

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

*A Researcher's Account of the 2015 General Elections*¹

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ABSTRACT

Using empirical field accounts of the 2015 general elections in the Ibadan South-East local government area, this article investigates the problems and prospects of election administration in Nigeria. It argues that while the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria's electoral management body, made elaborate preparations for the conduct of the general elections across the country, the conduct of the elections in Ibadan South-East local government area was characterised by logistics, manpower and security challenges. The combination of the character of the electorates and that of the electoral officials, as well as the attitude of the dominant political parties at grassroots level, shaped the outcomes of these elections.

Keywords: election administration, political parties, Independent National Electoral Commission, electoral malpractices, election outcomes, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Election administration, construed as the management of 'a parade of public affairs and events called the electoral process' (Agbaje 1999, p. 91), dates back to 1923 in Nigeria. This was when an election was conducted for the first time in the country for the purpose of electing members representing Lagos and Calabar in the colonial Central Legislative Council (Akanji 2014; Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004; Akinboye & Anifowose 1999). Since then election administration in Nigeria has expanded. Except for the elections on 12 June 1993, the traditional mark of election administration in Nigeria – particularly since independence in 1960 – has been their poor conduct, as they have been tainted by both malpractice and violence.

1 An earlier version of this article was presented at a national conference, *The 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Real issues*, organised by the Electoral Institute (of Nigeria), Abuja, Nigeria, 27 to 28 July 2015.

These have undermined the credibility of both the electoral process and the election results. It is in view of this and the broader context of studying dilemmas in Nigeria's electoral and democratic history that this study sets out to explain the dynamics and interplay of forces involved in the conduct of general elections in the country. The conduct of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo state in southwestern part of the country is used as a case study. The study focusses on INEC's preparation; the structure of the elections; the role and contribution of INEC permanent and ad hoc staff; and the involvement of political parties and civil society. The study has significance for future general elections in Nigeria, particularly the upcoming 2019 general elections, in that highlighting past errors may help to avoid these shortcomings in the future. Both Professor Mahmood Yakubu, INEC Head since 2015, and his predecessor during the 2015 general elections, Professor Attahiru Jega, have promised to conduct credible elections taking cognisance of past errors.

Specifically, Professor Mahmood Yakubu has demonstrated INEC's commitment to conduct credible elections in the country by promising to ensure inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in the 2019 general elections (Mwantok 2018) and by engaging critical local and international election stakeholders such as the European Union (INEC News 2018) on ways to achieve successful elections.

In order to properly address the focus of the study and achieve a balanced perspective the following questions were formulated:

- what was the nature of INEC's preparation for the 2015 general elections?
- what was the structure of the elections?
- how and in what ways did INEC's preparations and structure of activities affect the conduct and outcomes of the elections in Ibadan South-East LGA?
- to what extent did political elite manipulate the electoral process through financial inducements of INEC permanent and ad hoc staff?
- what challenges did voters face during the elections in the LGA, and how were they managed?
- what roles did security agents and political parties play?
- what factors contributed to the outcomes of the elections in the LGA?

One overarching question in the study was whether and to what extent the nature and outcome of these elections was a reflection and function of INEC's preparations.

Answers to the questions above provide insights into why elections in Nigeria have been problematic, and what can be done to address the problem. From the outset several hypotheses were formulated, as follows:

- that elections in Nigeria failed because successive governments failed to address their divisive issues;
- that proper and adequate preparations by INEC led to the success of the 2015 elections in Ibadan South-East LGA;
- that the inability of the political elite to appropriate and manipulate the electoral process contributed to the way the elections were conducted in the LGA, and the subsequent outcomes.

The following propositions were also set out to summarise this line of reasoning:

- that the recurrent lack of credibility in election results presupposes the failure of governance and the absence of political culture among both the political elite and the electorate;
- that the success of elections depends on the electorates' perception of the neutrality of the electoral body, and its level of preparedness for elections;
- that when electoral officials, both permanent and ad hoc, rebuff and reject all forms of inducement by political elites, the prospect of credible election outcomes is high;
- that even if the administration of an election is flawed, an acceptable outcome/result may be achieved where political parties cooperate to remedy the flaws.

Using this framework, the study investigates the conduct of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo state, southwestern Nigeria. The article is divided into five sections. The first focuses on the research methodology for the study, while the second is a short historical analysis of elections and electoral administration in Nigeria. The third section interrogates INEC preparation for the 2015 general elections, while the fourth and fifth sections respectively analyse the conduct of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA, focusing on the nature and dynamics of the elections, and the election outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The studying of election administration encompasses both primary and secondary research, that is archival/library, survey, and participatory research. Thus, various

types of documents and publications are used, together with the questionnaires, interviews and observation of non-verbal clues. Written materials provided the historical context of this study, together with an analysis of INEC documents, interactions with INEC officials and participant observation during the 2015 general elections. This collection of available information reveals which factors underlined and contributed to the conduct of the general elections, and how these were represented. Between 28 March and 11 April 11, my official position as INEC Registration Area/Ward Collation Officer (RA/Ward CO) provided the opportunity to gather information about the elections from INEC permanent and ad hoc staff members, security agents, party agents and voters. In my interactions with these categories of participants, close attention was given to both verbal and non-verbal information. The research covered the twelve electoral wards (constituencies) of Ibadan South-East LGA, with particular focus on Wards 3 and 6 where the researcher served as INEC RA/Ward CO during the 28 March and 11 April elections respectively. On returning from the field, library/archival data and field notes were analysed by means of content analysis.

