GOOD GOVERNANCE AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS: A PANACEA FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

Beetseh, Kwaghga 1 & Akpoo, Tarfa 2

1 Library Department, Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, PMB 237, Benue State –Nigeria. Email: beetse.kwaghga@uam.edu.ng
2 Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi. PMB 2373 Benue State Nigeria.
Email: akpootarfa@gmainl.com

Manuscript ID: RCMSS/JGGSDA/MAY/14014

Abstract
The electoral process is an ideal and integral part of the democratic process, whether in developed or developing societies. A mal-functioning of electoral system inadvertently produces mal-administration. The mal-function of electoral system is caused by the incident of leadership failure and political conflict. In most developing countries, crisis of governance is usually the major problem because of the kind of people chosen into elective positions. This paper however examines good governance and credible elections in Nigeria using relative deprivative rising expectation and frustration aggression models as its theoretical framework of analysis. The paper also examines credible elections as a determinant factor for good governance and conflict a free society. Critical analyses of African countries have clearly shown elections as selective and carry go process which in turn produces bad governance and political conflict across all levels of government. The paper also recommended some remedies for credible elections, good governance and conflict free society such as review of the structure, compositions, operations and funding of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) so that it can be autonomous. INEC should develop a code of conduct for political parties; institutionalize continuous voter’s registration and make review at the local government level. It should also develop and popularize a code of conduct for the security agencies’ as security sector transformation is a vital component of democratic reform and is crucial to guaranteeing respect for civil rights. New standards of behaviour should be set for all members of the security services, including an end to impunity and institutional cover-up. This could necessitate that the National Assembly make changes to existing statues. The government should provide security officials with continuous training in democratic values, while civil societies should develop the capacity to monitor effectively the security agencies and their operations .For any credible elections and good governance; the above mentioned remedies must be implemented.

Key words: Good Governance, Credible Elections and Conflict Resolution.

Introduction
Elections could be seen as institutionalized procedures for the choosing of office holders by some or all the recognized members of a society. So an electoral system exists to provide the electorate with opportunity and the right to choose their representatives and maintain contact with them. Hence, for an electoral system to be democratic, it must provide for equal electorate and the freedom of the electorates to make a real and meaningful choice devoid of coercion or intimidation (Eminue, 2005). In effect, ‘election would be deemed to be democratic-and hence good if it is free and fair and not based on patronage of any kind’.

Therefore, elections in Nigeria though seen as a means of controlling the government; within context of electorate’s participation reveal a rather disturbing ‘state’ that has called for serious concern. Mezu (2007) noted that, indeed the Nigerian electoral process since independence has gained an unenviable reputation for fraudulent practices ( in Duru 2002). This situation has forced many to see elections in Nigeria as a mirage or a mere ‘selection’; selection in the sense that the electorates are left out of the entire system, owing to the fact that elections are conducted with
or without the full participation of the electorate, who are supposed to choose those who rule over them. The organization of elections in Nigeria have often been carried out without due involvement of the people. The system operates in a way that suggests a total disregard and misapplication of democratic ethos. Thus, the outcome has always been manipulated in favour of candidates of the powerful few. This is unfair and shameful, given the democratic system we opted for. It better telling the people that the leaders would be 'selected' so that they would not bother to queue up in the scorching sun. But allowing them to vote and later turning things upside down is the height of betrayed that must be resisted.

**Conceptual Explication**

Electoral system is a process by which citizens of a given democratic entity elect representative to handle their machinery of government. This is done through vote casting. According to Elekwa (2008), electoral system is only one factor in the evolution of a party system, but the effects of different electoral system can be found in the structure, ideology, the pattern of the party interaction and the members of the parties that compete in the political system. An electoral system consists of more than the method of counting votes cast by the voters. A full description of an electoral system would include such factors as the extent of franchise that is, who is entitled to vote? It would include the rules relating to the candidates and parties, and those regulating the administration of election, especially the provision against corruption.

Roberts (1971), electoral system is the institutionalized arrangements by means of which an election is conducted and the purpose of the election fulfilled the term according to Hague and Agu (2009) covers the legal and practical realities of voter registration and election administration as well as the prices rule for translating.

**Election**

Beetseh (2008), election is the process whereby an electoral chooses, by voting, officers either to act on its behalf or represent it in an assembly with a view to governing or administering. An electorate refers to a class of citizens entitled (by a law course) to vote in an election, by whatever procedure. Elections provide for a bare minimum of political participation, perhaps the only act of participation for the vast majority of the governed, and therefore create a feeling of belonging and a degree of responsibility for government decisions.

