

## **The 2023 Presidential General Election in Nigeria: The Ripples and the Effects on Nigeria Democratic Governance**

**James N. Nnoruga**

Department of Religion & Human Relations  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria  
Email: jn.nnoruga@unizik.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

The Nigerian 2023 general election came as scheduled on 25<sup>th</sup> February, unlike the previous general elections, which shifted toward the election day. This election differed from other elections because of the introduction of a technological device, namely the bimodal voter accreditation system (BVAS) and independent result viewing (IREV) portal. This changed a lot of things in the electoral process and restored confidence in Nigerians. Hence there was a lot of enthusiasm by the citizens especially the youth to take back the country for their own advantage. But something went wrong during the election process. In this write-up, the research traced the problems encountered during the elections and how they affected the feelings of the people. To find out also to what extent the newly introduced technology in the electoral system helped in furthering and strengthening the existence of democracy in Nigeria. The research used a thematic approach in unravelling the ripples of the 2023 presidential general elections. It was found out that Independent National Electoral Commission was being accused of manipulating the presidential elections which gave rise to some problems than happiness.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria has enjoyed the democratic system of government uninterrupted from 1999 to 2023 with many different general elections conducted by Independent Electoral Commission (INEC). One of the main features of democracy is the process of electing leaders through free and fair elections where the people themselves freely choose their leaders without being imposed on them by anybody or through any other means. Nigeria and Africa in general have been unfortunate in the process of electing their leaders in various organs or tiers of government. The electoral body as an institution is highly manipulated by the ruling class in their favour, which means they are not a strong and still dependent institution. And without strong institutions, democracy can never thrive in any country. Nigeria has successfully carried out many elections from presidential elections to state houses of assemblies in different states, but almost all the elections ended in court for one problem or the other, for irregularities or malpractices either from the commission or from the staff or ad hoc staff employed to help during the elections or from politicians themselves. In many cases, new electoral acts were introduced but were not being followed, and electoral offenders were not brought to the book and punished, hence the impunity continues with each election. With the introduction of measures to control electoral offenses, the offenses are increasing, recently intimidation of voters, vote buying and manipulation of the bimodal accreditation system (BVAS), and false declaration of candidates by independent electoral commission officials. Concerning the above incident on false declaration of candidate, Okocha and Nwezeh (2023) reported that:

In a rather depressing point of electoral rascality widely seen as more disappointing than any situation in the past, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Resident Electoral Commission (REC) for Adamawa State, Hudu Yunusa, in the early hours of Sunday, declared the candidate of All Progressive Congress (APC), Senator Aisha Dahiru Binani, as the winner of the state governorship election. Adamawa State Commissioner of Police and the Director of the Department of State Service (DSS) in the state., curiously, provided cover for the REC during the fake declaration of Binani's victory. It is another instance of security agencies' connivance to undermine the free, fair, and credible electoral process in the country. But INEC, yesterday, described as null, void, and of no effect the declaration of Binani as the winner of the governorship election. (no. p).

This is the level of impunity in the Nigeria electoral process which at the end of any electoral process produces bad leaders.

The 2023 generation election has come and gone, and about 18 different political parties participated in the general elections which later produced the president of Nigeria and governors in different states, with senators and house of assemblies in the states and national assembly. The All Progressive Congress (APC) won the 2023 presidential election and majority members in the lower House of Assembly and in the Senate chambers. With the BVAS machine, it was gathered that voter turnout was low compared with previous elections being purported to be higher in voter turnout. There were foreign and local accredited observers who later released their reports on the conduct of the general elections. This write-up will investigate the pros and cons of the 2023 general elections process, some factors that militated or played out in the process of the election, and its impacts on the strengthening and weakening of the already existing democracy in Nigeria. Again, the reaction of the populace during and after the elections and why the slogan “Go to Court” originated and is carried on by some political parties or some citizens. Finally, the general role played by the INEC commission, the judiciary, and the media in the success or awful or failed election as differently purported by many opinion molders in Nigeria. This write-up focused mainly on the presidential election but draws some analogies or makes some references to the governorship elections that later came up on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

### **Build up to the 2023 Presidential General Elections in Nigeria**

The 2023 general election was different from all other previous elections due to many innovations in the constitution and the new Electoral Act 2022 being passed by the National Assembly and signed into law by President Muhammed Buhari the then-president of Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Apart from these innovations, a new system of campaign came into existence whereby a group of supporters organized million marches in support of their candidates or the political party of their choice in different states of the federation. This created a real atmosphere of contest where the youths for the first time were involved and were at the forefront in the election of their leaders. The youths and other stakeholders of the different political parties gathered to march in solidarity to promote their candidates for different elections. This helped to reduce so much money being spent in the campaign seasons by the political parties or the candidate involved. This motivated many people young and old, unknown political parties were made famous and this set the stage indicating that anybody can win the election irrespective of the party he/she belongs to.

