

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATIONS AND ELECTION CONSOLIDATION IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE (2015-2019)

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Abstract

Whereas countries in other regions of the globe have seemingly perfected their act in maximizing the opportunities provided by democracy via free, fair and credible elections; Nigeria albeit the entire African continent remain apparently marooned and relegated to the edge of the precipice of democratic instability occasioned mainly by compromised election management system that is perceptively tied to the apron of the incumbent political party. Worried by the prevailing scenario of dearth of free, fair and credible elections in Africa there is an indictment on not only the electoral management bodies in different countries of Africa but also on politicians and political parties, especially the party in power. The exploratory research design was adopted; this paper also made use of qualitative method in its data collection and analyses. It made use of content analysis in extracting information from the secondary sources of data. The paper found that election observation is aimed at detecting any infractions in the electoral process; providing concerned bodies with remarks on the progress of the electoral process and decisions taken; and guaranteeing the integrity and neutrality of the electoral process. International election observation helps in building confidence in the transparency of the process. For international election observation to contribute in legitimizing the election process; building confidence; improving the prospects for democratization; enhancing the electoral process; and reducing or preventing conflict there is need to make the outcome of international election observation count in the overall legitimization of the result of the election so as to deter future compromise and manipulation of the process. Here in lay the expected usefulness of the observer mission. Till this begins to be seen to happen, international election observation will remain a mere ritual and a charade without any useful impact on democratic consolidation in Africa.

Keywords: *International, election, observations, election consolidation, Africa, Nigerian experience*

Introduction/Statement of the Problem

African countries are still battling with efforts to consolidate their democracies. Across the length and breadth of Africa there are cases of elections which are largely compromised and far from reflecting popular choice. Influenced by the repressive, oppressive and suppressive nature of colonialism, the present crop of political elites that inherited political power from the British colonial scavengers assumed in all ramifications the character of the colonialists they replaced and became also repressive, oppressive, suppressive and seemingly anti-democratic; antagonistic to free, fair and credible elections and everything that has to do with opposition politics. Thus from Egypt to Zimbabwe, from Nigeria to Kenya, and from Mozambique to Sudan election is detested by the political elites who view it as a war for the acquisition of public power meant to be fought using every means possible. The electoral process in Africa and more so in Nigeria is therefore better described as a charade and far from producing and reproducing free, fair and credible outcomes. This is a scenario commonly found in many African countries where many have degenerated to a near one party state thereby perpetuating sit-tight syndrome in many African states. For the purpose of democratic consolidation, the need for free, fair and credible elections cannot be relegated to the background.

One of the major preconditions for the attainment of democratic governance is the existence of an independent electoral management body whose responsibility it must be to organize and conduct elections that would be adjudged credible and legitimate. However, evidences over the decades has proved that the electoral management body is far from being independent considering that its appointment still resides solely with the executive arm of government. Cognizant of the common saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune; the saying holds sway in the case of election management in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general where there are instances of executive interference by the ruling party in the electoral management process.

Bearing the above in mind and considering therefore that democracy has over the centuries evolved as a universal value embraced by significant majority of states across the globe, it becomes imperative to institute an independent mechanism of international election observation for the purpose of peer review and to ensure compliance with global best practices with recourse to the realization of free, fair and credible elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

International observers serve as monitors in countries that receive international donor assistance for elections, and countries undergoing a democratic transition. International observation is performed by many

different organizations, particularly by international organizations (such as the Commonwealth, Organization of American States, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the African Union and ECOWAS); and international NGOs (such as IFES, and International IDEA and The Carter Center), with support from national and supranational donor agencies.

The UN does not engage in election observation unless it is mandated to do so by the General Assembly or the Security Council. It has become rare for the UN to engage in observation: the most recent observation mandate was carried out in 2001. Observation is distinct from UN mandates to “certify” or to “verify” an election, but the latter two are equally rare. The organization does, however, sometimes provide logistical support for international election observers or other support for national observer groups (UNO, 2012).