HISTORICISING ELECTIONS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

Elections and election administration in Nigeria date back to 1923. These were facilitated by the inclusion of an elective principle in the 1922 Constitution, introduced into Nigeria's body politic by the colonial administration of Sir Hugh Clifford (Akanji 2014, p. 38; Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004, p. 4). Though no electoral body was formally established, elections were conducted in 1923 and every five years thereafter until 1938. These elections were for the purpose of electing four representatives onto the Central Legislative Council in Lagos, three of whom represented Lagos while one represented Calabar. The elections of 1923, 1928, 1933 and 1938 were however limited to those who fulfilled the constitutional provisions of one-year residency and gross annual income of £100 (Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004, p. 4; Akinboye & Anifowose 1999, p. 240). Despite its restrictive nature, the elective principle of the 1922 Constitution triggered political consciousness and encouraged the establishment of political parties by Nigerian nationalists. Some of the political parties included the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Herbert Macaulay, and the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), formerly Lagos Youth Movement, led by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya, JC Vaughan and HO Davies (Akanji 2013, p. 38; Ngou 1989, p. 90; Dare 1989, p. 110). Both the NNDP and NYM dominated elections in the country until the 1940s. While the NNDP dominated elections in 1923, 1928 and 1933, the NYM defeated the NNDP in 1938 and dominated the polity until the introduction of another constitution in 1946 (Keay & Thomas 1986, p. 202).

The 1922 Constitution was, however, defective, despite its elective principle. This was particularly because this constitution was effective only in the southern provinces of Nigeria, as the north was administered through proclamations of the colonial governor. Also, electoral representation under the constitution was limited to Lagos and Calabar, and the franchise was limited to men aged 21 or over (Akanji 2014; Osaghae 2002; Akinboye & Anifowose 1999; Keay & Thomas 1986). These defects undermined Nigeria's political and electoral development, as apart from excluding all women and many men from electoral participation, it hindered the growth and development of electoral and party politics in northern Nigeria. In view of these considerations, the 1922 Constitution was replaced in 1946 by the colonial government of Sir Arthur Richard.

The key features of the 1946 Constitution were the creation of a Central Legislative Council with powers covering the entire country; the division of the country into three regions, being the northern, eastern and western regions; the establishment of regional legislatures (Akanji 2014; Bamidele & Ikubaje 2004, p. 53; Keay & Thomas 1986, p. 178); and the retention of the elective principle, though with a reduction in the £100 franchise qualification from £100 to £50 (Akanji 2013, p. 40; ERC 2008, p. 82). However, like the 1922 Constitution, the 1946 Constitution did little to engender broad-based political and electoral participation, as women and un-propertied men in Lagos and Calabar, and women and men in other parts of the country were not entitled to vote in the elections that took place between 1946 and 1951. These shortcomings fuelled political agitation by nationalists for inclusive government, and led to the introduction in 1951 of another constitution to replace that of 1946.

The 1951 Constitution broadened the political space in Nigeria. It enlarged the Central Legislative Council, providing for the election of more Nigerians onto the council; it granted some measure of legislative power to the regional legislatures; it replaced the elective principle of the 1922 and 1946 constitutions with one that enfranchised all adult tax-paying males; and introduced an electoral college system (Akanji 2014; Keay & Thomas 1986). These encouraged local participation in governance and the formation of political parties across the country.

Political parties that emerged as a result of this constitution, and took advantage of the opportunities it created, included the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), both established in 1951; the Middle Belt Peoples' Party (MBPP) in 1953; and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in 1954 (Akanji 2013, p. 41; Ngou 1989; Dare 1989). These political parties and others existing at the time, such as the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed in 1946, and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) established in 1950 (Akanji 2013, p. 41), changed the nature and character of elections and of electoral and political participation in Nigeria. This

was in view of the fact that elections in the country became fully multiparty and more competitive, though more crisis-prone than previously.

At the same time, the interface between ethnicity, sectionalism and politics in the country assumed a frightening dimension, as ethnic and sectional considerations became factors for victory at regional and general elections by political parties and in addressing national issues. This posed a very serious challenge to the unity and stability of Nigeria, as, for example, it underlined violent riots in Kano, northern Nigeria, protesting against the visit of southern political leaders to the region in May 1953 (Akanji 2014; Albert 1998; Ngou 1989). The riot was a direct reaction to the ill-treatment and humiliation of northern parliamentarians by angry southerners in the House of Representatives in Lagos and on the streets of Lagos, who jeered at and verbally insulted them over their opposition to the demand by southern political leaders in the House that Britain should disengage from Nigeria in 1956 (for full detail see Akanji 2014; Albert 1998).