**Good Governance**

In recent times, the concept of good governance has gained currency in social discourse. Lucidly speaking, good governance according to Boeninger (1992) has to do with the capacities of a political system to exercise authority, will legitimacy, adjudicate conflicts as well as carry out effective programme implementation. This definition implies that good governance is the effective process of leading the society, with the capacity for efficient service delivery in terms of policy implementation.

Kukah (1998) has clearly stated that good governance is meant governance that is responsible, accountable and transparent in policy formulation and implementation. As a policy framework, good governance imposes demand on policy makers in their exercise of power. It encompasses an effective state that is a state that has enabling political environment for effective distribution of resources to improve the living condition of the ordinary people. In this sense good governance suggests the use of political authority and the management of the resources of society to better the lot of the people. Buttressing Kukah’s views, Jega (1994:101 – 102) has stated that good governance as a desirable social and political process involves the following basic elements:

- **Responsibility and responsiveness in leadership and in public service;**
Accountability in the mobilization as well as in the utilization of resources;
- Discipline, effectiveness and efficiency in handling public (as well as personal) affairs.
- Selflessness and impartial service to the people; and
- Popular participation and empowerment of the people in the conduct and management of their own affairs.

What the above conceptualization means is that good governance has to do with policy making and policy implementation by systems of laws and guidelines which are segregated into specific operations to achieve the overall development of the society. Good governance therefore involves a whole gamut of things: respect for the fundamental human rights of citizens, judicious use of resources that is devoid of waste and fraud via other corrupt practices. Besides, good governance requires respect for principles of accountability and transparency. It also encapsulated issues of equity, equality, justice and fair play in the distribution of goods, and services so as to promote and enhance the quality of life of the people irrespective of their class, status, religion or other parochial consideration.

Conflict Resolution
Although conflict resolution has been part of human experience for centuries, Burton (1993) and Mitchell (1993) argued that the concept is comparatively recent in academic discourse. He draws attention to the term “dispute” which some scholars interchange with conflict. For him, “settlement refers to negotiated or arbitrated outcomes of disputes, while resolution refers to outcomes of a conflict situation (Burton, 1993 and Otite Albert 1999). We thus have “dispute settlement” and conflict resolution.” However, dispute and conflict operate on the same principles and although they may refer to different conditions and scope of social relationships, they may, like the concept of settlement and resolution, be used interchangeably.

Theoretical Framework
The major attempt to understand the cause of good governance and credible elections has been a major problem faced by scholars over time. Good governance and credible elections by its very nature is naturally beyond any simple causation. The cause of good governance and credible elections has been so many and complex such that most scholars even argued that the very uniqueness of each good governance and credible elections defies any single theoretical explanation. However, in this research work, two paradigms shall be considered in explaining good governance and credible elections whereas emphasis shall be laid on one. These include: the relative deprivation rising expectation and frustration aggression model and the political theory by Karl Marx.

Relative Deprivation Rising Expectation and Frustration on Aggression
The relative deprivation, rising expectation and frustration aggression model was originally developed by Dollard and his association and later expanded and modified by other scholars. According to Gur (1974), the main understanding on this theory is that Aggression is always the result of frustration, given the requisite conditions. An individual whose basic desires are thwarted and who consequently experiences profound sense of dissatisfaction and anger is likely to react to this condition by directing aggressive behavior at what is perceives as being responsible for thwarting those desires or at the substitute.

This therefore means that there must have in existence a wide gap that leads to frustration, which leads to anger/aggression and violence and bad governance. In the same way, Anifowose (1982) emphasized that relative deprivation is a state of mind where there is a discrepancy between what men seek and what seems attainable. He stressed that the greater this discrepancy, the more
their anger and their propensity towards violence and rigging of elections. It is in contention of the proponents of this model that when one feels deprived in an attempt to get something one desire one is likely to be provoked and when provoked, one becomes angry and tries to register his frustration. The above thinking attempts to explain the rationale behind the predicament of good governance and credible elections in Nigeria.

This model is criticized for laying too much emphasis on internal or individualism. According to Lupsha (1969), political violence is a complex relative deprivation or reducible to rising expectations, relative deprivation or frustration aggression as the users of psychological explanation would lead us to believe. He says that ‘frustration can occur in that society without violence and credible elections resulting, and violence can occur in the society without needing a frustrating precondition’. This model discourages the systematic investigation of fundamental questions about the social context that shapes the situation of individual.

Despite the criticism, this model is useful because it seeks to explain the rationale behind violence and credible elections. It benefits are put on the fact that every violence is as a result of frustration or aggression. In every society, where people are pushed to the wall they certainly react violently in order to repel the aggressors.

