

State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges

Edited by

Hassan A. Saliu, Ph.D.

Fatai A. Aremu, Ph.D.

Abadulrasheed A. Muhammad, Ph.D.

Joshua O. Durojaiye

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PREFACE

This book is the output of our 2nd National Conference held on the 23rd November 2016. Deeply concerned about happenings in our society and in fulfilment of our role as academics, the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, organized a National Conference on the theme 'State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria' in order to brain-storm on the challenges confronting the Nigerian state with regard to governance and insecurity. We believe, in not just identifying the source(s) of challenges but proffering solutions as a step in moving our country forward because the issues that were engaged with at the conference are germane to the corporate survival of the Nigerian state. The conference, which were held on November 23rd, 2016, was declared open by the Vice-Chancellor of University of Ilorin, Professor Abdulganiyu Ambali, OON. He was represented by the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic), Professor (Mrs) N. Y. S. Ijaiya who gave the opening remarks. A keynote address was given by the President of Nigerian Political Science Association, NPSA, Professor Shuaibu Ibrahim while the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor B. Salawu, represented by Professor G. T. Arosanyin, gave the welcome address.

In his welcome address, the Acting Head of Department of Political Science, Dr. A. A. Muhammad, noted that the conference was timely considering the series of complexities in Nigeria's governance environment that require attention from both the state and the citizens. The conference thus, drew participants from across the entire nation comprising academics and policy practitioners. Students were not left out and as such, the conference was all-inclusive. The lead paper was delivered by Professor E. Ezeani while keynote papers were delivered by Professors R. Ayo Dunmoye and H. A. Saliu and they all engaged the theme of the conference from different perspectives. Thereafter, the conference broke into panels to discuss different sub themes. The conference came to a close with a communique calling on all stakeholders to be alive to their responsibility.

Several papers were delivered at the conference. However, a few of the papers are published in this edited volume. This is because the papers at the conference went through a phased review process to arrive at the ones

that are published now. First, paper presenters were asked to incorporate observations and comments they received during the presentation of their papers and re-submit them to the organizers. Not all paper presenters re-submitted their papers. Thereafter, the papers that were re-submitted were sent out for anonymous review by two reviewers for each paper. Those adjudged publishable after the review were sent back to the author(s) to effect corrections. The papers in this book are the ones that were returned by the authors. It is after this that the editors did the editorial work before bringing out this publication.

Hassan A. Saliu, Ph.D.

Fatai A. Aremu, Ph.D.

Abadulrasheed A. Muhammad, Ph.D.

Joshua O. Durojaiye

Department of Political Science

University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

2nd February, 2017.

DEDICATION

To all staff and students of the Department of Political Science,
University of Ilorin and to all individuals that are committed to the
attainment of good governance and security in Nigeria

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CHAPTER NINE

LOW VOTERS TURNOUT IN ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

Adebiyi Oluwashina Moruf
Department of Political Science,
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
shinnna7@gmail.com

&

Abubakar Abdulrahman
Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Introduction

Credible elections, all over the world, occupy a significant position in the democratic process. Elections in any democratic setting play the role of ensuring that popular will is adequately represented, thus, creating legitimacy for the emerging government. However, crucial to the achievement of credible elections is the participation of a high number of citizens in the voting process. Voting at elections is one of the most common means of participating in the democratic process in any liberal democracy. And as such one of the major requirements for democratic advancement and development is the involvement of citizens in the electoral process. Increased citizens' participation in the voting process lays a solid foundation for a healthy and developed democracy. While high voters turnout during elections produces sound base for democratic advancement, low voters turnout impacts negatively on a democratization project. It has however been observed that low voters turnout has become a serious problem in most democracies, both in developed and developing countries (Lijphart, 1998:5; International IDEA, 2002). The decline in voter turnout globally requires attention as it is fast becoming a source of worry to researchers. According to Lijphart (1998:5), there are five reasons why there should be concern about

the problem of low voters turnout: "First, low turnout means low participation by less privileged citizens who are already at a disadvantage in terms of other forms of political participation. Second, unequal participation means unequal influence. Third, actual turnout tends to be lower than the official turnout figures suggested. Fourth, turnout in elections other than those at the national level tends to be particularly low and that turnout is declining in most countries" (Lijphart, 1998:5). While it is unarguable that decline in voter turnout varies across countries, the problem of low voters turnout especially as it pertains to Africa, requires urgent attention and remedies. This is connected to the fact that studies have shown that most developing democracies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have the highest percentage of decline in voters turnout (Fagunwa, 2015:2).

Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to multi-party democracy after a long period of military interregnum, elections have been conducted on a stable basis. Not undermining the conduct of elections on a regular basis, it is important to note that the standard of these elections have become worrisome as elections in the country's Fourth Republic were bedevilled by several factors which include electoral fraud, malpractices, intimidation of voters and electoral officials and election related violence which include: assassination, maiming, destruction of property to mention but a few. Hence, little wonder why voter turnout is declining. Data on Nigeria's electoral process in the Fourth Republic indicates a declining trend in voter turnout. This paper aims at examining the connection between low voters turnout and democratic development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic with specific reference to Presidential elections. The major objective of this study is to find out the implications of low voters turnout on democratic development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study is, however, structured into five sections. The first section consists of the introduction and conceptual framework. The second section discusses the theoretical framework and a brief exposition of Nigeria's experience as regards voter turnout. The third part gives an analysis of voters turnout in Nigeria with specific reference to presidential elections of the Fourth Republic as well as an exploration of the nexus between voter turnout and democracy. The fourth part discusses the causes and implications of low voter turnout on democratic development. The last part concludes and suggests recommendations.

Voter Turnout and Democracy: Conceptual Overview

Voter turnout

Voter turnout in a simple sense refers to the proportion of registered voters who actually cast votes on Election Day or the total number of people voting in the election as compared to the grand total of registered voters in a voting unit. However, while defining voter turnout in this way is not faulty, it may not necessarily imply a concise and complete definition of the concept. Geys (2006:38) commented that defining voter turnout as a proportion of the population requires a clear operationalization of the population variable. He opined that one needs to take the ratio of the number of voters to the entire population, the population of voting age, the eligible population or the number of people registered to vote. This according to him affects the size of and the variation in turnout rates and affects the estimation result (Geys, 2006:38). In another perspective, Schmidt et.al (1998) submitted that voter turnout can be viewed from two perspectives. The first entails viewing voter turnout in terms of the percentage of registered voters in relation to those who turn out to vote in an election while the second views voter turnout in terms of the relationship between the percentage of voting age population (VAP%) (Whether registered or not) and the voters who turned out to vote in an election.

The second dimension has been described as more useful in determining turnout rates but it is not utilized in most cases because of lack of data and its unreliability. It can, however, be argued that determining voter turnout based on the proportion of the voting age population may not be tenable. This is because those who did not signify their intention to vote by getting themselves duly registered and who belong to the voting age population may be influenced by factors such as political apathy. Arguably, voter turnout determined based on the total number of those who were duly registered seems to be more tenable in the sense that those who actually get themselves registered are those who actually had the intension of voting. While it may not be possible to have 100 percent voter turnout, those who did not vote may be able to give explanations for their action. For example, time and peculiarities of election periods. For the purpose of this paper therefore, voter turnout is defined as the percentage of duly registered electorate who come out to cast their votes on the Election Day. Thus, according to Olaniyi (2008) voter turnout can be derived mathematically as:

Total Number of Voters

X 100

Total Number of Registered Voters

Democracy

As a concept, democracy has generated a lot of heated debates as regards its meaning, its practice, and what constitutes an ideal democratic system or society. As a result of this, burgeoning literature exists on the concept of democracy as regards its origin, meaning, practice and typology (Cunningham, 2002; Shapiro, 2000; Zimmerman, 1986; Schmitter, 1995; Schumpeter, 1962) Despite this, democracy has become the most practiced system of government across the globe (Abdellatif, 2003:6). Democracy can be understood from three perspectives: as an ideology, a concept, and a theory (Abdellatif, 2003:6). It is an ideology because it embodies a set of political ideas that spell out the best possible system of social organization (government) (Abdellatif, 2003:6). Democracy was, however, broadly defined as:

A mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement is that where all members of the collectivity enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly- one that is to say, which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise (Beetham, 1992:40).

In another perspective, Schumpeter (1962:269) defined democracy from the point of view of holding elections alone. He viewed it as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". This notion of democracy has come under intense criticisms. While the conduct of free, fair and periodic elections remains important indices of democracy, democracy cannot be reduced to the process of making electoral choice only. Based on this and for the purpose of this paper, democracy is referred to as a system of government based on popular consent of the people. In this regard, democracy is characterized by features such as the conduct of competitive and regular, free and fair

elections, a multi-party system, guarantee for fundamental human rights of citizens, rule of law, separation of powers, independent judiciary, existence of strong and vibrant civil societies and free press.

Theoretical Framework: The Rational Choice Theory of Voters' Turnout

Questions pertaining to factors which determine turnout over the years have proved problematic in studies on political participation. Rational choice theorists represented by Downs (1957) have classified voter turnout as a collective action problem whereby voters are required to give up time and transportation cost in order to acquire public good which involves the election of a particular candidate (Downs, 1957). Nevertheless, one of the major theories from which voter turnout during elections can be explained is the rational choice theory. "Rational choice theories are theories about how the (expected) utility associated with outcomes generates or induces preferences for the particular actions at hand" (Aldrich, 1993:248). The rational choice theory is also known as the economic theory of voting behavior which is a theoretical approach for explaining human political and economic behavior. Rational choice theory has been used to explain human tendencies towards economy, political science, psychology, and sociology. The rational choice theory was popularized by Downs (1957) through its application to voting behavior and political parties' competition. Central to the theory of rational choice are five concepts: individualism, optimality, structures, self-regarding interest, and rationality. The fundamental thesis of the rational choice theories is that "the individual prefers outcomes with higher utility to those with lower utility and chooses actions to receive more highly valued outcomes" (Aldrich, 1993:248).

