

**ELECTION TRIBUNAL AND ELECTIONEERING
IN NIGERIA: THE 2007 GUBERNATORIAL
ELECTION IN EDO STATE-NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper delves into examining the role of Election Tribunals in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria, using the 2007 gubernatorial election in Edo State as a case study. It was an election, consequent upon which malpractices which hinge on, among other factors, 'godfatherism', were exposed and nullified. The study adopts the narrative and descriptive methods in analysing the various primary and secondary historical sources. It thus, examines how the 2007 gubernatorial election in Edo State was conducted, beginning from the registration of voters, to the delivery of the tribunal verdict which sacked the acclaimed winner of the election, Oserheimen Osunbor of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and installed the supposed winner, Adams Oshiomhole of the Action Congress (AC) as Governor of Edo State. The paper submits that, for democracy to be established in Nigeria, the importance of election tribunals cannot be over-emphasised. This is because, as observed, the election tribunal remains the last hope of the common man. To this end, it is of utmost necessity the election tribunal be granted practical independence of operation so that it could discharge its duties without fear or favour of any sort.

Keywords: Nigeria, Election, Electioneering, Diplomacy, Tribunal.

Introduction

Electoral processes in Nigeria date back to its pre-independence years when colonial authorities handed down to Nigerian peoples quite a number of legal documents with which their political affairs were controlled. First among such was the Clifford Constitution of 1922 whose flaws led to the reviewing, rewriting and implementation of other constitutions all of which addressed the process through which the masses selected their representatives. On December 12, 1959, the parliamentary election which ushered Nigeria into an era of political independence was conducted. Voting was by the secret ballot and all registered adults in Western and Eastern Nigeria voted. In the North, only registered adult males were allowed to vote. The elections were conducted by Federal Electoral Commission headed by Mr. R.E Wraith, who was assisted by an Executive Secretary Mr J. J. Warren and Commissioners Alhaji Muhammed Bello for the North, Mr. Anthony Aniagolu for the East, Prof. Oritsejolomi Thomas; for the West, Mr. M. A. Shosilva for Lagos, and Mr K. A. de Bohn for the Southern Cameroon(Agbor et al., 2011).

From the outcome of the 1959 parliamentary election, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of the NPC emerged the country's first Prime Minister, while Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC became Nigeria's first indigenous President. Upon assumption of office, the new administration set up a new electoral body named the Federal Electoral Commission

(FEDECO) to conduct the 1964/65 elections (Saka, 2009). The elections, irrespective of its credit as the first post-independence election in Nigeria, played an unmistakable role towards the end of Nigeria's First Republic. The Nigerian National Alliance won a large majority in the election as the main opposition group, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) refused to take part. A supplementary election held in the Eastern Region in March 1965 led to the UPGA winning every seat. The widespread violence and level of electoral malpractices witnessed in the 1964/5 elections angered some section of the Nigerian military who felt that the civilians were not ready for democratic rule (Anikwe and Kushie, 2011). Eventually, Nigeria's first post-Independence democratic experiment came to a close as the country was plunged into an era of military rule.

In 1978, during the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria began to tend towards another democratic experiment as he lifted the ban on political activities. Before 1978, the Federal Military Government of General Murtala Mohammed had instituted in 1975, a 50-member Constitution Drafting Committee, headed by Chief Rotimi Williams. As contained in the final draft of the new Constitution, Obasanjo's administration was given powers to inaugurate a new 24-member Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) headed by Mr. Richard Avic (Ayo, 2011).

The elections were to be conducted for positions in the Local Councils, State Assemblies, Governorship, the Federal House of Representatives, the Senate and the Presidency. Consequently, Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the NPN emerged Nigeria's President-elect and was sworn in as President on October 1, 1979. However, at the expiration of the Shehu Shagari tenure in 1983, the Federal Electoral Commission was again faced with the task of providing the nation with another general election. At the polls, all the political parties re-nominated their presidential candidates and the newly registered Nigerian Advanced Party presented Tunji Braith Waith as its Presidential flag bearer thereby increasing the number of registered political parties from five in 1979 to six in 1983. The election was held on August 6, 1983 and the result was a victory for the incumbent president Shehu Shagari, who won 45% of the vote. The National Party of Nigeria also won majority seats at the parliamentary elections held later the same month (Gbenro & Ayodeji, 2010).

