

## **PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF EKITI 2014 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Election observation has become an established norm in virtually all democratic society. The institutionalization is rooted in international, continental and regional legal instrument endorsed by different countries setting a benchmark for democratic elections. Thus, election observation has become integral part of the electoral process and international best practice for assessing the quality of an election. In accordance with treaties Nigeria has ratified coupled with enabling law in the country, Independent National Electoral Commission extended formal invitation to international and domestic observers for the June 21, 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The thrust of this paper is the rationale for election monitoring and an overview of public perception of Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election in Nigeria through exploration of the reports of domestic and international election monitoring group, civil society organizations, as well as notable individuals. This paper infers that public perception of the election was extensively positive, adjudged free and fair, meeting the standard for democratic election.*

Key Words: Ekiti 2014 Governorship Election, Elections, Election Monitoring, Public Perception, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Elections as is obvious are a key aspect of democratic rule, being part of the essential framework for developing democratic politics. Be that as it may, elections are not the be-all and end-all of democracy. This is so, in view of the fact that there are minimum standard for elections to be termed democratic (Brett, 2009). Without any hesitation, not all elections can be termed democratic as election is incompatible with electoral forces (Ojo, 2008: 109-122).

In recent years, there is a growing international acceptance for election monitoring globally. The international acceptance is premised on the development of international standards on the conduct of democratic elections and the processes of monitoring elections by both international and domestic observing organization (Wikipedia, 2010).

As documented in the declaration of principles for international election observation and code of conduct for international election observation, election observation has the potential to enhance the integrity of election processes, by deterring and exposing irregularities and fraud and by providing recommendations for improving electoral processes. (United Nations, 2005).

Goodwill-Gill (1994) in Adebayo & Omotola, (2007) also submit that the reason for monitoring in election is to identify universal standards of electoral practice and to assess the extent to which different states live up to these standards. This then depict that the verdict of domestic and international observers in an election can make an election legitimate or a mere facade.

Furthermore, in line with universal best practice of conducting transparent elections, Nigeria provided an enabling environment for domestic and international election observer groups. The Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election is symbolic in view of the fact that the election is an off-season election, serving as a platform to test the preparedness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the 2015 general elections. Also, the tense electioneering campaign between the two major contestants Kayode Fayemi and Ayo Fayose among others that heightened the propensity for a tumultuous election.

This paper beamed its search light on the rationale of election monitoring and the attendant perception of the public. Without any gainsaying the verdict of domestic and international election observers coupled with that of well meaning Nigerians on Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election gives a seal of democratic legitimacy or engenders a legitimacy crisis. This research paper employs the secondary source of generating data. Data are sorted out from academic journal publications, book publications, working papers series, reports and relevant materials from the internet on the subject matter.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Election**

Elections lie at the heart of representative governance giving meaning to the modern conception of democracy (Joseph, 1987). To Ogunsanwo (2003:11) there is no superior method for selecting

the leadership of a democratically ruled society apart from election. Undoubtedly, election is the only acceptable institutionalized process enabling some or all of the recognized members of a democratic society choose office holders (Olaitan, 2005:44). Election is the process of choosing people for particular jobs by voting (Ojo, 2007:5). In the words of Nwolise (2007:157) election can be defined as ‘the process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization or group by the vote of its qualified members’.

In Anifowose (2003:24) perceptive essay he identified the functions of election to include:

Recruiting politicians and Public decision-makers.

Making government.

Providing representation.

Influencing policy decisions.

Educating voters.

Building legitimacy.

Strengthening elites.

Providing succession in leadership.

Extension of participation to many people.

However, election can be termed legitimate if free and fair and meets the minimum democratic standard. On the other hand it can suffer legitimacy crisis if characterized by electoral malfeasance.

### Election Monitoring

Election monitoring is also often referred to as election observation. Election monitoring is the observation of an election by one or more independent parties, typically from another Country or a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), primarily to assess the conduct of an election process on the basis of national legislation and international election standards. Election observers can be national or international (Wikipedia 2010).