The basic assumption of the rational choice theory of voter turnout however, is that voters are considered as rational actors in taking a decision which has to do with making a choice on election days. This may have prompted (Aldrich, 1997) to posit that: "the rationality of voting is the Achilles' heel of rational choice theory in political science". Rational choice theorists, according to Downs (1957) and Aldrich (1993), argued that voters weigh up the costs and benefits of their actions. Consequently, they turn out to vote when they judge that the benefits of voting outweigh that of not voting at all (Bartle, 2002). It was argued that voting is a rational action most especially when voters have social preferences and are concerned about

social welfare (Edlin, Gelman, and Kaplan, 2007). These scholars are of the opinion that separating the rationality assumption from the selfishness assumption denotes two basic facts: one is that the act of voting can be rational and two is that a rational voter will decide which candidate or option to vote for based on the voter's judgment of the expected social consequences of the election outcome as distinct from direct consequences on that voter.

The rational choice theory of voter turnout has been criticized on the grounds that voting is a very 'easy' form of political participation which requires modest effort and initiative which do not demand voters' engagement in conflictual or co-operational behaviors (Crewe, Fox and Alt, 1992). The rational choice theory is faced with the challenge of its limited ability to predict real-world behavior (Dryzek, 2008). The theory has been challenged on the grounds that it cannot explain why people vote in elections when the chances of their vote being decisive in determining the winner of the election are near zero. It is argued that "the results of rational choice theory are best thought of as a set of warnings about what would happen if people behaved as rational egoists, rather than an explanation of how the world actually works". Despite these criticisms the rational choice theory remains one of the tenable approaches for explaining human behavior. The assumptions of the rational choice theory have been used to generate a wide range of decision theories, whose hypotheses about the measureable real world phenomena erase the possibility of a larger set of results than what is already generally accepted to be unlikely (Agu, 2013:94).

Apart from its utility to economics and political science, the theory has been found useful in explaining human behavior in other social science disciplines such as psychology and sociology. The rational choice theory has been described as "a unified framework for understanding all human behavior" (Becker, 1976). The theory has also been referred to as the "most rigorous and the most general theory of social action that has been advanced in this century" (Rogowski, 1978).

Voter Turnout: An Exposition of the Nigerian Experience

General elections were held for the first time in Nigeria on the 20th of September, 1923 (Annual Colonial Report, 1923). The Clifford's Constitution which was inaugurated in 1922 made provision for four elective seats to the Legislative Council; three for Lagos and one for Calabar (Tamuno, 1966:18). Qualification for voting was however restricted to men

who were 21 years and above and who were British subjects or natives of Nigeria but must have lived in Nigeria for nothing less than 12 months before the election and who earned at least £100 in the year preceding the election. Those who had been convicted of a crime and sentenced to death, hard labour or prison for more than a year, or were of "unsound mind" were disqualified from voting (Tamuno, 1966:18). Based on the restricted franchise and the conditions attached to it, only about 4,000 people out of about a population of 99,000 registered in Lagos while just 453 registered in Calabar. (Tamuno, 1966:18) Voter turnout was generally low. A study of the 1959 general elections indicated that the percentage of voters turnout in the Northern Region of the country was 89.2% while turnout in the Eastern Region was 74.4% and 76.2% for Lagos, the Federal Territory (Post, 1963:569-474). Post (1963) observed that out of the 62 constituencies in the Western Region only 25 recorded voter turnout of less than 70%. The last three constituencies in this category were Okitipupa South (53.3%), Ekiti North West (53%) and Ede- Ejigbo (48.4%) (INEC, 2011:19). In the 1979 Presidential election out of a total number of registered voters of 47,433,757 only 16,846,633 (35.5%) of the total number of registered voters actually came out to vote on the Election Day (Nigerian Muse, 2006).

The 1983 elections saw an improvement in voter turnout compared to the 1979 elections even though the turnout was also considerably low during the Presidential election. Out of a total number of registered voters of 65,304,818 (African Election Database, 2011) only 25,442,414 votes were recorded. This showed an increase of close to 9 million of more than what was obtained in 1979 (Hart, 1993:403). This represented about 38% voter turnout. It signified a 51 per cent increase in total vote in only four years, even though in 1983 many people who had to vote were prevented from doing so (Hart, 1993:403). In 1999 the total number of registered voters was given to be 57,938,945 (African Election Database, 2011). Out of this figure a total number of 30,280,052 turned out to cast votes for their preferred candidates (African Election Database, 2011). This figure represented about 52.3% of the total number of registered voters. This showed a significant improvement in voter turnout in relation to what was obtained in the 1959, 1979 and 1983 general elections. In 2003, a total number of 60,823,022 voters were registered for the general elections (African Election Database, 2011).