In a spontaneous reaction to the official results released by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), mayhem was unleashed in the Southwest region. The violence was organized in protest against perceived manipulation of the polls as the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) lost to NPN at their strongholds of Oyo and Ondo states. Heavy human and material losses were suffered by political opponents and the Headquarters of FEDECO in Oyo and Ondo states were torched. (Ogbeidi, 2010:52) It was in the face of prevailing political instability, chaos and economic crisis that the military under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari sacked the second republic and took over power in 1983.

It was not until the regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida which began in 1985 that Nigeria once again began to tend towards democratisation. General Babangida decreed another constitution for Nigeria on May 3, 1989. Earlier in 1987, an electoral management body was established with the name National Electoral Commission (NEC). However, the regime of Gen. Babangida failed to hand over power to the believed democratically elected government. In August 1993, pro-democracy groups such as the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Coalition for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR) among others, pressured Babangida to hand over power to an interim government under the leadership of Chief Ernest Shonekan who resigned probably under pressure mounted on him by another military despot, General Sani Abacha in November 1993. However, he (Abacha) died in office in 1998 ushering in the regime of Gen. Abdusalami Abubakar.

Gen. Abubakar upon assumption of office introduced a new constitution for Nigeria with a new electoral body -Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). (Moveh, 2012) The election was contested between three major political parties which included the Alliance for Democracy, All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). (Saka, 2009). When the result of the election was announced, Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP emerged victorious as the Second Executive President of Nigeria. Abubakar handed over power to a democratically elected government.

The 2003 elections were again conducted, and results declared as at when due. The landslide victory of the PDP especially at the states' level generated a lot of violent demonstrations and street protests calling for cancellation of election results (CDHR, 2001). This was because the elections were fraught with obvious cases of malpractices of all sorts and degree, fraud and violence. Obianyo (2003) noted that reports of the various monitoring teams, national and international, also portrayed similar lapses and proven cases of irregularities and malpractices. For instance the European Union Election Observer Mission (EU-EOM) reported that the results of the presidential/gubernatorial elections in eleven (11) states which included Enugu, Cross River, Delta, Benue, Edo, Katsina, Kogi, Nassarawa, Imo, Kaduna lack credibility. The irregularities observed ranged from stuffing of ballot boxes, forgery and falsification of result sheets, ballot box snatching and other forms of rigging. For instance, in Bayelsa State, INEC office in Sagbama was burnt by angry youths, and other properties destroyed. In Edo State, four lives were lost following electoral violence in the state. Similarly, in Akwa-Ibom State, two persons were reported dead. In Enugu State, office of the chairman of Udi Local Government Area (LGA) was set ablaze for allegedly being used for ballot stuffing, while one person was shot dead in the process (*Vanguard*, April 14, 2003).

Losers however sought redress in tribunals, but judging from past experiences, there was skepticism as to the extent the judiciary could exercise independence of action on the respective suits. Already, most of the judgments by the various tribunals in most states upheld the result published by INEC. In Anambra and Enugu states for instance, where the tribunal appeared to be impartial, INEC declined compliance with the order of the tribunals that the election materials should be made available to the APGA and ANPP candidates for verification (*Vanguard*, June 10, 2003).

It is against this backdrop that the subsequent Edo State gubernatorial election held in 2007, and the role of the election tribunal will be examined as to the malpractices on which the election umpire –INEC stood to declare the PDP candidate winner against the wishes of the electorates which they expressed through voting. Hence, verdict was passed, and the acclaimed winner was sacked while the AC candidate, who was the supposed winner, was installed.