The roles mass media played in the above different million marches conducted all over the country were tremendous in shaping and disseminating information for the advancement of democracy in Nigeria. These expectations of mass media were highly utilized as Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2003) captured it earlier that:

The mass media are expected to (a) serve as the medium for the democratization of communication that is making communication public; (b) play a vital part in the political democratization of organization. Among other roles of the media is the duty to make information, discussion, and considerations of public affairs accessible. (p. 298).

These mass media online, print and non-print media promoted transparency and fairness in the election process in inter-party affairs, trust in the electoral process, voter education, and most importantly its role as the watchdog over the government and INEC commission as an institution. Again, in the buildup of the election, most eligible electorates came out to register for the permanent voter’s card (PVC) in different states of the federation the INEC commission has to extend the registration many times to accommodate the eligible voters who were yet to be registered. Erezi (2022) pointed out that:

A federal high court in Abuja has ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to resume the continuous voter registration (CVR) exercise. Justice Inyang Ekwo said the voters’ registration ought to last until 90 days before the 2023 general election...the plaintiff argued that INEC cannot stop the continuous voter registration before the time stipulated by law. Justice Ekwo agreed with the plaintiffs and ordered the electoral umpire not to deprive citizens of the opportunity to have their voter cards for the forthcoming poll. (no. p).

The peace pact or accord was signed by all political parties initiated by the National Peace Committee in Abuja months before the commencement of the general elections, thereby committing themselves to a peaceful campaign, to avoid discord, unnecessary fight/war or hate speeches among the political parties or candidates involved in the election or their loyalists. Many political parties came with their candidates or representatives to sign the peace accord up to two times. An Agency Report (2023) showed that:

The peace pact, the second in the last five months, was organized and coordinated by the National Accord for Peace under the chairmanship of a former Head of State, Abdulsalami Abubakar. The pact entails that all political parties accept the outcome of the elections or seek legitimate means of redress in the event of divergent positions. (no. p).

Most of the political parties flouted the first accord or pact which was signed on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022. This showed that there was a lack of compliance by the major political parties, there were many attacks and violations by the spokesperson of the political parties, party members, presidential candidates themselves, party chairmen, and hard-core supporters.

There were many attacks, killing of citizens and police officers, abductions, and burning of INEC offices and facilities despite the signing of the peace accord signed by the different political parties with their candidates. Some took place in campaign rallies and in different states of Nigeria. The Agency Report also stated that:

...in January 2023, a lot of violence occurred with at least 15 abductions (including that of a police officer) and at least, 30 killings (including those of 11 security personnel). In December 2022, INEC said it recorded 50 attacks on its offices between 2019 and 2022...there were 11 attacks on its offices in Imo, seven attacks in Osun, and five each in Enugu state and Akwa Ibom. In each state of Ebonyi, Abia, and Cross River, there were four attacks on INEC offices; two attacks each in Kaduna state, Lagos, Borno, Bayelsa, Ondo, and Ogun state. (no. p).

Concerning the above situation, there was palpable fear all over Nigeria towards the election period, because of insecurities in many states, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East were agitating that there should be no election in the whole of South-East, in the West the herdsmen were killing people both in the churches and homes, while in the North banditry was the order of the day because some local governments have been taken over by the bandits. Hence, the stakeholders consistently asked the INEC if the 25<sup>th</sup> February election would still place or postponed due to these factors and non-state actors harassing the citizens but INEC was vehemently optimistic that the election would still take place as scheduled in the election timetable. Later INEC conducted elections in most places except a few places where there were no registered voters and highly insecure places.