Furthermore, Nigeria's political and electoral landscape was altered when the colonial administration of Oliver Lyttleton introduced a constitution in 1954 to remedy the defects in the 1951 Constitution. The 1954 Constitution reintroduced the principle of direct election and further decentralised the electoral process. This was in view of the fact that the Constitution granted relative electoral autonomy to the regions, allowing them to formulate electoral rules and regulations and conduct elections in regional political offices. This gave rise to a situation whereby different electoral systems and regulations were adopted and used by the regions in the conduct of elections, both regional and federal. For example, while the Western Region adopted and used the single-member constituency system, the Eastern Region used the multi-member constituency system for elections (ERC 2008, p. 83).

While the Western and Eastern regions articulated electoral frameworks that accommodated the electoral and political rights of women, the Northern region's electoral framework ignored the franchise for women (Akanji 2013). This multiple approach to elections promoted ethnic politics, as it gave the dominant political party in each region the opportunity to manipulate elections and political appointments. The practice of multiple approaches to elections was revised at the 1957 and 1958 constitutional conferences when a uniform electoral approach and a single election management body for federal elections was proposed and adopted.

Consequently, the 1959 federal elections were conducted on the basis of the electoral framework articulated at the 1957/58 constitutional conferences. Part of the electoral guidelines for the 1959 federal election, for example, stated that 'every person shall be entitled to register as an elector and if so registered to vote at an election who on the qualifying date is ordinarily resident in Nigeria and... in Northern region a male' (cited in Oyekanmi 1999, p. 86). Also, the 1959 federal

elections were conducted by a single election management body, the Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ERC 2008, pp. 84, 94). Since then, the management and conduct of elections in federal and state executive and legislative offices have been the responsibility of the national electoral body, which assumed different names at different times², while each state manages and conducts elections for local government councils. According to the 1999 Constitution [amended] the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has the responsibility to organise, undertake and supervise all elections for federal and state offices, while state electoral commissions are expected to conduct elections for local government councils (FRN 2011, Third Schedule Part IF & Part IIB). This explains why INEC conducted the presidential and National Assembly elections and the governorship and House of Assembly elections across the country on 28 March and 11 April 2015 respectively.

INEC AND THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS: GENERAL ARRANGEMENT AND STRUCTURE

INEC is constitutionally empowered to conduct elections into federal and state executive and legislative offices in Nigeria. The offices are those of president/vice president; governor/deputy governor; National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives); state houses of assembly; chairmen/vice-chairmen of area councils in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja; and councillors of local area councils in FCT (INEC 2015, p. 8). In line with this and the constitutional requirement that in no less than one hundred and fifty (150) days and no later than thirty (30) days prior to the expiration of the terms of the substantive elected federal and state political office holders, INEC made arrangements for the conduct of the general elections in 2015. This was to fill the vacant positions of president, vice president, members of the National Assembly (i.e. senators and members of the House of Representatives), state governors and deputy governors and state houses of assembly, whose tenure expired on 29 May 2015. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria were the fifth to be conducted by INEC in the country's Fourth Republic. As part of the preparations, INEC developed a timetable and schedule of activities for the conduct of these elections. Unlike the past where elections were staggered, with the presidential election often being conducted last, the timetable for the 2015 general elections showed that the presidential and National Assembly elections were paired. Both were to be held on 14 February, while the governorship and state houses of assembly elections followed on 28 February 2015.

2 Some of the names are Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) (1964-1966); Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) (1979-1983); National Electoral Commission (NEC) (1987-1993); National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) (1994-1998); and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (1998-date).

However, insurgency by the Boko Haram sect in the north-eastern part of the country necessitated a last-minute change in the election timetable. Though the insurgency was of major concern to all, the change in the election timetable was also related to the statement made at Chatham House in London on 22 January by Colonel Sambo Dasuki (rtd), the National Security Adviser (NSA) to President Goodluck Jonathan. This statement alleged that INEC was ill-prepared for the elections because of the poor distribution of the Permanent Voters Cards (PVC), and advised the INEC chairman to postpone the elections (*Punch*, 2015; *Premium Times*, 2015; *Vanguard*, 2015). INEC consequently postponed the elections by six weeks (Suleiman 2015). This meant that the presidential and National Assembly elections were rescheduled for 28 March, and the governorship and state houses of assembly elections for 11 April 2015. INEC also introduced the use of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs), containing the biometric details and embossed passport photograph of voters, and Smart Card Readers to verify the authenticity of PVCs presented by voters. The introduction of both these items by INEC was aimed at preventing multiple voting and checking multiple voter registration as only one card was issued to each registered voter, a move intended to ensure electoral integrity.

Another notable arrangement for the elections was the adoption of the Remodified Open-Secret Ballot System (REMOBS). In this system, voters were to indicate the candidates of their choice in secret using a thumb or fingerprint on the ballot, and cast their votes in open (INEC 2015, p. 8). Similarly, INEC delineated the country into 119 973 polling units (PUs), with Lagos having the highest number, followed by Kano, Katsina and Oyo States in the second, third and fourth places respectively (*The Nation* 2015). Each polling unit was expected to be manned by a presiding officer (PO) and three assistant presiding officers (APOs) (INEC 2015, p. 9). In large polling units (those with over 750 registered voters), voting points (VPs) were created. Each voting point was to be manned by four APOs under the supervision of the assistant presiding officer in charge of the voting point (APO (VP)) (INEC 2015, p. 9). Voting during the general elections was scheduled to take place at polling units or voting points, with the PO having the responsibility to carry out accreditation of voters, and prepare and issue ballot papers to eligible voters (INEC 2015, p. 9). In the case of voting points, the POs were however allowed to delegate the responsibility to the APOs (VPs).

