THE ELECTORAL HUB



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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About the Electoral Hub

The Electoral Hub an organ of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD), is a multidisciplinary strategic think-tank which seeks to provide solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. It is conceptualized to complement the roles and activities of the different institutions, stakeholders and drivers of the electoral process and governance. The Electoral Hub's aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data and critical analysis supporting the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving the electoral governance architecture and democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in contextual analysis for solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity.

Our core values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.

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ACRONYMS

APC	All Progressives Congress
ERC	Electoral Reform Committee
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NNDP	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NRC	National Republican Convention
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Elections represent a core component of any democratic state. They provide citizens with the opportunity to exercise their political rights in choosing persons to represent their interests. The development of the Nigerian electoral system can be divided into two main periods: colonial (1900-1959), and post-colonial (1960-date). The post-colonial period can further be divided into the First Republic (1960-1966), the Second Republic (1979-1983), the Third Republic (1993-1999), and the Fourth Republic (1999-date).

Under the colonial period, elections were first held to the Lagos Town Council on 29 March 1920, after which general elections were held for the first time on 20 September 1923 under the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The Constitution introduced the first elective rights in Nigeria, and led to the formation of the first political party in Nigeria called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). Following the introduction of the elective principle in Nigeria, Africans were elected into the legislative council with four elected seats – three for Lagos, and one for Calabar. Legislative council elections continued to be held at regular intervals under colonial Nigeria, until the final elections were held in 1959. The 1959 general elections were a major milestone in the independence of Nigeria from colonial rule.

Following Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960, the country became a republic in 1963. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had been the Governor-General, became the country's first President. The 1964/1965 parliamentary elections were the first elections held in Nigeria post-independence. The result was a victory for the Northern People's Congress, which won 162 of the 312 seats in the House of Representatives. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was also re-elected Prime Minister of Nigeria, a position he had retained since Nigeria's independence.

However, the military coup of January 1966 led by Major General Aguisi Ironsi brought about the untimely end of the First Republic. This coup triggered a series of further coups which led to the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, and Major General Olusegun Obasanjo as Heads of State at different time periods.

Following thirteen years of military rule, Nigeria returned to democracy in 1979 under the Obasanjo administration. The first elections under the 1979 Constitution were held on schedule in July and August 1979. This Constitution granted universal suffrage in Nigeria, reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 and extending voting rights to women across the country. The elections ushered in a democratically elected government and the military government handed over power to a new civilian government under President Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979.

In 1983, another election was held in which the incumbent Shehu Shagari won a second term. However, the Second Republic was again brought to an end when a military coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari in 1983 brought about the return of military rule in Nigeria, with General Ibrahim Babangida later becoming Head of State in 1985.

The Babangida administration made an attempt to return to democracy. The 1989 Constitution was drafted, and parliamentary elections held in 1992, while presidential elections were held in 12 June 1993. The unofficial election result suggested that Chief Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party won the elections, however the National Electoral Commission (NEC) at that time refused to announce election results despite several court orders.

The annulment of the elections resulted in series of protests and strikes in the South-Western region. General Babangida resigned from office, and an Interim National Government led by Chief Ernest Shonekan came into power. However, Shonekan was only in office for about three months, because another military coup led by General Sani Abacha occurred in November 1993, thus truncating the Third Republic abruptly. Following Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State, and he ushered Nigeria's final return to democracy.

The 1999 election under the Fourth Republic was a major milestone in the democracy of Nigeria, as it led to the emergence of over two decades of civilian rule in the country. Four years later, presidential elections were again held on 19 April 2003, with the incumbent

President Olusegun Obasanjo winning the elections. In 2007, the third general elections since the end of military rule in 1999 were conducted. According to reports, the 2007 elections resulted in numerous casualties. Even the winner of the election, President Yar'adua, recognized that there were irregularities in the election. This led to the constitution of the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) led by Justice Uwais to provide recommendations to improve the electoral system of the country.

On the recommendation of the ERC, the 2006 Electoral Act was amended by the enactment of the 2010 Electoral Act to ensure transparency in the process and boost public confidence in INEC. Although the 2011 election was alleged to be more credible and transparent compared to the previous elections held in 2007, the election was not without its flaws such as vote rigging, ballot stuffing and ballot box snatching. The declaration of the incumbent as the winner of the 2011 presidential elections led to violent protests and riots especially in the northern parts of Nigeria who were ardent supports of the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari.

