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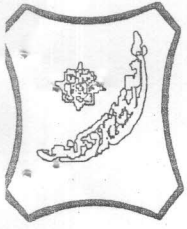
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An Analysis of Election and Its Purposes in a Political System: A Review

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Abstract

The imperativeness of election in a democracy is often determined by the purposes it serves. The extent to which it serves these purposes is a function of its political milieu. This review examines the purposes which election serves in a democracy and the objective is to carry out a prognosis of the purposes served by election in a democracy. Other objectives include: (i) an examination of what often serves as the inhibiting factors of the purposes served by election in a democracy; (ii) an examination of why the purposes fare better in some political systems than others; and (iii) an examination of the diverse forms such purposes serve in various democracies. The review is theoretical in nature but inferences were drawn from contemporary experiences of some nations across the globe. To that extent, the review adopts descriptive mode of analysis and its source of information was mainly secondary sources. The review arrives at a number of facts part of which include: (i) that most elections conducted by Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in developing nation often end up in skirmishes due to the fact that they fall –short of performing their functions unbiased; (ii) that the purposes served by elections in developed nations often fare better than developing nations because of the ‘high political culture’ of the latter; and (iii) that the purposes served by elections in various democracies often take diverse forms, perhaps, due to the selfish interest of the political elites of some countries or the socio-political values of some nations. The review ends up with a number of recommendations which include: (i) constitutional provisions and the electoral laws of a nation should be emphatic on how the purposes served by an election would materialize. The implementation of the purposes should be seen as a collaborative effort by all electoral stakeholders; (ii) Continuous Mass Mobilization Agency should sensitize the political actors of a country prior to and during election on the need to allow election to take its course; and (iii) in order for election or electoral processes to meet international standards, efforts should be made by a country’s Election Management Body (EMB) to enforce the purposes served by election, globally, before injecting local or domestic purposes into them.

Keywords: Elections, Purposes of Election, Political System, Electoral Management Bodies, Elites

Introduction

Democratic States differ from a totalitarian society (especially Military dictatorship) because of election which is the main political barometer for measuring the political temperature of any society. Absence of election in any democracy spanning over a period of time, put the political interest of people in jeopardy resulting in bandwagon effects: open confrontation with the power that be as witnessed in some Arab countries (For example, Libya, and Egypt between 2011 and 2012); unwarranted intervention in the domestic affairs of some States; economic loss due to the closure of some businesses by some foreign investors when the political atmosphere becomes uncondusive for them to transact their businesses; and diplomatic somersault caused by the

severance of diplomatic relations with some undemocratic States by some of their age-long friends. All these tell on the image of a State at the international level.

From the foregone, it can be argued that the cheapest way to maintain law and order in a State and continue to enjoy international immunity, is for it to be seen by comity of nations that it respects people's judgment manifested through accepted election by all sundry. This review analyzes the purposes served by election in a democracy. However, there are two sides of the coin to this issue. The purposes it serves in liberal democracy are different from totalitarian States. But the focus of this review is largely on the former which, by all intent and purposes, should be the primary concern of political actors in a State.

The review is theoretical in nature. However, constant references are made to contemporary experiences of some States across the globe to drive home the argument. The review is divided into a number of sections: introduction; conceptual clarifications; an analysis of the purposes served by election in a polity; recommendations; and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

Conceptualizing Election

Like any other political concept, election does not lend itself to a universal definition or explanation. Rather, it has been defined or explained from different perspectives by various scholars. But the diversity notwithstanding, the main thrust of the concept remains the same; it serves as the platform for deciding who will represent a large population or big society in the decision making process. This shows that the idea of election may not necessarily be tied to the knot of party-politics. Associations, Social Clubs, international organizations and even religious bodies may organize elections to elect their representatives to constituted bodies, for certain purposes. The foregoing reveals a nexus between election and representative system. Consequently, election can be explained as the process of selecting officers or representatives of organizations or groups by the votes of its qualified members.