Voter turnout for the presidential election was put at 42,018,735. This shows a percentage turnout of 69.1% (African Election Database, 2011) and an improvement on the turnout in the previous election. The total number of registered voters for the 2007 general elections, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission, was 61,567,038 (African Election Database, 2011) showing a slight increase from that of 2003. Turnout was, however, approximated to be 35,397,517, signifying approximately 58% of the total number of registered voters (African Election Database, 2011). This shows a slight drop from the turnout experienced during the 2003 election. In 2011, total number of registered voters was 73,528,040. Voter turnout, however, was put at 39,469,484 representing 55.7% of the total number of registered voters (African Election Database, 2011).

The 2015 Presidential Election and Voter Turnout in the Fourth Republic

Due to security reasons, the 2015 general elections which were initially scheduled to take place on the 14th and 28th February, 2015 for the Presidential and National Assembly elections and the gubernatorial and state Houses of Assembly elections respectively were eventually held on March 28 and April 11 2015. The Presidential election was, however, a milestone in the country's electoral history. It was the first election that led to the incumbent President being voted out of office in the country. Though the Presidential election was contested by 14 political parties, the presidential contest was majorly between the then incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party and Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd.), the All Progressive Congress presidential flag bearer. Also, the 2015 general election saw the introduction of the permanent voters' card and the electronic card reader. Unlike the 2011 elections, when temporary voters' card was used to vote, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) prohibited the use of the temporary voters' card. Thus, registered voters without the permanent voters' card were not allowed to vote on the Election Day. The card reader is a handy electronic device designed to confirm the authenticity of permanent voters' card presented by individual voters at a polling station. The introduction of the card reader for the elections was to prevent multiple voting during the elections. Hedlund (2015) contested that the electoral body's objective of introducing the

Electronic Card Reader is to ensure improved voter identification process, faster voting, transparent vote counting process and improved accountability and transparency of the entire voting process.

For the election, 67,422,005 intending voters were registered. A total of 31, 746,490 voters, however, turned out for the election. Muhammadu Buhari the APC Presidential flag bearer emerged victorious with 15, 424,921 (fifteen million, four hundred and twenty-four thousand, nine hundred and twenty-one) votes. The then incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan, came second with 12,853,162 (twelve million, eight hundred and fifty-three thousand, one hundred and sixty-two) votes. Muhammadu Buhari claimed 53.96% of the total votes cast while Goodluck Jonathan polled 44.96% of the total votes cast (INEC, 2015). Having satisfied the constitutional provisions for the declaration of the winner of the presidential election and having satisfied other conditions, Muhammadu Buhari was declared winner by INEC and was equally sworn-in as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the 29th of May 2015. The conduct of the elections was described as satisfactory (EUEOM, 2015; ECOWAS Election Observer Mission, 2015; Commonwealth Election Observer Mission, 2015). It is, however, important to note that the 2015 general elections did not go without noticeable hitches. It was observed that despite the intentions of the Independent National Electoral Commission to conduct a free, fair, credible and violence free elections, the elections were marred by technical hitches and sporadic incidents of violence (Fagunwa, 2015:11). It was noted that despite measures such as the introduction of the new voter registration system, the biometric card readers, the consistent training activities of electoral staff adopted by the country's electoral body observers noted that the election was not free after all (Fagunwa, 2015:11). It is however, important to note that though the 2015 general elections may not be free and fair in all ramifications, the elections signified improvements on what was obtained in the past elections.

One observable and important fact about the elections was the level of apathy displayed by a good percentage of the electorate which manifested in the low turnout during the Presidential election. The total turnout during the general elections was 31, 746,490 which represented 43.65% of the total number of registered voters. This has been described as the lowest since Nigeria's return to democracy. It was also observed that voter turnout

declined in all Geo Political Zones except the South West where turnout increased by 8% that is from 32% to approximately 40 (Centre for Public Policy Alternatives, 2015). This is illustrated in the following table:

Table 1: Showing Regional Voter Turnout during the 2015 and 2011 Presidential Election

Geo Political Zone	2015	2011 (Approximated)
North Central	43.47	49
North East	45.22	56
North West	55.09	56
South East	40.52	63
South - South	57.81	62
South West	40.26	32

Source: Centre for Public Policy Alternatives (CPPA) (2015)

