punchng.com/inec-had-many-operational-failures-euobservers/> (accessed June 20, 2022); and Matt Hadro, "Just In: US Expresses Concern over Tampering of Votes in Nigeria Elections," *Republican News* (February 25, 2019), <https://www.therepublicannews.net/2019/02/25/just-in-us-expresses-concern-over-tampering-of-votes-innigeria-elections-rn/> (accessed June 20, 2022).

<sup>65</sup> Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, "Third Interim Statement."

<sup>66</sup> Idowu and Mimiko, "Enabling Factors for Peaceful Political.;" and Samson Toromade, "Canada Says Nigeria's 2019 Elections 'Credible', Congratulates Buhari," *Pulse Nigeria* (March 14, 2019), <https://www.pulse.ng/news/politics/Canadacongratulatesbuhari-says-nigerias-2019-elections-credible/5v4h1nn> (accessed February 20, 2022).

<sup>67</sup> INEC, *2019 Presidential Election*.

academicians in the field of electoral studies, members of Parliament in the House Committee on Electoral Matters, and security personnel in Nigeria. Interviews were designed to collect data on the trends and dimensions of electoral malpractices in Nigeria, the factors responsible, and the future of democratic/electoral process in Nigeria especially with specific reference to the 2023 general elections. In-depth and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with ten (10) purposely selected key informant interviewees (KIIs). The researcher was guided by an interview guide during the interview sections.

Interviews were conducted in two different phases. The first phase of data collection was conducted between October 26 and October 29, 2021; while the second phase took place between November 25 and November 30, 2021. Each interview section lasted for between 20 to 30 minutes. Interviewees were recorded, and notes were also taken by the researcher to store the data. The table below presents the breakdown of KIIs.

Qualitative primary data collected from the field were analyzed using thematic analysis. Recorded responses from the interviewees were first transcribed and sorted into different themes using color codes assigned to the various objectives set out in the study. Relevant secondary data were also sourced from textbooks, journal and magazine articles, official documents and gazettes, and the Internet.

Table 1. List of KIIs, Affiliation and Sample Size Distribution

S/N	Respondents' Location/ Affiliation	Number of Selected Respondents
1.	The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria	2 KIIs
3.	The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Nigeria	1 KII
4.	Transition Monitoring Group (TMG)	1 KII
5.	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	1 KII
6.	Members of Parliament, Nigeria	1 KII
7.	The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and The All Progressives Congress (APC), Nigeria	2 KIIs (1 each)
8.	Academic experts on Electoral Studies in Nigeria	1 KII
9.	Nigeria Police Force	1 KII
		<b>Total Respondents=10</b>

Source: Author's Illustration.

## **Research Results: Dimensions and Trends of Electoral Malpractices in the Democratic/Electoral Process in Nigeria**

Electoral malpractices are huge, rampant, and have been done in a rather crude manner over the years. It has been huge to the extent that in most cases, what turns out as the people's choice from the primaries to general elections, is not actually their choice. While electoral malpractices are very general in the electoral process in Nigeria, there is the belief from some quarters that it is being spearheaded by INEC and political parties. This is correct to the extent that if INEC would check the activities of political parties, there would be no malpractices, or it would be minimized drastically.

The interviewees explore the various schemas—dimensions and trends of electoral malpractices in the Nigerian democratic/electoral process. Some of the dimensions and trends are highlighted as follows:

### ***Vote Buying***

While vote buying, the practice where politicians pay eligible voters to cast their ballots for them, their parties, or their preferred candidates, had not been rampant prior to 2015, that year seems to have been the turning point with respect to the spate of vote buying during all following elections in Nigeria. This is because the electoral process received a significant improvement in 2015 with the introduction of smart card readers and permanent voters' card. This, therefore, made it difficult for politicians to tamper with elections by other means, hence, a resort to vote buying. Nearly all of the interviewees for this research alluded to the fact that vote buying has permeated the electoral space in Nigeria.<sup>68</sup> Citizens have been found most complicit in this act, as they now await politicians to come and buy their votes, otherwise they may not participate in the process, and this has resulted in the declining voter turnout during elections in the country.<sup>69</sup> Beyond the vote buying that takes place on the day of election, interviewees #2<sup>70</sup> and #3<sup>71</sup> aver that vote buying in the Nigerian democratic/electoral process actually begins at the primary elections level, with potential candidates spending humongous amounts to buy delegates in the primary elections. Over time, vote buying has become a tradeoff in the electoral politics of Nigeria, becoming more attractive relative to other forms of manipulations, mainly because these other forms of manipulations became more difficult to practice, beginning from 2015. A prominent electoral malpractice replaced by vote buying is ballot snatching/stuffing. Vote buying has thus become a very prevalent and prominent electoral malpractice in

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<sup>68</sup> Interviewees #1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9.

<sup>69</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>70</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>71</sup> Interviewee #3.