The focus of this study is on election that has bearing with the idea of party-politics. That is, the practice in which parties field candidates for elective positions in a polity. Such candidates will contest elections in their various constituencies and if any of them wins, he automatically becomes the representative of his Constituency. In line with this argument, Harris (1979:327) explains election as "an event which permits political parties to offer their programmes and candidates to those voters qualified to participate in election." The problem associated with Harris' (1979) definition is that it only linked election to party-politics. But perhaps what informed the quarantine nature of his definition was that his view of election was in tandem with the interest of this review of linking election to the idea of party-politics.

Roberts and Edwards' (1991) view election in general. The authors did not associate election with party-politics. They defined election as:

A method for the selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by an electorate; those qualified to vote under the rules and procedures of the electoral system (Roberts and Edwards, 1991:41).

Its deficiency notwithstanding, the salient aspects of the definition are two-fold; namely, the right of a group of voters to choose their representatives; and that such electorates must meet certain requirements before they could exercise their franchise (right to vote).

In his own contribution to the discourse on election, Dunmoye (2010:3) viewed the concept as "the process of selecting one person or more for an office, public or private from a wider field of candidates. The deficiency of this definition was its failure to link election with party-politics. It, however, linked it with the idea of representative system in the public sector. Furthermore, it appreciated the fact that election is not peculiar to public realm but could also take place in the private sector. This view was also expressed by Yaqub (2010:32-33) who defined election as "the processes through which leaders are appointed to and/ or selected for an office."

Furthermore, Anifowose (2003:21) argued that "Elections, broadly conceived, refer to the process of the elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system." In the same vein, Onuoha (2003:46) posited that election is "a procedure recognized in a democratic state for choosing persons to hold offices in the State." Apart from the fact that Anifowose failed to link election to the idea of party-politics in a political discourse, he also failed to quantify "mass of the population". By his definition, "Mass of Population may include those who are under aged. But contrary to Anifowose's position, the electoral laws of every State usually define the category of the "Mass of Population." This also represents the pit-fall of Onuoha's (2003) position.

The summary of the various definitions of elections reviewed in this study has revealed a number of common grounds. One of which was that apart from Harris (1979) other authors failed to link their definitions with party-politics. They only defined the terminology from a general perspective; but since they were (are) Political Theorists or Political Scientists, it was incumbent upon them not to view election as a layman terminology. Rather, they should have gone a step further, by defining election from the perspective of party-politics. This effort, if undertaken, would have gone a long way to give the definitions, the political colouration they deserved. It is on this note that this review defines election as the procedure for electing candidates of political parties as the representatives or leaders of their constituencies in a keen contest for power, by a group of electorates who are qualified to vote in an election, at any point in time.

Conceptualizing Political System

Easton (1953:25) defines a political system as "those interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented." Easton (1953) used System Analysis Approach to buttress the interactions in any political system with regards to public policy making. He adopted 'input' - 'output' model in his explanation. Demands usually flow into the political system through the 'gate-keepers' he identified as the various interest groups in the society. The political system has the responsibility to scrutinize the requests, deliberate upon them and formulate policies on some of them. This is usually the responsibility of the legislature which is one of the structures in a political system. The 'output' analysis is in respect of policy implementation which is squarely the responsibility of the executive. The process continues with feed-back /evaluation which takes the form of responses got from people with regard to government policies.

Varma (1982) similarly explained political system from the perspective of administration. According to him:

It is the making of binding or authoritative allocation which distinguishes the political system from other systems both within and outside the over-all society that form the environment of the political system (Varma, 1982:195).

The foregoing explanation reveals that political system connotes that the supreme organ in a State whose authority is sovereign, is here in referred to as the government. It co-ordinates the affairs of the State and allocates responsibilities to its agencies. One of such agencies of government in Nigeria is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) listed in Section 153 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as one of the 'Federal Executive Bodies' in the country. It has the statutory responsibility of election management in the country.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is "structural-functionalism", developed from the work of the Social Anthropologist, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) and systematically formulated by the American Sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). The credit of applying it to a political discourse however, goes to Easton (1953) in his System Analysis Approach to the study of Political Phenomenon. According to McLean and McMillan (2009):

Structural-functionalism seeks out the 'structural' aspects of the social system under consideration, and then studies the processes which function to maintain social structures (McLean and McMillan, 2009:514).