The 2015 elections were described as the most highly competitive elections held in the history of elections in the country. However, despite the threats of violence by the Boko Haram sect and the tense political environment in the build-up to the election, the 2015 election was arguably the most credible election in the history of elections in Nigeria. For the first time, an opposition candidate won the presidential election against the incumbent.

General elections were again scheduled to take place in Nigeria on February 16, 2019. Following the outcome of the 2015 elections and the significant improvement in the electoral process, the 2019 elections had high expectations to be better than the previous elections. However, going by public opinions and election observers' reports, the 2019 general elections fell below expectations as Nigerians were dissatisfied with the management of the elections by INEC and the overall outcome of the election. The election was marred by low voter turnout, violence, electoral malpractices, alleged party affiliations by security operatives, and rejection of election result by the opposition party.

From the foregoing, we have discussed the development of the electoral process of Nigeria. Despite significant efforts by the several electoral commissions to improve elections in Nigeria, violence and electoral malpractices have been the hallmark of elections in Nigeria. This raises a pressing need for electoral and constitutional reform to address the numerous issues that mar elections in Nigeria. It is hoped that this paper contributes to further research, and policy and lawmaking in light of the current review of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as well as the move by the National Assembly to pass the Electoral Bill 2021.

Development of Nigerian Electoral System

Colonial Period	**1900-1959**
Post-Colonial Period	**1960 - date**
First Republic	1960 -1966
Second Republic	1979-1983
Third Republic	1993 -1999
Fourth Republic	1999 -date

INTRODUCTION

Elections represent a core component of any democratic state. They provide citizens with the opportunity to exercise their political rights in choosing persons to represent their interests. The history of elections in Nigeria can be traced to the advent of colonial rule when the first elections were held in Lagos in 1920 and the first general elections were held in 1923.

By 1999 at the return of civilian rule, Nigeria had been ruled by military regimes for 29 of its first 39 years of independence. The years of military rule impeded the development of civilian political leaders and hampered the emergence of a democratic culture.[1] The development of the Nigerian electoral system can be divided into two main periods: colonial (1900-1959), and post-colonial (1960-date). The post-colonial period can further be divided into the First Republic (1960-1966), the Second Republic (1979-1983), the Third Republic (1993-1999), and the Fourth Republic (1999-date).

Nigeria has a long history of electoral reforms dating back to the different political transition processes since independence, with each transition programme enacting a new electoral law and establishing a new electoral commission.[2] Under the Fourth Republic, the conduct of elections in Nigeria are regulated by the 1999 Constitution, the Electoral Act 2010, and INEC regulations and guidelines. Elections in Nigeria are organized and administered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as stipulated under the 1999 Constitution.[3]

Against this context, this paper gives a brief overview of elections conducted in Nigeria from 1920 till 2019, and also outlines the series of elections in Nigeria with the electoral

[1] "Final NDI Report on Nigeria's 2007 Elections," available at https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2313_ng_report_election07_043008.pdf

[2] Available at https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/lf/introduction/introduction

[3] "Election Observation Report: Nigeria April 2011 National Elections," available at https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/fields/field_files_attached/resource/nigerias_2011_national_elections_0.pdf

laws governing each election. It is aimed at furthering knowledge about the historical context of elections in Nigeria, which can be used by researchers, policy makers, the general public, and other electoral stakeholders.

OVERVIEW OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

COLONIAL ERA (1900-1959)

The city of Lagos was first annexed by the British in 1861, and by 1900 the British had extended their control to the entire northern and southern protectorates. These protectorates were amalgamated to form Nigeria in 1914. The elective principle was first introduced in colonial Nigeria in May 1919, when the Township Ordinance introduced voting rights within the country. The first elections to the Lagos Town Council were held on 29 March 1920.