Furthermore, apart from the POs, APOs and APOs (VPs), INEC's structure and preparations for the general elections included the appointment of 9 000 supervisory presiding officers (SPOs), one per registration area; collation officers (COs) of different categories³; 774 electoral officers (EOs), one per local government

3 These included Registration Area/Ward Collation officers and LG Collation officers.

area (LGA), assisted by assistant electoral officers (AEOs); and 37 resident electoral commissioners (REC), one per state and one for the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (FCT) (INEC 2015, p. 15). While the SPOs supervised the activities of the POs in their registration areas, and the EO took charge of the management and conduct of general elections in the LGAs in each state, the RECs coordinated activities of the EOs and other electoral officials in the states and the FCT. In addition to the permanent staff that made up the ranks of RECs, EOs, and AEOs, INEC recruited ad hoc staff from members of the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) to serve as POs; different categories of tertiary institution graduates as APOs and SPOs; and academic and non-academic staff of universities and allied institutions as ward/LGA/state collation officers.

INEC permanent staff also scheduled and undertook training its ad hoc officials in how to conduct elections, the professional and ethical conduct of officials on election duties, the process of collation, computation and declaration of election results, and security and safety tips on election days. The security of both permanent and ad hoc election officials and of election materials was important to INEC as part of the general preparation. As a result, the Commission collaborated with government security agencies including the Nigeria Police Force, State Security Service (SSS), and the customs and immigration services. While the use of military personnel in the general elections was banned by the courts, they were nonetheless deployed to the headquarters of Ibadan South-East LGA of Oyo state to safeguard election materials. This deployment was however a violation of court orders and an act of impunity on the part of the Jonathan administration. In a ruling on 23 March 2015, Justice Ibrahim Buba of the Federal High Court, Lagos had declared as unconstitutional the use of the military for election purposes (Anaba, Usman & Asomba 2015).

In addition, INEC contracted members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) to transport election materials and personnel, including youth corps members and collation officers. Though some concerns were raised about privatising the transportation of election materials and personnel because of fears that NURTW members could be manipulated by politicians to compromise the integrity of the elections, this arrangement saved INEC a considerable amount of money that would have been used to purchase vehicles of little or no use after the elections.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the credibility of the elections, INEC allowed independent local/national and international election observer groups to monitor the elections. These included the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a national coalition of Nigerian civil society groups, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and European Union Election Observation Delegation.

THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN IBADAN SOUTH-EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Ibadan South-East is one of the 33 LGAs in Oyo State in the southwest of the country and was one of the LGAs where the 2015 general elections took place in Nigeria. As in other states, the LGAs in Oyo State were structured into three senatorial districts, with Ibadan South-East LGA in the Oyo South senatorial district. The Ibadan South-East LGA is one of the LGAs that constitutes the city of Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state, and covers a large part of the interior, the core ancient areas of Ibadan. The LGA, headquartered at Mapo, covers such interior parts of Ibadan as Oranyan, part of Molete, Kobomoje, Elekuro, Eleta, Aperin Oniyere, Agbongbon, Odinjo, and Idi Aro. The 2006 national population census put the population of the LGA at 266 457 (National Bureau of Statistics 2011, p. 59). Political leadership at the LGA was appointive, headed at the time by a caretaker chairman appointed by the state government. This was because local government elections in the state had not been conducted.

Preparations

Along with other LGAs in Oyo State, preparations for the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA were coordinated by the office of the INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the state. These preparations included the recruitment, training and deployment of ad hoc electoral personnel alongside permanent INEC staff on how to conduct the elections. Ad hoc officials were educated on the nature of the elections, the use of election kits, how to collate and compute results, how to set up polling units, and on safety and security during the elections.

Corps members, members of the NYSC and graduates of tertiary institutions who applied for recruitment were trained in the jobs of POs, APOs and SPOs. University lecturers and non-academic staff of universities and allied institutions who indicated their interest to serve as ad hoc election officers were trained on how to collate election results in order to serve as ward/registration area (RA)/LGA/state collation officers. During the training of the ad hoc staff, particularly the collation officers, the four INEC officials showed the participants the various types of materials available for the elections such as Forms EC8A, EC8A (I), and EC8A (II) for presidential, senatorial and House of Representative elections. The training of the ad hoc election officials was for two days in the first instance, and one day in the second instance, at designated centres for those who applied as collation officers (COs), but two days only for POs and APOs.⁴ Thus, applicants

4 While the researcher was involved in the training for collation officers, information about the training of POs and APOs was sourced from participants at the training at Baptist High School Ogbomosho.

for PO and APO positions were trained for the two batches of the elections at once, at the Baptist High School Ogbomosho.⁵ Training of applicants for COs was, however, in two phases.