Total number of registered voter for 2011: 73, 528, 040

Total number of registered voter for 2015: 67,422,005

From table 1 above it can be observed that voters turn out during the 2015 presidential election decreased in all geo-political zones of the country with the South West as an exception. In the North Central geo-political zone, the turnout for 2011 presidential election was 49% of the total number of registered voters while the voter turnout for the 2015 presidential election was 43.47%. This shows a decrease of approximately 6%. In the North East zone turnout in 2011 was 56% while turnout in 2015 stood at 45.22%. This as well signifies a decrease of approximately 11% in the North East geo political zone of the country. Decrease in turnout in the North West zone was minimal as there was just a decrease of less than 1% (0.91%). The South East zone witnessed a drastic decrease in turnout. Turnout for the zone in 2011 presidential election stood at 63% while that of 2015 remained at 40.52%. This points to a drastic decrease of 22.48%. The South East zone was the only zone with a high decrease in voter turnout of approximately 22%. The South-South zone witnessed a decrease of approximately 4%. The South West is the only geo political zone that witnessed an increase in voter turnout. The zone recorded an increase in voter turnout from 32% to 40.26%. This shows an increase of approximately 8%. To further show the level of apathy displayed by the electorate, a state by state analysis of low voters turnout revealed that only 13 states out of the 36 states of the Federation

recorded a turnout of 50% and above during the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria (Centre for Public Policy Alternatives (CPPA) (2015). The following table, however, shows a state by state analysis (including the FCT) of voter turnout during the 2015 Presidential election.

Table 2 Showing State by State Analysis of Turnout (in %) during the 2015 Presidential Election

S/N	States	Total Number of registered voters	Total turnout for the election	Turnout (%)
1 .	Abia	1,396,162	460,733	33
2 .	Abuja	881,472	343,774	39
3 .	Adamawa	1,559,012	732,735	47
4 .	Akwa Ibom	1,680,759	109,249	65
5 .	Amambra	1,963,173	765,637	39
6 .	Bauchi	2,054,125	1,088,686	53
7 .	Bayelsa	610,373	390,638	64
8.	Benue	2,015,452	806,180	40
9 .	Borno	1,934,079	580,223	30
10.	Cross river	1,175,623	517,274	44
11.	Delta	2,275,264	1,501,674	66
12.	Ebonyi	1,074,273	429,709	40
13.	Edo	1,779,738	640,705	36
14.	Ekiti	732,021	329,409	45
15.	Enugu	1,429,221	643,149	45
16.	Gombe	1,120,023	515,210	46
17.	Imo	1,803,030	829,393	46
18	Jigawa	1,831,276	1,172,016	64
19.	Kaduna	3,407,222	1,771,755	52
20.	Kano	4,975,701	2,189,308	44
21.	Katsina	2,827,943	1,583,648	56
22.	Kebbi	1,470,648	794,149	54
23.	Kogi	1,350,883	472,809	35
24.	Kwara	1,142,267	468,329	41

25.	Lagos	5,822,207	1,688,440	29
26 .	Nasarawa	1,242,667	571,626	46
27.	Niger	2,014,317	946,728	47
28 .	Ogun	1,829,534	640,336	35
29 .	Ondo	1,524,655	625,108	41
30 .	Osun	1,407,107	703,553	50
31 .	Oyo	2,415,566	1,111,160	46
32 .	Plateau	2,001,825	1,080,985	54
33.	Rivers	2,537,590	1,801,688	71
34 .	Sokoto	1,611,929	951,038	59
35 .	Taraba	1,340,652	616,699	46
36 .	Yobe	1,099,970	527,985	48
37.	Zamfara	1,495,717	882,473	59

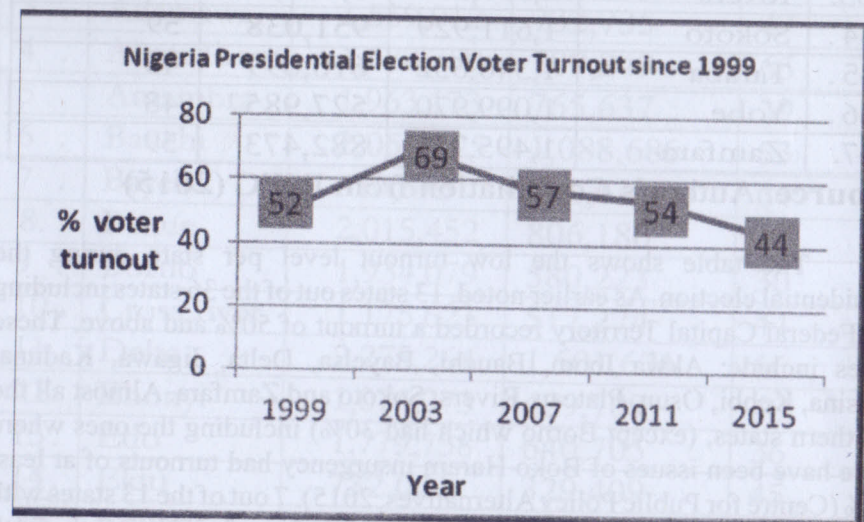
Source: Author's Compilation from INEC (2015)

The table shows the low turnout level per state during the presidential election. As earlier noted, 13 states out of the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory recorded a turnout of 50% and above. These states include: Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Delta, Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Osun, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto and Zamfara. Almost all the Northern states, (except Borno which had 30%) including the ones where there have been issues of Boko Haram insurgency had turnouts of at least 40% (Centre for Public Policy Alternatives, 2015). 7 out of the 13 states with turnout of 50% or more are Northern states while 3 are from the south-south zone, only one belongs to the South West zone. According to the Centre for Public Policy Alternatives (2015);

the aggregate votes from the North West exceeded the votes from the South-East and the South-South. The South-South had the most uneven votes between both candidates of the PDP and the APC. The South-East had the least diversified votes as they voted the least for the APC candidate with less than 20,000 votes in 4 out of 5 states. The South-West had the most even distribution of votes between the parties (CPPA, 2015:2).