Election observation is a process of systematically gathering information on the electoral process as the basis for making an informed decision on the integrity and credibility of the process (African Union Election Observation Manual, 2013:7).

Furthermore, monitoring and observation of election is a process through which an election is scrutinized and evaluated “for purposes of determining its impartiality in terms of organization and administration”. It involves “stationing of independent missions, officials or individuals representing international or local organizations for a specified time in a country which is in the process of organizing a national election with a mandate to closely observe and pronounce on the entire process and outcome”( Adututu,2002:2)

Election monitoring in a nutshell covers missions where delegations assessed pre-election, election-day and post-election conditions (Kurtzberg, 2012).

### Public Perception

Public perception is an idea, a belief or an image one has of reality as a result of how one sees or understands the reality. It is therefore conterminous with public opinion (See Adebayo & Omotola, 2007). Walter Lippmann in his eponymous treatise on public opinion observed that democracies tend to make a mystery out of public opinion with the declaration that “there have been skilled organizers of opinion who understood the mystery well enough to create majorities on election day”. Indeed, some political scientists have regarded public opinion as equivalent to the national will (Britannica Encyclopaedia).

How then can we define public opinion? Public opinion is an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community (Britannica Encyclopaedia). Public opinion/perception therefore represents opinions expressed by the public, which have considerable influences on governmental actions and/or inaction. The influence opinion wields depend largely on intensity, which has to do with the number of people holding the opinion and their location in the social structure of society-upper, middle or lower class(Adebayo & Omotola 2007:294).

### **Election Monitoring: A Brief History**

The importance of history cannot be overemphasized in view of the fact that history bridges the gap between the past and present and charts a path into the future (Ojo, 2014:5). The idea of monitors observing elections actually has a fairly long history. Historically plebiscites in disputed territories were firstly internationally supervised in Moldavia and Wallachia by most of the major European powers (Wikipedia, 2010; Brahm, 2004; Beigbeder, 1994). Santa-Cruz (2005) averred that Organization of American States(OAS) was the first international organization to monitor an election.

Be that as it may, election monitoring as a practice was unpopular until after World War II. In fact until the 1960s (Precisely 1962) there were no recorded cases of international election observation in sovereign states (Kurtzberg,2012). Election observation activities expanded significantly following the end of the cold War, with the development of international standard on the conduct of democratic elections and the process of monitoring elections by both international and domestic observing organizations (Wikipedia, 2010).

Furthermore, election observation related activities at the initial stage were centered on countries undergoing transitions to democracy. “The idea is that given the transition situation, both institutions and the culture supporting free and fair elections are weak(Adututu,2002:3).

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of observer mission monitoring elections in long-standing democracies, including the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Switzerland (Wikipedia, 2010). Many international actors have taken on the challenge of monitoring elections. States, both bilaterally and through International Governmental Organizations (IGOS) have been frequent participants to have a growing number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) with an interest in spreading democracy and human rights (Brahm, 2004).

A wide array of NGOs participate in monitoring efforts, the Carter Center, played a key role with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division and the National Democratic Institute in building consensus on a common act of international principles for election observation. In addition to international organization monitoring elections, citizen organizations or coalitions of organizations also monitor elections in their own country. (Cited in Wikipedia, 2010).

Historically, in Africa parlance, the first election observation/monitoring in Africa could be traced to the Namibia 1989 elections. (AUEOM, 2013:19; Adututu, 2002:3). From the 1989 Namibia election, there has been an increase in the number of international election observation groups, particularly from the 1990s, attention has been on elections in countries with weak democracies or democracies in transition as stated *ab initio*. Apart from the international election observation missions, there is great increase in the numbers of local election observers across Africa as different civil society organizations have been up to the task in terms of monitoring election in their respective countries.

In Nigeria, the first election observation took place in the 90’s. Thus, the monitoring and observation process that attended the Nigeria presidential elections of 1993 that was annulled

happens to be the first in Nigeria. The then military Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida set up Nigerian Election Monitoring Group (NEMG) as a governmental organ made up of civil society groups to monitor the 1993 elections (Abutudu, 2002:4).