The first training of COs was for the presidential and National Assembly elections and was held on 23 and 24 March 2015 at the Faculty of Arts Large Lecture Theatre of the University of Ibadan. A retraining session was organised for the governorship and state houses of assembly elections on 8 April 2015 at the same venue. Apart from refreshing the memories of those who had served as COs during the presidential and National Assembly elections, this retraining session was an avenue for the recruitment of new COs to replace those who had withdrawn after the first batch of elections, or those found to be inefficient during the election. The researcher observed that more people showed up for the retraining session than for the presidential and National Assembly elections training sessions. This was for two reasons: both the relatively peaceful nature of the presidential and National Assembly elections and the remuneration package of the COs who participated in the elections.

One of the major considerations before the presidential and National Assembly elections was that of security and violence during the elections. Given the history of elections in the country, many had anticipated that the elections would be chaotic and violence-ridden. However, this was not the case, at least in Ibadan South-East LGA in particular and Oyo State in general. Similarly, the uncertainty as to the actual remuneration package for COs before the presidential and National Assembly elections discouraged some of those who could have participated in the training sessions. The critical issue of remuneration was evident during the training sessions for the presidential and National Assembly elections, as participants insisted on getting information from INEC permanent officials about the remuneration package for each unit of the CO.

However, information about the remuneration of COs which showed that each was entitled to the sum of 77 000 naira per electoral exercise, was not released until 27 March, a day before the start of the elections. Consequently, it was only those ready to brave the odds who accepted the offer of CO positions after the training for the presidential and National Assembly elections. This was not the case at the commencement of the training session for the governorship and House of Assembly elections, as that remuneration package was known to the public. Consequently, the researcher observed in the course of interactions with participants that this attracted people to the training session for the governorship and House of Assembly elections.

Furthermore, as a prerequisite for appointment as a CO, participants in the training sessions for would-be ad hoc officials in Oyo State completed and signed

5 Information was supplied by two participants at the training.

the Oath/Affirmation of Neutrality for Election Personnel form. This implied swearing to and affirming neutrality during the elections. The last part of the preparations for the general elections in the state was the distribution and posting of those selected for election duties among the participants at the screening and training sessions, some of whom were designated RA/Ward COs, and LGA COs.

The release of the postings of those selected as ad hoc elections officials after the screening and training for the presidential and National Assembly elections showed that Ibadan South-East LGA had 12 registration areas (RA)/wards. As a result, 12 RA/Ward COs and one LGA CO were posted to the local government for the presidential and National Assembly elections. The same number of RA/Ward COs, but with an additional two LGA COs, were posted to the local government after the training session for the governorship and House of Assembly elections. By INEC design, each RA/Ward comprised a number of polling units, with some having voting points. Wards 3 and 6 in the LGA, for example, comprised 8 and 28 polling units respectively. Furthermore, each RA/Ward had three identifiers: a name/number for the ward, a code, and a collation centre. The name/number, code and collation centre of Ward 3 in Ibadan South-East LGA, where the researcher served as RA/Ward CO during the presidential and National Assembly elections, were S2A, 003, and Oranyan Maternity Centre respectively. The identifiers for Ward 6, where the researcher was the RA/Ward CO during the governorship and House of Assembly elections, were S4A, 006, and Public Day School Elekuro. The identifiers, which appeared on the sensitive election materials for the RA/Wards were, as the researcher gathered during the training sessions, unique to each RA/Ward, and part of INEC strategy to ensure the credibility of the elections by preventing electoral malpractice.

The list of ad hoc staff postings was, however, unduly delayed. The list of CO postings, for example, was not released until the afternoon of the day before each election. In the case of the presidential and National Assembly elections, this list was released at 1.45 pm on 27 March, and in the case of governorship and House of Assembly elections, at noon on 10 April. This affected the COs, especially those posted to locations outside the Ibadan metropolis. As observed by the researcher, such COs had little time to travel to their duty stations before nightfall and settle down properly for the elections. Even for those COs, including the researcher, posted to locations within the Ibadan metropolis, the late release of the list caused some discomfort. This was because it was only after the release of the list that many of the COs, some of whom were not indigenes of Ibadan nor long-term residents of the city, could locate the headquarters of their local government of assignment and the EO in charge. This discomfort was compounded by the unusually chaotic transport situation in the city caused by the vehicle restriction order that federal government had imposed on the days of the elections, resulting in last-minute

shopping for essential household needs. Also, as a result of the late release of the list of selected ad hoc staff for the presidential and National Assembly elections, the INEC office at Ibadan South-East LGA was unduly crowded with people seeking to ascertain if they had been selected as ad hoc staff for the elections, and where they had been posted to serve.