General elections were held in Nigeria for the first time on 20 September 1923 under the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The Constitution introduced the first elective rights in Nigeria, which allowed Nigerians who earned at least £100, had been resident in Lagos or Calabar for at least a year, and were above 21 to vote. The introduction of the elective principle led to the formation of the first political party in Nigeria called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). Following the introduction of the elective principle in Nigeria, Africans were elected into the legislative council.[4] There were four elected seats – three for Lagos, and one for Calabar. Members of the legislative council served five-year terms, which means that legislative council elections occurred every five years from 1923. During the first election in 1923, the NNDP won three of the four elected seats in the Legislative Council.[5]

Five years later, general elections were held in Nigeria on 28 September 1928. These elections were held to elect members of the legislative council. The NNDP again won three of the four elected seats in the legislative council.[6]

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[4] "Hugh Clifford Constitution (1922)," available at https://nigerianscholars.com/tutorials/west-african-constitutional-development/hugh-clifford-constitution/

[5] "Colonial Reports—Annual, Report for 1923. Available at https://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/ilharvest/Africana/Books2011-05/3064634/3064634_1923/3064634_1923_opt.pdf

[6] "1928 Nigerian general election," available at https://en.linkfang.org/wiki/Nigerian_general_election%2C_1928

Another legislative council election was held in Nigeria in 1933. Four candidates contested the three Lagos seats, of which three were members of NNDP.

On 21 October 1938, the next Legislative Council election was held in Nigeria. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) won three of the four elected seats in the Legislative Council, defeating the NNDP, the dominant party at the time.[7] In 1940 and 1941, by-elections were held to fill the vacancies due to the death and resignation of two members of the council.

Partial general elections were held in Nigeria in 1943, with only two of the four elected seats available. Rather than conduct fresh elections into all the four seats, elections were held for the two seats whose members had served their full five-year terms since 1942.

Legislative council elections were held again in 1947 with a reduction in the income requirement to be eligible to vote. The 1947 elections were the first elections to be conducted under Richard's Constitution of 1946. The Constitution reduced the annual income qualification for voters from £100 to £50.[8]

The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 succeeded the Richard Constitution of 1946. The Macpherson Constitution extended the elective principle of the Clifford Constitution in its provisions for a House of Representatives and Regional House of Assembly for the northern, western, and eastern regions.[9] It also removed the minimum income qualification for voting, allowing all those who had paid taxes somewhere in Nigeria within the year preceding the election to vote. The Western Region House of Assembly elections held in 1951 with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) winning a parliamentary majority in the Western House of Assembly.[10]

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[7] "Nigerian elections: A history and a loss of memory," available at https://www.thecable.ng/nigerian-elections-a-history-and-a-loss-of-memory

[8] Felix Diamond, "Richard's constitution of 1946: Features, Merits and Demerits," November 2016. Available at https://bloggerhall.com/schoolmattazz/2016/11/12/richards-constitution/

[9] Busola Ojumu, "Feature of the MacPherson Constitution, 1951," February 2016. Available at https://passnownow.com/features-of-the-macpherson-constitution-of-1951/

[10] "How Awo stopped Zik from going to the centre", May 2014. Available at https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/05/awo-stopped-zik-going-centre/

General elections were held again between October and December 1954, under the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954. The Lyttleton Constitution extended voting rights to women in the Eastern and Southern regions alone. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) emerged as the largest party, winning 84 of the 184 seats. However, the NPC only won seats in the Northern Region, while the NCNC won the most seats in the Eastern and Western Regions.

On 12 December 1959, the final elections in colonial Nigeria were held. The 1959 general elections were a major milestone in the independence of Nigeria from colonial rule.[11] One significant element in the 1959 election was the participation of key regional politicians, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, erstwhile premiers of the Eastern and Western regions respectively.[12]

POST-COLONIAL ERA

First Republic (1960-1966)

Following Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960, the country became a republic in 1963. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had been the Governor-General, became the country's first President. The 1964/1965 parliamentary elections were the first elections held in Nigeria post-independence. The date for the election was 30 December 1964, although it was not held until 18 March 1965 in some constituencies in Lagos and the Eastern and Mid-Western Regions due to a boycott in December. In an attempt to gain political control, the election saw most political parties run as part of alliances. The boycott did not stop the conduct of the elections, and in March 1965 supplementary elections were held in those areas where the boycott had been honoured.

[11] Anthony Akinola, "Revisiting the historic 1959 general election," November 2015. Available at https://guardian.ng/opinion/revisiting-the-historic-1959-general-election/
[12] Ibid.

The result was a victory for the Northern People's Congress, which won 162 of the 312 seats in the House of Representatives.[13] Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was also re-elected Prime Minister of Nigeria, a position he had retained since Nigeria's independence.