The 2007 Gubernatorial Election in Edo State

Registration of voters

Under the auspices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as was stipulated by Nigeria's constitution, Nigerians eligible to vote were to be registered before voting. Thus on October 25, 2006, INEC kicked off a computerized voters registration exercise in Nigeria. Direct Data Capture (DDC) machines were used for the first time in the country to register eligible electorates. However, quite a number of issues affected the credibility of the voters' registration exercise such as the problem of logistics and inadequacy of DDC machines. For instance, whereas a total of about 30,000 DDC machines were required for the registration exercise, only about 10,000 were reportedly available as at November 22,

2006 (Luqman, 2009). Eventually, several eligible voters could not be registered due to the slow pace of registration as a result of inadequate machines. (Luqman, Saka 2009). This was observed in such communities as Enwan in Akoko-Edo Local Government, (INEC, *The Nigerian Observer*, 2007); Ogba in Orhionmwon Local Government (INEC, *Vanguard*, 2007), among others thus, dampening the enthusiasm of the people and resulting to low turnout.

Despite the criticisms that trailed the voters' registration exercise, Prof. Maurice Iwu (the then Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC) on February 15, 2007, announced that 1,345,410 persons registered in Edo state out of a total 61,567,036 registered voters in Nigeria (*Daily Trust*, April 12, 2007). It was on this figure that the 2007 gubernatorial election in Edo state was conducted on April 14 2007.

Conduct of Election and Declaration of Results

On April 14 2007, gubernatorial elections were held across the 36 states of the Nigeria. In Edo state, a total of twelve political parties fielded candidates for the election. These included the Action Congress (AC), Alliance for Democracy (AD), African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), Better Nigeria Progressive Party (BNPP), Democratic People's Party (DPP), Fresh Democratic Party, National Conscience Party (NCP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Others are Progressive Peoples' Alliance (PPA), Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) and Democratic People's Alliance (DPA). (Olaoye-Osinkolu & O'Neil, *The Nation*, 2008)

The Edo state gubernatorial election held on Saturday April 14, 2007 with an appreciable turnout of voters as polling stations remained open for voting from 8.00am to 3.00pm until every voter who is entitled to vote and who arrived at the polling station before 3.00pm voted in the eighteen local government areas of Edo state (Asowata et al., *The Weekend Observer*, 2007). However, in the course of the election, violence was recorded in many parts of the state resulting to wanton destruction of lives and properties. Notable among these is the event at Oba Akenzua Primary School, Benin City, where three men lost their lives while trying to exercise their franchise (Afolabi et al., *The Nigerian Observer*, 2007)

On Sunday, April 15, 2007 when INEC announced the results from 14 states out of which PDP had won 11, the result of Edo state was declared inconclusive by Mallam Abubakar Ahmadu, INEC commissioner in the state. Tension was however high around the INEC headquarters at Ikpoba Hill, Benin City where a large crowd of youths gathered demanding for the release of election results (Osakue & Obanor, 2007).

On April 16, about 48 hours after the close of voting, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released the result of the election from 16 Local Government Areas of the state while those of Akoko Edo and Etsako Central Local Government Areas of the state were reportedly cancelled on the basis of irregularities. Oserhemen Osunbor of the People's Democratic Party was declared winner having scored a total of 329,740 votes as against 197,472 votes by the candidate of the Action Congress (A.C), Adams Oshiomhole (Osakue & Obanor, 2007).

Upon the announcement of the result, the people took to the streets in protest of the alleged irregularities in the compilation of election results by the Independent National Electoral Commission and in the events that followed Adams Oshiomhole, the candidate of the Action Congress was arrested by security agents while leading the protests. Though initially peaceful, protesters became volatile after the arrest of Oshiomhole coupled with the police brutality where in one occasion three protesters were allegedly fired by mobile policemen (Agbajor, 2007). However, Adams Oshiomhole was released the same day; he insisted that he would

continue to “fight for the mandate given to him by the people until justice is done” (Johnson et al, 2007). In a related development, on April 17, 2007, election petition tribunal to handle election cases in the state was set up at the High Court of Justice, Benin City (Judgement Read by Justice Umar Faruk Abdullahi (P.C.A) on Tuesday, November 11, 2008).

Election Petition and Verdict

In accordance to the 2006 Electoral Act which gives aggrieved parties in an election the right to file their complaints at a law court, Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole alongside the Action Congress (AC) on May 14, 2007, filed a petition of 69 paragraphs at the National Assembly, Governorship and Legislative Houses Election Petition Tribunal, Edo State (*Wikileaks*, August 29, 2007). The petitioner prayed the court to invalidate the result of elections held at Esan West, Esan Central, Esan North East, Esan South East, and Igueben, Uhunmwede, Ovia North East, Etsako West, Owan East, and Owan West Local Government Areas of Edo State on basis of corrupt practices and widespread irregularities. He also prayed that the entire election which saw to the victory of Osunbor as Governor be cancelled.