Nigeria. This finding also aligns significantly with the electoral malpractices previously identified in democracies by Cheeseman and Klaas,<sup>72</sup> and what Schedler refers to as “clientelist control of electorate.”<sup>73</sup>

### ***Campaign on Election-day***

Campaigning on the day of election has also been identified as another trend of electoral malpractices in Nigeria. While the electoral law prohibits campaigning and canvassing for votes by politicians, candidates, and their agents on election-day, the practice is nonetheless found among Nigerian politicians. Interviewee #1<sup>74</sup> posits, “On the queue on election-day, people are given money to say PDP [or APC or any other party they are working for], that is campaign... When you have campaign T-shirts at the polling unit level, it is an offense. All of those are criminal.” The advent of social media has further made it more difficult to control campaigns on the day of election because as the elections are ongoing, people continue to canvass for votes and campaign for their parties and candidates through various social media platforms.<sup>75</sup> Election-day campaign as a strategy of electoral malpractice is often found among incumbent governments/parties, who exploit their power of incumbency to engage in this act. This explains Simpson’s<sup>76</sup> theorizing on government’s involvement in electoral malpractice just to convey a message of their strength, resolve, and/or power to the opposition. This is also a strategy deployed by the incumbent government in order to compete favorably with the opposition.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Tampering with Election Results***

Another dimension to electoral malpractices in the Nigerian democratic/electoral process is one in which politicians connive with INEC staff and other electoral officers to change the outcome of the elections as recorded at the polling unit level. Interviewees #1,<sup>78</sup> #2,<sup>79</sup> #5,<sup>80</sup> #7,<sup>81</sup> and #8<sup>82</sup> all allude to the fact that tampering with election results constitute a menace in the democratic/electoral process in Nigeria. Interviewee #1<sup>83</sup> believes that tampering with

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<sup>72</sup> Cheeseman and Klaas, *How to Rig an Election*.

<sup>73</sup> Schedler, “The Menu of Manipulation,” 36.

<sup>74</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Simpson, *Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections*.

<sup>77</sup> Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty*.

<sup>78</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>79</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>80</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>81</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>82</sup> Interviewee #8.

<sup>83</sup> Interviewee #1.

election results is probably the worst-case scenario when it comes to electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Furthermore, “Poll officials at the polling units, they are being compromised and they deliberately bring out results that are different from what entered inside the [ballot] box.”<sup>84</sup> More succinctly, another interviewee explains thus: “Our collation system is the worst, you can win election in polling unit, and lose at the collation point. You have done your best trying to maintain some level of integrity at polling unit level, because that’s what everybody wants to see because the voting takes place there. You move the result to the collation points, and the returning officer cancels the results, you have lost the election.”<sup>85</sup> Citing an example of what could have been described as tampering with election results during the 2019 presidential elections, interviewee #1<sup>86</sup> argues that “In 2019 elections, there were 84 million registered voters, while INEC was going to declare President Buhari, the total number of registered voters were 82 million, against 84 million. So, what happened to 2 million plus unaccounted for? The only thing that can explain that is manipulation. On the day of declaration of that results, at the ICC [International Conference Center], several of the returning officers could not add up figures. One professor was battling with figures. That is a result of manipulation.” What has been identified to aid and abet the successful tampering with election results over the years have been compromised party agents, compromised poll officials, compromised security agents, and stampeding of poll officials and holding returning officers to ransom to declare results to favor some interests.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, it has also been argued that it is now becoming more difficult to tamper with election results in Nigeria because of the system being put in place by INEC (e.g., the scanning of election results at polling units) to check such sharp practices.<sup>88</sup>

This variant of electoral malpractice is one that involves a connivance among political actors<sup>89</sup> at the individual (politicians), collective (political parties), and institutional (INEC) levels. The institution of INEC, as Norris,<sup>90</sup> and Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde<sup>91</sup> have theorized, is found culpable in tempering with election results in Nigeria. This strategy of electoral malpractice is what Schedler refers to as “padding total votes,”<sup>92</sup> and Cheeseman and Klaas refer to as “election hacking.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>85</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Interviewees #2 and 8.

<sup>88</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>89</sup> Ejik, *The Essence of Politics*.

<sup>90</sup> Norris, *Electoral Engineering*.

<sup>91</sup> Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde, *Election Fraud*.

<sup>92</sup> Schedler, “The Menu of Manipulation,” 36.

<sup>93</sup> Cheeseman and Klaas, *How to Rig an Election*.

### ***Electoral Violence and Voters' Oppression and Intimidation***

Electoral violence, and voters' oppression and intimidation are next levels when it comes to the various schemas of electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Interviewees #1,<sup>94</sup> #7,<sup>95</sup> and #10<sup>96</sup> aver that incidents of election violence and voters' oppression are prevalent in the electoral process in Nigeria. Accordingly, "People sew Police uniforms, Army uniforms, buy guns—they are going for election, they are buying guns as if we are going for war. They say it is a war, do or die. So, they have to win by all means."<sup>97</sup> The deployment of this pattern of electoral malpractice is often carried out using thugs and security agents.<sup>98</sup> As Birch theorizes, electoral violence has been a long and constant feature in the democratic and electoral history of Nigeria, and is often deployed to pave way for other electoral malpractices, such as vote buying, ballot snatching/stuffing, and tampering with election results.<sup>99</sup> This is the variant of electoral malpractice which Schedler categorizes as opposition suppression, oppression and intimidation, voter suppression, violence, and intimidation.<sup>100</sup> Also, Cheeseman and Klaas identify this electoral malpractice as violence/repression.<sup>101</sup>

### ***Manipulations at the Point of Registration of Voters and Polling Units Creation***

Whereas most electoral malpractices take place on the day of the election, evidence shows that a lot of manipulations could well be carried out at the voter registration and polling units' creation stage. Registration of voters presents a period for some INEC officials to make their money, because desperate politicians usually make efforts to influence the register at that time.<sup>102</sup> One way through which they do this is to pad the voter register with all sorts of fictitious names, albeit, the introduction of the Smart Card Reader [SCR] and the Permanent Voter Card [PVC] has been able to check this to a large extent.<sup>103</sup> While SCR and PVC have made it harder to commit electoral fraud, politicians have devised other means to compete—for instance, the surge in vote buying could be linked to this. On the manipulations that take place during polling unit creation, interviewee #3<sup>104</sup> provides some insights as follows:

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<sup>94</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>95</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>96</sup> Interviewee #10.