Surprisingly, Lagos state with minimal or no security issues and with a significant population of informed people had a ridiculously low turnout of 29%. Rivers state on the other hand, had the highest turnout of 71%. As a matter of fact, voter turnout in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been on the decrease since the 2003 presidential election. A critical observation of voter turnout during presidential elections in the Fourth Republic especially since 2003 reflects dwindling voter turnout.

Figure 1 Showing Nigeria's Presidential Election Voter Turnout Since 1999



Source: (Centre for Public Policy Alternatives, 2015)

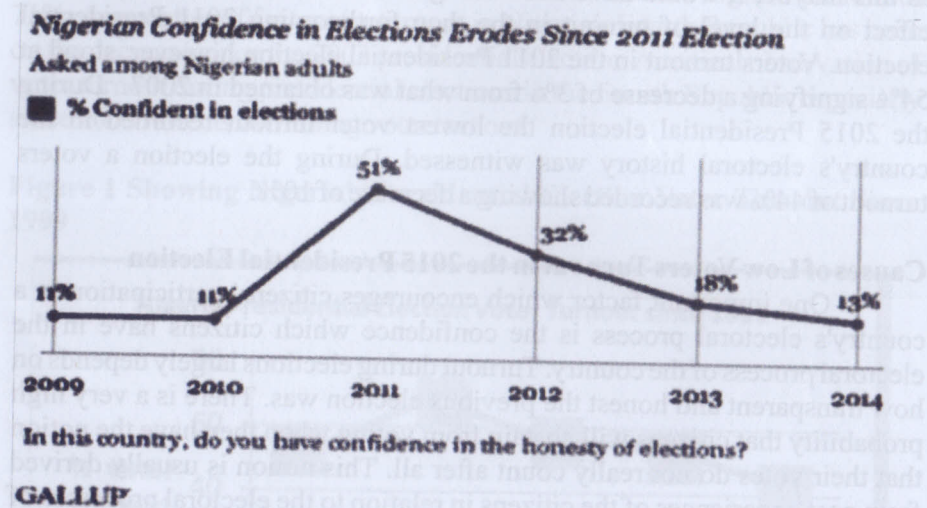
From the figure above it can be deduced that turnout in presidential elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been on the decrease. Voter turnout for the 1999 and 2003 Presidential elections were 52% and 69% respectively. This shows that voter turnout increased from 52% in 1999 to 69% in 2003, thus signifying a 17% increase in turnout. The level of voter turnout in the early years of the country's democratization process (1999 and 2003) attests to the proposition that foundation elections in transition period (in this case from military rule since 1983-1999) record relatively large voter turnout (INEC, 2011:19). However, from 2003, the country began to witness

decreasing voter turnout during presidential elections. Voter turnout decreased from 69% to 57% in 2007. This shows a decrease of 4%. Minimal as this maybe, it would have been thought that it will have no significant effect on the level of turnout in the then forthcoming 2011 Presidential election. Voters turnout in the 2011 Presidential election however, stood at 54% signifying a decrease of 3% from what was obtained in 2007. During the 2015 Presidential election the lowest voter turnout recorded in the country's electoral history was witnessed. During the election a voters turnout of 44% was recorded showing a decrease of 10%.

Causes of Low Voters Turnout in the 2015 Presidential Election

One important factor which encourages citizens' participation in a country's electoral process is the confidence which citizens have in the electoral process of the country. Turnout during elections largely depends on how transparent and honest the previous election was. There is a very high probability that citizens will abstain from voting when they have the notion that their votes do not really count after all. This notion is usually derived from past experiences of the citizens in relation to the electoral processes of their countries. Fagunwa (2015:23) opined that low voters turnout experienced in the Fourth Republic can be largely linked to the scepticism displayed by many Nigerians derivable from the past experiences of the nation's electoral process. Such experiences, however, include: electoral violence, election rigging and intimidation (Fagunwa, 2015:23). It was further explained that accusations of vote rigging, killings and intimidation have largely tainted and discredited most of the elections conducted in the Fourth Republic. Little wonder therefore, why a large number of the people have little or no faith in the country's electoral process (Fagunwa, 2015:23). The study carried out by Gallup in 2014 to ascertain the level of confidence of Nigerians in the honesty of elections showed that 13% Nigerians expressed confidence in the honesty of elections (Gallup, 2014).