Almost all the 18 political parties and their candidates participated in the presidential debates conducted both nationally and internationally using different media. On one occasion, the political candidate of APC in the person of Ahmed Bola Tinubu failed to show up in the debate slated nationally among other three famous contenders comprising Labour Party (LP) candidate Mr. Peter Obi (who has his group known as Obedient group), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) candidate Alhaji Rabiu Kwankwaso (with his group called Kwankwasia group). Rather candidate for APC went to Chatham House known also as The Royal Institute of International Affairs for his debate which was highly criticized by Nigerian citizens. Though later, some of the popular candidates went there also to campaign, followed by INEC chairman Professor Mahmood Yakubu who went and communicated and promised to the world the commitment of the commission to conduct a credible election in Nigeria with the introduction of BVAS and Independent National Electoral Commission Result Viewing Portal (IREV). Omolaoye (2022) said that “both technologies would be deployed for the voter accreditation and uploading of polling unit results” (no. p).

Another significant event in the buildup of the 2023 generation was the redesign of the naira currency. There were scarcity of funds and this affected business transactions all over Nigeria, citizens and the political parties needed money to prepare and flag off the campaigns, speculations were rife that it was done to curtail vote buying during the elections while some were of the opinion to curtail kidnapers who have naira notes stashed away in hidden places and to recover naira notes that are not in circulations. Some economists were of the opinion that it was ill-timed. Chime (2023) noted that:

The policy of CBN on redesigning of our currency at this time when Nigerians are preparing for elections is ill-timed. This malicious policy has thrown the entire nation into an economic and political quagmire, leaving both the rich and the poor in agony. Before any policy is made, you must put some things into consideration bearing in mind its effects on the general public. You need to check if the policy will have positive impacts on the people within a defined environment. The negative impacts must also be put into consideration holistically. (no. p).

The currency redesign was not done according to the federal government to hunt anyone but the presidential aspirant of APC senator Ahmed Tinubu claimed that it was meant to deter him from gaining victory in the presidential elections. The supreme court later ruled that both old and new notes should be in circulation till the end of December 2023. Adesomoju (2023) reported that:

The Supreme Court has extended the validity of the N200, N500, and N1000 naira notes till 31 December. A seven-man panel of the court led by John Okoro unanimously directed that the CBN must continue to receive the old notes from Nigerians. The court held that the directives of President Muhammadu Buhari for the redesign of the new notes and withdrawal of the old notes without due consultation are invalid. (no. p).

There were many analyses of public opinions with regard to the forthcoming elections, especially on the presidential election. There were many opinions, calculations, and suggestions on how the winner of the presidential election would come about. This led to many predictions by the citizens of Nigeria and political parties on who will emerge as the winner of the presidential election, even many pastors predicted and prophesied the outcome of the presidential elections. In the buildup to the 2023 general elections, several opinion polls were conducted by many poll institutes to predict or to give insight into the likely outcome of the elections. In most of the opinion polls, the candidate of LP Peter Obi maintains the lead then. According to ANAP Foundation (2023):

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final Poll result in February 2023 reveals that Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) remains in the lead, with Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) both trailing him. Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) emerged as the lone outsider. Mr. Peter Obi leads, with 21% of registered voters proposing to vote for him if the presidential election were to be conducted today, and 13% proposing to vote for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu who fell in second place. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was third with 10% and Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso was a distant fourth with 3% of voters proposing to vote for him. (no. p).

The issue of zoning was highly contested by the political parties on where to zone their presidency, most of the supporters of political parties zoned the presidency to the southern part of the country, sequel to the fact that the last president then, President Buhari came from the northern part of the country. But NNPP and PDP zones their presidency to the north while the two other contending bigger parties LP and APC zoned theirs to the southern part of the country. The stand of each party on the issue of the zone chosen was defended strongly by the party loyalists concerned. But the generality of Nigerian citizens preferred the presidency to come from the Southern part of the country, which later took place. This is the same with the Muslim/Muslim presidential ticket by the APC, some saw it as neglect, while other parties chose Christian/Muslim tickets which was applauded by citizens. This and other issues came up during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria before the actual days of the elections when the INEC promised Nigerians that the election process will be free, fair, and credible. At this

point, many Nigerians were ready to cast their votes to their preferred candidates to fulfill their franchise.