<sup>97</sup> Interviewee #3.

<sup>98</sup> Interviewees #4, 6, and 9.

<sup>99</sup> Birch, *Electoral Violence, Corruption*.

<sup>100</sup> Schedler, "The Menu of Manipulation," 36.

<sup>101</sup> Cheeseman and Klaas, *How to Rig an Election*.

<sup>102</sup> Interviewee #3.

<sup>103</sup> Interviewee #8.

<sup>104</sup> Interviewee #3.



The creation of polling units—if you want to win your election now, you are contesting for House of Representatives, this is the time to go and meet the INEC and say ‘create 30 polling units for me in my constituency.’ And if they are able to provide 20 polling units to you, you are the only one that know these polling units, because they are going to be in your house, and your neighborhood around your place. All the ballot papers come to your house, that is where the voting is going to take place. So, if it is 20 ballot boxes, 500 ballots, you are already having 10,000 votes ahead of your opponent that is contesting with you, who doesn’t know this thing...So, they buy the polling units. That is why in the 2019 election, you saw parts of Anambra State, the polling units were in the forest, nobody is living inside the forest, but there are polling units there, and results will come out.

Often, incumbent governments/politicians deploy this variant of electoral malpractice just to convey a message of strength, resolve, and/or power to the opposition.<sup>105</sup> The institution of INEC is complicit in aiding this electoral malpractice, thus supporting the claims of institutionalists’ theorists on electoral malpractice.<sup>106</sup> Cheeseman and Klaas also identify this electoral malpractice as gerrymandering.<sup>107</sup>

### ***Abrupt and Controversial Dismissal of Key Electoral Appointees who have Something to do with the Democratic/Electoral Process***

In Nigeria, instances show that incumbent politicians who have some level of control over critical INEC officers or other electoral officers appointed by them, can decide to dismiss them often in the most controversial manner when it is becoming glaring that they may not cooperate with them to manipulate the electoral process in their favor.<sup>108</sup> Interviewee #3<sup>109</sup> provides an example leading up to the 2019 general elections where the Chief Justice of Nigeria was abruptly and controversially relieved of his position prior to the elections. This had raised many eyebrows, so much so that most stakeholders condemned the act, and held the impression that the move was made by the incumbent so as to secure his victory in the 2019 Presidential elections. The argument goes: “The moment they removed that Chief Justice of Nigeria, I said it is finished, it was scheming. They started scheming right from then, because they already feel if

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<sup>105</sup> Simpser, *Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections*.

<sup>106</sup> Norris, *Electoral engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*; and Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde, *Election Fraud*.

<sup>107</sup> Cheeseman and Klaas, *How to Rig an Election*.

<sup>108</sup> Interviewees #3 and 4.

<sup>109</sup> Interviewee #3.

they go to the court, if they have that Chief Justice (that was the Chief Justice who had brought a different and credible report in previous elections based on genuine results). So, he [the incumbent] knew if they had such a Chief Justice, the man will say he didn't win; he will lose out. So, the best thing was to get him out. That was why they concocted all these allegations against him to remove him."<sup>110</sup> The fact that incumbent governments are often caught in the act of conveying the message of their strength and resolve through certain electoral malpractices,<sup>111</sup> could explain the rationale behind this variant of electoral malpractice in Nigeria.

### ***Compromising INEC Staff and other Electoral Officers***

In fact, there seems to be a general assumption that all other electoral malpractices hinge on the successful compromise of INEC officers, polling officers, polling agents, and security personnel, among others. This is correct to the extent that when all the aforementioned electoral officers are not compromised, it will be difficult to manipulate the electoral process.<sup>112</sup> This basically has to do with buying off these critical electoral officers so that they can look the other way when the malpractices are taking place at the polling unit level. The role of such institutions as INEC in determining whether electoral malpractices occur or not, or their magnitude, has also been stressed by the institutionalist theorists of electoral malpractices.<sup>113</sup> Lehoucq and Molina also find that partisan electoral commissions can aid ballot stuffing and other electoral malpractices.<sup>114</sup>

Interviewee #6<sup>115</sup> speaks to the fact that the schemas of electoral malpractices in Nigeria vary significantly, depending on the region or state of the country where such malpractices are being carried out. According to him, "Basically they [electoral malpractices] are as diverse as the territories are concerned. The incidents of electoral malpractices, there is a commonality to all of them, but that commonality has some smaller uniqueness. In some places, direct vote buying, that is cash for votes will trend more; some places, it will be physical violence. In some places, it would be more of subtle manipulation—let them vote, and then you compromise the process later through changing results, and other stuffs. In some places, they say deliberately the card reader doesn't work, we use incident forms."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Simpser, *Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections*.

<sup>112</sup> Interviewees #4, 9, and 10.

<sup>113</sup> Norris, *Electoral engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*; and Alvarez, Hall, and Hyde, *Election Fraud*.

<sup>114</sup> Lehoucq and Molina, *Stuffing the Ballot Box*.