In response to the law suit, respondents of the petition which included the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its officers, Prof. Oserhemen Osunbor and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) challenged the competence of the petition, praying the court to declare the petition “incompetent, inchoate, irregular, a nullity, invalid, incurably defective for non-compliance with the relevant mandatory provisions of the Electoral Act 2006 and the First Schedule to the same Electoral Act 2006.” (Adekoye, *Daily Champion*, August 29, 2012). In the legal proceedings that followed, the Election Tribunal rejected four procedural/jurisdictional objections raised by the PDP and INEC (Judgement Read by Justice Umaru Faruk Abdullahi (P.C.A) on Tuesday, November 11, 2008). Votes were recounted following the orders of the tribunal while forensic analysts were invited to examine the voting materials used for the election (*Wikileaks*, November 13, 2012). After considering the several evidences on deck, the election petitions tribunal upheld Oshiomhole's petition demanding Osunbor's removal from office as Governor.

Deducting 200,723 votes from PDP's initial score of 329,740 and 30,895 from AC's initial score in the final election result figures as approved by the tribunal, a total of 200,723 previously counted in favour of the PDP were invalidated while for the Action Congress, a total of 30,895 votes were declared invalid. The score of 197,472, the figures were left at 129,017 and 166,577 for the PDP and AC respectively. Consequently, the tribunal declared the erstwhile labour leader, Adams Oshiomhole winner of the April governorship polls thereby nullifying the Certificate of return earlier issued to the PDP gubernatorial candidate, Oserhemen Osunbor (Usigbe et al., *Vanguard*, November 12, 2008).

Rejecting the verdict of the tribunal, Oserhemen Osunbor, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as well as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) proceeded to the Court of Appeal which is the apex court for gubernatorial elections matters, where the procedures on which the tribunal delivered its judgement was queried. For over six months, the Appeal Court considered the suit and on November 11, 2008 delivered her judgement upholding the findings of the election tribunal with respect to massive fraud (Ebegbulem & Enogholase, *Vanguard*, November 13, 2008).

Under the leadership of Justice Umaru Faruk Abdullahi, the Appellate court unanimously declared Adams Oshiomhole winner of April 14, 2007 Governorship election. The Court ordered INEC to immediately withdraw the certificate of return already issued to Osunbor and hand it over to Oshiomhole (Arubi, 2008:10). Accordingly, on November 12, 2008, at the

30,000 capacity Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, Adams Eric Aliyu Oshiomhole was sworn in as Governor of Edo State by the state Chief Judge, Justice Michael Edokpayi. The victory and swearing-in of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole was greeted with wild jubilation as thousands of people poured into the streets in celebration of the court verdict. The verdict was lauded by many eminent Nigerians. The CDHR on its part declared that the judgement was clearly an indication that democracy is achievable in Nigeria.

Impact of the Election Tribunal Verdict

The judgement of the Edo State gubernatorial election petition tribunal which returned Comrade Adams Oshiomhole of the Action Congress as the duly elected governor of Edo state was left with wide implications not only on the directly affected (Edo) state but as well as Nigeria at large. It is therefore against this backdrop that I would examine the different areas in which the judgment has affected the society. Such areas as be examined in this section include the impact of the judgement on Nigeria's political culture as well as the impact of the judgement on the Judiciary. The impact of the tribunal verdict on Nigeria's democratization process would as well be assessed.

Impact of the Judgement on Nigeria's Political Culture

Political culture as would be taken in this study, has to do with the orientation of the citizens of a nation toward politics, and their perceptions of political legitimacy and the traditions of political practice. As regards the tradition of political practice in Nigeria, it becomes pertinent to discuss the twin issue of money politics and 'godfatherism' in Nigeria. In an interview granted to the BBC on 10 November, 2003, Jibrin Ibrahim defined 'political godfathers' as "men who have the power personally to determine who gets nominated and who wins [an election] in a state." (Albert, 2005:82). In a different approach, Chimaroke Nnamani, (former Governor of Enugu State) explains the concept of 'political godfatherism' by giving his experience with his own political godfather, Jim Nwobodo. In his words, "the political godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purposes" (*The Source*, 2003).