This discourse is cognizant of the phenomenal compromise of the election management body due to the desperation of political parties and politicians to have their way and win elections by all means. It is against this background that we take recourse to an assessment of Nigeria’s electoral experience with intent to identifying the quintessence of international election observation groups in democratic consolidation in Africa. The outcome of this study will provide a leeway for understanding and appreciating the nuances of election, free and fair election, international election observation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Objectives of the Study

This paper assesses sought to identifying the roles of international election observation in ensuring democratic consolidation in Africa with particular focus on the Nigerian Experience. In specifics, the following aims are to be realized;

- 1) *To highlight relevant conceptual issues germane to free and fair election in Nigeria;*
- 2) To assess the import and interconnection between international election observation, election integrity and democratic consolidation in Nigeria; and
- 3) To explore and ascertain international best practices and prospects of international election observation for the sustenance of African democracies;

Methodology

The exploratory research design was adopted. According to Eboh (2009) exploratory research design fits a situation whereby relatively, little or nothing is known about a situation/process or where the situation has a deviant character or is relatively new. However, the goal of exploratory design is to discover ideas and insights (Eboh, 2009; Shafi, 2011). In addition to the exploratory design, this paper also made use of qualitative method in its data collection and analyses. Qualitative research emphasizes meanings (words) rather than frequencies and distributions (numbers) when collecting and analyzing data. Primarily, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of situations or events from the perspectives of the people involved and as understood by them (in this relying absolutely on documented evidence). It is generally inductive rather than deductive in its approach, that is, it generates theory from interpretation of the evidence, albeit against a theoretical background. Thus qualitative measures are often binary in that they are interested in the presence or absence of phenomena. In order to achieve the set objectives of this paper, the methodology of content analysis was used in extracting information from the above enumerated sources of data gathering techniques. This was followed by an analysis of the discussions through a logical validation process.

Review of Conceptual Issues

What is Election

Although election is fundamental and very common in modern political discourse and there is hardly any dispute about its meaning, it has, like many other social science concepts, been discussed from several perspectives. In what follows we consider some of the definitions. A good one to begin with is the definition by Dowse and Hughes (1972) who assert that:

...lections are one type of social mechanism, amongst others, for aggregating preferences of a particular kind. An election is, therefore, a procedure recognized by the rules of an organization, be it a state, a club, a voluntary organization or whatever, where all, or some, of the members choose a smaller number of persons to hold an office, or offices, of authority within that organization...'

By analysis, this definition assumes that every political organization is democratic, and goes through the mechanism of elections in arriving at the smaller number of leaders that hold her offices. It is quite easy to describe this

definition as impressionistic and hastily generalizing, considering the fact that it was given in 1972 when only about forty two percent of world's nations were democratic and produced their leaders through elections. Ball (1977) can be accused of similar thing based on his definition that “elections are the means by which the people choose and exercise some degree of control over their representatives”. This simply suggests that wherever people are chosen to lead other people, the mechanism used is election.

According to Agu (2006), in modern democratic system, election is one of the principles of choosing leaders. This according to him, is based on the fact that those who preside over the affairs of men are expected to elicit obedience from them, should rule in the overall interest of the masses and that the people should be able to decide who should exercise control over their affairs. Nwaorji (2004) contends election is the action or an instance of choosing by voting one or more of the candidates for a position especially political office. In other words, election is a device for filling an office or post through choice made by a designated body of people referred to as the electorate. Election is the process through which the people the electorate choose representatives of political parties to represent them at any level of government such as federal, state or local governments. Schumpeter (1988) sees election as the process of choosing qualified candidates into an existing vacant political post following due democratic processes.

It is important to note that election can also be held in non-government bodies like clubs, community based organizations, women groups, national and international associations for the sole purpose of choosing leaders of such organizations (Agu, 2006). In sum, election is, therefore, the means through which group, corporate bodies, national and international associations, political parties and citizens of any country select, nominate, appoint or choose some of their members to represent them at whatever level of government in case of a nation.

Free and Fair Election and its Elements

The achievement of free and fair election is one of the most sought after values of democracy. A free and fair election is a type of election where a voter is free to cast vote according to his or her wish without any intimidation, harassment, inducement or coercion. In a free and fair election a voter is free to vote according to the dictates of conscience only. Since in a democracy the ideal is seeking the consent and mandate of the citizens for any leader to be accepted as legitimate, citizen participation in the choice of their leaders is important. Elections as the ‘means of filling public offices by competitive struggle for the people’s vote has become synonymous with democracy as it

empowers the common citizens with the right to choose their leaders (Asogwa, 2005). As a result, elections have become one of the yardsticks for measuring how democratic a country is. As such, participation in the decision-making process and the conduct of free, fair and credible elections are some of the major principles of democracy, to the extent that one of the political responsibilities of every citizen is to vote in responsible leadership in their community, state or country. In the light of the above there are certain elements that are akin to free and fair elections across different climes. The elements of free, fair and credible elections according to Nwanze (2002) therefore, include:

- 1) ***Elections must be competitive:*** Opposition parties and candidates must enjoy the freedom of speech, assembly and movement necessary to voice their criticism of the incumbent government openly and to bring alternative policies and candidates to the voters.
- 2) ***Elections must be periodic:*** Democracies do not elect dictators or presidents-for-life. Elected officials are accountable to the citizens and they must return to the voters at prescribed intervals to seek their mandate to continue in office or face the risk of being voted out of office.
- 3) ***Elections must be inclusive:*** Who is entitled to vote and how widely is the franchise drawn? The definition of the citizen and voter must be large enough to include the adult population, which in the Nigerian case is someone who is 18 years and above. An election in which a government is chosen by a small, exclusive group is not credible no matter how democratic its internal workings may appear.
- 4) ***Elections must be definitive,*** as they define who the public office bearers will be for a specified period of time. Popular election in multi-party democracies therefore are the most suitable mechanism for abetting sit-tightism, which has been the bane of African politics.

In addition to the above stated elements, there are also a number of features according to Anyaele (2003), which are the steps a government should take to ensure an election is free and fair election and therefore ensuring democratic consolidation:

- i. Disqualification from voting of certain persons such as lunatics, criminals, bankrupts etc.
- ii. Use of secret balloting or at least the open-secret ballot to safeguard the choice of the voter.
- iii. Absence of intimidation of voters
- iv. An independent electoral commission must exist to conduct the elections.
- v. All voters should be registered ab initio.

- vi. The electoral registers must be available for use on the day of voting.
- vii. Public counting of votes supervised by returning officers must be strictly adhered to.
- viii. There must be announcement of results of elections immediately after public counting of ballot papers.
- ix. There must be avenues to challenge the result of the election in courts.
- x. Ballots boxes must be secured from being snatched or stuffed with ballot papers by party agents and thugs.
- xi. There must be substantial security within and around the polling booths to guarantee the safety of voters and ballot boxes.

Free and fair election creates sentiment of popular consent and participation in public affairs. The people feel that they have been consulted, and have indicated their wishes, in the broad field of national policy, and are therefore willing to accept the legitimacy of the power exercised by those put into positions of authority by the electoral system, it makes it possible for government to succeed another in an orderly manner, without violence or bloodshed. Free and fair election emphasizes the responsibility of the government to the people. Politicians dare not become out of touch with public opinion, since they know that will lead to disaster for them at the next election.

The Import and Intersection between International election observation and Democratic Consolidation: a Search for Global Principles

International election observation refers to the role and the mandate of the different missions in terms of the level of intervention in the electoral process: observers having the smallest mandate, monitors having slightly more extended powers, while supervisors are those with the most extensive mandate. The mandate of election observers is to gather information and make an informed judgment without interfering in the process. Election monitors observe the electoral process and are to intervene if laws are being violated. On the other hand, the mandate of election supervisors is to certify the validity of the electoral process.

Different organizations use different definitions for these terms; in some cases the terms international election observation and monitoring are used interchangeably without any explicit distinction being made between the two.

International IDEA's Code of Conduct: Ethical and Professional Observation of Elections (1997); opine that, any foreign presence at an election might, in popular usage, be referred to as “observation”. This can however be confusing, as this term has been used to refer to any of the following five different types of activity:

- a) Mediation, which is a form of third-party intervention in disputes, directed at assisting disputants to find a mutually acceptable settlement.
- b) Technical Assistance, which generally takes the form of technical support to the electoral process.
- c) Supervision, which is the process of certifying the validity of all or some of the steps in an election process.
- d) Monitoring, which involves the authority to observe an election process and to intervene in that process if relevant laws or standard procedures are being violated or ignored?
- e) Observation, which involves gathering information and making informed judgments from that information.

The Central Electoral Commission of Palestine (2001) defines election observation as "the process of gathering information related to the electoral process in a systematic way, and the issuing of reports and evaluations on the conduct of electoral processes based on information gathered by the accredited observers without interference in the process itself. Elections observation aims at:

- a) Detecting any infractions in the electoral process.
- b) Providing concerned bodies with remarks on the progress of the electoral process and decisions taken.
- c) Guaranteeing the integrity and neutrality of the electoral process."