<sup>115</sup> Interviewee #6.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

## **Factors which have Driven Electoral Malpractices in Nigeria**

It is established that electoral malpractices are rampant in the Nigerian electoral process, but what exactly has driven them over the years? Interviewees for this study shed the light on the major factors which have been responsible for electoral malpractices in Nigeria. While this list is not exhaustive, they constitute some of the commonest factors responsible for electoral malpractices in the country.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty has been identified as one of the commonest drivers of electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Politicians and the system have consciously helped to weaponize poverty, and because people are poor, they are subject to being manipulated.<sup>117</sup> Interviewee #5<sup>118</sup> avers: “Poverty also in a way [contributes to electoral malpractices], because those who buy votes are using rice, noodles, etc., meaning that the poverty of the people is being exploited to manipulate the process.” Another dimension to poverty is the high rate of unemployment among the teeming youth in the country, who find some sort of temporary employment during elections. Interviewee #2<sup>119</sup> puts it succinctly: “I think the general unemployment in the larger society is an inducement for malpractices because there are youths out there that are not doing anything, so when election comes, it is a festival time. They are ready to also be part of the thing because they know they will pick some money, and they will be able to do anything.” This explains the reason why most of the youth allow themselves to be used by desperate politicians to manipulate the electoral process through violence and voters’ intimidation. This factor has mostly been responsible for fueling the increasing spate of vote buying, electoral violence, and the compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

### ***The Premium Placed on Political Offices***

The premium placed on political offices in Nigeria has made electoral competitions a “must win” for most politicians. One of the interviewees elaborates this scenario clearly:

So, the quest for political office is increasing all of these tendencies [for electoral malpractices], and political office is now seen as the highest paying job in Nigeria. You don’t have to do anything, you just need to be corrupt and earn money. So, there is that corruption narrative; and there is that quest...So, you see someone who has never driven a car, or

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<sup>117</sup> Interviewees #1, 2, 4, and 7.

<sup>118</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>119</sup> Interviewee #2.

doesn't have a car, or a house, just put the person in House of Assembly, it takes him just the first Ghana Must Go [bag load of money]. So, why do you think the fellow would not want to kill to return back? Why do you think the person would not want to do anything, including rituals to return back?<sup>120</sup>

This factor has been mainly responsible for driving virtually all the variants of electoral malpractices identified in this study, such as vote buying, campaign on election-day, tampering with election results, electoral violence, voters' oppression and intimidation, and manipulations at the point of registration of voters and polling units creation. Other electoral malpractices being driven by this factor include the abrupt and controversial dismissal of key electoral appointees who have something to do with the democratic/electoral process, and the compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers, etc.

### ***Inability to Enforce the Laws and Punish Offenders***

Good laws do not necessarily translate into good electoral process when implementation is weak or clearly absent. Most of the interviewees allude to the fact that one major driver of electoral malpractices in Nigeria is not the fact that the relevant laws are not present or adequate, but the fact that most of the laws are hardly implemented.<sup>121</sup> The fact that the electoral laws have not been able to serve as deterrence to future electoral offenders is something encouraging electoral malpractices. Interviewee #2<sup>122</sup> argues, and rightly so, "The weakness of the law to punish offenders allow for this thing [electoral malpractices] to persist. If you have been caught as having engaged in malpractices, and at the end of the day you are left off the hook by the judiciary, I will do it next time too. But if we know the law will catch you, and it will punish you, there will be some level of deterrence." Despite the glaring evidences of electoral malpractices being traded on social media, and claims that perpetrators have been handed over to the Police, electoral malpractices still persist with impunity because of the inability of the law to punish offenders.<sup>123</sup> Interviewee #7<sup>124</sup> provides the example of a female politician who was burnt alive in her house in Kogi State during the 2019 general elections. Three years have passed, and nothing has been done. Another interviewee also thinks that the punishment the laws stipulate for electoral offenders are too soft to deter politicians from the act. According to her, "I don't think also that the law has been very useful in addressing electoral malpractices. Even if you read the electoral law, and you see the kinds of amount that is being put for someone

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<sup>120</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>121</sup> Interviewees #2, 4, 5, 7, and 9.

<sup>122</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>123</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>124</sup> Interviewee #7.

who violates some of the electoral laws, then you will be shocked, so these are things that politicians can pay without blinking.”<sup>125</sup> This factor has continue to drive most of the electoral malpractices identified in the study, such as vote buying, campaign on election-day, electoral violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation, tampering with election results, and compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

### ***The Winner Takes All Mentality of Politicians***

The self-centeredness, ego, and personal interest on the part of politicians is yet another factor responsible for persistent electoral malpractices in Nigeria.<sup>126</sup> This has made Nigerian politicians nurse the desperate character to get political power through any means possible. Interviewee #7<sup>127</sup> refers to this factor as the “winner takes all mentality” of politicians. Describing this factor further, interviewee #2<sup>128</sup> posits that “Nigerian politicians still do not accept elections as a contest, and [they] see it that the only way an election is fair is that they win. So, everything is put into it. So, that must win mindset is a reason why these politicians engage in malpractices.” Electoral malpractices such as vote buying, campaign on election-day, abrupt dismissal of electoral officers, tampering with election results, violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation, and compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers have been mostly fueled by this factor. The fact that political actors, such as politicians, are often after their own interests,<sup>129</sup> explains the prevalence of this factor of electoral malpractice in Nigeria.

### ***Weak Capacity of Political Parties***

The weak capacity of most political parties to coordinate their affairs, often leading to the lack of internal democracy among political parties, has been held responsible for electoral malpractices in Nigeria. Interviewees #2,<sup>130</sup> #5,<sup>131</sup> #6,<sup>132</sup> and #7<sup>133</sup> allude to this fact. Specifically, interviewee #7<sup>134</sup> casts aspersions on the existence of political parties in Nigeria, when he queries: “Do we have political parties, and if we have political parties, are they fulfilling the objectives of political parties in a democratic system? These are gateways to elective positions. You see how politicians jump from one party

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<sup>125</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>126</sup> Interviewee #4.