Figure 2 Showing a Graphical Illustration of the Confidence of Nigerians in the Honesty of Elections



From the graph it can be observed that confidence of Nigerians in elections has been declining since 2011. While the confidence remained the same in 2009 and 2010 with 11%, the confidence increased from 11% to 51% in 2011. From 2011 however, the confidence of the Nigerians in the electoral process has been dwindling. Several factors can be responsible for the lack of confidence in elections and the consequent low voter turnout during elections in the country. One major factor identified above is the lack of confidence in the electoral process which consequently leads to voter apathy and low voters turnout. Findings of a nationwide study conducted by INEC in 2011 on voter apathy and the 2011 elections revealed four major factors responsible for voter apathy and low voter turnout, these include: violence and inadequate security, electoral malpractices and fraud, long registration and voting process, and non-fulfilment of electoral promises. However, in almost all regions, violence and fraud were the major causes of voter apathy and low voter turnout according to the respondents (INEC, 2011:49). The following table shows the responses of the respondents in percentage on the causes of voter apathy.

Table 3 Showing Reasons for Voter Apathy

Region	Violence and Inadequate security	Electoral Malpractice/ Fraud	Long Registration and Voting Process	Non-Fulfilment of Electoral Promise
North Central	60.0	77.5	22.5	20.0
North East	61.1	66.7	16.7	11.1
North West	85.5	83.6	9.1	25.5
South East	51.8	66.1	23.2	26.8
South-South	85.9	73.2	60.6	18.3
South West	83.3	63.3	10.0	13.3

Source: INEC (2015)

From the table it can be observed that the major factors which caused voter apathy and low voter turnout in the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria were violence and inadequate security as well as electoral malpractices and fraud. Factors such as long registration and voting process and non-fulfilment of electoral promises were also factors which induced voter apathy and low turnout during elections but they were not as prominent as the other two. Less than 30% of the respondents all over the regions except the South-South attributed voter apathy to long registration and voting process and non-fulfilment of electoral promises. Indeed violence and inadequate security during election periods have been major features of the country's electoral process. The country's major experience as regards the conduct of elections has been electoral violence. As a matter of fact, the history of elections after independence revolves around violence. It would be recalled that one of the factors which led to the termination of the First Republic came as a result of the intrigues and violence which trailed the conduct of the 1965/66 Western Region election. This period was characterized by wanton destruction of property and loss of lives (Nwolise, 2007).

Elections in the Fourth Republic have also been characterized by high level incidences of election related violence. Apart from the 1999, elections all other elections held in the Fourth Republic have been tainted with various levels of violence. The 2003, 2007, 2011 and the 2015 general elections were all engulfed in various forms of election related violence. One grave consequence of the electoral violence is the loss of lives and property. According to the Human Rights Watch (2011) the post election violence which occurred after the announcement of the 2011 Presidential election led to the loss of about 800 lives and destruction of property worth of millions of Naira. The violence was also reported to have rendered more than 5,000

people homeless (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The fear of loss of lives and other consequences of electoral violence therefore, scare away potential voters from the voting arena and the entire electoral process and even from political participation.

It is however, important to note that electoral violence does not just occur in a vacuum. It is caused by several factors, notable amongst them are electoral malpractices and fraud. Electoral malpractices and frauds refer to unethical and unapproved behaviors, and unlawful interference with election processes or results. Electoral malpractices and frauds are usually perpetrated during the voting process to distort election results in favor of a particular candidate. Forms of electoral malpractice and frauds include: inducing voters on voting days, ballot box stuffing, tampering with election results, multiple voting and falsification of election results, impersonation, underage voting and ballot box snatching. The Electoral Act (2010) (as amended) stated that voting by unregistered person, multiple-registration of voters, registration of ghost names and prevention of opponents from registration constitute electoral malpractices. According to the Electoral Act (2010) (as amended) "any person who knowingly votes or attempts to vote in a constituency in respect of which his name is not on the register of voters commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N50,000 or to imprisonment for a term of 6 months or both". Despite these, electoral malpractices and frauds in elections in the Fourth Republic still remain one of the features of Nigeria's electoral process and a major challenge to the country's democratization process. Electoral malpractices distort original election results, thus, the wishes of the voters are not usually reflected in the election results. This discourages voters from coming out to cast their votes on election days.

Low Voters Turnout: Implications for Democratic Development

Election remains one of the most important institutions of multi-party democracy. The centrality of election to democracy may have prompted Katz (1997:1) to conclude that election is the defining institution of modern democracy. While it is undisputable that democracy cannot only be perceived in terms of election alone, election, nevertheless, plays a crucial role in the development of democracy. Hence, it is referred to as "the heart of democratic order" (Chiroro, 2005:38). The opportunity to participate in any election gives the citizens of a country the feeling that

government is responsive to their needs and wants. This invariably increases such government's legitimacy. Election serves as a means of legitimizing the state and the people who exercise state power. Simply put, election serves as a major medium for converting the consent of the people to government power and authority. In essence, election plays an important role in the life of a nation. It is one of the essential ways by which citizens choose their leaders and by so doing contribute meaningfully to the identification of the kind of development they would like to see (Albert, 2007:132). Thus, elections are significant because they confer legitimacy on leaders and governments when they are democratically conducted but generate legitimacy crises when persons and governments that are not the true choices of the people are foisted on them (Nwolise, 2007:156). However, for elections to fulfil their roles in a democracy, the process must be inclusive. Those who are eligible to vote must be given the opportunity to air their voice through the ballot. Statistically, Tucker (2004:1) claimed that if eligible voters participate fully in election;

votes will be a population in the social science sense and that if turnout is less than universal, votes will be a sample. The sample of less-than-all may mirror the population of all more accurately or less accurately. The principles of statistics and sampling apply to elections. The smaller the sample, the greater it's potential to differ from the population (Tucker, 2004:1).