However, the military coup of January 1966 led by Major General Aguisi Ironsi brought about the untimely end of the First Republic. This coup triggered a series of further coups which led to the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, and Major General Olusegun Obasanjo as Heads of State at different time periods.

Second Republic (1979-1983)

Following thirteen years of military rule, Nigeria returned to democracy in 1979 under the Obasanjo administration. The first elections under the 1979 Constitution were held on schedule in July and August 1979. This Constitution granted universal suffrage in Nigeria, reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 and extending voting rights to women across the country. The elections ushered in a democratically elected government and the military government handed over power to a new civilian government under President Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979, 19 years after the country gained independence.[14]

The 1979 general elections also included parliamentary elections, to elect a Senate and House of Representatives. Members of both houses were elected using the single-member plurality electoral system. Each State was divided into five districts, each of which elected a Senator. Each State was also allocated a number of seats in the House of Representatives based on its proportion of the population.[15]

[13] https://africanelections.tripod.com/ng.html
[14] "The Second Republic, 1979-83," available at http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/29.htm
[15] Available at http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/NIGERIA_1979_E.PDF

The 1983 general elections were the second in the preceding 13 years of military rule ended in 1979.[16] During the elections, the incumbent Shehu Shagari won a second term, while the National Party of Nigeria won majority seats in both houses of Assembly.[17]

However, the Second Republic was again brought to an end when a military coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari in 1983 brought about the return of military rule in Nigeria, with General Ibrahim Babangida later becoming Head of State in 1985.

Third Republic (1992-1999)

The Babangida administration made an attempt to return to democracy. The 1989 Constitution was drafted, and parliamentary elections held in 1992 – these would be the first elections held since the military coup of 1983. Only two parties were allowed to contest the elections – the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the National Republican Convention (NRC). The elections resulted in a victory for the SDP, which won 52 of the 91 Senate seats and 314 of the 593 House seats, despite the NRC winning more votes[18].

Presidential elections were held in 12 June 1993. In a bid to hand over power to a civilian government, the Presidential Election (Basic Constitutional and Transitional) Decree No.13 of 1993 was promulgated to usher in a democratically elected President.[19] The SDP and the NRC were also the only two political parties that contested the 1993 presidential election. Chief Moshood Abiola was the SDP's presidential candidate and Bashir Tofa ran for the NRC. The unofficial election result suggested that Abiola won the elections,

[16] Alan Cowell, "Nigerians Prepare For 1983 Election," November 1982. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/21/world/nigerians-prepare-for-1983-election.html.
[17] "1983 Nigerian parliamentary election," available at https://www.owlapps.net/owlapps_apps/articles?id=29525969&lang=en
[18] "1992 Nigerian parliamentary election," available at https://www.owlapps.net/owlapps_apps/articles?id=29526060&lang=en
[19] "1993 Nigerian presidential election," available at https://www.owlapps.net/owlapps_apps/articles?id=29526099&lang=en

however the National Electoral Commission (NEC) at that time refused to announce election results despite several court orders.[20]

The annulment of the elections resulted in series of protests and strikes in the South-Western region.[21] In the aftermath of the election, the government shut down media houses, and arrested journalists. The government issued decrees preventing court cases on the annulled election and NEC's activities were terminated. Notably, the June 1993 elections can be described as one of the most contentious elections in the history of Nigeria's democratic governance.[22]

Following the annulment of the election, General Babangida resigned from office, and an Interim National Government led by Chief Ernest Shonekan came into power. However, Shonekan was only in office for about three months, because another military coup led by General Sani Abacha occurred in November 1993, thus truncating the Third Republic abruptly. The bicameral Parliament which had been elected in 1992 was dissolved,[23] and Nigeria returned to military rule.

Under Abacha's administration, there were some elections. The 1997 local government council elections held on a party basis, which were intended to fill 774 council chairmanships and 8,184 ward council seats. However, the elections were marred with irregularities.[24]

[20] "Nigeria: The 12 June 1993 presidential election including the parties and names of candidates who contested the election, the names and organizations involved in the tabulation of election results, and the relevant dates when election results became available to the general public and the media," available at https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab8b4.html

[21] Ibid.