Otite & Umukoro (2005) point out that the Nigerian political terrain is bedevilled by certain intractable problems which are caused mostly by political godfathers. Notable among such problems include ballot box snatching, hiring of political thugs as well as dissemination of falsehood. In some cases, even the government media is so manipulated to reflect the wills of these godfathers. The effect of this situation is that faith and confidence in the country's electoral system is diminished thereby leading to an increasing political apathy. Omodia (2012) in cognizance with the linkage between election irregularities and political apathy noted that the poor nature of electoral process in the past both at intra and inter party levels of political contest through imposition of party candidates, ballot box snatching, stuffing, manipulation of electoral results at collation centres among other electoral ills, are a major contributor to the increasing political apathy among Nigerians.

The history of democratization in Nigeria would not be complete without the examination of certain monolithic characters that emerged as determinants of Nigeria's political atmosphere. They sit at the top of politics and governance to determine who gets what, irrespective of the wishes of the people. Coincidentally, Anthony Anenih, one of such figures that have dominated Nigerian politics as a 'monumental' godfather hails from Edo State (Ogbonmwan, 2005). Anenih had begun to build for himself, a political empire in the build-up to the 1983 general elections when he edged out the late Anthony Enahoro from the NPN state chairmanship. Thereafter, Anenih led the NPN to sponsor Ogbemudia for the governorship

race in the state as against Ambrose Alli. Ogbemudia's victory at the polls marked the beginning of Anenih's 'godfatherism' in the state where he was deemed the political oracle which all contestants who wished to win, especially those from Edo state had to consult (Ogbonmwan, 2005). His grip on Edo state politics was made possible by his influence on his political godsons who have found their way into the corridors of power and are bound to carry out the orders of their godfather.

In one celebrated instance during the first term of Adams Oshiomhole, in 2009, the budget of the Edo state government was said to have been decided in the living room of Anenih's Abuja residence where PDP House of Assembly members loyal to Anenih tinkered with the budget in such a way that at the end, the governor was forced to sign a budget which reflected the will of the godfathers and was not in the best interest of the masses (Oliomogbe and Alemma-Ozioruva, *Guardian*, September 1, 2012).

Earlier in 2003 at the eve of the 2003 general elections, Anenih had declared that there was no vacancy in Edo State Government House and had stated authoritatively that the then Governor Lucky Igbinedion was bound to be re-elected at polls. Consequent upon the foregoing, a good number of politicians who had "sharpened their political knives to have a shot at the governorship race, had quietly faded from the scene for Igbinedion to serve his second term. (*The Nation* July 11, 2007). Anenih's influence on politics in Edo state is well represented in the statement by the Senator representing Edo Central Senatorial District, Odion Ugbesia, (one of Anenih's 'godsons'). To him, If you as ask Odion Ugbesia to draw God, because I have never seen God, by the time I finish it, you will probably find the face of Anenih in it, you will find the hands of Anenih and you find the legs of Anenih. This is a man who has done so much for me. Every day I pray to God to help me in my life, and once and every time Anenih comes and help me. He made me a commissioner; made me a Minister, made me a Minister again, he helped me build a house (Ogbonmwan, 2005:4).

This exemplifies to what extent budding politicians revere these godfathers who are somewhat deified as they take on the position of kingmakers in the political society. However, political godfathers came crashing from their exalted positions as kingmakers in Edo state as Comrade Adams Oshiomhole emerged victorious without the aid of godfathers. The impact of this situation on Nigeria's political climate is that the victory of Oshiomhole signified the beginning to an end of the old political order where leaders were installed by godfathers rather than the will of the people.