The authors went further to posit that "structure primarily refers to normative patterns of behaviour (regularized patterns of action in accordance with norms), whilst function explains how such patterns operate as systems" (McLean and McMillan, 2009:514). In relation to political discourse, Easton (1953) adopted the notion of 'systems' to explain human relationships. According to him the three elements of system are:

- (i) Parts of the system
- (ii) The parts should be related to the whole. The part and the whole constitute what is called the structure.
- (iii) The contributions each part make towards the survival of the whole. This third element is called the 'functions.' This is the essence of functionalism and it is the area of focus of this study. Structural-functionalism is therefore a methodology of analysis which examines a system in terms of the structure of which the system is composed, and the functions performed by those structures (Easton, 1953:27).

Almond's (1965) model of structural-functional analysis identified seven functional requirements of the political system and the contributions of these functions towards the maintenance of the system. He categorized the functions into, "input functions" and "output functions." The "input functions" include the following: political socialization/ recruitment; interest articulation; interest aggregation; and political communication. The output functions are rule-making; rule-application and rule-adjudication. These functions are performed by various structures and sub-structures in a political system.

According to Easton (1953:102) each political system is composed of a number of structures and sub-structures. These structures perform various functions which help guarantee the stability of the system. When the functions are performed as expected, the system will stabilize but when the reverse is the case, the system disintegrates. Examples of such structures include various organs of government, agencies of government, (for example, Election Management Body which manages elections), social institutions, political institutions, religious organizations,

For example, while election is always conducted by Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to elect public officers who will man the affairs of the State, Political Parties (an example of political institutions) have the responsibility to field candidates for such elections. The implication of this scenario is that when political parties fail to field candidates for elections and EMB shirk in their responsibility to conduct elections, there will be no legitimate representatives to administer the affairs of a State. This may eventually precipitate political crisis resulting in anarchy.

An Analysis of Purposes Served by Elections in a Political System

The purposes served by election in any political system depend, largely on the type of democracy in place in such a society. Political Systems are generally largely classified into 'liberal democracy' and 'autocratic societies' by political analysts. Liberal democracy can be explained as that type of democracy "without a distinctive ideology" (McLean and McMillan, 2009:306). Robert and Edwards (1991:74), also explained 'liberalism' as:

A tradition of political thought centered on the value of individual liberty and its relations to the State. Individuals are said to hold rights, often 'natural rights, having in existence independent of government or even of society, forming the basis for constitutional limits on the powers of government. Such rights typically comprise the secured enjoyment of life, liberty and property, and freedom of speech and association. The task of government is to respect and protect these rights, allowing individuals to pursue their own chosen goals with due regard to the rights of others.

The above position represents the main attributes of a liberal democracy. But more importantly, it accords high premium to the fundamental human rights of an individual. One of such rights is 'Franchise' (the right to vote and be voted for) which is usually reflected in the form of election. Individuals who meet certain requirements are usually allowed, unfettered, to participate in the electoral process of a democratic society.

Autocratic society, in contrast to liberal democracy, has as its first and most important characteristic, its failure to "encourage, or even allow, mass political participation through either a political party or voluntary associations/ pressure groups" (Nwabuzor and Mueller, 1985:84). In essence, there is lack of concern for civil liberties, restrictions on political competitions and criticisms. Electoral process in an autocratic society will be held at the pleasure of the power that be, and as Nwabuzor and Mueller (1985:84) argued: "There might be a ruling party and even trade unions, but these are likely to be facades rather than genuine channels for participation or communication and are most importantly used as instruments of control." The foregoing reveals the purposes of party-politics and elections in an autocratic society. However, the focus of this study is essentially on the functions (purposes) of elections in a liberal democracy. Consequently, they will form the focus of this section of the paper.

Elections are central to democracy. According to Matlosa (2008:20) "democracy cannot exist without elections while elections themselves can exist under conditions of authoritarian rule." Therefore, one of the purposes served by election is that it differentiates a democratic government from a non-democratic one. It is election which defines the character of government as being democratic or not and as Nnadozie (2003:45) (cited in Alli, 2007: xiv) posited "any problem associated with the electoral process has direct impact on democratic institutions." Consequently, Alli (2007: xiii) added that "properly, freely and fairly conducted elections confer legitimacy and ultimately enhance the proper and effective use of political power." He went further to say that "it is only elections that can open the way to the emergence of a truly people legitimized government" (Alli, 2007: xiii). But according to Matlosa (2008:21) "conversely, elections can also be used by the political elite to cloak and legitimize authoritarian rule." He added that some African States still use elections simply as a legitimating tool for their entrenched authoritarianism. However, when this happens, election has failed to serve the purpose of enhancing democratic norms in a State.