Its genesis was a problem as it was difficult for the political parties to accept its neutrality. Some of the civil society organizations invited to join the body as local monitors bluntly refused to do so, preferring instead to make their own independent arrangements for monitoring. For example, the Civil Liberties Organization, CLO rejected the invitation to be part of the NEMG “because it considered election monitoring a non-governmental affair.”(Abutudu, 2002:4).

However, since the return to democratic rule in 1999 in Nigeria, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has always extended formal invitation to local monitors and international election observers. Thus, all elections conducted from 1999 to the 2015 elections by INEC at different times were monitored by local and international observers, from the general elections of 1999 to 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 general elections, including off season elections in some states of the federation.

In the words of Adutudu (2002:4) a basic distinction usually made between Observers and Monitors is in their functions with reference to elections. Monitors are citizens and can supposedly intervene in the actual conduct of the election, at whatever stage should they detect any anomaly. Observers on the other hand are international groups and individual who can only watch proceedings, but must not interfere. Their observations can only come in later in the form of reports.

### **Rationale for Election Monitoring**

Elections are the cornerstone for creating democratic political system (Brahm, 2004). As such, monitoring is imperative as verdict of election observers can make or mar the electoral process. Election monitoring both international and domestic, contributes to democratic progress in a number of ways (Brett, 2009).

Bjornland & Gibson (1992:406) succinctly documented that election monitoring is:

*Designed to boost confidence in the fairness of the electoral process, to help deter fraud in the balloting and counting procedures, and to report to the country's citizens and the international community*

*on the overall integrity of the elections. In addition, if requested and if appropriate, observers can mediate disputes between competing political groups in an effort to reduce tensions before, during and after elections.*

Merloe stance also corroborates Bjornland & Gibson submission. To Pat Merloe (2009) election monitoring when done properly, can promote electoral integrity and the warranted degree of public confidence in the electoral process. Election monitoring also exposes violations of election-related rights, which violationed can subvert electoral integrity and deny legitimacy to those who falsely claim electoral victory.

In the view of Brahm (2004) election monitoring can assist democratic consolidation by instilling domestic and international legitimacy. He further stresses that the presence of election monitors prevents devltry act in relation to the electoral process, thereby enhancing credibility and legitimacy of elections.

In Hyde and Marinov's (2014) insightful essay the scholars averred that reputable international election observers can facilitate self-enforcing democracy by providing credible information about the quality of elections, thus increasing citizens' ability to coordinate against a regime when election fraud occurs. As Przeworski argues, the concept of self-enforcing democracy means that, generally elected leaders are motivated to obey the rules of the game and govern in a manner responsive to the peoples' wishes by implicit threat of mass uprising (Cited in Hyde and Marinov, 2014:333).

The African Union produced manual for election monitoring within Africa continent cap it up by outlining the rationale one after the other. According to the blueprint of Africa Union Election Observation Manual (2013:7) Election Observation serves the following purposes:

- Safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process;
- Promoting the openness and transparency of the process;
- Enhancing public confidence;
- Defusing potential tensions;
- Deterring improper practices and attempts at fraud;
- Increasing political credibility;
- Contributing to the acceptance of election results; and

- Disseminating and strengthening international standards and electoral best practices

### **Ekiti State Background Information**

Ekiti State is situated in the South West geo-political zone of Nigeria, with Ado Ekiti as the State Capital. Ekiti State known with the slogan of fountain of knowledge was created on October 1, 1996 from the old Ondo State, comprises of 16 local government areas. The state shares boundaries with Kwara State to the North, Osun to the West, Kogi State to the East and Ondo State to the South.

Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election is one of the off-season elections in Nigeria as a result of the nullification of the vote that ushered in Segun Oni in 2007 based on electoral irregularities, thereby leading to the enthronement of Kayode Fayemi as the duly elected Governor of Ekiti State.