### **Examining the Conduct of the Election Process on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 Presidential Election**

On this day, the presidential, Senatorial, and National House of Assembly elections took place simultaneously as they were in the previous years. Before the election day, the non-sensitive materials were seen being deployed in their respective areas as directed by INEC, though there was a shortage of buses that will convey the INEC staff and ad-hoc staff to their places of assignment. Many voters came out on time to exercise their franchise but voting started late in many places while in some it started on time. Observation shows that many electorates indicate that there was no playing of games in the squares or along the streets by the youths as it was the case during the previous elections. In most places, the BVAS was working efficiently but the problems started when the time to upload the result to the IREV. The code supplied for the upload of the result was not going but the codes for the Senatorial and National House of Assembly were going, the electorates started sensing fraud by the INEC commission. While the election process was going on in many places, in other places, it was full of thuggery, intimidation of voters, and killings of candidates vying for one office or the other. This led INEC to cancel election exercises in most places and later rescheduled them. Adebajo (2023) reported that:

On the day of the general elections, February 25, at least eight people lost their lives during the process. This shows an improvement compared to the death toll of 18 recorded during the presidential election four years earlier on February 23, 2019. However, in 2015, only two lives were lost to election violence during the presidential and federal legislative polls. There were 48 incidents across 21 states of the country, including the federal capital city. Lagos recorded the highest number of election violence incidents, followed by Rivers and Imo states. (no. p).

Though there were many conflicting reports as to regards to the number of violence and deaths in different states of Nigeria on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 general elections, it has to be noted that there were deaths and violence in some places. Worthy of note is that INEC indicated there would be no voting in some places for some reasons because earlier before the election day there has been rumors going around that there will be no elections in the whole of the south-east, this is to cause panic so that there would be low voter turnout during the election. Though this calculated attempt did not go through for there was a massive turnout on the day of election in the south-east generally.

There were no incidence forms in the 2023 general elections for those who were not captured by BVAS, unlike in the previous elections where they were used, which facilitated multiple voting by one individual and all manner of electoral malpractices. Rather what played out was noncompliance with the electoral process, for it was observed that some polling units did not use BVAS in accreditation and transmission of results. Again, there was the incidence of intimidation of voters in many states, where some group of people or party loyalists insisted that if you would not vote for their candidates, one should go away or go home, some voters were chased away and denied voting completely. The attention of security operatives was contacted to stop the anomaly. Furthermore, there were incidences of vote buying by many party loyalists in many polling units, this affected the result of the elections significantly in most places while some voters resisted the voter buying and voted according to their conscience.

However, rumor again started filtering in that the results of the presidential election were not going which INEC later described as technical glitches, while that of the senatorial and national house of assembly were going normal, voters started smelling foul play, and this led the voters to block the INEC staff from leaving the voting premises until the results were uploaded hence some waited into the night but to no avail. With this scenario, most people believed that INEC has been compromised and presidential results were tampered with. This caused a general fear in the country and the trust in the INEC Commission as an institution diminished. This was later seen in the European Union report on the conduct of the election by the INEC as related by Andrews (2023) thus:

INEC lacked efficient planning and transparency during critical stages of the electoral process, while on election day trust in INEC was seen to further reduce due to delayed polling processes and information gaps related to much-anticipated access to results on its Results Viewing Portal (IReV). (no. p.).

It is on record that the just 2023 general elections were marred by a lack of transparency on the part of the INEC. Many international and local observers were of the same opinion on the same issue of transparency and some observers went ahead to list other factors that militated against the due process during the election.

Ijaseun (2023) reported that the final result of the presidential election in 36 states of the federation and 774 local government areas in the country were called in the early morning of 1 March 2023, with APC presidential candidate Senator Bola Tinubu a former governor of Lagos state as the winner, who scored a total of 8,794,726 votes and won 12 states of Nigeria. Followed by PDP presidential candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar who scored a total of 6,964,520 votes and won 12 states of Nigeria, and LP presidential candidate Mr. Peter Obi scored a total of 6,101,533 votes and won 11 states plus FCT, while NNPP presidential candidate Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso scored total of 1,496,687 votes and won 1(one) state (INEC IReV portal). From the moment of the announcement of the presidential result, the political atmosphere in Nigeria changed from anticipation to criticism, and analysis of all sorts, many were angry and rejected the result, and some were happy especially the party that won the election.

From the ongoings, due to the outcome or seemly manipulations from the presidential election, the slogan “GO to COURT” originated, indicating that if you are in doubt about the result announced by the INEC commission, especially from the ruling party and the winner of the presidential election. This of course was from the notion that no one has ever won the presidential court case and become the president or unseat the ruling president through the judiciary process and that the judiciary process is the only way to claim a stolen mandate. No Nigerian politician or political party has in the past claimed back the presidential mandate through a court process except in the case of governorship elections. It has to be noted here that the senatorial candidates and national house of assembly elections were not contested much in comparison with the presidential election except for a few litigations.

