UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA

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SOLUTION TO ELECTION RIGGING IN AFRICA

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BY

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SOLUTIONS TO ELECTION RIGGING IN AFRICA
DEDICATION

To my doting parents for their invaluable support; both financial and moral, and to my siblings for their inestimable support.
Election Rigging is a canker worm eating deep into the fabric of Africa. Owing to the cataclysm it has inflicted, there arises the need to discuss it as an issue.

This work is a quintessence of the issues concerning election rigging in Africa. It encompasses issues like: the incidences of rigging in Africa, the causes and the effects of rigging in Africa. This work goes further to proffer pragmatic solutions to the problem of election rigging in Africa.

I, at this juncture, intend recognizing some key individuals whose roles have made this work a staggering success. I express my sincere and profound gratitude to my lecturer, Mrs. Uzuegbunam A.O, for the directions she availed me with; my parents, Engr. and Mrs. Nwogu who laboriously provided with some relevant information; and my friends, especially Adaaku Igwe, for her inestimable inspiration. To all these supporters, I say, “thank you and may God reward you”!

Nwogu Emmanuel Ezochinyere.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Africa from time immemorial has been besieged with a multitude of problems: economic, political, social and otherwise. But the irony here is that we cause these problems for ourselves and fail to proffer solutions to them, how pathetic! One of these problems eating deep into the African fabric is “election rigging”. The big question is “how can election rigging be curbed in Africa?”

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY AND DEFINITION OF CONCEPT

Election rigging, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is defined as “misrepresentation or alteration of the true results of an election”. It can also be defined in the words of Ben Nwabueze as

...Electoral malpractices which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent or sinister intention to influence an election in favour of a candidate by means such as illegal voting, bribery, threat and undue influence, intimidation and other acts of coercion exerted on voters, falsifications of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as winner (without altering the recorded results).
Election rigging is robbery of the right of the people (Africans) to participate in their own government, or in Wole Soyinka’s more intriguing metaphor, “the stealing, the theft, of their voices”.

1.2 INCIDENCES AND CAUSES OF RIGGING

The problem of election rigging in Nigeria is representative of what obtains in other Africa countries; hence Nigeria can be used as a case study. Ever since democracy was introduced into Nigeria elections has not been anything to write home about. The 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections were massively and brazenly rigged by the ruling party, PDP.

Also, “a virulent form of election rigging sits in Ethiopia”, according to Felade Shewakena. The “election” of Bereket Simon as president was obviously by hook or by crook. It was a lucid case of election malpractice.

Other countries like Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe are not left out. They are getting it ‘blood and gore’ from the power-hungry dictators. What do you call this kind of elections where the losers are first designated? Isn’t it really gruesome and pathetic?

“For every action, there is a cause”, is a popular saying. Election rigging is not left out as it has some causal factors some of which are adumbrated below.
1.2.1 UNBRIDLED QUEST FOR POWER AND WEALTH

The remuneration given to government officers in power is outrageously large, making such positions very attractive that every one wants to be there by any means possible. Most politicians are wealthy, but ‘power they say intoxicates’. The quest for power, and more and excessive wealth drives them into rigging their way to such enviable possible.

1.2.2 ETHNOCENTRISM

According to Charles Okereke, “Nigerian leaders have failed to accept the fact that Nigeria is a nation of nations”. It’s a multiethnic country. Many a time, the electorates without considering the caliber of the parties’ representatives, are biased and go ahead to support those of the same tribe as they.

Hence, in order to ensure that no other tribe ‘wins’ the election, they outrightly rig in their favour at the expense of ‘qualitative delivery’. No wonder Fox defined ethnocentrism as “…people’s feeling that, it not enough to possess culture to be fully human but ‘you have to possess our culture’.”

1.2.3 INCUMBENCY INFLUENCE

In Africa today, many presidents who want to remain in office for as long as they can, use their incumbency power to lord it over the masses. With this power,
they control most of the election proceedings, thus the elections become subject to their whims and caprice.

Also, many sycophants who know that the incumbent president or chairman or governor has a great chance of returning to office, support them in their fraudulent activities, with the hope of being placed at top ministerial positions. This is outrageous.

1.2.4 CORRUPTION OF POLLING CLERKS

The key agents in the dumping of ballot papers are the presiding officers and poll clerks at the polling stations. Their active co-operation is needed before thumb-marked ballot papers can be dumped into the ballot box in use at the polling station or before a ballot box stuffed with thumb-marked ballot papers can be brought to the polling station and exchanged for the one in use there.

According to Ben Nwabueze,

Just as the presiding officer and the poll clerks are the instruments for rigging at the voting stage of the electoral process, the returning officer and his deputy serve as the effective instrument for falsifying the results sent from the polling centers.9
CHAPTER TWO

EFFECTS OF ELECTION RIGGING

Election rigging is a vice that inflicts a lot of problems on man. Some of such problems are explained below.