African Union's (AU's) Declaration on the principles governing Democratic Elections in Africa during the inaugural summit of the Organization, in Durban, in July 2002 also attests to the importance of democratic elections not only in the African continent but also in any polity. The Declaration commits all member States to the following principles that:

- (i) Democratic elections are the basis of authority of any representative government;
- (ii) Regular elections constitute a key element of the democratization process and therefore are essential ingredients for good governance, the rule of law, the maintenance and promotion of peace, security and development; and
- (iii) The holding of democratic elections is an important dimension in conflict prevention, management and resolution (OAU/ AU, 2002) (cited, in Matlosa, 2008:22).

The foregone shows the importance of election to the democratic consolidation of any State. This explained why Egwu (2013) argued that:-

Elections lie at the heart of representative democracy and it constitutes a mirror of the people's understanding and appreciation of democratic norms. Not only is the democratic characteristic of a regime measured by the extent to which those who govern are chosen by means of free and fair elections, both the quantity of voting and the sanctity of votes are strong measures of democracy, (Egwu, 2013:1).

Before the above conditions can however, be met, there must be a prevailing conducive political atmosphere enthroned by the major electoral stakeholders in a State (Government and the EMB in particular). One other purpose served by election in liberal democracy is that it guarantees the involvement of people in decision making process. According to Cohen (1971:6) "participation in policy making by people is the fundamental measure of democracy." Mato (2010:143) also argues that "the expensive nature of election management, notwithstanding, it has the advantage of popular participation and fair contest" of the citizenry in the electoral process. In liberal democracy, election is a means of involving the citizenry in the policy making process. This stems from the belief that direct democracy, (government by the people) is impracticable in any political system. The logic is that since it is not possible for all and sundry to participate in the decision making process (government by the people) people cast their votes for the candidates who will represent them in public offices. However, each State usually fashion out the modality

for the involvement of its citizenry in the decision making process depending on the form of government in place. A country that practices 'Electoral College System' will involve its citizens indirectly in the electoral process. This is the method of electing the American President and it was the same method adopted in Nigeria in the First Republic when the country practiced Parliamentary System of Government. On the other hand, the participation of the citizenry in the decision making process through electoral process, may take a direct form. This is when the citizens cast their votes directly for their representatives. This is the method of electing representatives into the policy making arms (executive and legislature) of government in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The problem associated with the involvement of people in decision making process through election is that it may not give a picture of the true representatives of the people. This is particularly the case, when politicians allude with the Election Management Body (EMB) which manages the election maneuvers the outcomes of the election. Similarly, when the electorates are induced by contestants through monetary and material gifts failing to vote 'rationally', the products (winners) of the exercise will have the crises of legitimacy to contend with. In fact, where ever this is the case in any liberal democracy, autocracy or authoritarianism has set in. Therefore, for this purpose to be served by election, all the electoral stakeholders (EMB, candidates and electorates in particular) must perform their roles in line with the established norms governing the electoral process in a State.

Another purpose being served by election in liberal democracy is that of 'regulation' (Onuoha, 2003:46). This is also found in the words of Cohen (1983:85) who posited that "Election should be as a means of controlling the political executives, not as a means through which they control the electorate." In a proverbial tone, Hague and Harrop (1983:119) also argued that; "the last election determines 'who' governs, the thought of the next one influences how they do so." In a similar vein, Wantchekon (2003:8) also posited that election represents the platform by which "citizens have power to alter the government if they are wronged." The way this logic operates is that the electorates can use their votes to oust a 'non-responsive' and 'irresponsible' government in an ideal democracy.