### **INEC and the Administration of 2014 Ekiti Election**

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral umpire constitutionally empowered to conduct elections to fill political positions in Nigeria. The legally empowered body, INEC conducted Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial elections in collaboration with all the necessary stakeholders in the electoral process, varying from the security operatives, accredited Election observers and others.

As documented in the electoral act, INEC gave room for registration of eligible voters, updating of voters' register, monitored primary election of different political parties, allowed political campaign within the stipulated time frame with media bliss. The run-up to Ekiti gubernatorial election gave a heightened propensity for violence, as political campaign was greatly intense with flickers of violent attacks especially between the two top contestant that traverse the 16 local government of Ekiti state with their campaign team.

With this premise, this paper proceeds to the polemic, which is a periscope of INEC accreditation of Domestic and International observers as constitutionally entrenched and an overview of the informed judgment made by international and local observers, civil society organization as well as the perception of well meaning Nigerians on Ekiti gubernatorial election.

### **Ekiti 2014 Gubernatorial Election: Accredited Election Observers**

In view of the importance of election monitoring to credible election, and in consonance with the declaration of the principle of election observation in democratic societies, Nigeria Election Management Body, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) accredited a total number of 29 election monitors/observers for the June 21, Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial elections.

The groups according to The Nation online,( 2014); Pm news Nigeria, (2014) include: Centre For Education also known as Transition Monitoring Group (TMG); Justice And Equity Organization; NEPAD Nigeria and Reclaim Naija; Centre For Democracy And Development; Centre For Peace Building and Socio-Economic Resources Development (CEPSERD); Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (Policy And Legal Advocacy Centre); Nigerian Bar Association; National Association For Peaceful Election In Nigeria.

Also included are: Independent Election Monitoring Group (IEMG); Rights Monitoring Group; Election Monitor; Police Service Commission; Clean Foundation and Institute For Peace And Conflict Resolution; Research Initiative For Sustainable Development And Gender Awareness (RISDGA); Justice Development And Peace Commission (Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria); The Forum of State Independent Electoral Commissions of Nigeria (FOSIECON); Women Arise For Change Initiative (The Nation online,2014 &Pm news Nigeria,2014).

Others are, EU Delegation – Abuja; International Foundation For Electoral System (IFES); United States Mission To Nigeria; High Commission of Canada; British High Commission; UNDP/DGD – Abuja; Embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands; Embassy of Switzerland; Embassy of The Federal Republic of Germany and Embassy of France (The Nationonline,2014 &Pmnewsnigeria,2014).

In the light of the foregoing, accredited election observers have the responsibility to monitor and present report on Ekiti election in accordance with established legal framework. However, for an election to be considered free and fair, it must meet the minimum standard for democratic elections. In the brilliant work compiled by African Union for monitoring election in Africa tagged ‘African Union Election Observation Manual’ (AUEOM), the manual provided an in-depth impetus into what constitutes free and fair election. To AUEOM(2013:18), a fair election invokes the protection provided by the constitution and other legal frameworks that provide a level playing field. These include:

- A transparent electoral process;

- An election act and an electoral system that grants no special privileges to any political party or social group;
- A comprehensive electoral register that does not deliberately exclude any eligible section of the society;
- Establishment of an independent and impartial election management body;
- Access to all polling stations for representatives of political parties, accredited local and international observers, and the media;
- Secrecy of the ballot;
- Absence of intimidation of voters;
- Effective design of the ballot;
- Proper ballot boxes;
- Impartial assistance of voters (where necessary);
- Transparent counting procedures;
- Proper handling and transportation of the ballot and other sensitive election materials;
- Expeditious announcement of election results;
- An impartial and expeditious election complaints resolution system;
- Impartial media coverage of elections and equitable media access for all parties; and
- Acceptance of election results by all stakeholders.

If the above listed ingredients of free and fair election are out-rightly missing in the conduct of election, then such election may be termed a mere sham, routine ritual or facade, vitiating democratic universal standards of electoral practice. To assess the credibility of Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election, 29 accredited election observers pledged commitment to transparency in election observation.