CONDUCT AND OUTCOMES OF THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The two components of the 2015 general elections took place at Ibadan South-East LGA on 28 March and 11 April 2015 in line with INEC arrangement and schedule of activities. However, the conduct of the presidential and National Assembly elections in the LGA was to some extent different from that of the governorship and House of Assembly elections. The difference was that the presidential and National Assembly elections were characterised by serious logistical and manpower problems, foremost of which was the slow start in some of the polling units/voting points in the LGA. This was in view of the fact that though ad hoc officials on election duties as SPOs, POs, APOs, and APOs (VP) left the LGA headquarters at Mapo as early as 7.00 am to set up polling units and voting points in preparation for accreditation, there was a shortage of election materials at some of the units. As a result, the researcher observed that accreditation either did not start or had been stopped in some polling units/voting points at the same time it was ending in others. The severity of the problem was evidenced by several frantic telephone calls to the EO at the LGA headquarters by officials at polling units about the malfunctioning of the card readers and the absence of election materials such as result sheets. This prompted the EO to leave the LGA headquarters in order to personally inspect the situation at the affected polling units.

The steps taken by the EO proved successful as the short supply of materials was remedied, leading to the accreditation of voters and voting in the affected polling units/voting points. However, this solution engendered another problem: the late start to collating results in the LGA. The researcher observed that, as a result of the absence of the EO from the LGA headquarters, all arrangements were left in abeyance, particularly those concerning logistics – the distribution of materials for the collation of results and transportation of collation officers (the RA/Ward CO) to collation centres. This situation continued until about 6.45 pm, long after voting had ended and when some POs and APOs had concluded their counting and were waiting for the RA/Ward COs at the collation centres. As night drew near there was still no sign of the EO and materials for collation of results had not been distributed, so this delay created serious confusion among the RA/Ward COs and the LGA CO. Besides, there was no permanent INEC official at the LGA headquarters who could offer any logical and reasonable explanation as to

why the COs were left unattended to when voting had been officially concluded in many polling units. This situation angered the COs, many of whom complained bitterly about the ineffectiveness of the EO for failing to delegate matters relating to distribution of collation materials to any of the AEOs.

As a result, and as the situation persisted, the RA/Ward COs decided among themselves that the collation of results would be better done at the LGA headquarters at Mapo, where they had been waiting for the EO, as opposed to the various INEC-designated collation centres. This decision was informed partly by the fact that the LGA headquarters were large, adequately protected by security officers (including military personnel) and well illuminated, with a power generator on standby. On the other hand, however, the decision was equally informed by concerns for personal safety and security at the INEC-designated collation centres since it was obvious that the collation of results would last until well into the night or the following morning.

The security concern expressed by the COs was due to the fact that the LGA was notorious for violent crimes and in particular criminal activities by youth. For example, a week after the 28 March election, a Division Police Officer (DPO) was murdered by some young people at the Adekile area of Orita Aperin in the LGA (*National Mirror* 2015). Moreover, while inspecting the polling units and designated collation centres around the LGA headquarters, some of the RA/Ward COs reported the absence of adequate security in the neighborhood. They had also encountered several hoodlums publicly smoking Indian hemp who threatened to injure or even kill anyone who opposed them. The security concerns expressed by the RA/Ward COs were corroborated by the police and security officials in the LGA headquarters, though none of them wanted to be quoted or dragged into the heated disagreements that later ensued between the EO and the RA/Ward COs over the matter.

Consequently, the late arrival of the EO at about 6.45 pm and the decision of the RA/Ward COs about collation generated heated arguments, with the EO insisting that collations should be done at designated centres. This further delayed both the distribution of materials for collating results and the transportation of officials to collation centres. It was the intervention of the LGA CO that solved the problem by brokering a truce between the EO and RA/Ward COs with the promise that no RA/Ward CO would be compelled to collate in a centre where his or her security and personal safety could not be guaranteed. After this the RA/Ward COs, alongside the LGA CO, left the LGA headquarters at about 8.30 pm in a convoy of two buses to take each RA/Ward CO to his or her collation centre. As agreed, the convoy started with the farthest centres and ended with those closest to the LGA headquarters. In the process, and before the researcher reached his collation centre at Ward 3 (Oranyan Maternity Centre, one of the centres close

to the LGA headquarters), a female RA/Ward CO was not allowed to disembark from the bus because of security concerns arising from the lack of electricity and perimeter fence, and also the threats of attack by hoodlums near her collation centre. Also, two RA/Ward COs were observed by the researcher collating results at the headquarters at about 2.00 am, indicating that at least three RA/Ward CO did not collate results at their own collation centres. This emphasised the issue of security previously raised by the RA/Ward CO.

Another major aspect of the March 28 elections was the attitude and approach of the youth corps members, who served as POs at polling units and voting points. Based on observation by the researcher at his collation centre and by interactions with other RA/Ward COs, many of the POs were ill-informed about how to tally votes and enter scores on the result sheets. As a result, there were many incorrect calculations and misrepresentations of numbers on the result sheets submitted to the RA/Ward CO for collation. This, as the researcher garnered from communication with permanent INEC staff, was because many of the youth corps members failed to pay close attention to details during the training sessions organised for them before the elections. The youth corps members were accused of being uninterested in the training sessions, focusing on their mobile phones and texting messages rather than taking notes and listening to their trainers.