An Overview of the Electoral System in Nigeria

A survey of Nigeria electoral system (process) has increasingly revealed an important point of concern. This is sequel to the fact that the electoral system rather than provide expected results has become a misnomer and an episode that could be termed a farce. From 1959-till date elections, the system has gradually move from a falling system to a failed system, worse still the system recently has deepen its fraud ‘characteristics and further increased it sophistication in rigging, that the survival and endurance of our democracy is highly questioned. The electoral regulatory bodies instead of abating electoral fraud have join with the so called ruling party to disfranchise the electorate. In short, the have help institutionalized electoral crime in the polity. Indeed, characteristically, electoral system particularly in 2003-till date has been seen as charade. The magnitude of fragrant and deliberate abused of electoral process especially by people in power is clear’. The elections were flawed from inception to execution, lacked the corollaries that can produce genuine results that could be respected by observers and all the contending parties.

Pa Enahoro speaking on April polls remarked that at this point in our history, we must all do away with emotions on the current grave issues confronting the country. For over 53 years, our country was run like a vehicle with a drunken driver loaded with reckless passengers urging the driver on. The end needless to say has been the disastrous elections in which we find ourselves today.

Good Governance and Credible Elections: A Panacea for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria.

Without an effective electoral body to serve as an unbiased umpire in an election such electoral system cannot thrive or survive. The life of good governance depends on the type of electoral body put in place. It is believed that electoral body should be able, on the face of a democratic system provide for a free and fair election. An election where the electorates are allowed to cast their vote and the materials for the election provided on time, devoid of intimidation, malpractices and falsification of results. The function of electoral body is central to the sustenance of democracy and the deepening of democratic principles and practice. For instance the activities of INEC in 2003/2007/11 elections can only be adjudge as providing a credible election based on its ability to conduct a free and fair elections, if such has ever existed in its history. It inability to give Nigeria a free and fair elections and the undue influence by politician via the ruling party suggest it lack of independent. Independent which is a major feature of an effective electoral body is threaten here.
The activities of politician and political parties in the polity at times have been overbearing on the INEC, leaving the electoral system to suffer serious drawn backs; then allowing for more questions than answers in the mouth of Nigerians. Above all the crisis we have today is as a result of leadership which is a threat to democratic governance.

Conclusion
In short, the politics of electoral process in Nigeria has often operates in 'absolute' denial of the rights of the electorates who are supposed to choose those who rule them. Elections are regarded as mere 'selection' to favour the powerful few. There is absence of free and fair elections, as electorates are left out of the electoral system. The results of elections are often manipulated by INEC under the influence of the so called ruling party PDP. The elections were characterized by several under aged voters, ballot bag snatching, state intimidation via armed forces and Para-military agencies.

Therefore, the 2003/07/11 elections no doubt were not true reflections of the wishes, desires, expectations and yening of the people of Nigeria. The people are generally fed up with the prevailing scheme of things and they earnestly ask for a change to better their lots and give them a better life. 'Nigeria is not a banana republic where anything can just happen'. Nigeria is governed by laws; hence, we should strive to strengthen constitutional democratic development, thereby ensuring enduring democracy in the polity.

Suggestions and Recommendations
This situation has left nothing to be desired of the system. The resultant effect is that democracy is threatened in Nigeria. And for democracy to endure they have to be political rebirth and the change of the belief of political parties and politicians who believed election is do or die affair. Political values and Political culture of Nigeria should be reposition in a way that it will promise to strengthen democratic ethos. The electorates should be made to beloved in the Nigerian project and see the Nation as theirs.

The role of the judiciary in deciding on election result though excellent; something should be done about it to allow the people to decide who rule them through their vote rather their wait for the judiciary to decide who win in the elections. This may result in a serious tyranny of the judiciary. This will help sustain our democracy.

- INEC should be given independent to operate as an autonomous body free of undue interference from external sources.

- Adequate funds should be release in time to the electoral body for effective prosecution of election in a vast country like ours.

- The franchise of the electorate should be respected, uphold and strengthen in our democracy by our politicians, political parties and electoral body.

- Constitutional democratic development must be allowed to endure and honoured by the various actors in the electoral process or polity.

- For the sustenance of democracy, improvement of economic and social condition and the reduction of endemic poverty and deprivation should be seriously pursued. Therefore, economic empowerment of the electorates which could forestall the sale and disposition to sell their votes and/or voters cards for food is a must. According to Okoli (1990: 169) the only safeguard against banality of the electoral process is an informed and vigilant electorate, confidents in its duties, conscious of its rights and committed to the maintenance of a quality of life within the social political system.
References