After all necessary screening by INEC, a total of 18 political parties fielded governorship candidate with their prospective deputies as stipulated by law. The tables below gives an insight on the name of candidates, sex, party, age and qualification as well as the final result officially announced by INEC after the final counting and collation of the entire governorship election in the state.

**CANDIDATES FOR EKITI GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION JUNE, 2014**

<b>S/ N</b>	<b>EKITI STATE</b>	<b>NAME OF CANDIDATES</b>	<b>SE X</b>	<b>PARTY</b>	<b>AG E</b>	<b>QUALIFICAT ION</b>
1.	GOVERNO R	VINCENT BANKOLE AJAYI	M	ACCOR D	47	B.L.,LLB
	DEPUTY	AKINYEMI KOLADE ADEOLU	M	ACCOR D	39	B.SC
2.	GOVERNO R	OPEYEMI FOLAYEMI AKINYEMI	M	AA	46	SSCE
	DEPUTY	TAIWO OLUWATONI PHEBE	F	AA	36	SSCE
3.	GOVERNO R	OSEKITA OLUSEYI VICTOR	M	AD	46	B.SC
	DEPUTY	ALE OKE KEHINDE	M	AD	44	MBA
4.	GOVERNO R	PRINCE PETER ADEKOLA BAMIGBADE	M	ACPN	53	DIPLOMA
	DEPUTY	IBRAHIM COMFORT	F	ACPN	36	WASC
5.	GOVERNO R	OROKO BOLA	M	ADC	63	B.SC
	DEPUTY	OGUNDIPE LAWRENCE	M	ADC	42	SSCE
6.	GOVERNO R	OGUNLOLA ADEBAYO	M	APA	45	B.SC
	DEPUTY	ABEFEYO MARGARET	M	APA	54	B.SC
7.	GOVERNO R	JOHN OLUKAYODE FAYEMI	M	APC	49	PHD
	DEPUTY	MODUPE ADEOLA ADELABU	F	APC	63	PHD
8.	GOVERNO R	AYODELE SAMSON OLAYINKA	M	CPP	39	HND
	DEPUTY	OLUWAFEMI FRANCIS IDOWU	M	CPP	58	B.SC
9.	GOVERNO R	PASTOR OGUNKOLADE ADEWUNMI J.	M	KOWA	61	DIPLOMA
	DEPUTY	OLUWADRE AJEWOLE FAGBORO I.	M	KOWA	62	SSCE
10.	GOVERNO	AJIBOLA JOSEPH AKINWALE	M	MPPP	66	B.SC

	R					
	DEPUTY	CHIEF ABRAHAM KAYODE DAODU	M	MPPP	68	B.SC
11.	GOVERNO R	MICHAEL OPEYEMI BAMIDELE	M	LABOU R	50	B.A.
	DEPUTY	BOLANLE OLATUNDE BRUCE	F	LABOU R	46	B.A.
12.	GOVERNO R	MR. ILESANMI BANKOLE EMMANUEL	M	NCP	57	NABTEC
	DEPUTY	MRS. ADEGBOYE ADEOLA	F	NCP	41	G.C.E.
13.	GOVERNO R	PRINCE BANJO GBOYEGE	M	PDC	49	MBA
	DEPUTY	LAWAL BAMIDELE OLUTUNDE	M	PDC	40	B.SC
14.	GOVERNO R	AYODELE PETER FAYOSE	M	PDP	53	HND
	DEPUTY	JOSHUA OLUSOLA OJO ELEKA	M	PDP	80	TTC
15.	GOVERNO R	ANIMASHAUN GOKE	M	PPA	36	HND
	DEPUTY	AGUNBIADE AYOKUNLE	M	PPA	36	NCE
16.	GOVERNO R	EVANG. GBENGA ADEKUNLE	M	PPN	61	WASC
	DEPUTY	EVANG. RUFUS KEHINDE S.	M	PPN	60	WASC
17.	GOVERNO R	ADEKOLA ADELEKE AYO	M	SDP	60	MSE & T
	DEPUTY	AYENI OPEYEMI ISAAC	M	SDP	35	SSCE
18.	GOVERNO R	HON. ADENIJI AKINROPO PHILIP	M	UDP	46	B.ED
	DEPUTY	MRS. FOLUSO AGBOOLA LAWAL	F	UDP	43	WASC

SOURCE: Reclaimnaija.net(2014)

The Electoral Act is clearly explicit on eligibility of candidates vying for political position at governorship level. In view of this, the table above gives a detailed insight on the name of candidates, sex, party, age, as well as qualification obtained. The names and logos of political

parties are arranged alphabetically in the above order on the ballot paper used for the Ekiti 2014 gubernatorial election.