<sup>127</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>128</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>129</sup> Ejik, *The Essence of Politics*.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>132</sup> Interviewee #6.

<sup>133</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

to another.” Party switching is rampant especially among ruling parties and strong opposition parties, owing to the general lack of ideological leanings by political parties. While parties can control who gains membership, and their nomination procedure, they are nonetheless determined to increase their membership base, hence, they admit just everyone and anyone. The prevalence of lack of internal party democracy is demonstrated when a godfather wants at all cost for his candidate to emerge, so he can go to any length, buy people, manipulate the elections, and hijack people, etc.<sup>135</sup> Interviewee #5<sup>136</sup> believes that the weak capacity of parties and lack of party internal democracy is such a potent driver of electoral malpractices to the extent that if it is nipped in the bud, it will probably solve about 70 percent of electoral malpractices in the country. Buttressing this, interviewee #1<sup>137</sup> posits, “The greatest problem for electoral integrity is the role of political parties...they are the weakest link to electoral integrity [in Nigeria]. The politicians control everything—they make laws for the umpire to use. You want integrity, those guys [politicians] don’t want it—they give you the law that will unable you.” Harrison Idowu<sup>138</sup> also makes the claim that activities of political parties pose huge negative effects for democracy in Nigeria. This factor often drives electoral malpractices such as vote buying, campaign on election-day, tampering with election results, violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation, manipulation at the point of voters’ registration, and compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

### ***Lack of Consequence or Punishment for Bad Governance***

When politicians know that the people will not punish them in the next election for their lack of performance and bad governance, chances are they will carry on electoral malpractices with impunity. This is exactly the case with Nigeria. Interviewee #2<sup>139</sup> makes the point quite succinctly as follows:

The low quality of governance, and lack of consequences by the public to punish bad governance allow malpractice to persist. If you put a government in place, and the government is obviously doing badly, what makes sense is that the next time the party is thrown out. But what happens, a party that obviously did not perform, election comes, it pumps out money, and it gets away with it, and the same people will be complaining. Very recently, at a political campaign during the

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<sup>135</sup> Interviewees #5, 6 and 10.

<sup>136</sup> Interviewee #5.

<sup>137</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>138</sup> Harrison Idowu, *Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation: The Nigerian Experience* (Paper Presented at the First Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), South-West Zone, Nigeria, March 8-9, 2017).

<sup>139</sup> Interviewee #2.

Anambra election, a political party said ‘we know what they [the people] know is money, and we will take the money to them.’

This factor continues to drive vote buying, tampering with election results, electoral violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation, manipulation at the point of voters’ registration and polling unit’s creation, and the compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

### ***Lack of Patriotism and Spirit of Nationalism***

The feeling of patriotism—love for one’s country, and nationalism—the feeling of one nationality, are quite obviously lacking among Nigerian politicians and electorate, and this accounts for their ability to carry out all sorts of obnoxious acts and de-service towards the country during the election.<sup>140</sup> According to interviewee #3,<sup>141</sup> “Politicians are very greedy and selfish and they lack nationalism, they are not patriotic. You can’t put them on the class of the First Republic politicians—these ones are just like a group of bandits—political bandits. All they want is set the community on fire, and then pick the money out there.” Also, with respect to nationalism, interviewee #6<sup>142</sup> argues that “Deep seated tribal allegiances, and deep-seated religious biases. For a nation to survive, it must kill tribe. These are not necessarily corrupt tendencies, but they are ingrained un-progressive attitudes in us.” According to him,<sup>143</sup> these tendencies also make it difficult for Nigerian political parties to field the most competent candidates for elective positions, but find all means possible to get incompetent candidates into offices, often due to tribal, religious, and ethnic sentiments. Vote buying, campaign on election-day, electoral violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation, and manipulations at the point of voters’ registration and polling units’ creation are some of the electoral malpractices often driven by this factor. Others include abrupt and controversial dismissal of key electoral appointees and the compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

### ***The Cost of Contesting Elections***

The high cost of contesting electoral positions in Nigeria constitutes a factor of why politicians would want to win the electoral contest by all means possible so as to get the value for the money expended on the electoral contest. Interviewee #3<sup>144</sup> argues that “The cost of elections is also shameful...there are countries you see up till tomorrow in Africa, if they are campaigning, they

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<sup>140</sup> Interviewees #3 and 6.

<sup>141</sup> Interviewee #3.

<sup>142</sup> Interviewee #6.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Interviewee #3.

don't use posters, some carry slate, they write with chalk. That is the cheapest election. In our own case [Nigeria], we print in billions, so when the person has finished printing all these things, and loses the elections, the person is not going to be well. They feel very pained that's why they want to win by all means." This factor has often driven electoral violence and voters' oppression and intimidation, campaign on election-day, tampering with election results, manipulations at the point of voters' registration and polling units' creation, and abrupt and controversial dismissal of key electoral appointees.

### ***Inadequate Citizens' Awareness***

Where there are electoral laws describing what constitute electoral malpractices and offenses, and the consequent penalties, how much do the citizens know about these laws? In Nigeria, it appears most citizens do not even know the totality of what constitutes electoral malpractices, let alone the penalty for indulging in the act.<sup>145</sup> Interviewee #5<sup>146</sup> throws more light on this as follows:

There is lack of awareness. One of the things that we [TMG, & National Association for Peaceful Elections in Nigeria] realized is that people are not aware of some of these offenses, and the thing about normalizing the abnormality is that when you see people do things and they go scout free, then you realize that maybe there is nothing wrong in doing such...if you ask a typical Nigerian, what do you think that amount to electoral malpractice? They may not even be in the know of understanding what exactly it is, so these things are in the law, but people are also not aware.