### **Problems and Consequences of the 2023 Presidential General Elections**

Not minding the flaws in the electoral system and election process noticed in the 2023 general elections, which were attested by local and international observers and Nigerians a lot of improvements were made towards the democratic system of government in Nigeria. For free and fair elections and periodic elections according to Ibekwe (2009) remain the main features of democracy. The gains of the 2023 general elections towards the strengthening of the political institutions, development, and sustainability of democracy in Nigeria were highly noticeable. Previously what normally happens in elections was the pure selection of political leaders being imposed on Nigerian citizens in the name of election in the democratic system of government. Hence Odey (2003) regarded Nigeria’s elections as madness, which means it does not reflect the wishes of the people. Ezeani (2009) also cried out that what was being practiced in Nigeria was pseudo-democracy, a type of democracy that was totally devoid of strong institutions, altruistic patriotism, and sustainable development.

The introduction of BVAS and IReV were seen as a game changer in the 2023 general elections, these changes or introductions helped to improve the quality and transparency of the 2023 general election to some extent and helped to restore the confidence of the electorate nationwide, hence turnout was relatively high though not to be compared to previous elections where the BVAS machine was not in use. The national and international observers like the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute (NDI/IRI), and European Union Election Observers Mission (EUOEM) praised the introduction of these devices but decried the ill-use of them during the election process. These machines reduced the court litigations and at the same time helped to prosecute court cases as seen in the case judgement in Osun state and other states of Nigeria.

Beyond these gains and more, Nigeria experienced a kind of sorry state of affairs during the elections which caused some ripples in the democratic system of Nigeria. There has been a kind of feeling of

betrayal being experienced by Nigerian citizens caused by the failure of INEC to transmit the presidential result in real time. Of all the factors that militated against the free and fair election in Nigeria in 2023, failure to transmit the presidential result marred the election greatly with regard to transparency. The INEC chairman went to Chatham House to promise Nigerians and the whole world that upload of the result in real-time will take place and no going back, this gave confidence to Nigerians and attracted many world powers to focus on Nigeria in her bid to strengthen her democracy. Sulaimon (2023) reported that:

The Independent National Electoral Commission has flouted the promise it made on uploading results of elections in different polling units across the country as they are sorted, counted, and collated. The Punch on November 22 reported that INEC chairman, Yakubu Mahmoud, said there is no going back on its decision to upload the results of the 2023 general elections on its portal to enable Nigerians to have a real view of the results as they are being collated. Mahmood added that with Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, the result would be uploaded on the portal as they come. As of 7:14 pm, a check by the PUNCH shows that no result has been uploaded yet on the INEC website except those witnessed and recorded from their respective polling units. (no. p).

The consequences of the above action have landed Nigerian politicians and political parties in several court litigations. At least four political parties have filed their respective petitions challenging the declaration of the APC candidate as the winner of the 25<sup>th</sup> February presidential election. These include the Action Alliance (AA), the Allied People's Movement (APM), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Labour Party (LP). Though some parties have withdrawn their court cases due to one reason or the other. As of today, all eyes are on the judiciary to rule on the electoral process.

The lack of transparency which took place in the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 election would certainly affect the next coming election in Nigeria sequel to deceit and non-compliance of electoral laws by the INEC commission. It is the belief of the common man in Nigeria that elections in Nigeria will end up again in the selection of candidates than election. Akinyemi (2023) claimed that a 19-year-old boy from Plateau state committed suicide after Peter Obi the presidential candidate of LP lost the election due to fraud committed by INEC during the last election. Many citizens will be deterred from coming out in the next election to vote for the candidate of their own choice due to the above deceit.

The problem of incumbency still affects the election and judiciary process in Nigerian democracy. These institutions are among the pillars of a strong democracy in any democratic country. European Union lamented heavily on the influence of incumbency on the outcome of the Nigerian general election. They presented their report which they carried out between 11<sup>th</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at the invitation of the INEC, the mission accredited a total number of 110 observers from 25 EU member states, as well as Norway, Switzerland, and Canada. This factor alone contributed to the decrease in the outcome of the turnout in other elections, for electorates always believe that those in power will use their government machineries to upturn the outcome of the election process in their favor. This portrays the INEC as a dependent institution being used by the government to achieve their aim and reward some politicians in their good books.