2.1 INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE MASSES

In the words of Ben Nwabueze,

Rigged elections would lose all its relevance and efficacy as a means of making government responsive to the welfare of the people and of enforcing upon it an awareness that the power it exercises is only for their benefit. Rigging according to Ben, "...subverts the electorates' wishes as expressed in their votes at an election".7

2.2 VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL CRISIS

Election rigging does not stop at the poll boots, it transcends into the streets, causes a lot of violence, with a possible breakdown of law and order. Election rigging and violent disturbances, according to Ben, are clearly related.

One of the most feared and dreaded consequences of election rigging is that when violence ensues, it opens the door for military "intervention". In the oft-quoted words of president J.F Kennedy, "those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change possible".8
2.3 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Election rigging culminates in not only political instability, the imminent consequence, but also in economic instability. Inflation becomes the order of the day.

Also, consider how in Nigeria in 2007, some government enterprises like NNPC were dubiously privatized. According to Abubakar Momoh and Taiwo Hundeyin, “the arguments for privatization and commercialization remain spurious, dishonest, and amount to duplicity and double standards”.

CHAPTER THREE: SOLUTION TO ELECTION RIGGING IN AFRICA

“There is no problem without a solution”, so goes a Cliché. Election rigging therefore has solutions only if those besieged with it vehemently result to implement them. Some possible remedies are given below.

3.1 COMPUTERIZED VOTERS’ REGISTRATION

Anichebe Obiura, speaking to the press, said that the voters’ register should be computerized in such a way that anybody who has a computer can access the database of all registered voters in a constituency. According to Abel Gaobudia, “since no two human beings have the same fingerprint, computerization process will settle the scores”.

3.2 MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM

The concept of multi-party system creates a barren and unbiased ground for everyone and party eligible to be elected into official government positions. With this in place, many ‘eyes’ would be watching and monitoring electoral proceedings and thus the serendipity of election rigging would be drastically minimized.

3.3 VOTER AND CIVIC EDUCATION

According to Prof. Awwalu Yadudu, “there is a need for the electoral processes to be nurtured by continuous voter and civic education.”
It is appalling and pathetic that, what obtains in many African countries, is a situation where the political parties educate only their followers who would vote them into power.

3.4 REDUCTION OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS’ REMUNERATIONS

There should be more emphasis on prestige rather than the financial aspect of governance. In this vein, the remunerations given to people in such positions should be made moderate. This would make political positions to look not too uncreative as they presently are, hence money-hungry politicians would resort to something else since such positions would not earn them their desired expectations.

3.5 CONSTITUTION REFORMS

The constitution is another instrument that is indispensable in the protection and promotion of human right, hence there is the need for constitution reforms in many African countries.

Most constitutions in use in such countries were tailor-made to meet the whims and caprice of dictator-rulers. Now that democracy is in the air, there should be a rigorous reform of the constitution, which includes electoral reforms, and there should be enforcement of such reforms.
3.6 THE USE OF LOCAL AND EXTERNAL MONITORS

Adedaro Akinrefor wrote down the words of Chief Charles Okeke as follows: "independent supervisors should be deployed to all constituencies in order to avoid rigging". The onus is not only the government to ensure a flawless election, but also, in the electorates.

According to Adedaro Akinrefor, "the electorate should be vigilant during the elections and ensure that only the right and accredited people vote to avoid double voting". In a nutshell, all hands must be on deck to kick the evil menace of election rigging out of Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

3.7 APPROPRIATE TRAINING OF ELECTION WORKERS

Election workers, including the poll clerks, the returning officer, his deputy, etc, should be appropriately trained and sensitized to provide honest and quality services during voting activities.

This in place; the situation of election rigging would be very much ameliorated.

3.8 MOBILISATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS

According to J.O.R Uju, "it is the responsibility of government to provide social security for all citizens". Properly trained and sensitized law enforcement
agents should be mobilized during electioneering to forestall election irregularities and malpractices during voting their presence will also prevent violent protests by thugs and the aggrieved electorates.

3.9 PUNITIVE MEASURES TOWARDS CORRUPT POLITICAL PARTIES

The institution of disciplinary bodies like the election tribunal will help to purge out of public offices, those fraudulent politicians who swindled their way into office through election rigging.

Also, jail terms should be given government officers who have been indicted and found guilty of looting public funds. This would sound a warning bell in the cases of fraudulent politicians.
CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

With the aforementioned causes, effects of and solutions to election rigging in Africa, it becomes crystal clear that it is a vice that is eating deep into the fabric of the African society.

"There's always light at the end of a tunnel" so goes a popular adage. With the proper measures implemented and sustained, Africa can be drawn out of the quagmire of this hydra-headed monster caused election rigging.

To put it right, there is still hope for the African continent.
END NOTES

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