Interactions with the youth corps members on duty as POs revealed that the main reason for their lacklustre attitude and poor performance at tallying and recording votes was the rigorous nature of the elections. In addition to both elections being run concurrently, the tally continued late into the night in some cases, causing stress, strains and fatigue. The POs further revealed that this distress was exacerbated by the failure of INEC to provide basic refreshments, particularly snacks and water. Despite these challenges, the presidential and National Assembly elections in the LGA were conducted successfully, as they were relatively peaceful and the results were duly declared as and when due and in line with established provisions.

The conduct of the governorship and House of Assembly elections on 11 April in the LGA was an improvement on that of the presidential and National Assembly elections on 28 March, as many of the challenges that characterised the latter were conspicuously absent. First and foremost, there were no serious shortages of election materials for the polling centres, and where such occurred they were properly managed. Also, materials for the collation of results were distributed on time, and the RA/Ward CO commenced the process of collation as early as 6.30 pm. This was the case in the researcher's collation centre, instead of 10.30 pm as during the March 28 elections.

Nevertheless, the conduct of both the March 28 and April 11 elections in the LGA was similar in many respects. Firstly, some of the non-sensitive materials

such as biros, calculators, rechargeable lamps, stamps and stamp pads, and official prescribed bags for carrying collated results were either unavailable or insufficient. For example, some RA/Ward COs were not given rechargeable lamps because there were not enough to go round; even those who did receive lamps, including the researcher, used their personal lamps or their telephones as lamps because the brand-new INEC rechargeable lamps had not been charged, and switched off as soon as collation started. Similar problems were encountered by RA/Ward COs with INEC calculators; when they were available and distributed, they stopped working as soon as it was dark, because they were solar-powered and there was no provision for battery back-up as an alternate source of power.

Consequently, RA/Ward COs, including the researcher, improvised with their mobile telephones and personal calculators for the collation exercise. Secondly, there was no improvement in the performance of the youth corps members who served as POs, as there were many errors in their calculations and vote tallying during the two elections. Thirdly, although some election observers, notably local/national observers, were seen at voting centres during the day, neither local nor international observers were present at the collation centres when the results took place. A reason for this, particularly for the March 28 presidential and National Assembly election, was that collation continued late into the night and there was inadequate security at the collation centres. Fourthly, there were also cases of altercations between the EO and RA/Ward CO during the April 11 elections, as in the March 28 elections, on whether to use the officially-designated collation centres or to improvise. Some of the RA/Ward COs, including the researcher, wanted to collate election results in either the LGA headquarters or the nearest secure collation centre because of fears that their lives were not safe in the officially designated collation centres. This was however rejected by the EO. Though attempts to improvise with collation centres were frustrated by the EO's objections and vehement opposition, events later justified the security concerns of the RA/Ward CO. For example, at Elekuro Public Day School, the official collation centre for Ward 6 where the researcher was the RA/Ward CO, news of imminent attacks by hoodlums led to an abrupt closure of the centre at around 11.30 pm while collation was still under way.

The decision to stop the collation process was taken after security agents attached to the centre had on three occasions informed the RA/Ward CO that they could not guarantee the security of people present at the centre if the collation continued deep into the night. This was despite the fact that the collation centre was a stone's throw from a police station, and despite the presence of a sizeable number of people, including political party agents, youth corps members who served as election officials, SPO, police and customs and immigration officers. The reason given by the security agents was that the collation centre, a dilapidated

public primary school with no perimeter fence or electricity and located in an area notorious for violent crime, was too porous to be effectively monitored and secured. This was obvious and the same reason why the RA/Ward CO had earlier decided to improvise. Though results from only three polling units had yet to come in, efforts to convince the armed plain-clothes security agents to allow the collation of results to continue was aborted by news that hoodlums had gathered at a building close to the collation centre and were on their way. During the ensuing stampede the generator supplying electricity to the collation centre was disconnected, throwing the centre and its neighbourhood into total darkness and creating more panic. In the midst of this chaotic situation, with everyone trying to board available vehicles in order to escape from the centre, gunshots were heard. Shortly thereafter, military personnel deployed to the area because of its notorious reputation for violence, together with a number of anti-riot police vehicles with blaring sirens, rushed to the centre to rescue election officials and election material. Consequently, the collation of results for Ward 6 was completed at the LGA headquarters in the presence of party agents and security agents. These challenges notwithstanding, the April 11 elections were successfully conducted in the LGA, as the exercise was relatively peaceful in other parts and the collated results duly declared.

RESULTS

The results of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA on 28 March and 11 April were due to a number of factors. One was the resilience of the voters in protecting their votes. In seven of the twelve collation centres in the LGA that the researcher visited during the two elections, voters were seen waiting after elections to ensure that their votes were properly counted and collated. At polling units, for example, voters milled around POs as votes were being counted. The researcher observed that as the POs read out the figures, the voters in the area repeated the result. Alongside this was the readiness of the dominant political parties in the LGA to ensure that correct process was followed by electoral officers and that the right environment was established for the elections. The dominant political parties in the LGA, by virtue of popularity among the electorate and the history of performance at elections, were the ACCORD party, All Progressive Congress (APC), Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP).