Common standards for evaluating elections pose many difficulties. For one, international standards, while clearly articulated and binding through international legal instruments, are abstract and require interpretation and judgment before they can be applied to specific instances. Furthermore, it can be difficult to reach a general conclusion about an election on the basis of existing standards alone: there is no established formula on how instances of violations or irregularities relate to a broader quality assessment of an election or its outcomes.

Experience shows that it is not always easy to reach an overall conclusion. International observer reports may disagree because different observer groups use different criteria or are influenced by disparate interests or perspectives. The result is that such inconsistencies may engender confusion in the country in which elections are observed.

Contradictory reports undermine the credibility and purpose of observation. For example, during the 2019 election in Nigeria, the election observers' statements in their final reports sowed confusion and resentment. Many observer groups seemed to give a passing grade to the election, based on their observation of the voting and the count; a few others took emphatic exception,

citing the unhealthy political atmosphere before the election (Neou and Gallup, 2019).

Similarly, during Zimbabwe's legislative elections in 2000 and presidential elections in 2002, contradictory evaluations were issued by various international observation groups (Bjornlund, 2004). Once again, the reports were met with some bitterness by national participants.

Thus adoption of common observation standards is increasingly viewed as essential to ensuring the credibility and legitimacy of election observation missions. One set of proposed criteria is as follows (Bjornlund, 2004):

- 1) Observation should cover a broad range of issues: administration and functioning of the election process; legal and institutional framework for the process; political context and climate in which the election is held (exercise of political rights).
- 2) Observation should cover the entire process from beginning to end, including: the pre-election period, including candidate registration and the campaigning; Election Day and vote counting; and the post-election period, including vote tabulation and announcement of results, resolution of complaints, and assumption of elective office by the winners.
- 3) Coverage should be as broad as possible: sufficient observers stationed throughout the country; including party and candidate agents and monitors, national observers and official monitors and overseers.

International Election Observations and Democratic Consolidation

International election observation plays an important role in safeguarding election integrity and consolidation of democracy. This role may be compromised if election observers do not follow certain rules that should guide their conduct during their mission. International election observation can help ensure democratic consolidation in several ways such as:

- a) *Disseminating international standards and good practices:* Electoral administrators, politicians and national observers can learn to better understand international standards for free and fair elections by engaging in liaison with international observers and studying their reports. International observer missions also provide electoral administrators the opportunity for comparative exchange of professional knowledge with other experts, particularly on integrity mechanisms.

- b) *Deterring integrity problems:* The presence of international observers monitoring the election process may help deter attempts to disrupt or tamper with the process. There is a public perception in most countries that international observers will be able to uncover fraud on Election Day (Carothers, 1997). But, in fact, this perception may be misplaced since international observers have only limited data and may not understand the "local" way of doing things.
- c) *Detecting integrity problems:* Experienced observers can detect problems or questionable activities, and bring them to the attention of the election management body and the public. International observers, like national ones, cannot actually intervene in an electoral procedure, but may ask questions about its conduct in an informational way. Early identification of issues in this manner can allow a problem to be solved before it is too late.
- d) *Holding a fragile process together:* In situations of conflict or in countries in transition, the presence of international observers can to some extent deter violence and intimidation. Their ongoing presence may help reassure candidates, monitors and voters that it is safe to participate. The presence of international observers may also convince opposition politicians that competing in the election is preferable to boycotting, or engaging in civil disobedience or disturbance (Carothers, 1997).
- e) *Increasing the credibility and legitimacy of the process:* Through their reporting and analysis, observers can uphold or denigrate the legitimacy of the electoral process and its outcome. If their reports show that the election is proceeding within acceptable parameters, this finding reinforces the acceptability of the process and the legitimacy of the results.
- f) *Developing the capacity of national observers:* If international observation is occurring simultaneously with national observation, the example set by international observers can help develop and improve the capacity of national observation efforts. For example, international observers can provide a model to emulate concerning how to set up a nationwide election observation effort, conduct parallel vote tabulation and assimilating field observation reports. They can also encourage national observers, and perhaps inform them of standards and best practices relevant to their activities.
- g) *Relationship with national observers:* But it must be cautioned that international observers should not actually coordinate with national observers in terms of deployments or other aspects of their mission,

since that would potentially detract from the perceived independence of the international observers and their accountability to the organization which has authorized and supported their mission. Similarly, international observers should not share non-public information concerning their activities or impressions since that might compromise mission security and lead to unauthorized disclosures of information.