Therefore, the 'regulation' function of election is practicalized in this form; voters should have the right to use their votes to control the activities of the Political Office holders. Any political office holder who, after winning a previous election, reneges in his promise(s) should be conscious of the fact that he stands the risk of being voted out of office by his constituents in the next election. Therefore, all things being equal, there is the tendency for him to behave well in his first term of office. But in the case of a political office holder in his last lap of tenure, 'regulation' may not serve an all-true useful purpose. However, in a situation where there is a strong 'party affiliation', 'party identification', or 'party supremacy', a candidate in his last lap of tenure will still be mindful of the next election.

All these analogies are however, true of liberal democracy where there is respect for election outcomes and where Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are not only independent in name but in reality. Furthermore, the judiciary must be equally independent before election can serve the purpose of 'regulation' in certain situations. When the outcome of an election precipitates litigation, judiciary is always looked unto by the aggrieved litigants for justice. But when the

judiciary has been 'caged' by the political executives, as the case in autocratic societies, or, when it is corrupt, aggrieved candidates may not get justice from it. When political executives also hold on to power, longer than necessary (as was the case in Libya under Mohammad Ghaddafi who did not face election for forty-two years) election cannot perform the task of 'regulation.'

The foregoing explains why Beetham and Boyle (1995) gave conditions under which election can perform the task of control mechanism. According to him, this function of "popular control is only effective, however, to the extent that elections are 'free and fair,' that, government is open, and that parliament has sufficient powers in practice to scrutinize and control its actions" (Beetham and Boyle, 1995:6-7).

Furthermore, another purpose of election in a democratic society is that it allows the electors to choose their representatives (Ball, 1988:119). According to Boynton (2001) this is more evident in the legislature where legislators are selected through elections. He posited that "Election is a distinctive route into the political elite; it is an avenue that distinguishes legislators from most other members of a nation's political chiefs" (Boynton, 2001:280). In the face of alternatives manifested in the forms of the ideologies of various parties and the capabilities of candidates, a voter will have the freedom to assess them and vote in accordance with his judgment. Therefore, the main advantage inherent is that when contestants present themselves for elections, the electors will have the opportunity of subjecting their capabilities to scrutiny. The assumption is that as rational beings, they would elect a representative whose sense of reasoning is deemed best. However, contrary to this position, a number of external forces may work on the electors at the point of taking their voting decisions. Consequently, in the final analysis, they may not enjoy 'freedom of choice' (Miller, 2001:428).

One of the external forces that may intrude into the manner of judgment of voters is the society. The society in which an elector lives or the environment in which he finds himself, usually influence his political/ electoral decisions. This is the thrust of political sociology which is an area of specialization in both Political Science and Sociology. In a society with 'low political culture', a political man will, in the name of trying to avoid being tagged as a 'deviant', all things being equal, bend to the wish (es) of the society where he lives. If he therefore, makes any electoral decision under this disguise such cannot be said to be devoid of subjectivity. But on the other hand, in a society with 'high political culture', the influence of the society on the electoral choice or political decision of an electorate may be insignificant.

Election also serves the purpose of assessing the 'public opinion' on any particular issue or the programme (s) of a government (Hague and Harrop, 1982:119). In other words, it serves as a test case for the popularity of an ongoing programme of a government or an intended programme. The logic is that when the electorates vote overwhelmingly for a political party on the basis of its manifesto, or, a candidate, on the basis of the cardinal programmes of his party he has presented to the electorates during electioneering campaigns, what can be inferred from the election outcomes is acceptance on the part of the voters. Similarly, when a government introduces an 'unpopular programme' (by electorate's judgment) close to the period of election, it may be counter-productive because there may be protest votes by the voters. This explained why Alli (2007: xiii) posited that "elections are also seen as a procedure for aggregating political preferences."

The foregoing shows that in an ideal democracy, not until an election is held, a regime may not be in the position of ascertaining whether or not its programmes enjoy the support of the constituents. Consequently, elections are intended to provide a principal link of upward communication from the governed to rulers. However, Beetham and Boyle (1995:8) noted that few representative governments are immune to expressions of public opinion because it ultimately depends on "the effectiveness of the electoral process." According to them, "governments will only listen seriously to the people when there is a realistic possibility that they will be turned out of office if they do not" (Beetham and Boyle, 1995:8). The ingenuity of this position notwithstanding, this paper is of the view that it is only practicable in liberal democracy where there is 'electoral sanctity.'