[22] Claude E. Welch, Jr, "Civil-Military Agonies in Nigeria: Pains of an Unaccomplished Transition," available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0095327X9502100405

[23] "Parliamentary Chamber: Senate Elections Held IN 1999," http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2364_99.htm

[24] "Local Government Elections," Human Rights Watch Report, available at https://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/nigeria/Nigeria-03.htm

Parliamentary elections were held in Nigeria on 25 April 1998. All parties running in the election were affiliated with the military regime, with all opposition parties banned. Voter turnout was very low, and the election results were again annulled by the government.

Following Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State, and he ushered Nigeria's final return to democracy.

Fourth Republic (1999-date)

The 1999 election under the Fourth Republic was a major milestone in the democracy of Nigeria, as it led to the emergence of over two decades of civilian rule in the country. The elections were conducted under the newly enacted 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. The election was won by Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party, who defeated Olu Falae, who was running on a joint Alliance for Democracy-All People's Party ticket. Obasanjo was elected on a four-year term. Though the election was marred by irregularities, the election was relatively peaceful.[25]

Four years later, presidential elections were held in Nigeria on 19 April 2003, with the incumbent Olusegun Obasanjo winning the elections. The outcome of the elections as described by both local and international observers was fraudulent. The election witnessed gross electoral malpractices and several incidents of violence.[26]

The 1999 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Act provided the legal framework for Nigeria's 2007 elections. These were the third general elections conducted since the end of military rule in 1999. Elections were conducted at both national and state level with the PDP candidate Umar Ya'Adua declared winner of the presidential election.[27]

[25] Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_Nigerian_presidential_election

[26] "Nigeria's 2003 Elections: The Unacknowledged Violence," Human Rights Watch Report. Available at https://www.refworld.org/docid/412eef5b4.html

[27] Ben Rawlence and Chris Albin-Lackey, "Briefing: Nigeria's 2007 general elections: Democracy in retreat," *African Affairs,* Volume 106, Issue 424, July 2007. Available at https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adm039

In the build-up to the elections, the political environment was tense, with several incidents of violence such as: assassinations of candidates for party nominations and for the general elections; armed attacks against campaign meetings and rallies; threats against potential voters to influence their choice at the ballot box; and attacks against polling stations, polling officials and rival party agents.[28] According to reports, the 2007 elections resulted in numerous casualties. Even the winner of the election, President Yar'adua, recognized that there were irregularities in the election. This led to the constitution of the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) led by Justice Uwais to provide recommendations to improve the electoral system of the country.

On the recommendation of the ERC, the 2006 Electoral Act was amended by the enactment of the 2010 Electoral Act. The Act was intended to address the lapses in the 2006 Electoral Act, as well as to ensure transparency in the process and boost public confidence in INEC For instance, the Act reduced INEC's financial dependency on the executive branch and, as a result, increased the institution's overall independence. Also, the 2010 Electoral Act placed a cap on how much money could be legally spent on individual campaigns.[29]

Despite changes to the electoral framework, the 2011 general elections in Nigeria were held in a very tense environment. The election was originally scheduled to be held on 2 April; however, the elections were postponed due to logistical problems as stated by the INEC Chairman.[30] The ruling party, People's Democratic Party, ran against the Action Congress of Nigeria and the Congress for Progressive Change, amongst others. The pre-election environment witnessed unprecedented forms of violence such as: riots, bombings

[28] "Final NDI Report on Nigeria's 2007 Elections," available at https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2313_ng_report_election07_043008.pdf
[29] "NIGERIA NATIONAL ELECTIONS APRIL 2011," International Republican Institute Report. Available at https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/fields/field_files_attached/resource/nigerias_2011_national_elections_0.pdf
[30] "Nigeria elections postponed for second time," April 3, 2011. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/4/3/nigeria-elections-postponed-for-second-time

and assassinations resulting the loss of lives and properties.[31] Human Rights Watch report that the pre-election violence claimed at least 70 lives.[32]

Although the actual election was alleged to be more credible and transparent compared to the previous elections held in 2007, the election was not without its flaws such as vote rigging, ballot stuffing and ballot box snatching.[33] The declaration of the incumbent as the winner of the 2011 presidential elections led to violent protests and riots especially in the northern parts of Nigeria who were ardent supports of the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari.