It also brought to an end in Edo State 'money politics' which had been a clog in the wheel of Nigeria's democratisation. It was noted that prior to the election, the PDP hired some personnel to buy voter's cards at stipulated prices (O. Edekpai, personal communication, July 3, 2012). More so, it was also speculated that on the day of the election party agents were seen all around the corners persuading people to vote for PDP with juicy offers ranging from cash to jewellery and even phones (C. Osawaru, personal communication, July 7, 2012). In spite of such election malpractices, the PDP still lost out to AC.

Political participation also rose from about 35% to 39.1% in the 2012 general elections in the state (INEC, September 1, 2012). The point being made is that the verdict of the Edo State Election Petition Tribunal has shown to the common man that their votes and participation in the entire electoral process are not in vain. As such, with or without fear of election rigging, people have begun to develop confidence in the entire electoral process, hoping that even when election results are manipulated, the courts would remain the last hope of the common man.

Impact of the Verdict on Nigeria's Judiciary

The judiciary is one of the three arms of government which concerns itself with the interpretation of the law. The other two – the legislative and the executive arms of government make and implement the laws respectively. The Nigerian judiciary like several other sectors in the country has been subject to criticisms. Unfortunately, a large proportion of such criticisms are founded on loss of confidence on the country's judiciary given a history of manipulated verdicts. As was noted by Emeka Ngige: “the judiciary is at its lowest ebb in terms of respect, in terms of acceptance and in terms of ability to inspire the common man” (Igbitande, 2012:1).

However, the tribunal verdict which installed Oshiomhole as the duly elected Governor of Edo state was lauded by several Nigerians as a mark of the restoration of the judiciary's cardinal position as the final hope of the common man. Peter Okocha, a former gubernatorial aspirant in Delta State hails the judgement as a 'historic victory' for the judiciary (*Vanguard* November 12, 2008). Similarly, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, a former governor of Lagos State commended the judiciary for the judgement, stating that it had become apparent that the judiciary “is up to the task of reforming our country's battered image on election malpractices.” He added that the Oshiomhole victory was a “great tonic” for those who had been despondent on the court cases over the 2007 elections (Tinubu, *Vanguard*, November 12, 2008:10). In furtherance thereof, the Committee for the defence of Human Rights (CDHR) as well as the Niger Delta Peace Organisation (NDPO) lauded the verdict of the court, stating that the judgment signalled a victory for the rule of law. In a related development, the Governor of Jigawa State, Sule Lamido reacted to the judgement by enjoining all parties to respect the judgement of the court as it was reflective of the wishes of the masses. (Arubi, *Vanguard*, November 12, 2008:10).

Impact of the Verdict on Nigeria's Democratisation Process

Nigeria ever since the attainment of independence in 1960 has had its successive governments involved in conscious efforts targeted at leading the country towards the attainment of “true democracy”. Nonetheless, such efforts have been repeatedly hindered by the spate of electoral malpractice as several contestants have emerged as winners in elections even without securing the people's support. Describing the victory of Adams Oshiomhole at the Election Petitions Tribunal, Pat Utomi, former presidential aspirant, said that it was not only a victory for the Action Congress but was an exceptional victory for democracy in Nigeria (Akoni, *Vanguard* November 12, 2008:10). In a separate statement, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) described the verdict as a “victory for democracy and our country” (Komolafe, *Vanguard*, November 12, 2008). On his own part, Governor Theodore Orji of Abia State described the judgement as a development “that is good for Nigeria's fledgling democracy” (Okoli, *Vanguard*, November 12, 2008).

Conclusion

Drawing from the findings of this study, it becomes safe to conclude that as exemplified by the events of the 2007 gubernatorial election in Edo State, election tribunals are highly instrumental in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Thus, democracy has to do with the government of the people by the people and for the people and not one impeded by election malpractices. It could therefore be stated that election tribunals which tend to be the only ground upon which election results could be re-examined, play an invaluable role in the sustenance of democracy. In addition, with regards to whether election tribunals have the capacity to deter electoral fraud, the point must be stressed that as long as election tribunal verdicts reflect the wishes of the masses as was the case in Edo State, politicians would gradually begin to identify the futility of any attempt to manipulate election results. In general, one major contribution this study has made to the overall body of knowledge is the discovery of the role of election tribunals in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. It has become a reference point as to how it promotes democracy, raises the electorate's hope and renders military coups d'etat almost impossible.

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