The purpose of assessing public opinion by an election is similar to 'Issue-based Theory of Voting Behaviour' which can be explained as a form of 'voting behaviour' in which the electorates base their voting decisions on past, current or future issue(s). However, the inhibiting factors inherent in election serving the purpose of assessing public opinion are in two fold. First, is the nature of the regime itself. That is, is it a responsible and responsive government? Only a responsible government will be mindful of its activities because it will be conscious of their aftermath. On the other hand, it is only a responsive government that will respect the wishes of its citizens. This explains why Momoh and Adejumo (1999:142) posited that "elections ensure political accountability to the people." The other inhibiting factor is the milieu. The environment must be conducive enough for people to communicate freely with those at the helms of affairs of government. There should be available, channels for them to express their desires. For instance, there should be press freedom and /or freedom of expression. The existing law on press freedom (for example, Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act) must be allowed to take its course. But more importantly, when the electorates express their opinions in the form of voting and the election outcome reflects a particular preference, the EMB that managed the election must be bold enough to communicate same to the contestants.

According to Ibrahim (1993:49) election also serves the purpose of 'legitimation.' McClean and McMillan (2009:303) have explained legitimacy as "the property that a regime's procedures for making and enforcing laws are acceptable to its subjects." In other words, when a regime is described as being legitimate, the implication is that it was lawfully constituted or constituted in line with the culture or tradition of a society. Egwu (2013:1) also holds the view that there is a strong correlation between the sanctity of votes and notions of mandate on the basis of which the electorates and citizens can demand accountability. According to him, "it follows, logically, that once elections are flawed or perceived to be lacking in credibility, the legitimacy of government is called into question." The process of legitimation differs from one political system to another but the common parameter for actualizing it in liberal democracy remains to be election. A government in power in any liberal democracy will be deemed to enjoy the popular support of the citizenry. Consequently, it will enjoy relative political stability since it has the mandate of the people. The foregoing explains why Ibrahim (1993:49) argued that for the representatives of the people to legitimately act on their behalf and take decisions that become binding on them, the people must be satisfied that the representatives are their choice, which suffices, if a majority of the people sees them as such. The mechanism by which the people make that choice is election.

In relation to 'legitimation', election outcome has positive effect on the political stability of a nation. According to Egwu (2013:1) "elections lacking in credibility have brought to grief most of the democratic experiments since political independence" of most African States. Credible elections will generate little or no political acrimony. On the other hand, when an election is adjudged not to be free and fair, the end result will be 'political disequilibrium.' This was the experience of Nigeria in 2003, 2007 and 2011 when the General Elections held in the country were considered marred by electoral malpractices by the members of opposition parties, election observers and the international community.

Momoh and Adejumobi (1999) also considered the imperativeness of election as that of 'instrument of legitimization.' According to them:

Elections occupy a central place in the process through the animating force they provide for representative government. On the other hand, they serve as an instrument of legitimization for the state and those who manage the reins of state power, (Momoh and Adejumobi, 1999:142).

The imperativeness of Momoh and Adejumobi's (1999) position is seen in the fact that any government will wish to be branded as being legitimate. For instance, Dunmoye (2010:3) was of the view that "even totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships use elections to justify their holds on power, and feign claims to legitimacy, though the elections might be fraudulent and neither free nor fair." Since election is the only platform through which this can be achieved, it will therefore accord electoral process a premium position in its political programmes.

Furthermore, another purpose served by elections in liberal democracy where there is high 'political culture', is that it provides the means of solving the fundamental political problem of ensuring the peaceful transfer of power from one 'ruling class' to another (Derbyshire, 1993 quoted in Ologbenla, 2003:77). In an ideal democracy, this can only be achieved through election. This view has been buttressed by Ubi (2007:100) who posited that "the essence of elections is that it offers preferences to the electorates who can decide between alternatives." According to him, Collier and Vicente (2007) however, noted that the failure of this mechanism as a means of enforcing discipline on government into improved performance is that the participants rely upon illegitimate strategies to victory. This is about the most important function performed by election in liberal democracy because it is what differentiates it from other forms of democracy (for example, monarchism).