The International Republican Institute explains that in Kano, Kaduna, and 10 other northern states, heavy violence broke out between supporters of the two candidates, and between Christians and Muslims.[34] According to Human Rights Watch, the violence that occurred between the April 16 presidential election and the April 26 state elections resulted in more than 800 persons dead, thousands injured, about 65,000 persons displaced, as well as properties damaged and destroyed due to arson and vandalism.[35]

Following the outcome of the 2011 elections, the increased activities of Boko Haram in the north, allegations of marginalization, high rate of unemployment, widespread corruption, fragmentation within the major parties among others, contributed to rising tensions in the country. This was the context in which the 2015 elections were conducted in the country.[36] The election was described as the most highly competitive elections held in the history of elections in the country. Although 14 candidates contested the elections, the real contest

[31] Christian Purefoy, "Violence marks run-up to Nigerian elections," March 31, 2011. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/03/31/nigeria.elections/
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ben Simon Okolo and R Okey Onunkwo, "The 2011 Nigerian Elections: An Empirical Review, available at https://www.eisa.org/pdf/JAE10.2Okolo.pdf
[34] International Republican Institute (2014), *Nigeria National Elections: April 2011*, https://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/69123540-Nigeria-national-elections-april-international-republican-institute.html
[35] Ibid.
[36] Olakunle Olowojolu and Modupe Ake Ph.D, "An Overview Of 2015 General Elections In Nigeria," *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (OMAN Chapter)* Vol. 5, No.5; December 2015. Available at http://eprints.lmu.edu.ng/1432/1/AN%20OVERVIEW%20OF%202015%20GENERAL%20ELECTIONS%20IN%20NIGERIA.pdf

was between the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC).[37]

Despite the threats of violence by the Boko Haram sect and the tense political environment in the build-up to the election, voting proceeded smoothly on Election Day with minimal violence or disruptions. In addition, the introduction of smart card readers by the electoral commission to a large extent impacted positively on the outcome of election to curb election rigging.[38]

The 2015 election was arguably the most credible election in the history of elections in Nigeria. For the first time, an opposition candidate won the presidential election against the incumbent. This significant act gained Nigeria accolades from both local and international communities. Despite the peaceful conduct of the elections and the introduction of technology, the elections were not without its hitches, such as the late arrival of election materials in some polling units across the country and failure of smart card readers.[39]

General elections were again scheduled to take place in Nigeria on February 16, 2019, four years after the 2015 elections. These elections were held to elect the President, Vice-President, and members of the National Assembly. These elections were expected to be the sixth elections since the country's transition to democratic governance in 1999.

However, a few hours before the polls were scheduled to open, the elections were postponed from the original date to Saturday, February 23, 2019.[40] This was the third time in a row that general elections were being postponed in the country. The Chairman of INEC

[37] "Nigeria 2015 presidential election: Significance and challenges ahead," available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2015/03/31/nigeria-2015-presidential-election-significance-and-challenges-ahead/

[38] "Taking Stock of Nigeria's 2015 General Elections: A Post-Election Q&A," available at https://www.ifes.org/news/taking-stock-nigerias-2015-general-elections-post-election-qa

[39] Ibid.

[40] "The 2019 Nigerian elections and Buhari's second chance to provide peace, prosperity, and security," available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/03/01/the-2019-nigerian-elections-and-buharis-second-chance-to-provide-peace-prosperity-and-security/

stated logistical problems as the reason for the postponement of the elections, which raised a lot of questions in the minds of members of the public as to the independence and transparency of the Commission.[41] The postponement of the elections resulted in several allegations that there was a ploy by the ruling party to rig the elections in their favour. The opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President, posed a strong competition for the incumbent. Following the outcome of the 2015 elections and the significant improvement in the electoral process, the 2019 elections had high expectations to be better than the previous elections.

However, going by public opinions and election observers' reports, the 2019 general elections fell below expectations as Nigerians were dissatisfied with the management of the elections by INEC and the overall outcome of the election. The election was marred by low voter turnout, violence, electoral malpractices, alleged party affiliations by security operatives, and rejection of election result by the opposition party.[42]

The announcement of the election results declaring the incumbent President Buhari as the winner raised a lot of controversies causing political candidates including the opposition presidential candidate to challenge election results in the courts. The 2019 election recorded several cases of nullification of election results by the courts forcing the electoral comission in some instances to conduct fresh polls or a rerun.[43] Despite the contention of the presidential election result by the opposition on grounds of electoral malpractices, the victory of the incumbent was reaffirmed by the courts.