### DECLARATION OF RESULTS

**NAME OF STATE: EKITI**

S/N	CONTESTANT	GENDER	PARTY	VOTES RECEIVED	PERCENTAGE (TVC)	REMARK
1.	VINCENT BANKOLE AJAYI	MALE	ACCOR D	268	0.07%	
2.	OPEYEMI FOLAYEMI AKINYEMI	MALE	AA	146	0.04%	
3.	PRINCE PETER A. BAMIGBADE	MALE	ACPN	1,822	0,51%	
4.	OSEKITA OLUSEYI VICTOR	MALE	AD	843	0.23%	
5.	OROKO BOLA	MALE	ADC	542	0.15%	
6.	MUSA ADEBAYO AYENI	MALE	APA	1,224	0.34%	
7.	JOHN OLUKAYODE FAYEMI	MALE	APC	120,433	33.41%	
8.	AYODELE SAMSON OLAYINKA	MALE	CPP	967	0.27%	
9.	PST. OGUNKOLADE A. JOSEPH	MALE	KOWA	222	0.06%	
10.	BAMIDELE MICHAEL OPEYEMI	MALE	LP	18,135	5.03%	
11.	AJIBOLA JOSEPH AKINWALE	MALE	MPPP	137	0.04%	
12.	ILESANMI B. EMMANUEL	MALE	NCP	322	0.09%	
13.	PRINCE BANJO GBOYEGA	MALE	PDC	921	0.26%	
14.	AYODELE PETER FAYOSE	MALE	PDP	203,090	56.34%	ELECTED
15.	ANIMASHAUN GOKE	MALE	PPA	1,050	0.29%	
16.	EVANG. GBENGA	MALE	PPN	82	0.02%	

	ADEKUNLE					
17.	ADEKOLA ADELEYE AYO	MALE	SDP	95	0.03%	
18.	HON. ADENIJI A. PHILIP	MALE	UDP	67	0.02%	

a	TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS	733,766
b	TOTAL NUMBER OF ACCREDITED VOTERS	369,257
c	TOTAL NUMBER OF VALID VOTES	350,366
d	TOTAL NUMBER OF REJECTED VOTES	10,089
e	TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST	360,455
f.	PERCENTAGE TURN OUT	50.32%

Source: INEC Nigeria. Org (2014).

The table above gives a vivid picture of the names of contestant, gender, party affiliation, votes received and percentage of votes. Ayodele Peter Fayose of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had 53.64% of the total votes cast, winning in all the 16 Local Government Area. The Returning Officer for the governorship election, the Vice Chancellor of Federal University of Oye- Ekiti, Professor Isaac Azuzu declared Ayo Fayose winner of the election haven fulfilled the constitutional requirement. It is however clear from the statistics that the turn out of voters was low.

### **Overview of Perception of Local and International Election Observers**

Regional and international standards for democratic elections are encapsulated in a number of international treaties Nigeria has ratified, varying from the international covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the African Charter on Human and peoples Right (ACHPR) which provide for basic civil and political rights related to elections and democratic process (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2007:4-5).

Furthermore, Nigeria has additional commitment to good governance, human right, the Rule of Law and democratic elections under the 2001 protocol on democracy and good governance of the Economic Community of West African States (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2007: 405).

With this premise, the paper proceeds to highlight perception of commentators, local and international election groups that the best method of awarding the seal of democratic legitimacy is through election monitoring (Ayoade, 1999).