The logic is that a set of ruling elites, can, after completing its term in office, be voted out of power by the electorates and another one voted in without or minimal political rancor resulting in litigation. On the other hand, the process of change or replacement may affect members of the same political party. This is often the case when one set of ruling elites who are members of the same political party, complete their mandatory terms in office, and their party still wins the transitional election and they are succeeded by new brand of party members as the ruling class. This was the experience of Nigeria during the 2007 electoral process. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which was the out-gone Party in power with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the President was succeeded by the members of the same Party with Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua as the President. What only changed, then, was therefore, the composition of the political (ruling) elites and not the party in-government.

The foregoing reveals a sharp contrast with 'Military dictatorship' which always effect change of 'ruling class' through Military coup d'état or 'barrel of guns.' The guiding principle of this mode of leadership change is therefore 'survival of the fittest.' However, before election can serve the purpose of peaceful transfer of power from one class of ruling elites to another, the electoral process in a country must be devoid of electoral logjams. In addition to this, electoral stakeholders must be willing to, and should be ready to accept election outcomes. The judiciary must also be independent of electoral stakeholders, especially political parties and the incumbent government.

All the purposes of election that have been reviewed in this work are largely true of liberal democracy. However, there may be some differences in the ways they manifest themselves in different political systems, occasioned by the constitutional provisions or the electoral laws of such polities. But the fact remains that the extent to which election performs these functions will serve as the leverage for measuring its level of democratic development. In non-democratic States, the performance of these functions by an election may reflect the opposite. For instance, with regards to a Communist /Socialist State, Hague and Harrop (1982:126) argued that:

General elections can be one of the few genuinely national institutions in the country. Elections in communist regimes are vehicles through which the party seeks to mobilize the population in the drive for socialism.

The above positions give the picture of election serving as a channel to actualize State's purpose(s). This is also true of the purpose which election often serves in military regimes. Where elections are held in States controlled by Military dictators, experiences have revealed that they were organized and conducted to legitimize such Military rules by transiting them into civilian governments. Under that arrangement, Military dictators usually maneuver the purposes served by election to actualize their dreams.

Recommendations

Following the review, recommendations are as follows:

- (i) Constitutional provisions and electoral laws of a State should be anchored on the purposes served by election in the other world's advanced democracies. This is necessary to guarantee that the election meets international standard. An attempt to fashion out 'brand new' electoral guidelines by a State may end up making it fall short of international standard. Therefore, where change is desirable, it must be minimal or moderate.
- (ii) The EMB of a nation must be transparent in its actions. However, before this can be actualized, its independence must be guaranteed by the various laws governing electoral process in the country. When this is guaranteed, the umpire (EMB) will be able to be fair to all the electoral stakeholders and the election conducted by it will be devoid of favouritism.
- (iii) States with 'low political culture' have, as one of their attributes, poor management of elections by their EMBs. Coupled with this is the unwillingness of their 'electoral players' to accept the outcomes of elections even when it is glaring that their countries' EMBs have conducted 'free and fair elections.' Their lack of faith in their EMBs has become a menace which can only be corrected through prolonged political socialization. Therefore, 'electoral players' of States with 'low political culture' need

to have a re-orientation of the game of politics and the need to have faith in the outcomes of elections. This is because, as Manin (1995:72) argued, the cost of accepting election outcomes far outweighs its rejection. However, this does not suggest that this discourse supports or promotes electoral corruption. But since democracy is dynamic, a 'nascent democracy', if given a trial, will grow to becoming a 'developed democracy.'

Conclusion

This discourse and review has carried out analyses of the purposes served by election in liberal democracy. It was demonstrated that these purposes are germane for the democratic advancement of a State. It was however, stressed that the ruling class of an autocratic state will maneuver these purposes to suit its whims and caprices.

The major arguments advanced are that:

- a. The purposes served by elections in liberal democracy often take different forms largely due to the nature of government, constitutional provisions or the electoral laws;
- b. The poor handling of the management of an election by the EMB of a State, may prevent the election from serving its purposes; and
- c. That the purposes served by elections in States with 'high political culture' fare better than in States with 'low political culture'.

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