Having briefly discussed the history of elections in Nigeria from the colonial to the post-colonial era, the table below outlines the elections held in Nigeria since 1920 including the legislative frameworks regulating elections in each dispensation.

[41] Ibid.
[42] Hakeem Onapajo and Dele Babaola, "Nigeria's 2019 general elections – a shattered hope?" available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00358533.2020.1788765
[43] Ibid.

Table 1: Elections in Nigeria[44]

Election Year	Election Type	Laws Governing Elections[45]
1920	Lagos Town Council	Township Ordinance, 1919
1923	Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1922
1928	Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1922
1933	Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1922
1938	Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1922
1940 and 1941	Bye-elections into the Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council, 1922
1943	Elections into two seats of the Legislative Council	Clifford Constitution, 1922 (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council , 1922
1947	Legislative Council	Arthur Richards Constitution, 1946
1951	Western Region House of Assembly	Macpherson Constitution of 1951 Election Regulations of 1951
1954	House of Representative & Regional House of Assembly	Oliver Lyttleton Constitution, 1954 The Election Regulations of 1951[46]
1959	Parliamentary elections	Order-in-Council, 1958 (Electoral Provisions) Order in Council, 1958 The Elections (House of Representatives) Regulations of 1958
1964/1965	Parliamentary elections	Republican Constitution, 1960

[44] Table compiled by The Electoral Hub.

[45]"Constitutional law,"
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.listResults?p_lang=en&p_country=NGA&p_count=237&p_classification=01.01&p_classcount=20

[46] The Electoral Regulations for election into the central and regional legislatures were in two parts. The first part was the General Regulations under which the elections were conducted while the second part was the Specific Regulations which laid down the procedure for elections in each region of the country.

		▪ Electoral (Amendment) Act, 1964
1979	Presidential/Parliamentary elections	▪ 1979 Constitution ▪ The Electoral Act 1977
1983	Presidential/Parliamentary elections	▪ The 1979 Constitution ▪ The Electoral Act 1982
1992	Parliamentary elections	▪ 1989 Constitution ▪ National Assembly (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree 1992. No. 18
1993	Presidential elections	▪ 1989 Constitution ▪ Presidential Election (Basic Constitutional and Transitional) Decree No.13 of 1993
1997	Local government Council elections	▪ Local Government (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree No. 7 of 1997
1998[47]	National Assembly Elections	▪ Transition to Civil Rule (Political Programme) Decree No. 1 of 1996 ▪ National Electoral Commission of Nigeria Decree No. 3 of 1996
1999	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ▪ Transition to Civil Rule Decree (Political Programme) of 1998 ▪ Presidential Election (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree 1999 ▪ Political Parties Decree (Registration and Activities) of 1998 ▪ State Government (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) (Amendment) Decree 1999 ▪ Independent National Electoral Commission Amendment Decree, Decree No. 17 of 1998

[47] The elections were held during the military regime of General Sani Abacha in which all political parties participating were affiliated with the government while the true opposition was prevented from participating in the poll.

		▪ National Assembly (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree 1999
2003	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ▪ Electoral Act 2002
2007	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ▪ Electoral Act, 2006
2011	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended by the First to Third Alteration Acts, 2010) ▪ Electoral Act, 2010
2015	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended by First to Third Alteration Acts, 2010) ▪ Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) ▪ INEC Regulations and Guidelines, 2015
2019	General Elections	▪ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended by the First to Third Alteration Acts, 2010 and the Fourth Alteration Act, 2017) ▪ Electoral Act, 2010 (as amended) ▪ INEC Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2019

CONCLUSION

Elections are an essential part of any democratic government, which give citizens the opportunity to elect leaders of their choice. From the foregoing, we have discussed the development of the electoral process of Nigeria. Despite significant efforts by the several electoral commissions to improve elections in Nigeria, violence and electoral malpractices have been the hallmark of elections in Nigeria which has impacted negatively on the outcome of elections in Nigeria and resulted in lack of trust by the public in our electoral process. This raises a pressing need for electoral and constitutional reform to address the numerous issues that mar elections in Nigeria.

It is hoped that this paper contributes to further research, and policy and lawmaking in light of the current review of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as well as the move by the National Assembly to pass the Electoral Bill 2021.



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