For lack of transparency and condoned deceit in the just concluded 2023 general elections, it becomes difficult to arrest and punish the electoral offenders in the various states of the federation. The (EUOEM) Report on this, advocates the need to:

Address impunity for electoral offenses through robust, well-defined, and effective inter-agency coordination governed by clear rules on non-partisanship, optimization of resources, delivery of effective investigation and sanctioning, and provision of regular public consolidated information on outcomes. (p. 10).

Nigeria is known for not being forthright or diligent in preventing and prosecuting the electoral offenders, hence electoral malpractices keep multiplying from time to time in every election that takes

place in Nigeria. This ridicules and adversely affects the whole process as a non-serious affair, hence most Nigerian citizens do not come to vote during the elections.

The problem of insecurity is a troubling factor anytime Nigeria wants to elect her leaders, many elections have been shifted from the slated date to another date because of insecurities and other related factors. This automatically reduces the number of voters that vote in each election. INEC commission released the number of registered voters to be 93. 469.008 million voters and 87.2 million people collected their permanent voters card (PVC) but the total number of actual voters on election day was only 24.9 million (Yusuf, 2023). Those in internally displaced camps (IDP) did not vote, and those who did transfer of their voting location to another place could not vote because most of the transfers had technical glitches or were not completed in time before the INEC portal was closed. Adding these to other factors mentioned earlier accounts for low turnout in the presidential general election. The consequences of these factors have ripple effects in the governance of the people, and the development of the nation (Nnoruga, 2023).

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Though there were many improvements in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, like through the use of BVAS many over voting were curtailed in places where they were used, it helped to give accurate data of the electorates that voted in each election unlike in the previous elections where a huge number of voters were recorded but it was a falsified number. Again, the political parties with unknown influential people won the election in different senatorial and house of assembly seats. This gave great joy to most Nigerians because it indicates that democracy is for the common people and that the wishes of the people were respected. From critical observation and analysis, one will see from the results released by the INEC, the 2023 general election was highly contested by political gladiators not minding the blurred result sheets and forged figures on the IReV portal. This shows or means that party without structure(s) can win election in Nigeria, this is against the backdrop of some parties who claimed and mocked other smaller parties of not having structures to win any election in Nigeria.

To continue to improve on the already advanced electoral process, INEC should always follow the electoral laws for credible elections in the country, this will help to strengthen the democracy in Nigeria. Adhering to electoral laws will drastically reduce voter apathy which has been threatening the election process. INEC technology should be tested very well and upgraded from time to time to avoid the claimed glitches that took place in the 2023 presidential general elections. This will restore the confidence of the electorates during the election and increase voter turnout in each election because citizens will know that their voices will be heard and their wishes respected just like in the other developed democratic system of government.

The continuous voter registration should be on throughout the year, not only when the election is about to start, the INEC will start registering for people. This will ease out the heavy workload on the staff of the INEC and citizens will not be disenfranchised as was done in the last 2023 general elections. This also will not subject the citizens to unnecessary harshness and struggles to get their PVC, the issue of transfer should be made seamless and INEC protects the PVC to avoid being stolen and thrown away as it used to be in previous times when many PVC were found inside the drainages system and inside the bushes. INEC should provide a means for Nigerians in the diaspora to vote during the elections so that they will participate in electing the leaders of their choice. With this in mind, INEC should improve its devices for online voting across Nigerian states. This will ensure spending less amount of money in and during the elections. The killings, ballot stuffing and snatching, and change of figures will drastically reduce though there is no perfect system. Online voting will also reduce the stress and risks involved in moving sensitive and non-sensitive materials from one place to another.

The European Union Election Observation Mission recommended the establishment of a robust operational framework for the independence, integrity, and efficiency of electoral administration through an inclusive and publicly accountable mechanism for selecting candidates for the posts of INEC



commissioners, and RECs based on clear criteria for evaluating of merits, qualifications, and verified non-partisanship (EUOEM, 2023). This of course has been the problem of Nigeria where the staff of INEC remain servants to the ruling party or president who appointed them to the detriment of Nigerian citizens. Finally, election malpractices slow down the pace of national development because the good people who can be good leaders with vision and good plans are not always elected. With this economic, social, and infrastructural developments become mere fantasies or dreams. The advanced world democratic governments know the value of credible elections because it is generally accepted as an authentic platform for determining the outcome of a good democratic government for the development and sustenance of governance

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