In addition to the above stated, international election observation are supposed to monitor the process objectively. Since their interest is to ensure that elections are fair and above-board, they should not take a position on political issues. Also as independent observers, they must also provide objective reporting on the electoral process. International IDEA (1997) has identified several systemic advantages of encouraging international election observation in Africa, including:

- a) legitimizing the election process;
- b) building confidence;
- c) improving the prospects for democratization;
- d) enhancing the electoral process; and
- e) reducing or preventing conflict.

A wide variety of NGOs and other organized civil society groups act as international election observers. Active monitoring of elections by international observers provides feedback to electoral administrators and policy makers about problems encountered. This allows for corrections to be made during the process, when there is still time to act. In this connection, active monitoring from onset resulting in interim reports during the electoral process can be more effective in maintaining election integrity than passive monitoring, which simply produces a report after the process is over, without much interaction with electoral administrators. Therefore, impartial international observers help in promoting free and fair elections.

Effective international election observation may yield some or all of the following dividends, which have far reaching impact on democratic consolidation in Africa

- a) Detect and deter integrity problems by closely monitoring the process, and draw attention to any irregularity or integrity problem observed;
- b) Increase transparency by publicly reporting on the process, identifying problems and assessing their impact on the election results;
- c) Assess the integrity of the election. In newer democracies, this may mean assessing whether elections were “acceptable”, “competitive” or

“free and fair,” and whether the results reflect the will of the voters;
and

- d) Recommend procedural or policy changes to improve election integrity.

However, international observation that is not impartial or balanced can itself create integrity problems. Furthermore, monitoring of the entire electoral process is one of the integrity safeguards that help protect the viability and honesty of election administration, as well as fair participation by election participants. Monitoring promotes compliance with the legal framework and helps deter questionable activities. Public reporting by international observers increases transparency and helps ensure election officers’ accountability.

The Prospects of International Election Observation and Democratic Consolidation

As widely acknowledged in various international fora election observation is a highly visible demonstration of international commitment to supporting democracy and promoting respect for human rights around the world. The EU and other international and regional organisations deploy Election Observation Missions globally but these missions are also increasingly exposed to public scrutiny and new challenges.

The Report of a High Level Conference co-hosted by the European External Action Service and the European Parliament (2017) brings together partners from around the world to discuss the Future of International Election Observation, key challenges and opportunities.

The conference brought together election observers, electoral stakeholders, donors, civil society and conflict prevention practitioners to take stock of these new challenges including the increasing use of social media for electoral campaigning, the use of ICT in the conduct of electoral processes, and electoral violence. In addition, the conference explored the role and best practices of Parliamentary observation, and how to enhance collaboration between the EU, African Union and United Nations in this area.

The Conference participants highlighted issues around the use of ICTs and social media in electoral contexts. The digitalisation of elections to streamline their management, from voter registration and identification to voting and counting of results, raises concerns about the integrity of the process as well as affects trust among politicians, voters and electoral authorities. Similar questions arise around the role of social media, sometimes involving complex disinformation operations. While the debate on Internet governance has so far centred on the respect for freedom of expression, these new trends have

revived the questions of its limits when it comes to hate speech and the role of social media in opinion formation, and whether that requires regulation. Still, the red line between regulation to prevent interference and restriction of freedom of expression is very thin and needs to be carefully thought through. In this challenging context, observer's teams also face difficulties in keeping up with fast technological progress. Their technical capacities and methodology need revision and updating if they are to properly monitor digital systems and social media, and to assess their impact on electoral processes (The Report of a High Level Conference co-hosted by the European External Action Service and the European Parliament, 2017) .

Understanding and addressing the complex processes that make violence or the threat of violence a concern during elections requires collective multi-disciplinary perspectives and efforts should be made to identify potential conflict triggers well in advance. During the Conference, the debate focused on the need to develop long, medium and short term strategies for preventing violence and conflict. Long-term strategies of strengthening state institutions including through a systematic approach to implementing the recommendations of observer missions can generate more trust and credibility in electoral processes, which can in turn help to ensure peaceful and smooth political transitions. Short-term strategies include mediation, the promotion of dialogue and dispute resolution. There is a need to integrate the existing tools of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peace building and mediation together with election observation and assistance. Mediation and prevention work should not only be focused on political leaders but also on the grassroots and the role of women, youth and minorities is vital. Election Observation Missions' long-term presence and their independent and impartial assessments often play a key role in enhancing the credibility of electoral processes and have a mitigating role against violence and conflict. By improving the transparency of the electoral process, they make an election less prone to escalate into violence (The Report of a High Level Conference co-hosted by the European External Action Service and the European Parliament, 2017).