This factor has mostly driven vote buying, campaign on election-day, electoral violence and voters' oppression and intimidation, and manipulations at the point of voters' registration.

### **A Forecast into the Democratic/Electoral Process for the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria**

Having explored the schema and magnitude of electoral malpractices which have been prevalent in the democratic/electoral process in Nigeria, and most of the factors which have accounted for them over the years, this paper now provides a prospective insight into the 2023 general elections. This is important in the face of a number of Electoral Bills and amendments going into the Electoral Act, as the country prepares for the elections. It is also relevant

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<sup>145</sup> Interviewees #5 and 10.

<sup>146</sup> Interviewee #5.



to guide the preparations of relevant stakeholders towards the elections. What then is to be expected in the electoral process and in the aspect of electoral malpractices in the 2023 general elections?

Ahead of the 2023 general elections, coming up on February 25 and March 11, 2023, the Electoral Act 2022 was assented by the president on the February 22, 2022. Among other new provisions, Sections 47 and 50 (2) of the Electoral Act 2022 make room for the electronic transmission of election results from the polling unit to a public server with public access. This is believed to have the potential to significantly improve electoral credibility and eliminate the tampering with election results.

Interviewees shared their views on what to expect in 2023.

### ***It Will Be a Keenly Contested Poll***

The general perception is that the 2023 general elections will be one of the most keenly contested polls in Nigeria after the 2015 general elections. Interviewee #2<sup>147</sup> describes this level of keenness and the factors that will be accountable for it as thus:

The 2023 election will be very competitive for the single fact that in 2015, we had a change of power from one party to another. That party has now spent 8 years, and the president is also leaving, having completed 2nd term, so the election will be competitive. We are up for an election that will test the capacity of the commission, against an electoral environment in which the party that lost have also seen the cost of losing election, in terms of battling, and all the things they do. So, 8 years of being out of power must have meant so much for them, so there will be desperation on the part of that party to come back, just as the party that is in power wants to consolidate—we too should spend 16 years too. So, the election will be keen.

Deriving from the envisaged keen contest, there will be serious desperation and attempts to manipulate the process naturally because the character of Nigerian politicians has not basically changed and will not change going into that election.<sup>148</sup> Quite important to take seriously are the fears that the current incessant borrowings of the incumbent party and government is an attempt to stock pile funds in order to be able to fund and execute their rigging agenda in 2023.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>148</sup> Interviewees #2, 5, 8, 9, and 10.

<sup>149</sup> Interviewees #3 and 4.

### ***Electoral Malpractices will Continue with the Possibility of Novel Practices***

The general belief going into the 2023 elections is that electoral malpractices will most definitely continue in 2023, with new patterns and trends envisaged to emerge.<sup>150</sup> It is not expected that the desperate nature of Nigerian politicians will change before the 2023 polls, hence, they will attempt to manipulate the process. Interviewee #2<sup>151</sup> posits that if any one political party or candidate has an edge over the others remarkably, then Nigeria will be up for another high(er) level of electoral malpractices. An interviewee shed more light on the fact that Nigeria should not be taken aback to see new patterns and trends in electoral malpractices in 2023, because just as time is changing, so also will Nigerian electoral malpractices increase in sophistication. In his words, “There will be new tactics of election rigging in 2023, which is just normal, just like a normal life style...So, same way, it is moving, we should expect more sophisticated way of rigging in 2023. Time is changing, so also will the rigging pattern change. Don’t be surprised in 2023, another method of rigging will come, but for now, the ones we know, they are conventional.”<sup>152</sup> There is also the notion that indeed, while some political parties are gearing up for a real contest and are supporting all the new legislations being made to improve the process, others are already scheming ahead on how to carry out electoral malpractices.<sup>153</sup>

### ***The Electoral Laws Going into 2023 Will Help Improve the Process if Effectively Implemented***

There is no gainsaying the fact that a lot of amendments have being made to the electoral laws in order to improve the democratic/electoral process come 2023. These amendments, such as the electronic transmission of election results, if they are effectively implemented, will go a long way to make the difference in the 2023 general elections.<sup>154</sup> Speaking specifically on the electronic transmission of results, interviewee #1<sup>155</sup> argues that “When things are not done properly at the polling unit level, it gets transmitted, then it gets manipulated. That’s why electronic transmission will solve this.” While one of the biggest challenges in 2019 was the collation process, there is some optimism that there will be an improvement in the collation process in 2023 due to the electronic transmission of results going into the process.<sup>156</sup> As for interviewee #5,<sup>157</sup> if the laws recently introduced are not well implemented,

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<sup>150</sup> Interviewees #1, 2, 4, and 6.

<sup>151</sup> Interviewee #2.

<sup>152</sup> Interviewee #4.

<sup>153</sup> Interviewees #2 and 4.

<sup>154</sup> Interviewees #1, 3, 5, 6, and 7.