Apart from their presence at polling units/voting points and collation centres, and participation in the process of counting and collating results, agents of the dominant political parties in the LGA assisted in providing an environment conducive to a successful election. Reports from RA/Ward COs and personal observations at Wards 3 and 6 during the two elections at the LGA revealed that

while INEC failed to provide alternative sources of electricity at collation centres, party agents remedied the situation by providing generators and fuel. Also, communications with RA/Ward COs revealed that the agents of the dominant political parties in the LGA cooperated with election officials. The attitude of the political parties, as demonstrated by their agents and by the attitude of the voters, gave little if any room for electoral malpractices in the LGA, at least as far as manipulation of figures and results was concerned.

Similarly, security agents were present in seven of the twelve collation centres in the LGA that the researcher visited during the two elections. Polling units around the vicinity of or at collation centres also had security agents attached to them; however, these agents were disproportionately distributed. While there was heavy security presence at some collation centres during the March 28 elections, including Ward 3, it was less evident in others such as Ward 6 during the April 11 elections. At the LGA headquarters at Mapo, which served as the base of INEC in the LGA, security was extraordinarily heavy, with military, police, Department of State Security Service and customs and immigration personnel. This diminished the extent to which politicians and hoodlums or political thugs could foment trouble. The presence of police officers at polling units and collation centres and on the streets, and the deployment of soldiers to volatile communities in the LGA, particularly Adekile, contributed to the relatively peaceful conduct of both the March 28 and April 11 elections in the LGA. Also, the ability of INEC permanent staff to address some of the serious problems that plagued the March 28 elections contributed to the successful conduct of the April 11 elections in the LGA. This manifested in the timely distribution of election materials and transportation of election officials to their assigned locations during the April 11 elections, as opposed to the delay that characterised the earlier elections on 28 March.

Furthermore, the election outcomes at the LGA were connected to the level of sensitisation and mobilisation of ad hoc election personnel, and that the COs in particular need to be transparent and to shun financial inducements by politicians. During the pre-election training sessions, the COs were advised against accepting gratuities from politicians in either cash or kind. Similarly, during the course of the elections COs were inundated with telephone and text messages reminding them of the role bribery plays in damaging democratic processes, and the need to avoid being used by politicians, both of which would compromise the integrity of the elections. Two of these text messages read thus:

Half-A-Word: Take no bribe. Respect other workers and agents. Be vigilant. Record rightly. Be diligent. Be faithful to figures. Be neutral. Return with pride.

(Coordinator of INEC Collation Officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan,
1.10pm, 11April 2015)

Bribery is not a One-Way road. Reject being compromised. Avoid being joined in avoidable litigation. Security reports point at a number of LGs and COs. Beware.

(Coordinator of INEC Collation officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan,
7.51pm, 11 April 2015)

Besides, measures were taken when it was observed that politicians were making frantic efforts to lure COs with money during the April 11 elections. Some COs were recalled from their duty stations because they were suspected of having been bribed by politicians⁶; there were also threats to publicise the names of COs who had compromised the integrity of the elections. A telephone text message to all COs about this issue reads as follow:

Save your institution's name. Reject offers in cash and kind. Our job is to count, not to connive with Enemies of order. We will publish names of bribe takers.

(Coordinator of INEC Collation Officers, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 6.18pm,
11 April 2015)

Though the text messages were sent to all COs in the state, one-on-one interactions and communications with the majority of the RA/Ward COs at Ibadan South-East LGA headquarters on 11 and 12 April 2015 revealed that they were aware of and supported these measures. The RA/Ward COs in the LGA were also seen to be disgusted at the fact that politicians had attempted to bribe COs.

CONCLUSION

Election management is a notoriously difficult task, given the plethora of activities and events that are involved. The role of the electoral umpire and both its permanent and ad hoc officials is critical to the outcome of any election. As the case of the 2015 general elections in Ibadan South-East LGA has shown, where the electorates are politically mobilised about the importance of their votes, and political parties are committed to the elections, the failings or shortcomings of the electoral management body can be easily mitigated. The integrity of elections is also assured when and where electoral personnel are adequately motivated,

6 The researcher reliably gathered from four COs, three from Ibadan South-East LGA and one from Oluwa Oluwa LGA, that some COs suspected of having been compromised were recalled from Ogbomosho and its environs. One informant, who was close to the Coordinator of the coalition officers at the University of Ibadan, confirmed this information.

are both mobilised and sensitised against inducements by politicians, and where those who compromise or attempt to compromise them are punished.

The conduct of the 2019 general elections and future general elections in Nigeria should therefore take their cue from the 2015 elections. For instance, the use of technological devices such as smart card reader machines and biometric PVC should be continued but improved on so as to curb election fraud. In addition to the live television and radio broadcast of election results at state and national collation centres only during the 2015 general elections, INEC should in future general elections explore the possibility of live transmission (both on radio and television) as well as the online streaming of the collation and declaration of election results at both ward and LGA collation centres.

Similarly, the leadership of INEC should demonstrate commitment and determination to deliver credible elections; it should reject any form of interference, inducement and pressures by politicians and their acolytes, and should devise innovative strategies to correct past errors and other challenges confronting the country's electoral process. In this regard, INEC's announcement in December 2017 of the dates for the 2019 general elections is commendable, as it provides ample time for stakeholders to prepare for the elections.

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