The report further emphasized on need for the participation of parliamentarians in election observation missions, most of the time in the framework of regional organizations (EU, OSCE, NATO, the Council of Europe, OAS, Pan African Parliament etc.), brings further credibility and political visibility to the observation process including the recommendations presented afterwards. Their participation, as elected representatives of the people with experience and expertise in campaigning and the diversity of backgrounds and, particularly, political affiliations of parliamentarians also further reinforces the impartiality and the independence of the conclusions and recommendations from their observation. However, in recent years some parliamentarians' behaviours have been seen as problematic. Part of the

discussion during the conference focused on how to address these issues and the need for the OSCE and NATO parliamentary assemblies and national parliaments participating in international observation missions to join the Common code of conduct agreed by the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The importance of better integration of national staff in international EOMs and of reinforcing their cooperation with domestic observers, to achieve for example better consistency of EOMs' reports, were also discussed. In the words of Heidi Hautala, Vice-President of the European Parliament;

....we are all united that International election observation is an important tool and we have to take care of its dignity, its reputation and its credibility... We all believe that there needs to be an implementation of the codes of conduct and each national parliament can also look at this Common code of conduct that the four multilateral Parliamentary assemblies are adopting or have adopted... that can make our common missions very coherent....

Another important debate of the Conference was how to enhance EU-AU-UN trilateral cooperation on electoral processes and observation, especially in supporting elections over the whole electoral cycle, before, during and after elections. The EU and AU's partnership in this area can be further strengthened through capitalizing on the recommendations of their observer missions to encourage consolidation of democratization processes and institutions throughout the continent. The UN, the EU and AU already cooperate closely on election observation within the “Declaration of Principles for International Observation” launched at the United Nations Headquarters in 2005. The AU and the EU have also been cooperating closely at the political and technical levels on electoral processes, including on long-term observation methodology, and expressed their commitment to strengthening and broadening this cooperation, notably on the follow-up to EOMs recommendations. Participants concurred that, in view of the experience of the three organizations and the challenges ahead, an enhanced triangular partnership in the area of elections would be welcome. For many participants, implementation of recommendations, especially those relating to electoral reforms, would also benefit from enhancing dialogue on cooperation with and between Election Management Bodies and CSOs (The Report of a High Level Conference co-hosted by the European External Action Service and the European Parliament, 2017).

The "High Level Conference on the Future of International Election Observation" brought to the event a range of different expertise and experiences and, through keynote presentations, panel debates and informal

discussions in the margins, identified a number of important points for further action and a substantial agenda for future work together.

Recommendations for Policy

In view of the above reviewed the following recommendations are proffered for policy as a leeway for strengthening international election observation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria and Africa in general;

1. There is need for synergy between international election observers and other key stakeholders in the digital technology sector, including think tanks, academia and digital tech companies.
2. The overarching principles of transparency, security, sustainability, accountability and inclusivity that guarantee the credibility and integrity of an election should also apply to digital systems.
3. There is need for the international community to further strengthen long-term and short-term efforts between the international electoral observation, electoral assistance and the peace and security communities, in the efforts to prevent electoral violence.
4. The EU, AU and UN should intensify the exchange of information before and during the period of EOM deployment on follow up activities, including the deployment of Election Follow-up Missions (EFMs) and ensure the use of the full range of political tools (institutions/organs) of the three organizations to put electoral issues on the agenda and to ensure coherence in messaging and actions to support election processes.

Conclusion

This paper has recognized the link between election and democracy all over the world; more importantly it has interrogated the role of international election observation in democratic consolidation especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Even though there are attendant challenges as revealed by the study especially those emanating from prevalence of compromised electoral management bodies, politicians and political parties, inconsistent legal regimes and interference by the political leadership; all of which constrain the efforts of international observers as much as they jeopardize the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Africa.

In the submission of this paper therefore, it is quintessential to reiterate that Election Day activities merely represent a microcosm of the macrocosm continuum in the overall electoral process that requires the attention of international election observers to ensuring free and fair election and



democratic consolidation. But the question still remains, how we make the outcome of international election observation count in the overall legitimization of the result of the election so as to deter future compromise and manipulation of the process. Here in lay the expected usefulness of the observer mission. Till this begins to happen, international election observation will remain a mere ritual without any useful impact on democratic consolidation in Africa.

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