<sup>155</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>156</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>157</sup> Interviewee #5.

things will continue as usual in 2023. According to her, “A lot of issues are involved in the new proposals to the law—we have the electronic transmission, there is a bill also on the floor [of the National Assembly] of having Electoral Offenses Commission, etc. where people like EFCC whose work is to even make sure that before the election, maybe you see people stocking money in places, and where reported, you can go after them. So, there is a need for our law reforms generally that will speak to the issue of electoral malpractices. So, 2023 if some of these things are not done, it is just going to be election as usual, or even worse.”<sup>158</sup> While electronic transmission of election results has been approved, interviewee #3<sup>159</sup> is of the view that the process will be better improved if electronic voting is also allowed in 2023, and the transmission is done effectively. He queries why Nigerian politicians are not accepting electronic voting which can enhance electoral integrity. Interviewee #7<sup>160</sup> asserts that beyond the new electoral laws being introduced, the fact that Nigerians are getting more informed also means some positives for the 2023 elections. Corroborating the foregoing point, interviewee #6<sup>161</sup> submits that “More than the electoral amendments, it is possible for us to have an improved process. And then, attitude is changing, you notice that there is more awareness now, people are becoming active in the electoral process. These days before results are announced, it is already broadcast on social media; they are helping to check some of the negative tendencies. I am hoping that this one coming 2023 will be better.” The decision to allow a second term in office for the present INEC chairperson has been described as strategic, and an initiative that will allow for the reforms that have been started to be completed, thereby increasing the chances of an improved electoral process in 2023.<sup>162</sup> Interviewee #6,<sup>163</sup> however, warns that it is not enough to have electoral amendments going into 2023; Nigerians need to have a change of attitude, and the laws need effective implementation.

### ***Despite the New Electoral Laws, Politicians will Try Novel Tricks to Manipulate the Process***

Whereas there is so much optimism that the amendments to the electoral laws, especially the introduction of electronic transmission of election results, will enhance the integrity of the 2023 elections, there is also some pessimism about this. This is because it is believed that given the very greedy and desperate nature of Nigerian politicians, it will not be surprising to see them pulling new

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Interviewee #3.

<sup>160</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>161</sup> Interviewee #6.

<sup>162</sup> Interviewee #7.

<sup>163</sup> Interviewee #6.

stunts to beat the process in 2023. Interviewees #1,<sup>164</sup> #4,<sup>165</sup> #8,<sup>166</sup> and #10<sup>167</sup> share this view. Interviewee #1<sup>168</sup> avers, “Politicians always have a way of bending the rules without breaking them. We don’t know what they are up to now until 2023...That’s why people talk about hacking as a problem in 2023. Yes, we are seeing the possibility...if you are tech savvy, you can do some programming with those INEC devices. If five people vote for party A, and party B has 3, the programming will have the capacity to re-write it.” This is an indication that politicians are likely going to find new means to beat the new electoral laws. Another interviewee portrays unequivocal pessimism over the prospects of the 2023 polls improving in spite of the new laws being introduced. According to her, “I am not really seeing what will be different [regardless of the new laws], we may not be able to have an election that is free and fair. So, I think if I put it on a percentage, I am a bit pessimistic whether anything would really change.”<sup>169</sup>

### Summary of Findings

The study reveals that electoral malpractices are very huge and rampant, to the extent that in most cases, what turns out as the people’s choice from the primaries to general elections, is not actually their choice. While electoral malpractices are very general in the electoral process in Nigeria, some are linked to INEC officials. This owes to the important role of INEC in overseeing the activities of political parties and its central role in election administration. Some of the forms, dimensions, and trends of electoral malpractices which have permeated the democratic/electoral process in Nigeria over the years include: vote buying; campaign on election-day; tampering with election results; electoral violence and voters’ oppression and intimidation; manipulations at the point of registration of voters and polling units’ creation; abrupt and controversial dismissal of key appointees who have something to do with the electoral process; and compromising INEC staff and other electoral officials, etc. While these electoral malpractices prevail in the Nigerian democratic and electoral space, there has been some tradeoffs over the years, with vote buying becoming easier for politicians than any other electoral malpractice; hence, vote buying has become more prominent over time, especially beginning from the 2015 general elections. Vote buying is closely followed by compromise of INEC staff and other electoral officers.

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<sup>164</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>165</sup> Interviewee #4.

<sup>166</sup> Interviewee #8.

<sup>167</sup> Interviewee #10.

<sup>168</sup> Interviewee #1.

<sup>169</sup> Interviewee #5.

The study also finds some of the commonest factors which have been responsible for electoral malpractices in Nigeria. They include: poverty; the high premium placed on political offices; inability of the laws to punish offenders; the winner takes all mentality of politicians; weak capacity of political parties; lack of consequence or punishment for bad governance; lack of patriotism and spirit of nationalism; and inadequate citizens' awareness.

It is important to have foresight into the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, in the face of a number of new electoral laws and amendments going into the Electoral Act, as the country prepares for the elections. It is also appropriate to guide the preparations of relevant stakeholders towards the elections. The 2023 general election will be one of the most keenly contested polls in Nigeria, like the 2015 general elections. It carries an opportunity for a change of the party in government. The incumbent president will not be a candidate having spent eight years of two terms. Deriving from the envisaged keen contest, there will be serious desperation and attempts to manipulate the process. Quite important to take seriously are the possibilities that the current incessant borrowings of the incumbent party and government may be an attempt to stockpile funds in order to be able to fund and execute rigging agenda in 2023.