In an assessment of the 2014 Ekiti gubernatorial election, a former National President of Nigerian Bar Association, Wole Olanipekun opined that Ekiti 2014 Governorship election remains one of the fairest and freest in the history of election in the country and that the country is moving towards civilized democracy (in Vanguardnigeria,2014)). In the view of Mr. Akin Omole, the Chairman of Labour Party in Ekiti State, the conduct of the election is better than the previous ones. Even the celebrated June 12, 1993 election was not better than this (Vanguard nigeria, 2014).

In a related vein, Transition Monitoring Group, a coalition of over 400 civil organizations in Nigeria presented a report on Ekiti governorship election. Ibrahim Zikirullahi, the TMG Chairman submitted that polling units generally opened on time and polling officials followed the prescribed procedures. He further opined thus (Transition Monitoring Group, 2014).

*Ekiti was a significant logistical improvement over the Anambra gubernatorial election, “Further, drawing on official results independently compiled from a representative random sample of polling units, TMG can independently verify that the official results announced by INEC accurately reflect the ballots. Voters and contestants can have confidence that the INEC results are a true reflection of the will of the voters of Ekiti State.*

The Nigeria Bar Association Election working Group (NBA EWG) also corroborated the submission of Transition Monitoring Group and other observers’ verdict. NBA EWG expressed that the election was generally peaceful as voters conducted themselves in an orderly manner. Unlike the previous elections, logistic challenge did not characterize the Ekiti election.

Furthermore, Abiodun Ajibola the team leader of Election Monitor for Ekiti 2014 election, being one of the accredited observation group by INEC compiled a report of Election observation on Ekiti 2014 Elections. In the report, Election Monitor group(2014) opined thus:

*In conclusion, the 2014 Ekiti State Governorship Election was extremely well conducted. The independent National Electoral Commission should be well commended for displaying a high level of professionalism and conscientiousness. It is the opinion of Election Monitor Accredited Election observer Group that the 2014 Ekiti State governorship election was free, fair and credible and could possibly pass as the best election conducted by INEC since 2011.*

The International Federation for Election Studies(IFES) one of the accredited international observer group also documented that the June 21 gubernatorial election in Ekiti State is adjudged by accredited observers and political watchers as being very successful, peaceful, credible and reflective of the wishes of the electorates (IFES, 2014).

United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria on June 23, 2014 further noted thus:

The Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) oversaw a credible, efficient process, and by all accounts the result reflected the will of Ekiti Voters. The security forces collaborated effectively and provided a safe and secure environment free of major incidents.

From the report collated on the Ekiti 2014 governorship election, it is evident that the perception of observers and well meaning Nigerians is widely positive.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Ekiti gubernatorial elections has come and gone. The verdict of international observers, domestic monitors and well meaning Nigerians attest to the fact that the conduct of the election is not below the minimum standard for democratic elections. Even the then incumbent Governor (Kayode Fayemi) who lost conceded defeat by congratulating Ayodele Fayose the incumbent governor. However, there was allegation of maneuver of the Ekiti gubernatorial election. In some quarters,

the allegation that went viral in the run up to the 2015 general elections tagged ‘ekiti gate’ undermine the credibility of the Ekiti governorship elections. A military officer Captain Koli released an audio/ video clip of military involvement mentioning top military hierarchy in conjunction with some politicians.

To strengthen Nigeria’s electoral process, there is need for a thorough probe into the alleged involvement of military men and other political class said to be involved, to ascertain whether the viral video/audio is a scuttlebutt masterminded by the then opposition political class or reality. Also, allowing the law take its place is necessary to give room for professional conduct of the involvement of security operatives and the military in relation to the electoral process and to deter other stakeholders from erring from the rules that govern elections.

Finally, Nigerian politician needs to imbibe democratic ethos, the chaotic electioneering campaign no doubt contributed to low voter turnout on election day. There is need for adherence to the provisions of the law in terms of use of money in campaign finance and on Election Day. Ekiti election was characterized by heavy vote buying and sharing of rice and other alluring materials.

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