Tucker (2004:1) went further to state that "the lower the turnout, the greater the chance that the election result is not the outcome preferred by the population of potential voters" (Tucker, 2004:1). Consequently, low voters turnout makes it possible for minorities to defeat majorities (Tucker, 2004:1). The implication of this is that political office holders are elected by the minority of the population. Democracy as earlier noted in this study is all about majority rule and does not emphasize rule by a few like oligarchy. When voter turnout is high, political leaders and citizens alike will have more sense of responsibility than when it is low. This will thus bring about high political participation in the democratization process which will in turn promote democratic development. In stressing the dangers of low voters turnout to democracy Caulfield (2007:38) argued that:

It is the people via elections that give authority and can make their government accountable, therefore, the lower the turnout is the less representative and legitimate the government is, if not reversed this may lead to future unrest and the crisis looks only set to worsen. In practice elections are the central pillar of representative democracy, they serve to legitimize government and drastic decreases in turnout indicate a crisis in democracy (Caulfield, 2007:38).

In situations where low turnout is caused by persistent electoral malpractices and frauds, for example, candidates or political parties buying voters cards to prevent voters from voting or bribing voters to vote for particular candidates and if these acts of electoral fraud are sponsored by the wealthy political elites, the elected candidates who emerge as a result of these acts will be solely accountable to their sponsors. It is further observed that if leaders at the national level are bought by wealthy political elites the leaders will at all times do the bidding of their sponsors. They tend to pass laws and implement policies that will favor the wealthy political class and not the masses (Verba et al., 1995). These have been regarded as indirect effects of low voters turnout. It has further been claimed that if due to low voters turnout some particular sections of the population are over-represented at the expense of the others, then "public officials hear more from some kinds of citizens than from others and thus jeopardize the democratic norm of equal protection of interests" (Verba et al., 1995). In concurring to this position, Grossman and Noh (1990) argued that democracy fosters accountability of government to the governed with the impact that government is motivated to govern efficiently for the welfare of the people so as to be allowed to stay in power (Grossman and Noh, 1990).

Conclusion

Since the country's return to democratic rule, elections have been conducted on a regular basis. The standard of some of these elections have been a source of worry to political stakeholders. While some of the elections were seriously flawed by all sorts of electoral malpractices and frauds, others were described as credible. However, the decreasing number of citizens' involvement in the voting process in the Fourth Republic has generated more worries as regards the destiny of the nation's democratizing

process. Voter turnout during (Presidential) elections in the Fourth Republic has been on the decrease particularly after the 1999 Presidential elections. Since 2003 voter turnout has been constantly decreasing the worst decrease being that of the 2015 elections. It was discovered among others that the major causal factors of low voters turnout was: voter apathy which was largely brought about by violence and inadequate security during election periods; electoral malpractices and frauds; long registration and voting process; and non fulfilment of electoral promises. The constant decline in turnout since 2003 is a clear indication of the fact that the nation's electoral process needs a total overhaul. Though mindful of the fact that elections are conducted on a regular basis since 1999, the number of people involved in the actual voting process should be of significance to political stakeholders in order to ensure a well developed democratic system. To encourage turnout in future elections there is the need to embark on extensive rigorous voter mobilization.

Political stakeholders in the electoral process need to sensitize, on regular bases, the electorate on the importance of voting during elections. Voter mobilization, sensitization and orientation remain the task of the nation's electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, politicians and political office holders, the mass media (both print and electronic), government and the electorate. Secondly, there is the need to provide adequate security during election periods to protect voters, electoral personnel and electoral materials during elections. Provision of security should not be limited to the voting period alone. It should cover non-voting day activities such campaign, party primary elections, and movement of electoral personnel material to voting centres. In addition, there is the need for government and the country's electoral body to ensure that elections are conducted under free and fair conditions. Ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections is important in raising the confidence of the people in the electoral process. One major way through which this can be encouraged is punishing offenders who commit electoral fraud. Furthermore, politicians after assuming elective positions need to imbibe the moral value of fulfilling their electoral promises made during campaigns. Lastly, politicians need to reduce both intra and inter-party violence by regularly organising symposiums, political rallies and meetings to educate their supporters on the need to eschew violence in all ramifications. Political parties or politicians need to imbibe the political culture of being magnanimous in victory and defeat in any elections.

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