Also, there is no doubt that electoral malpractices will most definitely continue in 2023, with new patterns and trends envisaged to emerge. It is not expected that the desperate nature of Nigerian politicians will change before the 2023 polls; hence, they will attempt to manipulate the process. New patterns of electoral malpractices are envisaged to emerge in 2023, as politicians try to beat new systems put in place by the INEC and electoral laws. Whereas some political parties are gearing up for a real contest and are supporting all the new legislations being made to improve the process, others are already scheming ahead on how to carry out electoral malpractices. Whereas there is so much optimism that the new amendments to the electoral laws, especially the introduction of electronic transmission of election results, will enhance the integrity of the 2023 elections, there is also some pessimism about this, because given the very greedy and desperate nature of Nigerian politicians, it would not be surprising to see them pulling new stunts to beat the process in 2023. For instance, hacking of the electronic results transmission portal/system is most likely. This is an indication that politicians are likely going to find new means to beat the new electoral laws. While electronic transmission of election results is guaranteed in 2023, it is not certain if INEC will be deploying electronic voting machines for e-voting.

The decision to extend the tenure of the current head of the INEC is also a welcome development going into the 2023 general elections. This will allow for the commission to continue and consolidate all the reforms it has started ahead of the elections. There is no gainsaying the fact that a lot of amendments have been made on electoral laws in order to improve the process, come 2023. These amendments, such as the electronic transmission of election results and the possibility of the creation of an Electoral Offences Commission, etc.,

if effectively implemented, will go a long way to make the difference in the 2023 general elections. While one of the biggest challenges in 2019 was the collation process, there is some optimism that there will be an improvement in the collation process in 2023 due to the proposed introduction of electronic transmission of results. However, if the laws are not well implemented, things will continue as usual, or even get worse in 2023. If the electronic transmission of election results is done effectively, the integrity of the election will improve. It is, therefore, important to note that it is not enough to have electoral amendments going into 2023, Nigerians need to have a change of attitude, and the laws need effective implementation. Nevertheless, the fact that Nigerians are getting more informed and getting more involved in the electoral process also means some positives for the 2023 elections.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations ahead of the 2023 General Elections**

The democratic and electoral process in Nigeria has been fraught with enormous challenges, including electoral malpractices since the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. This study has examined the schema of electoral malpractices in Nigeria and the factors driving the practice, and has made a forecast for the 2023 general elections in the midst of the prevailing electoral environment in the country. The study has found that electoral malpractice is huge in Nigeria, as it permeates all aspects of the electoral process. It has taken diverse trends and patterns over the years, ranging from the use of violence and thuggery, vote buying, padded voter registration, polling units purchase, arbitrary and controversial dismissal of critical electoral appointees, and altering of election results, among others. This schema of electoral malpractices in Nigeria varies significantly, depending on the region or state of the country where such malpractices are being carried out. Factors such as poverty, lack of patriotism and the spirit of nationalism, greedy nature of Nigerian politicians, weak capacity of Nigerian political parties, winner takes all mentality, and inadequate awareness on the part of citizens, etc., have been identified as the major drivers of electoral malpractices in Nigeria.

With foresight into the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, it has been observed that it is going to be one of the most keenly contested elections in Nigeria; the new laws presently governing the election are largely envisaged to enhance electoral integrity in 2023, albeit, not without some pessimism especially in the event that the laws are not effectively implemented. There will be new tactics and methods (hacking is most likely) to attempt to beat the improved system by politicians. Nevertheless, the fact that citizens are becoming more enthusiastic about the electoral process and are getting more informed and involved in the electoral/democratic process in the country, is a positive omen for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. For an improvement in the electoral process in 2023, electronic voting should be introduced, while

all hands must be on deck to ensure that the envisaged new patterns of electoral malpractices are nipped in the bud.

Arising from the findings made in the research, the following are recommended ahead of the 2023 general elections:

- There is the need for INEC and other electoral stakeholders, including the executive, to implement the new electoral laws effectively;
- In order to outsmart any envisaged hacking plans (one of the most likely novel electoral malpractices in 2023), there is the need for INEC to develop a paper trail which it can track, such that when a voter votes, there should be a printout that they will see stating that they voted for a particular party/candidate, so that there is no over-riding;
- Beyond electronic transmission of results, the legislature should approve the use of electronic voting, which will address vote buying and selling;
- There is the need for political parties to undergo reforms to ensure that political parties truly are political parties;
- Citizens have to own the process; citizens have to participate in the process; citizens have to ask those tough and hard questions; and the “office of the citizen” must be occupied;
- All hands (INEC, civil society organizations, national orientation agency, the Police, political parties, etc.) must be on deck for better citizens’ awareness and voter education;
- The Police should provide a feedback system on what happens to people who violate electoral rules, or who participated in one form of electoral malpractice or the other in order to serve as deterrent to others;
- The legislature should pass the bill currently before it, seeking for the creation of an Electoral Offences Commission that will operate a mobile court that would address electoral malpractices on the day of election; and
- Nigerian leaders must begin to know the true essence of leadership and have an attitudinal change.

### **List of Interviewees**

Interviewee #1—An official of Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Nigeria, interview by author, October 28, 2021.

Interviewee #2—Staff, Election and Party Monitoring Department, INEC, Nigeria, interview by author, October 26, 2021.

Interviewee #3—A Professor of Electoral Studies, University of Abuja, interview by author, October 26, 2021.

Interviewee #4—An official of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria, interview by author, November 25, 2021.

Interviewee #5—An official of Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Nigeria, interview by author, October 29, 2021.

Interviewee #6—A member of House Committee on Electoral Matters, Nigeria, interview by author, November 30, 2021.

Interviewee #7—An official of National Democratic Institute (NDI), Nigeria, interview by author, October 28, 2021.

Interviewee #8—Staff, Election and Party Monitoring Department, INEC, Nigeria, interview by author, November 26, 2021.

Interviewee #9—An official of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Nigeria, interview by author, November 29, 2021.

Interviewee #10—An official of the Nigeria Police, interview by author, November 26, 2021.

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